

RETURN TO

Maniac

Mansion

*I like the oversized 'M's**I don't like the color scheme.*

## Lucasfilm Games Division internal memo

circa 1991

So we've been tasked with creating a rough draft of a sequel to Maniac Mansion. Inspired by Ron's SCUMM system, I decided that instead of just writing a single script, we could create several rapid prototypes of stories, characters, gameplay puzzles, then go back through and pick out the best ideas from what we generate. Then, once we've got some solid ideas, we can reincorporate them into a something coherent, plug it into SCUMM and have ourselves a complete game.

To that end, I've outlined a system below for creating a series of iterative mockups. I call it the "SCUMM Rapid Prototyping Game" Or "SCUMM RPG" for short.

"RPG"? Is this like Dungeons & Dragons or something?

A little bit, I guess.

## Basic Premise

Dr. Fred has gone insane (*again*). He has kidnapped you and your friends. Dr. Fred performed some odd experiment, and now you're all able to hear each other's thoughts. Not so bad, but then he threw you in the mansion's dungeon. How will you escape? What has caused Dr. Fred to go insane (*this time*)? What is his evil plan?

*Return to Maniac Mansion* and SCUMM RPG developed by Nick Wedig.

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## Those Meddling Kids

We'll need a couple of notecards.

Each player defines their character in terms of a teenage horror movie stereotype. On a central notecard, write one verb that everyone can use (the pool starts with: **Go, Take, Drop, Examine, Pass, Talk to**). Then they define a verb exclusive to your character. Once you've done that, define a verb for the character on your left and one for your right. That's it! Now we have a pool of quick character sketches to use for this initial prototype.

*Why does each of us play a single character? Isn't the game going to be a single player game, like the first MM?*

*Probably. I mean, maybe we'll decide to make MM2 into a multiplayer game. Even if it is a single player game, two (or three or four) heads are better than one. This way, we'll be generating more ideas and we won't sit around frustrated trying to think of solutions. But the eventual players will have to do so.*

*I get it now.*

## Defining Dr. Fred's Dungeon:

Each player should establish one detail about the dungeon. Is there a skeleton with manacles? A loose stone? A window looking out on the garden?

Dr. Fred didn't leave you any tools and any obvious exits are closed off. Getting out won't be that easy.

(Starting in the dungeon gives them a simple pseudo-tutorial. They have only a limited pool of things to work with, and they have to figure out how to escape before they can explore the rest of the mansion. We probably should structure the starting puzzle to need several of the kids working together, like with the gargoyles or the loose brick in MM1.)

## Gameplay

Each of us will take turns playing the Mansion. The Mansion player controls the NPCs (like Dr. Fred and his weird family) and the general environment. The rest of us will be regular Players. While you're a player, take turns proposing a course of action to the Mansion. A proposed course of action consists of a verb and a noun and some guess as to what will happen when you combine your verb with that particular noun. Then the Mansion's current player will respond using one of a pool of simple responses, which may or may not resolve the issue.

## Verbs Shared by Everyone

<b>Go</b>	Specify what direction and the Mansion will tell you where you arrive
<b>Take</b>	Picks up an object
<b>Drop</b>	Puts the item down nearby you
<b>Examine</b>	Gives you a bit more information
<b>Pass</b>	Let the next player take a turn
<b>Talk To</b>	Speak to an NPC

## Possible Unique Verbs

**Repair**  
**Play**  
**Open**  
**Follow**  
**Adumbrate**  
**Program**  
**Tickle**  
**Kick**  
**Eat**  
**Taunt**  
**Throw**  
**Sabotage**  
**Hide**  
**Gargle**

*Definitely, make up your own.*  
*Don't pick violent verbs like "Attack" or "Kill". This isn't that sort of videogame. And don't take the verb "Use" either, as it's way too broad.*

## Outside the Dungeon

When a PC enters a new environment, the current Mansion describes where they find themselves. After saying briefly what the room is like, the Mansion should ask all the players for suggestions on what items or NPCs they may find there. Each player can propose one item/NPC/detail present in the room. The Mansion must include at least one of these elements, though they may choose to include more of the elements (possibly all of them.)

## Playing the Mansion

When a player proposes a course of action, they present a verb, a noun (if appropriate) and an idea of what they think will happen. Your job is to pick one of the following responses and use that to give an answer to them.

**Responses** *Write these on notecards, too.*

**Yes, and**

**Yes, but**

**No, and**

**No, But**

**You need something else to do that  
Something unexpected happens**

*Specify what that thing is.*

When you use a response, move its card off to a discard pile. You can't use that response again.

When you only have a single response left, it's time for someone else to take a turn as Mansion. After all, if you kept playing the Mansion, then the players would know what your next response would be, even if it didn't make any sense. Instead, we'll have the next player take on the Mansion role (play goes to the left). Move all the responses from the discard pile back to the pool.

You aren't supposed to be deciding solutions to puzzles ahead of time. All you do is create obstacles and let the players propose the solutions. When a good solution is presented, use a "Yes" based answer. When it's less good of an idea, use a "No" answer.

*We'll probably want to take notes on what does what with what, so that later Mansions can stay consistent with earlier ones.*

Remember the gaming philosophy we worked out over the last few games:

**Don't kill the PCs:** It's more fun to put them in peril or to throw them in the dungeon again.

**Don't let them reach a dead end:** There should always be a way forward, though it may not be obvious.

**Players should be able to use logic:** Don't make puzzles require insane, sadistic game thinking or hunting for just the right item. The logic of the game may be slightly skewed for comedic purposes, but shouldn't be entirely nonsensical.

**After everyone has had a turn being the Mansion,** we'll improvise a cutscene. I don't have any hard and fast rules for these. People should just propose things that could happen, roleplaying some NPCs instead of the teenagers for a bit. Just make sure that the cutscene makes things worse, more complicated or more exciting for the player characters.