

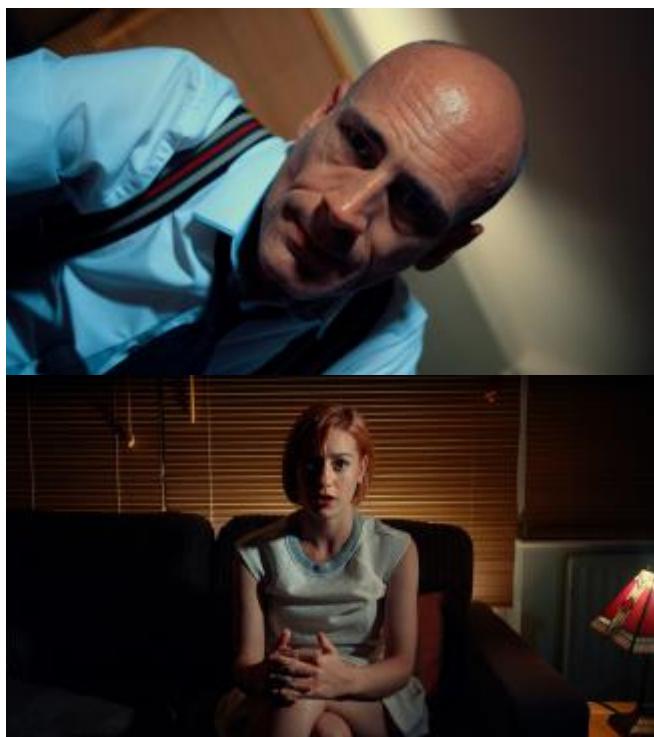
The Shapeshifting Detective - Review

Bengt Lemne

The Shapeshifting Detective - Teaser Trailer

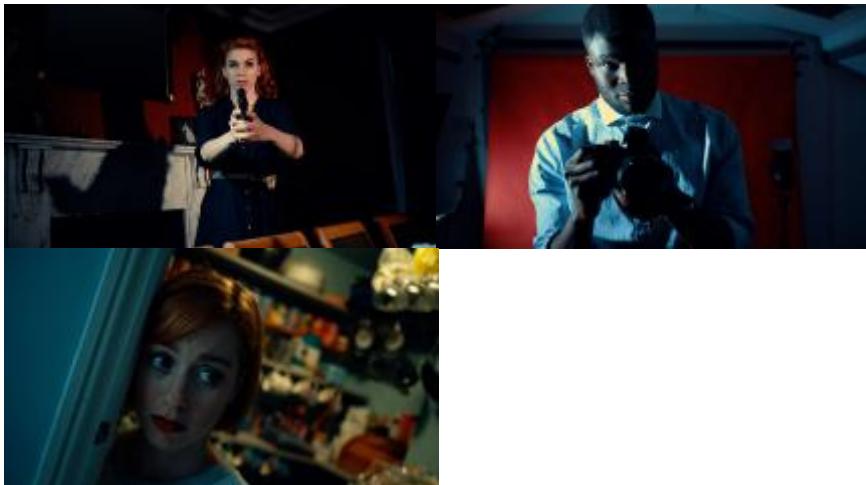
The story of [The Shapeshifting Detective](#) is one of a kind. Spanning transdimensional beings, aliens, ghosts, murder, tarot readers, and the titular shapeshifter, it's unlike anything we've witnessed before. It may sound out of this world, but the story of the murder of talented musician Dorata Shaw in the small town of August still manages to feel very grounded and intimate, largely thanks to a brilliant cast of actors lending their talents to this FMV (full-motion video) mystery.

Having previously created a similarly structured game, The Infectious Madness of Dr. Dekker, D'Avekki Studios is proving once more that the FMV genre is far from dead. With this sort of highly focused narrative experience where you're seeing the actors play characters from a first-person perspective, it is a highly effective technique.



You're Sam, but then you're not really Sam. You're a shapeshifter and Sam is the form you've taken in order to investigate a murder in a village called August. A group of three tarot readers living at a bed and breakfast predicted the murder of a young lady named Dorata Shaw and now they are the chief suspects. As you investigate the circumstances and interview various people including the weird lady who owns the B&B, Dorata's boyfriend, the police chief, and others, you will also be able to assume their shape in order to learn more from the other suspects about what's going on. Thanks to this mechanic there's more interactivity here, and more bonus content, even potential love interests to pursue, than what you'd normally expect from an FMV title. On top of the murder mystery, there's a sort of meta-mystery that revolves around who you are, one that you likely won't piece together in one playthrough.

The game takes roughly three hours to play through once (subsequent playthroughs will be shorter), but it's been designed with replayability in mind and you won't see anywhere near the 1600+ video clips recorded for the game in one pass. There are different potential killers each time you play and your choices may lead to further potential victims. There's an interesting mechanic here where you can choose to dig deeper into certain subjects or "can" that line of questioning. Is it better to potentially not upset the killer or should you try and get as much of an indication that you can? In addition to questions you'll also be making some choices with regards to defending the second victim, but mainly you'll be asking questions.



The chief of police will keep you up to date with how the case is progressing and may provide a hint or two about who you need to talk to next and what shape you may want to take. It is however not always clear what you need to do in order to progress, as partway into the game you'll have as many as seven or eight shapes to take and as many people to question. It becomes something of a process of elimination then and perhaps the game could make things a bit clearer from time to time.

We started out mentioning the cast and they are the key to everything really. Aislinn De'ath who made a very memorable appearance as Marianne in The

Infectious Madness of Dr. Dekker is back as the somewhat odd owner of the B&B and she once again does a great job, but she's far from alone in doing so. Our favourites this time around were Nicholas Pople as the tarot reader Rayne, and Leah Cunard as radio personality Ellis Munro. Speaking of radio personalities, the brilliant talk radio intermissions of Poe and Munro offered some of our favourite moments, even if they mainly served as filler when travelling in a cab or arriving at the bed and breakfast. It brought popular podcast Welcome to Night Vale to mind (even if it's not nearly as strange as that) and really offered an additional layer to the narrative.

Given the low price, we'd say there's great value here, and you can either play it through instead of a movie night with a couple of friends, or you might get invested enough to replay it several times to explore the various paths the narrative can take. In a way, it's a modern interactive take on Clue with a shapeshifting twist thrown in for good measure, and we thoroughly enjoyed our visit to August from start to finish...

The Shapeshifting Detective - Livestream Replay