

y Paul Natsch

April 14 & 15, 1912 are known as some of the most famous dates in history. They are also dates that hold a high level of importance, as well as sorrow within my family. It was April 14, 1912 at approximately 11:40 PM that the R.M.S. Titanic, on her maiden voyage, struck an iceberg which buckled her plates and ultimately sank her 2 1/2 hours later off the coast of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Over 1,500 people perished on the Titanic, which was often described as “unsinkable” and “the largest and most luxurious ship ever built”. My Great Grandfather, a businessman traveling in first-class by the name of Charles Natsch, was among the hundreds who perished. The story of the Titanic has long since become a legend. There have been hundreds of newspaper articles, books, and television programs produced on the subject. Hollywood is even getting into the act with at least two movies about the disaster in production. Naturally, it was only a matter of time until the Titanic story found its way into the interactive digital entertainment medium. CyberFlix, whose previous games include Dust, Jump Raven, and Lunicus, has digitally “raised” the R.M.S. Titanic for their upcoming interactive multimedia adventure game Titanic: Adventure Out of Time.

### [The Story within the Real Story](#)

Most people are familiar with the tragic story of the R.M.S. Titanic. In Titanic: Adventure Out of Time, CyberFlix mixes that true-to-life catastrophe with a fictional story involving a variety of subplots. As the game begins, you assume the role of a British secret agent onboard the R.M.S. Titanic on the fateful night of April 14, 1912. Your main mission is to locate and recover missing British naval plans in order to prevent a World War. Eventually you discover that your mission could alter the 20th Century in more ways than one. To complete your mission you must explore the immense ship and communicate with over 25 other passengers and crew members who each have their own agendas. Some passengers may provide you with important information or objects that will aid you in your search. Many of these passengers won't give you what they have to offer without you doing something for them first. In performing these tasks for the passengers you find yourself thrust into intriguing subplots which involve espionage, deception, and even murder! The adventure concludes with the actual sinking of the Titanic. By this time, whether you have successfully completed your mission or not, you may still escape the Titanic if you were able to obtain the all-important boat pass.

he game consists of two main phases: the period of time before the Titanic collides with the iceberg (approximately 9:30 P.M.-11:40 P.M.) and the period of time until the Titanic sinks (approximately 11:40 P.M.-2:20 A.M.). Titanic will ship on two CD-ROM disks with each main phase occupying a single CD-ROM disk. This should make disk-swapping almost non-existent. The first main phase is event-based which gives players all the time they need to explore the ship, meet and communicate with the passengers and crew members, and get involved in the various subplots. The second main phase continues the main story and subplots which began in the first main phase. But all the action now occurs in real time, which is approximately 2 1/2 hours — the actual amount of time it took the Titanic to sink! So now it is a race against time to take care of any unfinished business and find that lifeboat before the Titanic sinks to its watery grave! I liked the fact that you can have, as CyberFlix states, “a complete adventure experience and not win Titanic”. There are a couple of ways to “win” Titanic and a couple of ways to “lose”. Each varies in their degrees of success or failure. This provides a certain amount of replayability not usually present in adventure games of this type.

### [Adventuring at its Finest](#)

Gameplay in Titanic mainly consists of three elements: conversing with passengers and crew members, performing tasks, and solving puzzles. Conversations are handled in much the same way they were in Dust and other adventure games such as Gabriel Knight 2. Upon initiating a conversation with another character the view zooms in on that character. You are then presented with a choice of questions with which you may ask in any order. Certain questions may lead to a new set of questions and so forth. These characters are not brainless either because they will remember your decisions and act accordingly. Throughout the course of the game certain passengers and crew members will offer important information or objects in exchange for performing a task for them. For example, if you agree to send an important telegram for the ship's Purser, you will be allowed access to the cargo manifest upon completion of the task. The puzzles in Titanic are fairly straightforward and can be solved through trial and error. For example, you must learn how to send telegrams as well as decode them using your enigma machine. If you have trouble with a particular puzzle there are always hints available if you know where to look. Smethelis, the trusty steward, is always available to provide general hints and directions. You may also get directions from the friendly elevator operator. Besides the main gameplay elements, the game expands on its variety by providing a full-fledged blackjack game as well as a fencing simulation, both of which are integrated nicely into the plot.

### Interface needs no Dusting

As with Dust, the interface in Titanic is elegant and simple to use. The arrow keys (or A, W, and D keys) represent your legs and are used in traversing the enormous ship. The mouse represents your hands and is used to open or activate items. The bottom of the screen contains various icons which represent game functions. There is a life preserver which will take you to the preferences and help menu when clicked on. Clicking on the satchel will open up your inventory window. One of the most unique features of the game is the map icon at the bottom of the screen. Clicking on this will take you to a detailed map of the entire ship always displaying your current location. During the first main phase of the game, the map also allows you to click on certain highlighted (in red) locations which will in turn instantaneously transport you to that location sparing you the trouble of having to walk there manually.

### But How Does it Look and Sound?

The detailed photo-realistic graphics in Titanic are nothing short of outstanding. Using actual blueprints and period photographs, it took a team of 3D artists nearly two years to digitally recreate the Titanic. It is said to be the most accurate representation built to date anywhere. Titanic is also the first title to show off the capabilities of the latest version of DreamFactory, which is CyberFlix's proprietary programming environment. DreamFactory allows users to explore the massive ship in a detailed 3D environment in fluid 360-degree movements. The movement is not quite Marathon-like, but rather like Dust or Buried in Time. In the beta, I found the movement to be quite smooth on my Power Macintosh 6100 really giving me a sense of what it must have been like to roam the decks of the real Titanic. To add even more realism, the entire interior and exterior of the Titanic, as well as individual objects such as

statues, furniture, and even teacups, are all fully rendered. Just about any object can be viewed from various angles within the environment. Spectacular cutscenes pop up from time to time which effectively move the story along and provide the player with a window to what else is happening around the ship. I was so impressed with the cutscene depicting the sinking of the Titanic that I watched it over again a few times! The "cyberactors" have also been improved since Dust allowing for more realistic movements and facial expressions.

itanic employs an original soundtrack and ambient sound effects in 3D stereo. The music is appropriate for the era in which this disaster took place. The sound in the game is realistic right down to the sound of the sea breeze as it blows through an open door you are walking through to go outside onto the deck. Through the preferences menu you have the ability to control the volume levels of both the sound and music. The spoken dialogue is clear and easy to understand despite the fact that many of characters speak with accents. British and American voice actors were cast to provide speaking voices for the characters.

### [Technically Speaking](#)

The CyberFlix press release on Titanic states that the minimum system requirements are a 68040 Mac with eight megabytes of RAM, double-speed CD-ROM drive, and system 7.1 or higher. The game also runs in native mode for anybody with a Power Macintosh. These light system requirements should make this game accessible to just about anyone. I played the beta all the way through to one of its conclusions and the game ran smoothly and only crashed once on my Power Macintosh 6100.

### [The Final Word](#)

Titanic: Adventure Out of Time is an exciting adventure game which should please adventure game fans as well as anybody who is remotely interested in or wants to learn about the Titanic. The variety of fictional subplots mixed with the tragic real story of the R.M.S. Titanic is sure to keep anybody who plays on the edge of their seats right up to the very end. The ground-breaking detailed virtual environment of the digitally reconstructed Titanic is an unparalleled accomplishment in computer gaming today. Titanic: Adventure Out of Time will depart from its "digital dry dock" this November.

### [Publisher Info](#)

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