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[Sherlock Holmes - The Awakened](#)

It's elementary my dear Watson!

His name is Sherlock Holmes. It is his business to know what other people don't know as he describes himself in *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*. Holmes is one of the most famous fictional detectives. His excellence in using logic and his perceptive observations in solving the cases quickly conquered the hearts and imagination of all mystery lovers across the world. The credit for this exceptional character goes to the highly appreciated Scottish author and doctor Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The writer enriched the detective's "life" with dozens of intricate cases described step by step in his four novels and fifty-six short stories. A great detective is not much without a loyal friend and colleague. This is where Dr. John H. Watson comes in. He is also Holmes biographer as almost all of the writings designate the doctor as the storyteller. The welcoming and interest that people showed for the brilliant crime solver couldn't go unexploited for long. Only six years after his "debut" in literature (*A Study in Scarlet* - 1887) Sherlock Holmes got his first movie part in *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*. This was just the beginning as the fictional character was played by no less than 75 actors in 211 movies since then. The computer era couldn't pass on without paying its respects to the illustrious mind so the first Holmes game came out in 1984 on Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum and was called simply, "Sherlock". Since 2002 the game developing studios of Frogwares thought to themselves it was their duty to present the gaming community with some of the detective duo's adventures. Hence began the *Sherlock Holmes* series. Already at its third title, Frogware now proposes the most horrifying case yet in *Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened*.

Story 221b Baker Street, London, 6th September 1894. It's been quite a while since Holmes hasn't got any more mind bending cases. Not being able to properly put his innate talents to work gives him a mood of malcontent and the everyday fog in London seems gloomier than ever. Fortunately for him Watson brings news of a mysterious disappearance. The young Maori working for Captain Stenwick - one of Watson's patients - has gone missing without a trace apparently. The first clues indicate a very strange affair - a kidnapping. More similar cases are reported, but there doesn't seem to be any link between them and which is even more peculiar no signs of any ransom notes. Macabre clues quickly lead to the conclusion that a strange and disturbing sect is behind it all. These are worshipers of the god Cthulhu engaged on a ritual that border on the edge of reason. The fictional extraterrestrial creature depicted by the horror author H. P. Lovecraft enters the thoughts of its followers leading to gruesome events and remarkable confrontations that pitch logic and wisdom against the unnatural. After experiencing scenes of madness and horrors the player is kept in the mist until the final unraveling following the purest style of a Conan Doyle novel.

Concept There you have it: the utmost rational detective in the world meets the greatest threat in the horror fiction, the stand-in for ultimate terror and evil. The game comes with a captivating story and holds tight to your curiosity from the first moment to the final un-puzzling cutscene. You'll witness (and guide step by step) the work of the magnificent detective and his trusty friend through intriguing sets such as the Victorian London, a mental asylum in Switzerland, the US and the Scottish highlands. Borrowing the Sherlock-style of investigation the game concentrates on a highly linear course of events. Every clue has a meaning, everything you find will be of help at some point and most of all there is nothing you can assume will be of any help unless the story already pointed that out. The magnifying glass will be your best friend and you'll soon be starting to think in terms of actions, clues and consequence.

Gameplay More than sixty characters that you can interact with will spice the investigation. Hundreds of clues need to be revealed in a certain order and then combined or studied to make up the terrifying story

behind the events. Think like Sherlock and you'll do great. Miss out on anything and you're doomed to wonder around helpless. Fortunately the game helps you out a lot as once everything is uncovered at the crime scene this becomes inactive, unlocking the next place to search. The map that enables the detective to fast travel to a certain (already visited) location sometimes proves to be more of a setback than a help. This way you may miss out on a clue on the way or fail to trigger a cutscene. Just keep in mind that the game is all about logical deductions and don't ever try to skip a few steps - it doesn't work that way when you're Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock has its brilliant mind. You'll be granted with even more. Aside from Sherlock's comments on different discoveries, you can also take advantage of an extremely functional inventory. There's a place for the usual items and map from all adventure games, but there is also a place for a dialogs history, documents that you have come across during the investigation and also Sherlock's reports on every found clue. But don't open the champagne just yet as the developers thought of a way of increasing the difficulty of the game even more. In an attempt to allow a more movie-like (or realistic - I'm not sure yet) approach they even eliminated completely the cursor from the view except for the times that you can actually interact with something. Unfortunately there were plenty of situations where I had to wonder along what seemed like miles of plain walls in search of a clue. The interesting aspect is that there are times when you'll also have to get in control of Watson's actions. The characters interchange manages not to seem artificial or unnecessary in any way, providing you in fact with a more adequate sense of what you always imagined a detective's work would be like. Frankly, Holmes is at times way too observant and seems to get the story right with a lot less clues than you ever imagined so Watson seems like a more appropriate character to play. **Video** For the first time in the history of the series, Holmes will chase the clues in a fully 3D environment. The character will move around using the WASD keys while the mouse will allow you to keep your eyes open looking for clues. After giving up on the scene from scene jumping and adopting a first-person movement in pre-calculated decors (for which it deserves a small bonus as encouragement), the game indeed succeeds in recreating a more appealing crime-scene investigation. Unfortunately the environment doesn't really feel like 3D, flowers looking rather as folded 2D pictures. If I also add that colors are rather scarce it all concludes to a pretty poor décor (I am well aware that London is and was more about perfectly mowed lawns, but that's exaggerated). Other than this, I may add that the character design is pretty well done with specific features for all the known protagonists and appealing facial aspect. However, I can't say much about the animations as the only movement is visible in the in-game video cutscenes. There's not much to complain about these - they are well realized, but tend to look rather plain, again not too much action is involved. I do have to admit though the overall visual aspect is considerably above most games in its category. **Sound** It has environmental sounds, it has voice acting, a catchy tune, but it is all too plain. At times it felt like the morning news were more engaging than this. I know the detective job is a serious one, but come on... it can't be this faded. So Sherlock is a highly balanced and rational man - he won't lose his nerve or give away anything that suggests tension. What about everybody else? Not even Watson's nightmare succeeded in moving me in any way. Sorry guys, the sound needs a lot more work next time. **Multiplayer** Not available (how many Sherlock Holmes do you think there are in the world?) **Conclusion** I had a brief encounter with the previous two games in the series and I have to say I enjoyed those much more than this. True, The Awakened brings in the completely 3D world, but it also asks me to wonder blindly around in this cruel world that it creates. I'm used to look for clues, but searching all the walls and streets and yards while moving freely seemed a little too much. The most frustrating thing was that at times I was able to see part of the future clues - you're sure it's a clue, you see the link with the rest of the story, but you can't use it just yet because you haven't picked up ALL the clues that lead you there or you probably missed on a clue place that may have triggered some cutscene. OK, it's Sherlock Holmes - he's a perfectionist, a master investigator. Now really, a little more freedom of choice would have

been utterly welcomed. On the bright side, the story was wonderful. The script compensates plenty of the drawbacks in the game. With a huge quantity of patience, strong nerves and good logics Sherlock Holmes: The Awakened can prove to be a pleasant adventure game.