

# Up Close and Personal with Brian Barnes

Some folks enjoy meeting the people behind the scenes of Ambrosia, some are curious about what goes into a new program, and some are just plain nosy. So each issue of The Ambrosia Times we interview a member of the Ambrosia family.

Ambrosia Times - Knock Knock, who's there?

Brian Barnes - I can't talk to you, my mother told me not to talk to strangers. Wait, she's not here, I guess it's OK. Would you like to come in for some cookies? My name is Brian Barnes. Hey -- are you wearing anything under that coat?

AT - Nevermind my raincoat. Aren't you that guy who has a fascination with old spooky houses? Manses, right?

BB - Actually, I have a fascination with new spooky houses, but you don't see many of those outside of Mr. Gate's abode. Or should I say adobe? Has he bought them yet?

AT - I don't think so, ummm...As the author of Manse, what influenced your decision in creating such a game?

BB - The whole 3D First Person Perspective (FPP) thing seemed like the bandwagon to be on! Actually, I like the crop of 3D games as much as the next guy, but I wanted to see if I could really expand the genre. I don't want to do a game unless I can add some real value to it.

AT - Since only a few have seen the game, could you describe your vision of what you intend Manse to become? What kind of plans do you have for it?

BB - I've said this a thousand (oops, 1001) times, but I really wanted to add real adventure elements to the 3D game. Doom had the engine, Marathon had the story, and I want to tie them together with an environment that accepts real change, from real 3D objects to changing weather.

AT - The technology on Manse is a step forward in First Person Perspective games. What makes this project different from other products of the genre?

BB - There are lots of neat additions to the basic engine, like transparent glass, opaque smoke, real-time projection lighting, and others that comes with a true 16-bit graphics engine. But this is all eye-candy, the real heart of the changes is the object & inventory engines. Real objects, you

can move them, interact with them, examine them, pick up and drop them, combine them, even stack them. They are fully connected to the world.

AT - What encouraged you to take on the 'Big Boys' computer games? Your product will be compared to other similar products, what would you say to these people?

BB - Don't sue me! I don't think of this as a competition, there are millions of Mac owners, there is more than enough space for all of us. I just want to try to give the game players something different.

I really can't wait to see how I'll be judged. I work late and hard every night on this game, while other companies have full time staffs. I have a lot of ground to make up, but I think I can do it. And after all these things I've said, I probably should cancel the printing of the "Let's Kick Bungie's Ass" ads. Hmmm....

AT - Manse will have slightly higher System requirements than most games available. What are the reasons for this?

BB - It's the 16-bit nature of the game; I'm pushing an incredible amount of data. I want the best game play experience, so you need a faster machine. But any Powermac will run the game fine, so I don't think the requirements are really all that high.

AT - You have a real job, don't you? Is it related to computers and programming?

BB - Can we say "NT sucks?" Can we say "that the next person on the net who says NT is crash proof, I'm going to send my kernel dumps to?"

AT - Uh, OK. What sort of computer/programming background do you have?

BB - I started in 6th grade working on: Get ready kids .... a Vax, which was hooked up to a teletype by a rotary phone through an acoustic coupler. No joke. This was a while ago. This was at the local college.

AT - How did you become interested in making games?

BB - I've always been. They are all I've ever wanted to write.

AT - Have you done any other products in the past? Any games?

BB - On the Apple ][ I wrote a zillion games, I remember them all: Goblin Smash, Brick Layer, Haunted House 1, Haunted House 2 (hmmm, a pattern?), Work Guy (don't ask), and on the Mac I wrote: Zombie Smash (don't ask again), Scruffy, Billy goes Bowling, Scruffy 2, and now Manse.

One day I'll make a Mac version of Brick Layer, what had to be the coolest game of all (IMHO). You'll all see.

AT - What would you consider the best classic game, computer or otherwise?

BB - Hmm. I loved Super Castlevania IV, Marathon, and Mario 64.

AT - What sort of things do you do during your free time? Hobbies?

BB - Free time. What's that?

I play guitar in my free time, I was in a band when I had the time; it was called "Entangled" and we used some of the Scruffy 1 money to record ... no kidding.

AT - How have you liked working so far over the Internet with Ambrosia and the alpha testers?

BB - It's great. I thought I was a genius, and only I had bright ideas, but I was wrong. The alpha testers', Andrew's, and your help has been invaluable in making this game way better.

AT - Why shareware?

BB - Because I love Ambrosia and all it stands for. It's a great place, a great idea, and a good boss. But he's stinky.

AT - Being the spooky Manse dude that you are, what are you going to be for Halloween? Cajun needs a costume, do you have any suggestions?

BB - I always have a Halloween party, except this year 'cause of external circumstances. I am building a Halloween tree in my front yard (when I should be programming, mind you.) Last year I went as Kurt Cobain's ghost (a sheet with a bloody head ... I know, put down the pen. Don't write me letters. It's a joke.) ... you can use that one!