

creatures
evolution



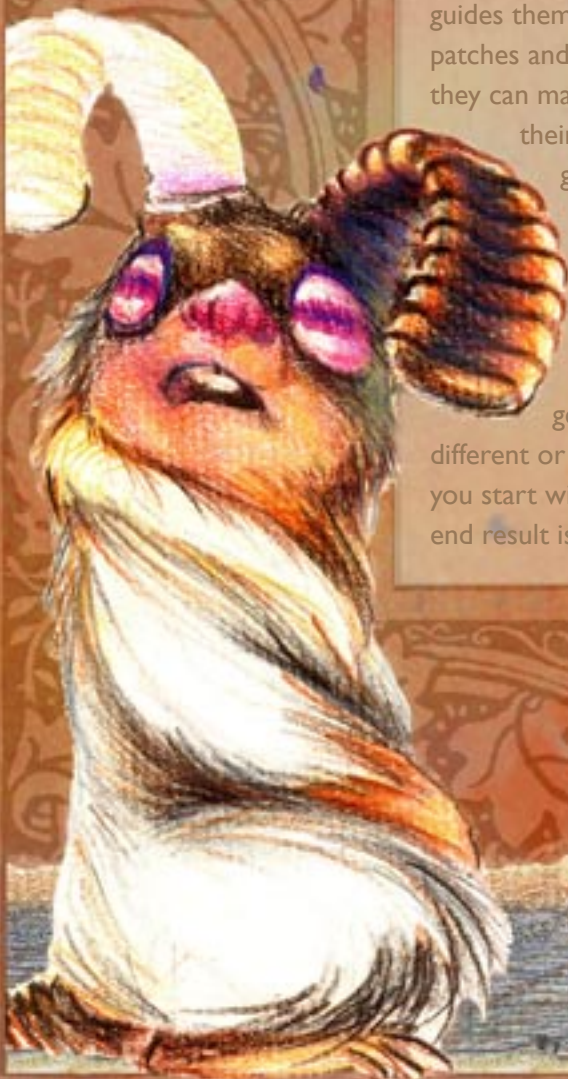
Background

First released in 1996, the *Creatures* series has sold more than two million copies and its latest incarnation – the free Docking Station client – has been downloaded more than half a million times.

We've all heard of artificial intelligence – *Creatures* is artificial life. The dream that computers could be conscious remains science fiction... for now! So far, all the computing power on the planet seems unable to locate that elusive property that we have called self-awareness. Indeed, the only systems on Earth which exhibit the adaptability and flexibility necessary for self-awareness are biological systems. It makes sense, therefore, to turn to nature for our answers, as it has had nearly 3.5 billion years to iron out the bugs.

Creatures models real biological systems inside a computer. Our artificial organisms come complete with their own biochemistry, brains, digital DNA, and an environment in which to live. None of their behaviour has been specifically programmed. They make their own choices, and learn from their mistakes. The player guides them through their lives, helping them through the bad patches and enjoying the good times. When they become adults, they can mate and pass on their genes and characteristics to their offspring who then possess their own unique genetic material that can be passed down to their children and their children's children.

The possibilities are endless. Everything from their movement to the individual chemical reactions in their bloodstream is genetically specified. A tenth generation creature could end up looking completely different or even be considerably more intelligent than the ones you start with. Just like life, the end result is a mystery!



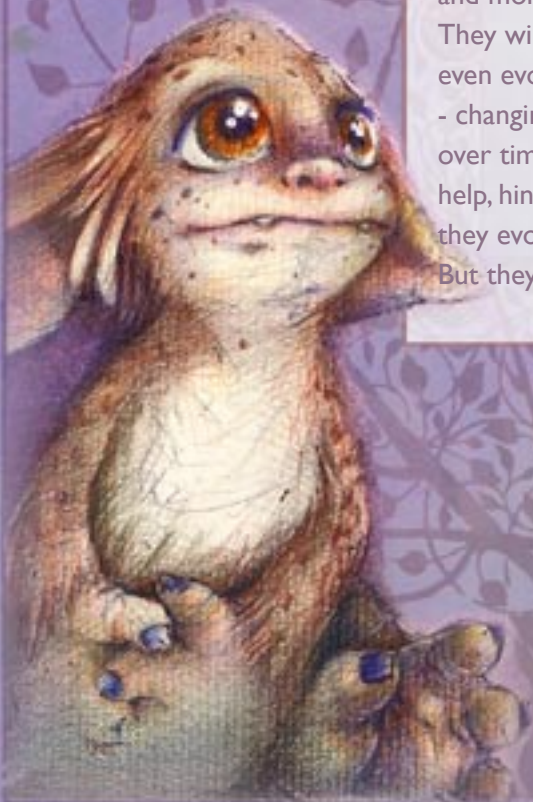


Gameplay

In *Creatures Evolution*, the player is presented with an empty planet upon which the Shee have built massive domes. Each dome has temperature and weather controls allowing them to be bioengineered as virtually any environment, from desert landscapes to rainforest jungles. The player exists in this world as a virtual presence – a sort of remote-control existence – that the computer portrays as a hand-shaped cursor.

The player starts the game by choosing a dome and selecting weather systems and plant life and populating it with various lifeforms. These initial decisions are crucial, as each dome is a miniature eco-system that must be balanced if the life within is to survive.

Once the domes are complete, the player can choose from amongst a wide range of “higher” life forms: the Norns and Grendels of the original *Creatures* series, and monitor them as they live, grow and reproduce. They will adapt where possible, or perish. They might even evolve to suit the landscape in which they live - changing their physical characteristics and behaviour over time and generations. The player can choose to help, hinder or simply observe. Will they survive? Will they evolve? What will they become? Only time will tell. But they must adapt or they will die!





The Story

Once upon a time, in a universe far, far away, the Shee, an ancient and advanced race who had previously lived on the disc-shaped world called Albia, came to populate the more roundy Cruthiar. When most other intelligent life in the universe was discovering fire and inventing things like the wheel, the Shee were busy delving into biology. They discovered DNA long before they worked out that you could attach two disks to a pole and make a functioning wheel and axle set. The Shee used their understanding of biology to engineer new life forms to assist them on Albia and brought these with them to Cruthiar.

Having found this new and suitably spherical planet, they settled in and got to work making themselves at home. What that work was is another story: the Shee, in their inimitable way, had trouble deciding just what to create and how precisely to go about it and what was worse, couldn't agree on the optimal temperature for a proper cup of tea. Frustrated by their lack of progress, they took off again, leaving their constructions unfinished and the planet populated with all of their genetic experiments.

Back when the Shee were around, Cruthiar teemed with Norns - small cuddly creatures endowed with a special sort of intelligence of their own. The Shee had made good use of their genetic screwdrivers to create a range of distinct Norn species, but left the resultant eggs languishing around their laboratories. These contain unique creatures, possibly the last of their kind. We may never know where the Shee are now, but the fate of their long-forgotten creations is certainly in doubt.



Norns

Norns were the best creatures the Shee ever created. Cute, cuddly, and with an annoying habit of picking up objects they really should have left alone, the Norns are a race of beings well known to the players of *Creatures* titles. The Planet Norns, as they are known, are direct descendants of the original Norn race that escaped Albia in the Shee spacecraft headed for Cruthiar.

Reconstructed by the Shee from the original digitalDNA template they carried down to the planet surface, the Planet Norns existed alongside their masters for centuries before the Shee finally gave up on Cruthiar. Many left with the Shee to find greener pastures, however, in the rush a large number of Norn eggs were left behind where they remain to this day.

There are twelve different breeds of Norns to choose from in *Creatures Evolution*, each already adapted to one environment, but with the potential to adapt (or not!) to others. Norns are generally omnivores, but some tend towards meat-eating, whilst others prefer a more vegetarian diet.



Grendels

Grendels have a rocky history of violence, greed and bad personal hygiene. They carry nasty infectious diseases and secrete horrible poisons.

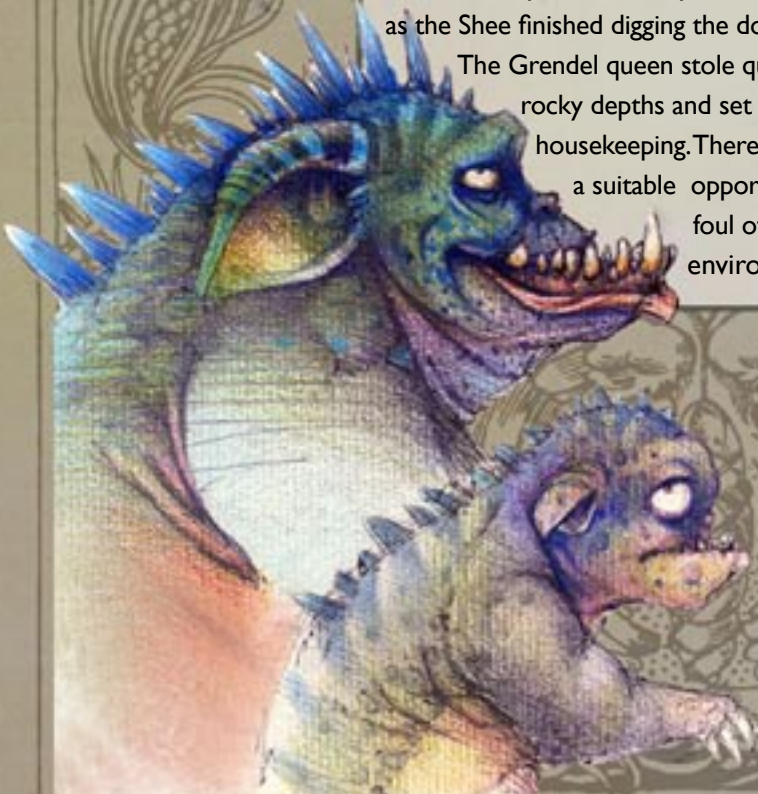


As with all nasty alien creatures it was inevitable that one of the queen Grendels would manage to clamber onto the undercarriage hold of the spacecraft used by the fleeing Shee. There she remained, quietly plotting vile and unspeakable events, which if she could remember for long enough, would have been inflicted upon her soft cousins and weak masters.

Fortunately for the Shee, as they came into land, the queen, finally bored of plotting and scheming, fell into a deep sleep. This avoided the inevitable series of blood-letting events that would have occurred if the airlock had opened directly into the mouth of the hungry and rather angry Grendel.

Unfortunately for the everyone else, she finally woke just as the Shee finished digging the domes' power tunnels.

The Grendel queen stole quietly into the planet's rocky depths and set up her rather dubious housekeeping. There she waits, watching for a suitable opportunity to unleash her foul offspring into Cruthiar's environmental domes.



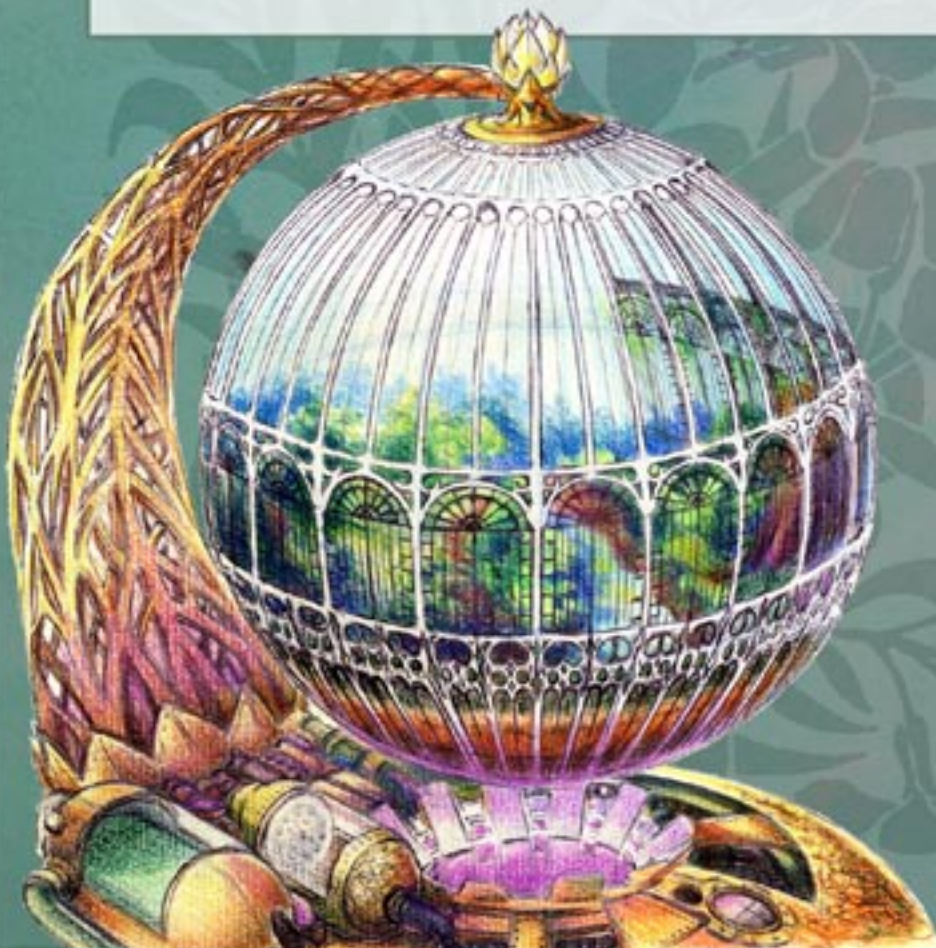
Environments



The game world exists as a series of domes on the planet Cruthiar's surface. These look rather like a cross between a Victorian greenhouse and those funny glass snow domes that create snowstorms when shaken. It's clear that the Shee had just this in mind when designing them and found it amusing to think of the power they had to "shake up" their creations whenever the mood struck. In addition to the domes, there are various other important constructions that the player can explore within the course of the game.

Within the domes, the player can create a wide range of environments for their creatures. Each dome will have a variety of pre-generated terrains, and the player will be able to choose weather systems and can then place a variety of plants in the environment that will ultimately thrive or suffer depending on how well they are adapted to the environment selected.

For example, the player might choose a very mountainous terrain and hot dry weather. Selecting broad-leaved plants for these conditions might not be the best choice, however, since they will tend to lose moisture too quickly and may not survive in the environment. A better choice would be small-leaved plants with shallow roots that can easily absorb moisture during infrequent rains.





USPs

- New and original gameplay mechanic
- Autonomous characters with their own personalities, needs and drives
- Creatures live, grow, reproduce and die, adapt to their surroundings and even evolve!
- Twelve different Norn breeds - all with unique characteristics plus five Grendel breeds
- Many objects in the game can be interacted with in some way, from toys and machinery to flora and fauna.

Press

When *Creatures* was first released in 1996, it garnered unprecedented coverage in the non-gaming press. From short fillers to entire magazine articles, from full-length National Public Radio programmes to television documentaries, *Creatures* has appeared in more than 500 different publications, radio and television shows, including *Tomorrow's World*, *All Things Considered* and *Bits*.

Whilst the gaming press was focussing on the unique, open-ended gameplay and cross-gender appeal, non-specialist publications picked up on the remarkable technical achievement of the *Creatures* titles. Making the cover of such diverse publications as *New Scientist* (twice!), the *Times Educational Supplement* and *Edge Magazine*, *Creatures* has gained a truly mass-market appeal and benefits from unique media positioning.

Creatures has also won an EMMA Award and has been nominated for 2 BAFTAs

Quotes

"I first saw this program in the same week that evidence was discovered of life on Mars. This is more exciting."

– Douglas Adams, Author

"I've never seen anything in my experience of artificial life the equal of *Creatures* and when I first saw *Creatures* I immediately thought this was a sort of quantum leap in the development of artificial life."

– Richard Dawkins,

