


Review

Adventures In Odyssey and The Great Escape

Developer: [Digital Praise](#)
Publisher: [Digital Praise](#)
Genre: Arcade/Puzzle Adventure
Release Date: September 2005
Platform: 



Review by Karla Munger
November 2, 2005



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It's my pleasure to be reviewing the third entry in developer Digital Praise's six-part series of **Adventures in Odyssey** games. This series, based on the *Adventures in Odyssey* radio show and designed for kids ages 8 and above, offers games that can actually be enjoyed by the entire family. Each has a basis in Christian tenets (although not overbearingly so) and presents solid values and virtues within the context of some very entertaining activities.



This time out we have **Adventures in Odyssey and the Great Escape**, which boasts a story penned by Odyssey head writer John Fornof. Here, the emphasis is on choices and consequences, obedience, moral character, responsibility, and the value of time. Skills such as problem-solving, logic, and independent thinking are highlighted as well.

In the first two Odyssey games (***Sword of the Spirit*** and ***Treasure of the Incas***, both of which I also reviewed), we met Eugene, Connie and Whit from the radio show. In ***Escape***, we're introduced to some new characters.



As our adventure begins, we find Michael, an avid gamer who is also rather impetuous, playing an arcade game called Firewall Defender. Looking on is Mandy, who isn't into computer games all that much but is gathering information for a school report.

Enter the intrepid Eugene (briefly appearing here and at the end of the game), who tells the duo about an experiment he's devised wherein he's linked Firewall Defender to the CPU of a place called the Room of Consequence (ROC). This arrangement will enable Michael and Mandy to play the game from inside the computer.

Michael thinks this is a fabulous idea and is very eager to try it. After promising Eugene that he won't tamper with the game's Safety Protocols, he immediately runs through the ROC's portal and enters the computer. Mandy is more tenuous, but after Eugene provides some reassurance she follows Michael.

As promised, our duo is again facing Firewall Defender. But this time, as with all subsequent activities, we're at the controls.

Unfortunately, Michael ends up disappointed because he thinks this version of the game is too similar to the one he's already played. As a result, he promptly forgets



all about his promise to Eugene and, over Mandy's protests, decides to liven things up by disabling the Safety Protocols. Uh-oh.



Our duo is whisked off to an unsecure domain where they must deal with the consequences of Michael's choice to disregard Eugene's instructions. First up, they are tasked with fixing a bunch of corrupted e-mail via an arcade game called Spam Dodger, wherein they must collect packets of good data while avoiding such things as spam, trojan horses and various other unsavory items.



Once Michael and Mandy have accumulated sufficient data, it's assembled into e-mail messages that reflect quotes from philosophers, authors and statesmen, as well as biblical passages and some pretty amusing jokes. ("What time is it when an elephant sits on your car? Time to get a new car.") These messages are featured in several of **Escape's** activities; they're randomly generated and sufficiently plentiful that you can replay the game a number of times without repeatedly seeing the same ones.

After completing this task, our pair meets the emperor-like Seepi Yu, a mostly organic construct who has a head full of hardware and rules the entire domain from his control center. He gives Michael and Mandy a glimpse of his Ultimate Game Room, then invites them to try his latest prototypes.

Michael, of course, is gung-ho for this. Mandy is dubious, but again decides to go along with things. The two then find themselves facing a logic-based puzzle featuring a bug-infested motherboard, and another arcade-style game that's fraught with really bad tasting cookies.

The logic puzzle features more e-mail messages assembled from data packets, as does one of the arcade games in our next round of challenges. As you progress through the story, all assembled messages remain accessible should you want to read them again.



Mandy soon admits, albeit hesitantly, that she is having fun. Seepi Yu then offers our duo unrestricted access to his Game Room where they'll be able to play every game imaginable, to the exclusion of all other activities. He points out that they'll no longer have to bother with things such as reading books or riding bicycles, because the computer will provide everything they need. (Confession: I spend so much time in front of my computer that at this juncture, I started to feel rather uncomfortable. Ack!)

The only thing Seepi Yu asks in return for this infinite amount of fun is Michael and Mandy's time...all of it. (This is where I hung my head and tried to slink away, unnoticed.) He then presents the two of them with virtual reality-type helmets to wear.



Predictably, Michael wants to go for it. Mandy, however, decides that the games aren't that much fun and smashes the helmets. This causes the nefarious Mr. Yu to toss them both into the brig for an "attitude adjustment."

After being locked up, our duo meets yet another new character by the name of Gregory, who reveals the true motives behind Seepi Yu's offer (and his helmets). Gregory also tells Michael and Mandy that he's discovered a way out of the brig, but for reasons I won't disclose here, he's unable to leave.

Instead, Gregory sends our pair off to make a break for it, defeat Seepi Yu, and hopefully escape from the computer. To have any chance of success, they must win three more arcade games.

I also won't divulge how **Escape** ends. Suffice it to say that the ever-erudite Eugene reappears and throws a clever twist at our two adventurers, and some important lessons are learned.



As with the first two **Odyssey** games, I'm wholeheartedly behind the concepts presented in **Escape**. In fact, I'm rather a fanatic about the idea that actions carry consequences and responsibilities. This is a concept I see manifested less and less in our finger-pointing society (I'm talking about the U.S.), where flinging blame

has practically become a national pastime. As a result, kids are picking up negative behavior from adults who should know better. Okay -- I'll get off my soapbox now.



Let's talk a little more about the games that appear within **Escape**. The six arcade games are of the twitch variety, and they have you blasting, crunching, blocking, zapping, and otherwise dispatching those bothersome computer nasties. You're also awarded points based on skill, and if you score high enough, you're given an opportunity to enter your name and score in the Hall of Fame.

Some of the arcade games start out at a relatively fast pace and become a lot faster. Others start out at a sane pace and become waaaaay faster. My point is that most of these games end up being very fast. So much so, in fact, that I got quite an adrenaline buzz from a few of them (yikes!). All have multiple levels in which difficulty also increases as one progresses, and all levels of a game must be mastered before the story can proceed. **Escape** is strictly linear in structure.

Now, I haven't done a whole lot of intensive twitching lately, and until I became accustomed to **Escape's** arcade games through quite a bit of repetition, my performance was pretty abysmal. I also found the instructions that appear prior to the start of each game to be somewhat unclear, which compounded my difficulties. The CD-ROM does include a User's Manual (which can be accessed directly from the CD, through the main splash screen, and via the game options panel) that elaborates on the instructions a bit, but even then, I remained unsure about what was expected in a couple of areas.



Luckily for me, Digital Praise has thrown some features into **Escape** that can really come in handy: (1) it's possible to save the games while they're in progress, and (2) each game includes a pause button. Abundant use of these features -- particularly the pause button (thank you, thank you, Digital Praise) -- is the only way I was able to get past some of the more challenging games. And by the time I succeeded, I was worn out. Whew.



So, even though **Escape's** target audience is kids, I doubt that many adults will find its arcade games unchallenging. I'm just happy that no one was around to see me initially tripping and fumbling through most of them (I hate it when that happens...).

At the other end of the spectrum is **Escape's** solitary logic-based puzzle. This can be solved at a leisurely pace, but it's so easy that I thought I must be doing something wrong at first. And although this is a multi-level activity, it's quite repetitious. It did give me a much needed twitch break, but it seemed oddly out of place amid the frenetic pace of the arcade games. I would have preferred a more balanced mix.

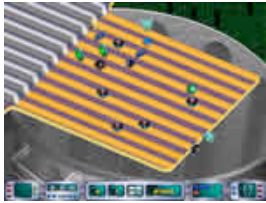
As with the first two **Odyssey** games, our characters make a variety of comments during each activity. Mandy gets off some pretty good ones that have nothing to do with the business at hand, and a few of them had me laughing out loud. During Firewall Defender, for instance, she asks, "Ever wonder how they make cottage cheese?"

On the other hand, while he does offer occasional tips regarding gameplay, I found many of Michael's comments to be on the whiny side: "Mandy, keep moving! Good grief! Look Out! This is really getting on my nerves!" (And he was getting on mine.) "They're coming in too fast! I can't keep up!" You get the idea. Michael also has a tendency to say, "Oh no!" when nothing's wrong.



Well, taking into consideration that the predicament in which he and Mandy find themselves is his doing, I do hope Michael appreciates how truly lucky he is that I wasn't playing the part of Mandy. Okay, I'll admit that's not a very Christian sentiment, but at least I'm honest about it. Oh, to have given Michael a little thump on the head just once (shame on me). It did occur to me later, however, that Michael may have been saying these things to illustrate how spending too much time playing computer games can skew one's perspective (and I should know).

The folks at Digital Praise have really outdone themselves with **Escape's** music and sound effects. The upbeat electronic tunes that play in the background serve as a perfect complement to the game's high-tech theme. The music is balanced so skillfully that it enhances gameplay without ever intruding on it.



The sound effects, consisting of a variety of electronic tones, buzzes, beeps and other high-tech noises, are also right on target; they provide a heightened sense of actually being inside a computer. My favorite sound occurs in a game in which you control a device called a virus viper, which gobbles up data packets (good) along with the kinds of cookies that continuously assault our hard drives (bad). Well, every time the viper eats a cookie, it makes a very subtle but wonderfully effective sound that leaves no doubt whatsoever that the thing tastes just awful. In the realm of game sound effects, I consider it a classic!

Speaking of bad-tasting items, one of the other games consists of a debugging program that has you sucking up good stuff and blasting away at bad stuff. Unfortunately, my fingers kept getting tangled up and doing things backwards -- and lemme tell ya, you haven't really lived until you've inhaled a few viruses and several handfuls of worms. What a hoot! (Cough.)

Escape can be played in one of two modes, each with its own circuit board navigation map. In Story Mode you're playing within the game proper, and the associated map enables you to track your progress as you make your way through the activities. In a nice touch, this map also lets you replay cutscenes after you've viewed them once from within the game.



In Arcade Mode, you're afforded access to games you've already completed so you can play them as stand-alones, either just for fun or to improve your skills through practice. Some even offer extended and/or additional levels that don't appear in Story Mode.

As in both **Sword of the Spirit** and **Treasure of the Incas**, games are commenced, saved and loaded via a Theatre screen. Players may also return to games in progress or leave **Escape** completely from this area.

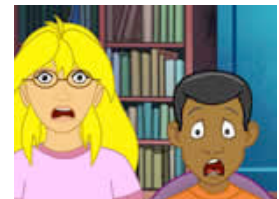


Alas, I did encounter one minor glitch. At times, background music and dialog would simply vanish. I was usually able to get them back by exiting to the Theater via one of the circuit board maps and then returning to where I'd been, so it was no big deal. I suppose it might have even been the fault of my computer, which has been experiencing a little indigestion of its own after having recently swallowed some bad-tasting malware (you should have heard the sounds I made when I discovered that).

In **Escape**, Digital Praise has maintained the excellent production standards manifested in the first two **Odyssey** games. Along with its first-rate music and sound effects, **Escape's** cartoon-style graphics are clear, colorful and vibrant; animation is pleasingly rendered, cutscenes are plentiful, and the voice acting is nicely done.

Escape's CD-ROM also includes some nifty extras. There's a generous selection of desktop wallpaper, a **Sword of the Spirit** trailer, and a "lite" version of **Treasure of the Incas**. Links to Digital Praise tech support and the *Adventures in Odyssey* website are also provided.

In summary, **Escape** may have its flaws, but it also has an abundance of good things. On the downside are the lack of balance between arcade and non-arcade activities, the somewhat confusing instructions, and the rather steep success curve yielded by the rapid pace of the arcade games -- although come to think of it, this does add to the feeling of accomplishment when the games are finally mastered.



On the positive side, Digital Praise has again offered us a refreshing, high-quality alternative to games that feature bad behavior, realistic violence and general mayhem. One need not be a kid or a Christian to enjoy playing it, either. **Escape** does a very good job of delivering ideas and concepts to kids (as well as adults) who may not have been exposed to them

elsewhere, and it does so in an entertaining and frequently amusing way. The game also provides wonderful reinforcement for folks of any age who are already familiar with the concepts it presents.

I continue to applaud the **Odyssey** series of games for promoting the kinds of solid values that I feel we could use a lot more of in our increasingly mixed-up world. It's my hope that Digital Praise will keep up the great work and keep those games coming!

Final Grade: B

[\(find out more about our grading system\)](#)

System Requirements:

Windows

- Windows® XP, ME, 2000, 98
- 300 MHz Pentium II
- 100 MB available hard drive space
- 64 MB RAM
- 8X CD-ROM drive
- 4 MB DirectX® 8.1 compatible video card
- DirectSound® 8.1 compatible sound card

Mac

- G3, G4, or G5
 - MAC OS X v10.0 or later
 - 100 MB available hard drive space
 - 128 MB RAM
 - CD-ROM drive
 - 4 MB video memory
 - Speakers
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