



Stasis - www.stasisgame.com - PC

Though point-and-click adventure games have recently had a revival, it sometimes feels like new entries to the genre don't venture far from the usual themes: pirates, teenage detectives, and of course, sad clowns. Okay, so I'm kidding, but it's not often that a genuinely intriguing concept for an indie point-and-click adventure shows up on the radar. Fans looking for something new will be intrigued by Stasis (<http://www.stasisgame.com/>), Chris Bischoff's upcoming sci-fi horror adventure that takes more of its cues from 2001: A Space Odyssey, Event Horizon, and Danny Boyle's Sunshine than from Guybrush Threepwood.

In Stasis, the player will control Captain Maracheck, a solitary salvager of deep-space detritus, abandoned satellites, and mining craft. On his ship, the Hawking, he scans unused frequencies for anything of interest - until he stumbles onto something big. Maracheck's colossal find looms like a behemoth in the darkness of space, reminiscent of the discovery of the huge craft in Ridley Scott's Alien.

For an indie title, Stasis' visuals are breathtaking. The player views Maracheck's surroundings from an isometric perspective, which is perfectly suited to show the epic machinery of the futuristic spacecraft as well as the enveloping blackness of space itself. Designer Chris Bischoff works mainly as a professional CG artist, and his talents for modeling jaw-dropping space technology as well as finer details are clearly on display. Maracheck's living quarters on the Hawking have the look of a worn bachelor pad of a guy who's been on his own in space for a little too long (his sole companion is the ship's emotionless computer).

Small touches, such as a chess table, a tiny greenhouse, and a basketball court provide a very human aspect to Maracheck and his lonely state of existence.

Scenes from the enormous ghost ship - which is actually a former research station for scientists with little regard for conventional ethics - hint at the layers of horror beneath the protagonist's isolation. Streaks of blood line a large entrance hallway, framed by flickering signs with slogans like "research and development ... for the children" and "always remember ... science saves lives!" The billboards, filled with creepy optimism, contrast with the obvious fact that something has gone horribly wrong here.

Asked about where exactly Stasis lands between adventure, horror, and science fiction, Bischoff says "it's quite difficult to nail down...Does survival-sci-fi-drama count as a genre?" In any event, Stasis promises to make fans of both Dead Space and Sanitarium salivate. Bischoff

admits to being a fan of classic titles like The Dig and the Fallout series, and says that Stasis has exploration-driven adventure at its heart. It will also feature puzzles, and Bischoff says he's done his best to avoid the kind of pixel hunting that makes most adventure gamers want to tear their hair out.

Perhaps most impressive is the fact that Bischoff has developed Stasis entirely on his own using Visionaire Studio. Despite the fact that Visionaire Studio does not support 3D environments, he has managed to create CG scenes that are animated, dynamic, and masterfully lit.

Bischoff plans to release a free playable chapter of Stasis before publishing a commercial version. I, for one, can't wait to play it (with the lights off, of course).

- David Bruggink

