



Here's a question for you: when is the last time you played an FMV game? Specifically, one with live-action footage (such as *Myst*, *Night Trap*, or the more recent *Late Shift*)? Chances are pretty good that it's been quite awhile, but here we are with *The Shapeshifting Detective*, a full-motion video murder mystery from D'Avekki Studios. To be honest, they had me at murder mystery (I'm such a sucker for them!), so without further ado, let's get into the game and see if this mystery is one worth solving or something to be shapeshifted into anything else!



You begin the game in a mysterious office, with an agent berating you for not doing your job well enough. Well then! We need to up our game, apparently! We are given our new persona, a man called Sam, with a warning that we can't tell anyone of our ability to shapeshift. With that in mind, we're sent to a town called August to help the local police chief to solve a murder.

While the game really backs off on giving the protagonist (you) any sort of personality or character whatsoever, it does deliver in producing

a sizable cast of characters and suspects to interact with. You're automatically booked into the guest house where the prime suspects are located: a group of travelling tarot card readers who actually predicted the murder before it happened (which is one heck of a lead). From there, the game is broken into hourly chapters as you interact with suspects and try to learn the truth, with new characters introduced frequently along the way. The game's unique mechanic, however, is your shapeshifting ability. Whenever you meet a new character, you're able to go back to your room and transform into them, including the voice (not that you ever see your character in this game, of course). Still, this lets you revisit people and learn things they would never tell to a nosy detective.

In a game like this, the story makes or breaks the experience, and happily enough *The Shapeshifting Detective* does an admirable job of telling a murder mystery, while the shapeshifting ability helps you piece together the clues. However, while the mechanic is definitely unique, I couldn't help but notice it really isn't fully usable. More often than not, if you try to visit someone who doesn't have a hinted-at relationship with the character you pick, they are just gone. It really does give the story less punch as you feel the game is becoming more linear.



Still, the scenes and story you do get (along with new characters and new plot developments from the chief) are acted out well, props to the actors and actresses here! The story itself is solid, but it still has very little actual action (calling this a game may be a bit much, actually) and if you're a fan of the genre, you've likely played through (or read through) much better mysteries. However, the biggest positive to the game is the fact that it isn't just a murder mystery... it's a random murder mystery! Each time you start a new game, the culprit is randomly chosen from a pool of possible suspects, which means *The Shapeshifting Detective* manages to circumvent one of the biggest flaws of mystery games in general and actually has some replayability to it. Color me impressed!

While *The Shapeshifting Detective* does have good production values with its live action recordings and audio quality (I especially enjoyed the time you spend on the choice/movement selection screen as the game features two town DJ's who like to talk about everything macabre), I have to point out that it's technically flawed. In my first playthrough, the game crashed out to the PS4 menu three times. After starting a second playthrough, it crashed out again in the first hour. Needless to say, the game is hardly stable. In addition, I found out that three trophies are currently bugged with a 0% achievement rate (although the developer knows about this and has promised a patch). The technical difficulties here are definitely the game's glaring low point.



In the end, *The Shapeshifting Detective* will give you a solid mystery to solve with some unique story mechanics behind it. As a bonus, the game also has some great replayability as well, and it can be entertaining to see how one playthrough changes from the next (although some sort of story route mechanic or choice in the randomness would definitely be appreciated, something like New Game+).

Unfortunately, the game is quite buggy with multiple technical issues and beyond the solid (but not great) story and replayability, there just isn't much else. Still, if you're a fan of the genre and you're itching for your next mystery murder read, *The Shapeshifting Detective* is an easy game to recommend for a good evening or two of getting lost in. Just be sure to temper your expectations a little.



Gregory Wright

Howdy chummer!

It's good to meet you! I'm better known online as "Bkstunt_31" and have been writing Reviews and video game Strategy Guides/Walkthroughs for WAY too many years! Feel free to stop my my Facebook page and say hello! Have fun and keep playing!

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<p>and its isometric graphics aren't what anyone would call top-notch (although both those things are solid for an indie title). But what it does have is a lot of HEART! The story is intriguing and well told and the audio is just fantastic. If you're looking for a song to get lost in, <i>Maquerada</i> may be just what you're looking for.</p> <p>AUGUST 31, 2017</p>	<p>comes in. Trying to figure out the various players and "whodunit" ahead of time is a thrill, and I always enjoy seeing a good mystery come together. That's why I took an interest in <i>The Council: Episode 1 - The Mad Ones</i>, a new episodic story-based game from freshman developer Big Bad Wolf.</p> <p>MARCH 29, 2018</p>	<p>If you're anything like me, it's hard to say no to a good old-fashioned mystery, so there's a good chance that <i>The Raven: Remastered</i> (based on the 2013 game <i>The Raven: Legacy of a Master Thief</i>) may have caught your eye. And for good reason!</p> <p>APRIL 16, 2018</p>	<p><i>Episode 1</i> started, which is very much a good thing. I will add that like most story-based games, <i>Hide and Seek</i> is a "convergence point" in the story as I played two different characters through to the end (which is fine, as you can't have too many diverging choices over five episodes after all).</p> <p>JUNE 19, 2018</p>	<h1>Review</h1> <p>In the end, <i>Shining Resonance Refrain</i> is a solid addition to any JRPG fan's lineup, but honestly, I'd recommend it to hardcore JRPG fans looking for something new.</p> <p>AUGUST 09, 2018</p>
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