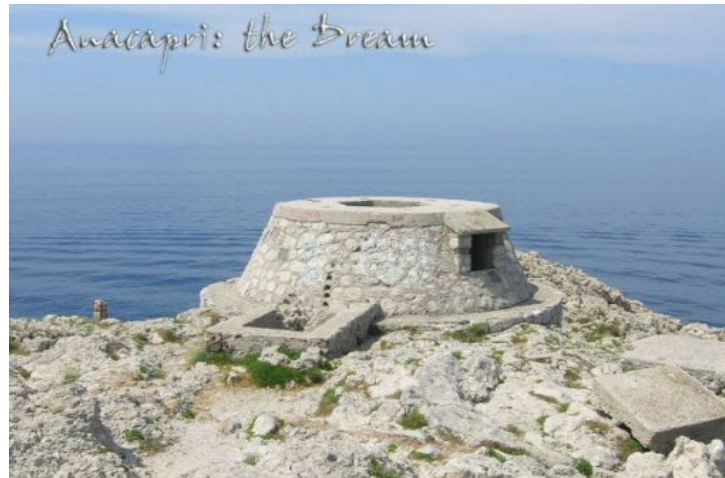


Interview with Gey & Silvio Savarese on Anacapri the Dream

Conducted by Ugur Sener



If you ever wanted to travel to a beautiful location (and some adventure) without all the expense, then perhaps you took a chance a few years ago on an Indie game called "A Quiet Weekend in Capri". Set on the island of Capri off the coast of Italy, the game combined thousands of photos with intuitive puzzles to create an experience unlike any other. The magic of the game was in creating a feeling of actually being in Capri and providing the game with rich and accurate history of the island. Now, the two-man team has joined forces to bring us back to the island for a whole new adventure.

This interview was originally conducted back in March in anticipation of the game. However, since the game has just recently been released, the timing seems just about right to find out more about this fascinating duo and their latest venture.

[Adventure Lantern]: Could you tell us a little about yourselves? Who is the team behind Anacapri the Dream?

[Gey & Silvio]: The team is made up of two people: Gey Savarese (father) and Silvio (son). We are both graduated in Electrical Engineering. Gey is a former R&D Director of Texas Instruments Italy and Micron Technology Italy, and contract professor at the University of Salerno, Italy. Silvio is PhD in Computer Vision, Beckman Fellow at the University of Urbana Champaign, Illinois. Occasionally, we have friends who help us in developing the games, such as Laura Mac Donald, or some professional company such as Nucleosys.

[AL]: How did you become involved with developing adventure games?

[G&S]: Gey started early to develop games on Texas Instruments' TI99/4A Home Computer in the early 80's while Silvio was programming games similar to Scott Adams' textual games on his Commodore. Recently we decided to develop a game for PC just for fun. The first game – "A Quiet weekend in Capri" – received unexpected success. Many adventure gamers loved this game. A short article appeared also in Time Magazine. So, we have been encouraged to develop the second game – Anacapri the Dream. This game is not

the sequel of the first one. It is a completely new game, albeit set in the same island.

[AL]: What can you tell us about the style you have used in A Quiet Weekend in Capri and Anacapri the Dream?

[G&S]: The story is key in our games. It is also key that the game is set in a real place, as much as possible with real characters. The story has to fit with the place and is inspired by what is available in the real world. We set a well defined methodology to shoot the pictures so that the navigation is smooth. We share the tasks: Gey shoots pictures and executes the computer programming and Silvio writes the story and composes the music. However, this is not a clear-cut separation. There is continuous interaction between us. Particularly, we discussed a lot about the ending of the Anacapri game. Each of us had a very different view. After two months of debate, we came out with a third solution, better than our initial ones, and surprisingly fulfilling both our requirements... but it is your turn now to discover (and select) the ending of the game!

[AL]: What were some of the challenges in putting the images together? Do you have any interesting stories you would like to share?

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[G&S]: To get 8000+ useful shots has been a huge undertaking. I guess we shot 30,000+ pictures to select the good ones. Almost all shots have been photo-edited. The most challenging work was to get images of a place empty in the game but in the reality full of people, cars, taxis, buses, and other moving stuff. Often the story requires that the places are empty. It is not realistic if a person appears in a scene and, when returning there after a few hours, he/she is still at the same place and in the same position. So each time there is a trade off: wait with patience until the place becomes empty, or take a shot then spend the time to edit the picture with a photo editing tool.



[AL]: How has the development experience changed moving from your first project to Anacapri the Dream?

[G&S]: There have been many changes, all related to the complexity of the game and the new advanced 2D technology. Developing Anacapri has been extremely more difficult than Capri. But the fun in doing it... was exactly the same.

[AL]: Could you give us an overview of your latest project?

[G&S]: Anacapri is an adventure game featuring innovative 2D technology with a few 3D scenes. There are full screen images, cross-fading pictures, panoramic views, and 2.3 GBytes of animations. Particularly, we found a new technique to animate the sea and the water effects in the game. The movement of the waves is blended with wet sand and rocks along the shore. But mostly, the story is so complex and beautiful that we are going to publish a novel : "The Legend of the Obsidian Disk".

[AL]: What details can you provide us about the story?

[G&S]: Actually there are 3 stories blended in the game: The Dream, the Reality, and the "true" myths, legends and history of the island of Capri. There are 42 characters: Capri townspeople interpreting themselves, computer graphics animals, historical characters and few actors. We covered 5 ages: Neolithic, with the ancient shaman at Grotta delle Felci; the Greek, with Oebalus, king of the Telebois; the Romans, with the Emperors Augustus and Tiberius; The '500, with Red Beard the Pirate; and finally the '800, with the British and the Frenchies. Where the Dream becomes the Reality and vice-versa? The player will discover it.



[AL]: What can you tell us about the mysterious Obsidian Disk?

[G&S]: At the beginning of the game, you will soon get a copy of "The Anacapri Enquirer". Let me report here an excerpt of one article found in this newspaper. "Regardless of how far back you search, historical events are so mixed with fiction, that in the end all we really have left is the myth. According to the stories, the Gods, bored with the monotony of eternity, placed a bet: if humans were given infinite knowledge and intelligence, would they handle these gifts wisely? To test them, the Gods forged a marvellous Disk from obsidian and threw it to Earth, where it landed in Capri. Then they had great fun, betting between themselves on the outcome. Legend then speaks on the folly of men, those who tried to use the Disk, thinking they could master its gifts and the dire consequences that followed. But is this merely an allegory, or fanciful story reserved for children and dreamers? Or is there more? For as we all know, any legend, no matter how fantastic, just might conceal the truth..."

[AL]: How is it forcing the villagers to leave the island?

[G&S]: The Disk provided great power to the Shaman of a Neolithic tribe, to Oebalus, King of the Telebois, to the Roman Emperor Tiberius, to Red Beard the Pirate and to the English during the battle of Capri in 1808 against the French. They were fascinated by the power of the Disk but used it selfishly to increase their personal power. So they inevitably received great misfortunes for themselves and for their people. If the Disk now would fall in unscrupulous hands, it could bring great problems to the Anacapri townspeople, so they are scared and many of them are leaving the island.

[AL]: Can you describe Nico Fredi, the character we will be controlling throughout the game?

[G&S]: Nico Fredi is a neuro-scientist. But you will be controlling also Nico N, who is an expert of ancient civilizations. Are they relatives? Or is it a case of double personality? What is the true relationship between these two characters? It's up to you to discover the truth.

[AL]: Who are some of the other characters we will meet during the adventure?

[G&S]: The most important are Ms Giulia MacKowen, daughter of John Clay MacKowen, a Southerner American colonel who really lived in Capri years ago; Norbert Hadrawa, an Austrian antiquarian and former archaeologist; Nereus and the Nereids; the enchanting siren; Nelson, lieutenant of the British Army; Mirta Marconi, writer and columnist; Professor Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, owner of the Philosophical park; Monk of Cetrella and his guardian; the Giant Turtle... Amazingly, you will not always be able to distinguish between "fantasy" characters and "true" characters. For example, Gunnar the Philosopher is the real owner of the Philosophical Park in Anacapri (see: www.ebson.se/hemadmin/philopark/). If you visit Capri in the spring, you may meet him and visit the Park. Many other characters in the game are true people living in Anacapri.

[AL]: Can you describe the location? What makes the island a good setting for an adventure game?

[G&S]: If you go to Capri, at the first glance you get the very vivid feeling that you are in a magic and enchanted island. There are wonderful landscapes, story and legends blending their charms. Many adventures games are set in dark places. Here we are mostly in the open air, surrounded by incredible and varied scenery. In the walk of the Forts there is a wooden and iron bridge linking two sides of a hill. It is so charming that it seems invented and drawn. It is not: it is a real bridge.

[AL]: What kinds of challenges can we expect to encounter?

[G&S]: There are plenty of original puzzles well embedded in the story. You will need to learn how to play Scopa, a typical Neapolitan card game, and win against 'O Riccio, the owner of a restaurant. Only if you win he will lend you a boat to enter the Blue Grotto. And you need to bring back the right arm to the Augustus' statue. And find how to escape the sirens' trap. And prepare a bottle of Limoncello. And solve the Sphinx' riddle. And open one by one the Forts, to eventually find the Obsidian Disk. But... was it the real object of your search? Or maybe you were looking for something else? In any case, don't get scared. We provided a bypass if you give up at the most difficult quiz. For example, in case 'O Riccio is too strong to be beaten or if you don't want to spend your time to align the tiles of the Mesola Fort because you are eager to know how the game ends.

[AL]: What can you tell us about the game's atmosphere? Can we expect a strong sense of mysticism?

[G&S]: The tunnel joining Damecuta to the Blue Grotto is dark and scaring. Many disquieting creatures dwell there. There is a claustrophobic site I cannot reveal now. And a beach shed by the moonlight. Otherwise, this is a solar game.

[AL]: What are the underlying themes the game will explore?

[G&S]: There is one very important theme: know yourself.

[AL]: What are some of the key differences between Anacapri the Dream and A Quiet Weekend in Capri?

[G&S]: There are huge differences. Anacapri is a step function better than Capri. For the complexity of the story: the depth of the characters and the technology. Many of the criticisms received about Capri have been well accepted and considered. Here the story unfolds smoothly. You don't have to wander in large areas without knowing what you are looking for. The game is largely non-linear, but only locally. The areas of the game open one after the other. Anacapri extends in a large territory, but you don't need to walk around too much to solve your puzzles. Mainly we intended to tell a story, so we tried to simplify the life of the players.

[AL]: Will the game feature a similar interface to the one in A Quiet Weekend in Capri?

[G&S]: Basically it is the same interface but largely restyled. The maps are now well readable, also showing in which direction you are looking to. All the sentences of the characters are recorded and organized by characters. Many jumps are allowed as long as you access new areas, avoiding wearing out your shoes walking over and over along the same paths.

[AL]: Who would you expect to enjoy your latest project?

[G&S]: People keen to spend 50+ hours to solve a complex and addicting adventure game set in a fairy but true island.

[AL]: When can we expect to get our hands on Anacapri the Dream?

[G&S]: We are basically on schedule to get the game on the shelves within this spring. Or at least to sell it via internet.

[Editor's Note: Anacapri the Dream has been released this month and can be purchased through [Got Game Entertainment](http://GotGameEntertainment.com) or Amazon.com]

[AL]: What are your plans after releasing the game? Do you have any other projects in the works?

[G&S]: The game comes in Italian and English languages only. Localization efforts for other countries will keep us busy for the rest of the year. However, a great new idea is in our minds... no more in Capri, this time. All corners of this island have been covered by our two games. We have so many beautiful places here in Italy, and we have plenty of fresh ideas...

Thank you to both Gey and Silvio Savarese for allowing this interview. We are always grateful to find out more about those who work so hard to bring us new experiences in the gaming world. For more information on Anacapri the Dream, please visit the official website at www.anacaprithedream.com. If you missed A Weekend in Capri, you can check the game at www.weekendcapri.com.