



Pierrot
(Tamas Z. Marosi, Game Designer)

**1. Who came up with the idea for the game story and where did the idea come from?
Why was Eger chosen for the game?**

The municipality of Eger announced a competition with the declared objective to increase the town's attractiveness by means of a computer game, primarily among youngsters. They didn't think of an adventure game of course. But I did. The announcement revealed an open mind that is rare to find and this encouraged me to present my plans bravely: to address not only children who like to play fortress defense, soldiering and shooting but a much wider audience, and to introduce more values than just the Castle of Eger. I managed to convince them. On that time already, the framework of the plot was taking shape in my mind. Since the time I have been making adventure games, whenever I visit a historical town it always comes to my mind what a terrific location it were for the plot of a mystic crime. The famous novel by Géza Gárdonyi, his person and the age itself were there to form the basic idea right away.

2. How much time did the crew spend in the city?

The so-called "research period" took months, while the actual shooting some weeks only. The negotiations were held in April 2005, the work started in May and the majority of the shooting was completed during October. Some additional shots were taken in January 2006 using movie sets, and finally we returned to Eger for a little more work in the Spring.

3. How did Eger citizens react? Did they take part in the game as extras?

The citizens of Eger mainly faced the fact the "something was about to happen" when they saw streets and squares blocked. Of course we did our best to inform everybody in advance and continuously, and local people readily cooperated with us too. However, it now and then happened that stubborn, incomprehensible, defiant guys caused the shooting to take three times longer than expected, despite the dozens of policemen and soldiers assisting the staff. Unfortunately such things cannot be avoided, you must be aware of this and take it into account.



▲ Shooting at Senator hotel – daytime scenes were often shot in the evening, or the opposite ;)

▲ Jonathan Hunt was always there behind the camera – this made dialogues more realistic

▲ In the research phase, game designer Pierrot (on the right) meets town historians of Eger, half a year prior to shooting.

4. How long did the photo shoot take?

Panoramic photos were taken in multiple sessions, parallel with the shooting or just prior to it. Primarily this was the reason why the otherwise busy town, like some kind of enchantment, had to be turned motionless. We practiced the working processes beforehand and planned every point in advance to enable Tamás D. Varga photographer and the “second unit” to work really fast. Nevertheless, sometimes a given part of the street had to be photographed again because of cars passing there despite all the arrangements made.

Although we worked as perfectionists, there were some minor errors. If you watch carefully you will be able to notice them. But only if you watch carefully - thanks God...

5. What was the motive for using pictures of Eger instead of making a full 3D graphics? Was such an idea simply cheaper?

There were a number of reasons. First, because Eger is like a well-built adventure game scene in reality too. Second, it was important to present the values worth visiting – after all, we had been working on a destination marketing project. Third, the engine developed for the AGON games enabled us to replace the rendered scenes with panoramic images, and once this was so, even cutscenes could become real-life movies too. Fourth, it had been an experiment on my side to find out whether it was possible to revive the FMV genre from its long-standing state of apparent death today. The fifth reason was another experiment: I assumed that by making a game with a look-and-feel of a movie it would become possible to convince people to sit down and play even if they didn't have the habit of gaming.

▼ The production manager checks the schedule with the policemen securing the event

▼ The camera is high on the crane, focusing on the Agent from this perspective (László Árva chief cameraman)

▼ A slosh from the Agent – the cameraman's face is tensed. He managed to escape injury...





▲ A high perspective. Down below an arrival scene is being set.

▲ The grim guy and the author/producer have been good friends for a long time

▲ The sound engineer of the movies, waiting

6. Is it more expensive to do a full 3D world and animated characters in the game then hiring well known actors and musicians?

Yoomurjak's Ring was a very expensive game. Multiple of the costs of developing an Agon episode. Yet I think its budget still remained a fragment of adventure games created by big game development companies – in the US or Western Europe, for example. This was a different job, we had to or could save – or rather optimize – elsewhere.

7. How long did it take to write a game screenplay?

A single afternoon was enough to write the first synopsis. After the research work was done, I gave myself a month to finish the writing. That was in August. Success was 90% but everything became ready for the shooting in October. Refinement of the narrations and text of certain documents were done parallel with processing the entire material and doing the programming. I wanted to align these with the scenes that had basically taken shape and became ready for trial by then.

8. Are there any plans for second episode of 'Yoomurjak's Ring'?

The opportunity is inherent both in the story and in the protagonist's character. But there aren't many city governments in Hungary as enthusiastic and open-minded as they were in Eger, some years back. Still, the interest has been there constantly. I have been approached with smaller or bigger assignments ever since, and I am very proud that the game has not only been successful but it also won a professional award.

9. Where there any changes done in the screenplay after the work on the game begun?

There are a great many of opportunities for making changes during the development of a 3D game. But once you have made a photograph and a shooting of something, you've got a stuff that is more difficult to vary. There are of course post-production solutions such as retouch but we aren't Industrial Light & Magic...! So to say, I rather believe in accurate planning.

10. How many people were involved in this project?

Well, I haven't made a count yet. It's difficult because different teams had been working on each phase of the production: the designers, the movie team, the graphics, the programmers, and so on. I guess over 60 people, including the actors.

11. Was the city of Eger a sponsor of the game?

Yes they were. We could say this was the case. Of course, they also had funds from other sponsorship and tender arrangements.





▲ A real bad guy ;)

▲ The film director receives an SMS in the company of Boldogfi's men. A true journey through time!

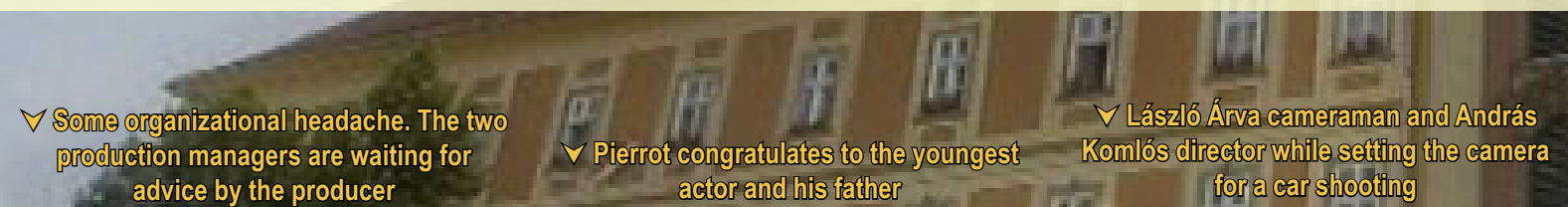
▲ A genuine menace: László Görög got real bruises during these scenes (It can happen at five locations in the game)

12. Were there castings for actors made or was the screenplay and each character in the game made having the one earlier chosen actor in mind?

I had the ideal actor in mind for the main characters and fortunately all of them was willing to do the job. (I'm highly proud that György Bárdy undertook to play Yoomurjak again, because in our country everybody knows that the same character had been formed by him in the movie made from the Stars of Eger in 1969. The character of László Görög came to my mind right at the beginning when writing the first dialogue – and later I couldn't even think of anyone else as Jonathan. It was in 1991 when I worked with him for the first time on a stage play as the composer of a musical in which he was starring. For all other characters we selected talents from the theatre of Eger, so there had been traditional casting sessions as well.

13. How many pictures of Eger were taken for the game?

The programmers say the number of panoramic images processed and built in the game exceeds 800! This is a large number taking into consideration that an average adventure game featured about a hundred nodes. A node in a game consists of 6 screens, but our photographer applied a different approach: he stitched 4-6 pieces of 180° photographs together for each panorama. Then there are of course other images, close-ups and supplementary photos for the scenes too, not to mention the werk-material made during the preparatory period. We produced a 4-5 hour long recording to eventually create a 90-minute movie which was used for the game.



▼ Some organizational headache. The two production managers are waiting for advice by the producer

▼ Pierrot congratulates to the youngest actor and his father

▼ László Árva cameraman and András Komlós director while setting the camera for a car shooting





▲ one of the many car scenes

▲ It took a long time to adjust the microphone here... ;)

▲ Another daytime scene shot in the evening – in the Gárdonyi house with Aunt Iza

14. Could you please explain what is AGON game doing in the XVIth century in a Turk's cellar? ;) See the screenshot :)

Jonathan was also surprised – but he thought maybe another time agent could have left it there earlier. Apparently, it must have been the agent's favorite game;) Investigations are still going on in this matter...

15. If the idea of the game was to promote the city it's difficulty level should be appropriate for wider audience. Meanwhile some puzzles in the game are really difficult like the crest one. This may lead to situation when someone will start the game but not finish it. Don't you think that puzzles in a game which suppose to promote the city should be less complex?

I think the proportion of harder and easier puzzles in the game is appropriate. If there only had been easier ones, the more talented gamers would frown. How is it possible to satisfy everybody at the same time? Yet, I think everyone can finish the game with the help available on the website. But never forget: it is more fun to solve the riddles yourself. As for the puzzles, my concept was to make the protagonist face problems that are as realistic as possible – since the environment, where the plot takes place, is also as realistic as possible. Therefore only very moderate stylizing was allowable – for example, an undemanding sliding puzzle would have been more than insufficient to answer the question about heraldry, addressed only by an archaically worded poem on how the Boldogis' coat of arms may have looked like. But we have strongly filtered the heraldry information and simplified the set of tools to be used to avoid the escalation of puzzle solving into a trying scientific workload. At the same time, the puzzle remained authentic in all details – with the added value that you can go on to create you own coat of arms, the way you like best.

16. Why did you decide to hire Ganxsta Zolee for the game? Was it because of his appearance which corresponds with the stereotype of how should a 'bad guy' look like well? Or did you hope the game will sell better because Ganxsta Zolee fans will buy it as well or were there other reasons?

There were a number of reasons. Zolee's character came to my mind early, while writing the story. The two of us have been good friends for more than ten years, since when I became composer and producer of his albums. That was in 1995. Moreover, we share the passion of adventure gaming and actually play together often. Of course, he's been aware of my activities in this field and there were cases when he lent his voice to certain characters of the Agon games (for example, Swanson's snoring in The London Scene or the potter guy in Toledo in the Hungarian version.) He has played in a number of movies although he isn't an actor. Having actor parents, his talent is probably not surprising. So it was him I asked first – and of course he was happy to take on the role. In Hungary, Ganxsta is not simply a rapper but also a well-known media personality, so I had reason to anticipate the supportive power of his popularity too. All in all, I should rather say this setup was just so self-evident as it couldn't have been any other way.





▲ A garden party for the staff at Szarvaskő, after the shooting



▲ The intimacy of a great romantic scene... ;)



▲ No harm! Just the smoke machine is being fixed. In the meantime, László Görög lights a cigarette (which AZ don't approve :P) – or he just wants to help make the smoke?

17. Except for next 'AGON' episodes do you have plans for other adventure games in the nearest future? If not then when can we expect next 'AGON' game and is there a work title for it already?

Many of Private Moon Studios' resources are engaged in the Agon episodes. But we do have plans of other nature too. It would be great to come out with our games on other platforms as well. Recently we have been involved in real-time adventures at real-life locations and of course we would not reject an assignment for making another interactive movie such as Yoomurjak's Ring. So we are continuously seeking new opportunities while working on the upcoming Agon episode which has reached the last third of its development phase. Anyway, is there a reason why Jonathan Hunt's next destination couldn't be somewhere in Poland for example...? :)

**Laszlo Gorog
(Jonathan Hunt)**

1. Was working as an actor for a computer game story much different than working on the movie set? If so what were main differences?

You just have to play with the same devotion, volition, concentration – and cheerfulness; I felt no difference there. Except that since everything was happening within the game (that is, the rhythm of the game is what matters and not that of the movie), it was not only the character himself whom I had to bear in mind continuously but the potential player too. Then there were a lot more scenes where I had to be invisible – „only” being present to help my colleagues. The main difference had been that under constraint of budget and time we worked in a „horrifying” pace, striving to make many useful minutes, while we were filled with the excitement and added concentration this „new medium” demanded.

▼ Yoomurjak's last message and poem is stuck in the talisman. The prop man is there to help



▼ Road security, soldiers, policemen, civil guards and students help securing undisturbed shooting on the streets temporarily closed



▼ György Bárdy as Mihály Jámbor. The 85-years old actor had many dialogues to perform. A last check with film director András Komlós





▲ The film director (András Komlós), the producer (Pierrot) and the production manager (Richard Kun) reviewing the screenplay at the scene to be shot on the Lyceum balcony

▲ The last meeting at Pierrot's house prior to shooting. On the left: László Falvay graphic designer

▲ The only non-professional player was the bazaar merchant woman. Simply we had not been able to find a suitable actor for the role. For a while it looked like the film director was to do the job himself

2. Why did you decide to take part in making an adventure game? Was there anything that encouraged you especially or maybe someone had to persuade you to try?

To start with, I had to encounter the opportunity – I mean the luck of having anything to decide about. This happened when Pierrot asked me. Actually I had already worked with him once in the musical version of Anthony Burgess's Clockwork Orange. I was very pleased about the call and happy to undertake the task. First of all, in the hope of another great job together, and second, because I fancied the idea and the entirely new task very much. I enjoy adventure games and I like that you can be successful not just by twitching the joystick but purely by using your logic, and also that you don't get bonus points for corpses. When I was young I simply loved the story of the Stars of Eger and now I found Pierrot's idea of the time machine really unique and genial. But of course I wanted to be there!

3. What is your opinion about the story given in the game and about the screenplay?

You may guess from what I've just said that I felt very positive about the whole thing. It is a shame that the „constraints” mentioned under the first question did not leave us a chance to execute some minor changes or additions to make it even better after the game had been assembled and we saw the „entire picture”.

4. Would you be interested in taking part in a similar project again? For example if there were plans about doing second episode of „Yoomurjak's Ring”?

I'd be happy to. I'd be pleased to see either a second part, or a brand new Jonathan Hunt adventure. (With special consideration to the Polish-Hungarian friendship, I would be glad to do some investigation around the Mazuri Lakes - especially because my brother married a girl who is half-Polish).

5. Were there any funny situations happening while making the game? Can you recall any of those?

The entire shooting was fun – otherwise we had not been able to do such an enormous work. I don't even remember any „classic movie bloopers” that are usually talked about later on. What I do remember is telling lots of stories to each other with Pierrot and Ganxsta Zolee, that sometimes made us laughing through our tears.

6. Where there any scenes for which double or stunt man help was needed?

There was one occasion, when it came to climbing the city wall. It was so late and so cold that we didn't take risks. For a single „climbing shot”. But all other climbings were mine...!





▲ Tamás D. Varga, photographer of the panoramic pictures; a rare shot, since he had taken all these werk photos too. ;)

▲ Discussions in front of the Boldogis' portal. Wearing a Budapest top: László Árva chief cameraman.

▲ An authentic scene: the Ambulance arrives to take care of the injured after the blow.

7. What do you think about the role you were playing? Do you like Jonathan? Are there any things that are common both for you and the character in the game you were creating?

I really liked Jonathan. Probably for the things I feel sharing with him. I also like to express myself in a polite, logical (maybe sometimes a bit circuitous), elaborated manner, to speak with style. As it is said in the game: a bit „old-fashioned” way. It makes me also incredibly delighted when I find out something, when I discover something, using my brain. I believe in the power of thought – yet it has been less and less fashionable nowadays.

8. Do you think that now, when violence and a lot of blood are things very common in computer games such game as „Yoomurjak's Ring”; still have a chance to interest game players?

You have an interest for those things that have been brought to your attention. I do believe that a high-standard, well made product will find its audience – if it can get to the audience. Our entire budget was only a fragment of the amount spent by big companies just for advertising their new shooter. Luckily, we've had much positive feedback, practically everybody (irrespective of age) were happy with it.

9. Have you read Gardonyi' novel?

Naturally I have. Just like, as I guess, Quo vadis from Sienkiewicz or Pharaoh from Boleslaw Prus are mandatory readings in Poland, Gardonyi (Stars of Eger) is mandatory in our country.

▼ Jonathan Hunt and Pál Boldogi talking about the state of Hungarian theatre life, while Pierrot eats all the pastries of Mrs. Boldogi... ;)

▼ A last review of text with Yoomurjak. The old actor was one of the most accurate in delivering his text.

▼ Shooting took place early in February in minus 5°C, surrounded by papier-mâché sets. Bárdy would have been freezing without a bar heater.





▲ Jonathan has pinched a few pieces of dates. ;)

▲ Yoomurjak's farewell scene in the ice-cold cellar-home.

▲ Act natural ... I have Yoomurjak's Ring!

10. Did you try to speak in the game with an American accent? I'm asking because all characters in the game notice it while we (Polish reviewers) had problems to hear it ;)

The various accents have been a tradition in the Anglo-American language zone. But there is none in Hungary, moreover, such an attempt might even sound funny. Therefore we chose to indicate the „alienship” through speaking a „learned language” rather than through the accent. That is, Jonathan – especially when excited – simply makes mistakes in expressing himself in Hungarian. This is intentional, of course. And this is what some people notice.

Ganxsta Zolee (The “Agent”)

1. Why did you decide to take part in making an adventure game? Was there anything special that convinced you?

This game was made by one of my best friend, and he asked me to do it, so it was not a question. Anyway after all I enjoyed it a lot.

2. How did fans of your music react when they learned you are going to play one of the „bad guys” in an adventure game?

For my fans it is a natural thing that I am a bad guy. If I had to play a good person that would be a bigger problem.

3. Did you take part in making music for the game? If not, did you ever think about doing something like that? Would you be interested if you were asked to write music for a computer game?

No I didn't. On the other side, I like challenges, so I would gladly try myself on that. But everyone should know, that my musical taste is a bit different. I don't belong to the mainstream, if you know what I mean. But if anybody makes a game, and needs a hellboys hardcore music - here I am lad.

4. Are you a computer games fan yourself? If so what kind of games you like the most?

The most I like sport games- football, ice hockey, rugby, boxing, etc. but I also like adventure games, every weekend I play with my friend Pierrot- who is the father of this game.



▲ Peter Vallai, totally transformed to play the character of Ábray.

▲ Easter egg: adventure game screenshots and software music instrument on the screens in Ábray's laboratory. ;)

▲ Total Conquer: Jonathan playing solitaire on the Time Machine. ;)

5. Did making the „bad guy” of you needed a lot of make-up? For example are those tattoos real? ;)

I never need any makeup. I am who I am. Not just the tattoos are real, but in the one true meaning of the word, I am real hardcore.

6. Would you agree if someone asked you to take part in making „Yoomurjak’s Ring Episode II”; or in a completely different game and giving you a bigger role to play?

Of course I would agree mate! Where is the contract?

7. Did you have a chance to play the game after finishing it? What do you think about it?

Yes I played it. It is a real adventure, a big fun for everybody.

8. Your last album was released in 2007. Are you working on some new music right now? When we’ll be able to hear it?

With my rap band- the Kartel - we released the new album in September, the title is „Just when you thought it was over”. With the punk band - the KGB - where I am a drummer, we come out with the new stuff sometime in November or December.

Good bye Poland, take care lads!

▼ A less known part of the laboratory.

