



Criminal-minded...

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

The sequel to your favourite burglary sim is approaching completion. Anthony Holden smashes and grabs the latest exclusive info

IF YOU'VE never actually *been* a thief, just stop right here. Get up off the bog or wherever you're browsing this fine publication, get some suitably inconspicuous duds on and go and nick something. Anything will do – a car, some diamonds, even just a packet of peanuts. If your conscience is bothering you, pick a big high street chain store – they're all run by evil profiteering tossers anyway. When you're done, come back and we'll carry on.

Done...? Terrifying, wasn't it? The paranoia of being watched, the fear of being caught, the tension as you

made off with the goods, your shoulders tingling with the dreadful anticipation of a policeman's glove falling on them like the hand of god. But assuming you didn't get caught, and aren't currently sharing a cell with a hairy, drunken sodomite, how great was it when you got away with it?

If the adrenaline is still pumping through your veins from that experience, you'll understand more than ever why *Thief* is such a great concept. The appeal of being a thief is not the stuff you nick, it's the fact that you get away with it at all. Every time you steal, you outwit your opponents – you take the goods right out from under their noses and better yet, no one even sees you doing it. You're clever, you're invisible, you're better than all the idiots who work

for a living and you'll stab anyone who says otherwise.

HELLO DARKNESS, MY OLD FRIEND

This month, we were lucky enough to have another furtive peek at the newly renamed stealth 'em up, *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. With the full team once again beavering away on the title (after they were pulled off to get *Deus Ex: Invisible War* out the door), development is proceeding at an alarming rate. "We've already got a complete 'draft' of the game," says Randy Smith, project director of *TDS* and our guide through the latest build. "You can play through the whole thing from front to back. It's a bit of a shaky first draft, but the potential for an amazing game is very

clear and we've got plenty of time to polish and tune."

He's not kidding either. These new screenshots aren't too shabby, but they really don't do justice to the game and just how far things have progressed since *Thief II*. Indeed, despite being the third in the series, this could well be the game that finally nails the idea of actually *being* a thief, of becoming the character Garrett, with no lumbering zombies or ridiculous robots to get in the way – just the freedom and tools to be a master criminal in a believable, dynamic universe.

"*Thief: Deadly Shadows* takes things a step further," agrees Randy. "The player has a lot more options, and you also get to be involved more directly in Garrett's life. You'll enter Garrett's house,

"Garrett has a much larger presence in the game and you take a much more direct part in his life"

RANDY SMITH PROJECT DIRECTOR

Another guard about to fail dismally in fulfilling his job spec.

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THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Ion Storm
PUBLISHER Eidos
WEBSITE www.thief3.com
ETA June 2004

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Some of the smartest, most dynamic enemy AI around
- Hugely interactive world powered by Havok physics
- Open-ended gameplay – find your own path
- Now with both first- and third-person options

CV



ION STORM

The story of Ion Storm is the stuff of games folklore. In 1996, John Romero famously split with id Software, to do his own thing, forming Ion Storm and signing with Eidos. His Dallas-based studio produced over-hyped stinker *Daikatana* and quirky RPG *Anachronox* before being shut down in 2001, while a second studio, based in Austin and headed up by industry legend Warren Spector, has rarely set a foot wrong. Here's what that lot have been up to.

2000 *Deus Ex*. The classic role-playing shooter is still one of the finest games ever created.

2003 *Deus Ex: Invisible War*. The rushed-to-market sequel was simplified and vaguely disappointing, but nonetheless great.

2004 *Thief 3*. Ion Storm has managed to reunite many former employees of Looking Glass Studios, where the first two *Thief* games were made. Hopes are high for a truly magnificent sequel.



Semi-detached gothic mansion, some security issues.

meet your fence, sell your loot and go to the black market to buy thieves' tools. You'll be able to make decisions about who Garrett allies with and who he chooses as his enemies. Overall, Garrett has a much larger presence in the game and you take a much more direct part in his life."

THE THIRD MAN

But before we get carried away, we should have a look at what's changed since we last saw the game. Clearly, the biggest change is the new third-person perspective. As much as we like it, we have to ask Randy: was it a pure gameplay decision, or a concession to the broader console audience?

"Ultimately, supporting both first- and third-person as fully as we're doing will

make the *Thief* series more profitable," admits Randy. "But as a result there's a good chance fans will see more and better *Thief* games in the future. However, the impetus to support both view modes was to improve gameplay, and the game is much better as a result."

Navigating Garrett through a dim castle interior, we get our first look at the new perspective in action. Having played countless other stealth games in third-person, the transition is a natural one, though we soon find ourselves switching back and forth between view modes depending on the situation.

"Third-person provides better perspective on the overall environment and how Garrett fits into it," says Randy. "It lets you see the big picture and it affords some very compelling visuals of



Garrett sulked for days when he heard *Thief: The Movie* was to star Tobey Maguire.

“The AI is some of the best in the industry, especially in terms of alertness and sensory modelling”

RANDY SMITH PROJECT DIRECTOR



Garrett sticks his blackjack where the the guard least expects it.

Garrett pulling off his cool moves: creeping along the walls, crouching in the shadows, climbing up to a second storey window, jumping up to ambush a guard and so on. First-person is generally better for the finer details, precision, a strong sense of immersion and, of course, seeing things from Garrett's perspective – which can be crucial when you want to make sure the guard really can't see you when you're hiding behind that column."

While the new perspective definitively opens up your options, some may find the disembodied view a bit of a 'cheat', as it allows you to view things outside of Garrett's direct line of sight. You can still play the game entirely in first-person of course, and as Randy insists, "There's nothing Garrett can do in third-person that he can't also do equally well in first."

UNDERCOVER BROTHER

But while the view may have changed, Garrett himself is much as we left him. All his old tricks are back – sneaking around, backstabbing enemies, firing rope arrows, picking locks, and so on. The lock-picking is handled a bit differently, but the only genuinely new ability is climbing stone walls. Hardly a revolution, you must say, but Ion Storm is still being tight-lipped about new tools, weapons and gadgets, and it's here that we're likely to see the most new game-actions emerging.

"There are some other cool new ways to interact with the environment," teases

Randy. "But yes, they pertain to the player tools we're still not talking about."

Clearly though, the coolest things about *Thief 3* aren't going to come from a new type of arrow or a new way of climbing walls. It's less immediately apparent things, like the subtlety of the AI and the environment physics that are going to have the most impact.

For a start, the Havok physics – it's not just ragdoll deaths and bottles falling off shelves we're talking here. Some real thought has gone into applying the realistic physics to the gameplay, and the results are nothing if not compelling. By way of example, Randy shows us a



First-person view is still essential in some situations.

few scenarios in which physics might create interesting gameplay. Some are familiar enough, having been seen in games like *Far Cry* and *Half-Life 2*. So, Garrett can drop a heavy item onto a guard's head, knocking him out. He can cause a distraction by rolling a barrel down a staircase. Or he might jump onto a table, scattering plates and dishes,

some of which might be valuable and wind up in hard-to-find locations. Better yet, Garrett can outdo Sam Fisher, creating his own shadows in lighted spaces by pushing furniture up against windows.

However, our favourite piece of physics in action comes straight from a *Looney Tunes* cartoon, when Randy

OUR FAVOURITE THIEVES



YOU CAN KEEP YOUR DICK TURPINS AND YOUR ROBIN HOODS, PC ZONE HAS OTHER IDEAS

Whether it's a deep-grained criminal streak, a yearning for anarchy or just because chicks love a bad boy, our culture is one that celebrates the thief. From *Prometheus* to *Lara Croft*, a taste for larceny has been rewarded with fame, celebrity and the admiration of young boys. Here then, in all their glory, are the *PC ZONE* team's thieves of choice.



- PREZZER** Raffles, the gentleman thief and cricket champ, who charmed the ladies then stole their necklaces.
- WILL** Pop-up Pirate. We don't know what he stole, but he'll always have a special place in Will's heart.
- JAMIE** Robert Maxwell, aka the Bouncing Czech, who stole from pensioners then jumped off a boat.
- MARTIN** Janosik, the so-called Slovak Robin Hood, folk hero of bear-baiters and potato farmers everywhere.
- ANTHONY** Happosai, lecherous underwear thief and master of perverted martial arts (from *Ranma 1/2* comics).
- DAVE** Celebrity shoplifter Winona Ryder, who turned out to be completely nuts, just the way Dave likes 'em.

THIEF: PERILOUS GLOOM

WHAT'S IN A NAME, YOU ASK? PLENTY, IF IT'S AS BAD AS THIS ONE

Like *Deus Ex: Invisible War* before it, *Thief 3* has lost its sensible numeration and gained a stupid subtitle. *Thief 3*, you see, might have confused any Xbox owners who play the game, because they might not have heard of the first two *Thiefs*. If they've been living under a rock with their ears full of silly putty, that is. So it's *Deadly Shadows*, because of course, you hide in the shadows, and you're a bit deadly. Not that you're a killer as such – in fact you're more of a medieval cat burglar really, but if provoked you certainly have the potential to be deadly. And yes, it's probably the stupidest, most inapid, committee-designed name for a stealth game since 'Metal Gear Solid: Sneaky Sneaky Bang Bang'. And we just made that one up.

Someone's about to spoil their uniform.

pushes a cart down a steep hill to bowl over some pursuing guards – truly comical stuff. "This is really just the tip of the iceberg," boasts Randy. "And these are not scripted events either; the player can cause them to happen dynamically during the normal course of gameplay."

CLEVER CLOGS

Hand in hand with this sort of high-level interaction of course, is a level of enemy intelligence that can react to it, and we soon move on to the game's AI. We've heard plenty of talk about how 'aware' of their surroundings the enemies are, but seeing them in action is a very different matter. Taking the controls, Randy fires up a typically gloomy level and starts sneaking around in the darkness.

"*Thief's* AI is some of the best in the industry," he enthuses, "especially in terms of sensory and alertness modelling. The guards see and hear evidence, which includes your footsteps as you walk around and glimpses of you out of the corner of their eye. Also, they'll notice torches that go out, guards missing from their posts, doors left ajar, missing valuables, broken furniture and blood pools, bodies, and other signs of recent combat. The more they see and hear, the more suspicious they become, and eventually they'll leave their patrol route to search. If a guard is not too suspicious, he'll search carelessly, but a very alerted guard will draw his sword and search carefully, poking into every corner of the room, opening doors, looking behind the furniture, and so on. And if they do find you, they'll attack you and call for help."

So saying, Randy passes through a cluttered armoury, emerging from shadow briefly to snatch a piece of brightly glinting loot. At almost the same instant, the room begins to glow faintly, as reflected light flickers into the room from the hallway. Being no fool, Randy

Q&A

RANDY SMITH



We fire a volley of burning queries at project director Randy Smith.

PCZ Can you give us details of any new weapons and gadgets?

RS We've put a lot of thought into broadening Garrett's toolkit and refining his trusty weapons and gadgets from the previous games. There are definitely some interesting new additions, but we're not talking about them much, yet...

PCZ How will Garrett's mechanical eye be used in the new game?

RS Garrett's mechanical eye allows him to zoom in on faraway features, which is great for scouting out a situation before sneaking your way in.

PCZ Can you tell us any more about the plot?

RS I can tell you that the plot progresses rapidly from a seemingly simple beginning into a complicated web of intrigue. This is to be expected given that Garrett spends time interacting with the Keepers, a meddlesome secret society that pulls the strings in The City and has numerous secrets to protect from prying eyes. The plot keeps moving at all times, and there are a lot of shocking developments that I think will surprise everyone.

PCZ Are there any notable differences between the PC and console versions?

RS Our goal is to support the same exact quantity and quality of gameplay on all platforms, but of course to achieve this we are specifically tuning each version of the game towards the particulars of that platform.

PCZ What would you say is your favourite part of the game, or the thing you're most proud of?

RS I'm proud of lots of things, some simple and some more elaborate. I really like 'informing', where a servant will run to get an armed guard if he catches you, because the two AIs engage in dynamic dialogue depending on whether they spot you or not. For example: "I just saw somebody!", "Lead the way, I'll follow you!", "He was right here, I swear I saw him!", "I believe you... I'd better take a look around, see if he's still around."

As a simpler example, I really like the 'loot glint'. Every valuable object in the game sparkles in a particular way. It's kind of like a thief's appraisal skill: from across the room you can look carefully and tell which goblets are golden and valuable and which are just worthless lumps of metal.

leaps behind some crates and crouches silently in the darkness, waiting for the unwanted presence to pass. Sure enough, a guard carrying a torch patrols by a few seconds later, but Randy is out of luck. In any other stealth game, this dullard would continue on his way,

Even on his way to the pub, Garrett hated to be seen.



Diehard *Thief* fans may balk at the new view.

oblivious to any change in the environment, but instead, he stops in his tracks, visibly frowning, and says, "Hey! Who took that?"

His suspicions aroused, the guard then begins a vigorous search, saying things like, "I'd better check over by those crates, someone could be hiding there." As Randy turns to make his getaway, he blunders into a rack of swords, which clatter to the ground noisily. "That's it," cries the guard, drawing his sword, "make a little more noise, it'll help me find ya!"

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Needless to say, this episode leaves us rather impressed. This guard has just displayed more intelligent behaviour than any opponent in any stealth game before – more intelligence than we've seen in just about any other game in fact. "The AI guards exhibit interesting and unpredictable behaviours pretty much any time we play the game," says Randy proudly. "No bullshit, this stuff really happens in our game all the time."

"The potential for an amazing game is clear and we've got plenty of time to polish and tune"

RANDY SMITH PROJECT DIRECTOR

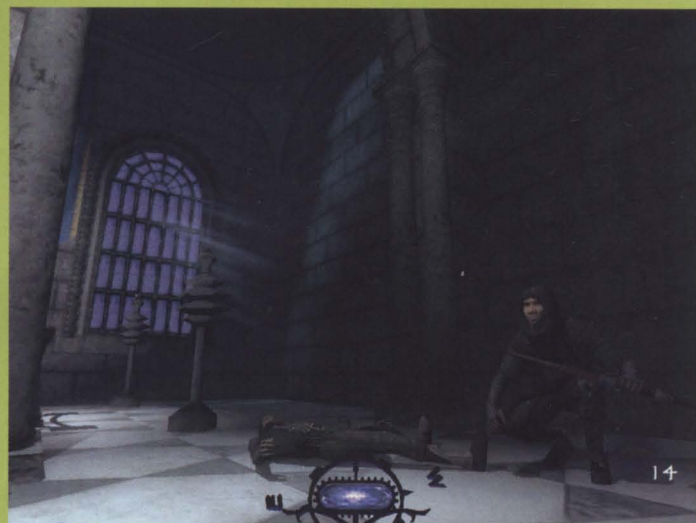
Lucky for Garrett, moody lighting was all the rage.

Clearly, the *Deadly Shadows* gameplay is going to equal or even surpass its *Deus Ex* stablemates for sheer freedom of action. And if anything, this style of freeform interaction is even more appropriate to the subject matter of *Deadly Shadows*. After all, thieves are by their very nature prone to challenging their environments and finding alternative ways of doing things.

It's easy to imagine that this was the ideal the series was building towards all along. Rather than just providing a string of sneaky, linear missions, it's this idea of simulating the life of a thief, giving a bit of insight into his motivations and above all the freedom to be a crafty, devious bastard. As great as the first two *Thief* games were, this could be the game we've really wanted all along. **PCF**



Why Don't You?...



The third-person view lends the game a more cinematic feel, but surely more could be made of it than that.

DON'T BE HALF-HEARTED, PUT THIRD-PERSON TO GOOD USE

As you'll have read, *Thief: Deadly Shadows* now offers both first- and third-person perspectives, and the option of flicking between them at will. However, we reckon the third-person view could be used to add more substantial gameplay elements, rather than just being thrown in to appease the console crowd. Think of *Metal Gear* or *Splinter Cell* – they're third-person for a reason. Without the disembodied view, how could Solid Snake do the wall peek or crouch roll? How could Sam Fisher do his split-jump or forced interrogation? Though *Thief* has never been about this sort of acrobatics, there's no reason why it couldn't be beefed up for *Deadly Shadows*. Try this for a start: instead of firing a rope arrow, Garrett uses his rope to lay a noose-like trap on a shadowy patch of ground, before scampering up into the rafters to wait for a passing guard. As soon as a foot enters the trap – whoosh – he's off his feet and helpless as Garrett drops on him silently with a blade to the throat. Now *that* would make the new perspective worthwhile.

At least in a place like this you know you're stealing from the rich.