

# Another World

The age old debate continues, thanks to Roger Ebert returning to his meditation on whether games are art (spoiler: he thinks they're not) and I can think of no better time than to review one of the latest games added to the Good Old Games website.



Another World was originally released back in 1991 and created by designer Eric Chahi. It tells the story of a scientist named Lester (although only referred to as Professor in-game) who due to a freak accident during an experiment is transported, as the title suggests, to another world.

Playing almost like a silent movie, the only dialogue spoken in the game is in an alien tongue. All clues to your survival are in the visuals and soundscape, the latter contributed by Jean-Francois Freitas. Your empathy for Lester comes from the feelings you get from his body language, expression and surroundings.

The graphics were created using flat shaded polygons, giving the game a very particular style and its silky smooth animation and cinematic presentation can leave the player (I speak from personal experience here) uncertain as to where a cut scene ends and the game itself begins, years before the much lauded Metal Gear Solid.

You are thrown into a hostile alien world with only your wits to guide you, at least at the start, but assistance comes later in the form of a fellow prisoner and you will be helping one another throughout the story if you wish to make it out alive.

So, what can a game now nearly 20 years old bring to a 21st century audience? In its latest incarnation it delivers an

immersive, cinematic narrative with challenging puzzles and level design, brought together with a haunting score, beautifully re-mastered graphics and artwork, and that's just the game. Included in this increasingly wrongly titled 15th Anniversary Edition is a fascinating 20 minute long Making Of... documentary and scans of Chahi's development diary, technical handbook and mp3 soundtrack. Oh, and with all the pictures we now see on the news and in films such as Angels and Demons you would swear that Lester works at the Large Hadron Collider!

It must be said that it is a game of its time and new players be warned, you WILL die a lot, however this version has many additional save points and you no longer have to deal with the passwords of old. Once you know what you are doing the game isn't especially long and can probably be completed inside of half an hour. Some may see this negatively, however I would argue that this makes it much more replayable in much the same way a favourite film or TV show is rewatchable and the new save points make it as easy to skip through as chapters of a DVD.

Now, why do I believe it can be seen as a work of art as much as it can a game? For a start, this was a very personal project for Chahi, not created by a team of designers, with Freitas being the only other person to work on it. This can be seen in the final product; isolation is a key theme to the piece and while it might not be the first game to lean towards filmic, I cannot think of an earlier work that has as much heart. The tale of exile and friendship is almost as linear as a novel and not completing it is no different from putting down a book without reading to its final page. In fact, this for me was the computer equivalent of a compulsive page-turner, dragging me into its world, the flat polygons giving an illusion of mass to the creatures that lurked around each corner. Some could argue that being a game it lacks pace, especially if or rather, when the player dies. My defence of this would be comparing the player to the conductor of an

orchestra, the player being in control of how the piece plays out. This is, of course subjective, so let me now focus upon the artistic craft found in the game. The once monochrome backgrounds that were each sketched on paper before being transferred to the computer now have true depth and texture to them thanks to the fact that the polygonal landscape has now been painted and it compliments the original style perfectly. The title screen alone, which uses high resolution scans of the original box art painted by Chahi, has phenomenal texture and running the game full screen on a bright, high resolution monitor will have you believing you could reach out and touch the canvas. Then there is the sound design, I hesitate to call it a soundtrack as there is really only music in the introduction and ending, however Freitas and Chahi have created an emotive aural experience with excellent digitised sounds creating real depth to the alien landscape giving it the sort of attention rarely seen outside of a production by David Lynch.

Whether you see games as art is in fact irrelevant. Another World is an experience not to be missed and we can thank its existence for the creation of more contemporary titles, such as Ico and Killer 7. It looks gorgeous, plays better than ever and will hook you until its gripping conclusion. The brevity of this title can be made up for by its replayability and incredible amount of additional material.

Another World  
15th Anniversary Edition

Developer/Publisher: Eric Chahi/MC2

Review copy: PC (via <http://www.gog.com> )

Link: [http://www.anotherworld.fr/anotherworld\\_uk/](http://www.anotherworld.fr/anotherworld_uk/)