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By Hugo Labrande

Issue #9 : Spanish text adventures, as seen by Juanjo Muñoz

Some of you might have seen Juanjo Muñoz's name – if you've read about the history of Spanish text adventures, or if you've seen him on Twitter (@Juanjoide), or if you've read the recent issues of CAAD. He is a very important figure in the history of Spanish-language text adventure – not as an author, but as a writer, fanzine editor, publicist and community organizer for the community. Without him, the current-day Spanish-language text adventure community at [www.caad.es](http://www.caad.es) would simply not exist! Juanjo graciously accepted to answer my questions on his journey through the community of Spanish-language text adventures; we talk a little bit about the games, and a lot about building and sustaining a community around text adventures for that long!

(PS: if after this article you are interested in brushing up your Spanish and playing an aventura conversacional, Juanjo's advice is: start with *La Aventura Original*, because is a relatively simple and easy to solve adventure (and it will look familiar if you have played *Adventure*). The first part is totally "open", meaning you can explore freely all the locations but one, that requires a light source. Aventuras AD games had two versions, text-wise: depending on the available memory on the target computer, you had a "verbose" or a "condensed" version; so if your Spanish is rusty, play the ZX Spectrum version.)

**You were on board with Aventuras AD since the very beginning, arguably the most successful Spanish text adventure studio. What was the context in the Spanish video game scene that led to this creation?**

That deserves a long answer, but I will try to be brief. It is true that Aventuras AD was the most successful of the companies that went into text adventures... but it was also the only one. To explain this, let's do a brief history of adventure games, and of video games in general in Spain.

Before 1982, there was not a large video game industry in Spain, period. In 1982, with the launch of the ZX Spectrum, things began to change. The Spectrum was the best-selling computer in Spain due to its price. The other three 8-bit computers that were successful were the Amstrad CPC, the Commodore 64 and the MSX standard. The first Spanish video game for a microcomputer was *La pulga*, from 1983 (for the Spectrum; 1984 for CPC and C64, 1986 for MSX), better known outside of Spain by its English title *Bugaboo (The Flea)*. Another notable title was *Fred*, also from 1983, both being originally distributed by Indescomp. Ventamatic was one of the first companies, selling homebrew programs sent to them by amateur programmers. In 1984 Dinamic, one of the main Spanish companies, was created. Their first game was a text adventure, since at the time the programmer lacked the technical knowledge to create an action game. Dinamic coined the term that for years defined text adventures in Spain: "aventura conversacional" (conversational adventure).

The first commercial adventure appeared in 1984, and it was *Yenght*, which was also the first game from Dinamic, one of the main Spanish video game companies. Shortly after, Fromesoft's *La Princesa* would come out, but *Yenght* came out a few months earlier. It took three years for an adventure to have a high number of sales, and therefore repercussions on the genre. Once again, it was Dinamic who succeeded, with *Don Quijote*, created by Jorge Blecua, under the pseudonym Egroj, who the previous year had already published the *Arquímedes XXI* adventure with Dinamic.

Dinamic wanted to capitalize and get the whole market, but they didn't have their own team creating adventures; instead they bought them from independent authors and improved the graphics. With the launch of *Don Quijote*, they created a sub-label called AD, acronym for Aventuras Dinamic, under which his titles on this genre would be published. In fact, *Don Quijote* was originally published under the Dinamic label and in later versions under the new AD label.

Throughout 1987 and 1988 more adventures were published by Dinamic through AD, such as *Megacorp*, *La guerra de las vajillas (Tableware Wars)* or *Los pájaros de Bangkok (The Birds of Bangkok)*. Other labels joined the trend and launched adventures, such as System 4, who published *La Corona* by Pedro Amador (13 years old at the time), or Proein, who published Egroj's latest creation, *Abracadabra*.

But something else happens in 1988, and it is the creation of Aventuras AD. Why the name Aventuras AD? Because Dinamic had already created the AD seal, with its logo, and it had a certain reputation, so it remained. The "Aventuras" word was added so that the name was not exactly the same as before, and although originally AD meant "Aventuras Dinamic", in Aventuras AD it did not mean anything. This is somehow confusing even for Spanish adventurers.

Why did Dinamic look into creating a separate company? The reason is *La Diosa de Cozumel*, which Andrés Samudio created between 1986 and 1987, with graphics by Carlos Marqués. Instead of sending it by mail for Dinamic to take a look at it, he went in person with his lawyer and showed the game he created to the Ruiz brothers (from Dinamic), with its cover, box and even printed instructions. The Ruiz family must have thought that he was someone capable and responsible, and they offered him the possibility of creating a company to develop these type of games.

**Recounting the whole story of Aventuras AD would take too long here - in fact, you've already written a whole book about it! So I'll just ask this: What was it that set apart Aventuras AD? What were your biggest strengths and what led to your success?**

Aventuras AD was a team, where a scriptwriter created a story, a programmer implemented it, an illustrator made graphics and two graphic artists were in charge of putting them into the computers. It also had members in charge of working the texts and testing the game. For all the other games on the market, the teams were limited to one or two people, which very much limited the process. On the other hand, Aventuras AD had the DAAD, Diseñador de Aventuras AD (AD Adventure Designer), an adventure creation system developed by Tim Gilberts of Gilsoft, which was an evolved PAW and had the ability to export the adventure code to various computer models. In fact, all Aventuras AD production came out for ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, MSX, Amstrad CPC, Amstrad PCW, Commodore Amiga, Atari ST, and PC.

**You also founded the CAAD club in 1988. Was this the major (only?) fanzine on text adventures in Spanish? Can you give our readers a sense of how popular it was?**

I had the idea of creating an adventurers club before joining Aventuras AD (and being one of the founding partners of the company). I published an ad about it in the most widely circulated magazine at the time, *Microhobby*, and Samudio contacted me because he too had the intention of creating an official club for the new company. The CAAD, Club de Aventuras AD (AD Adventure Club) was also created in 1988, like Aventuras AD, and in April 1989 the first issue of our fanzine appeared, which I wrote in its entirety. Luckily and thanks to the adventure community, from the next issue there were a growing number of excellent contributors.

CAAD was not originally going to be called CAAD. My original idea was something similar to Spanish Adventurers Club (CAE, from club de aventureros españoles). Andrés told me that if the project was to be financed by Aventuras AD, the "AD" should appear in the name of the publication. A first idea of merging both resulted in CAE-AD, and that in Spanish means "AD falls". It was prophetic, but since we didn't know it at the time, a more official name was chosen, which became CAAD or Club de Aventuras AD (Aventuras AD Club).

After CAAD's first few issues, other fanzines appeared, in the early 90s, and some were very good. We collaborated with some of them, such as *El Aventurero* (The Adventurer), who contributed with content for a multidisciplinary magazine that I created, called *Utopía*, but which unfortunately only had two issues. Others ended up joining the CAAD team – because really, not so many people were writing articles in Spanish the adventure fandom scene. Mostly, they met the same problems as me (expenses and lack of time, mainly) and ended up being overwhelmed by them and disappeared after a few issues. My idea was always gather all around a common point, the CAAD, because there were not so many potential readers, so I always invited anyone to join forces with CAAD. The best example is Jorge Fuertes; he stopped editing his own fanzine, *A través del espejo* (*Through the Looking Glass*), to collaborate directly with CAAD, becoming vice-director.

By the way, compiling all the adventure reviews that were published in the CAAD I made a compilation and annotated book called *Aventuras del ayer* (*Yesterday's Adventures*), where I added more information about the author and his creations, as well as maps, covers, advertising and all other information I was able to gather. It is a good reference to discover the non-professional adventures that appeared during those years.

**CAAD is a community that was created by a major studio; what was the vision behind it? A club gathering everyone who loves the genre, or something more centered around Aventuras AD's games? Did you talk/review the competitors' games? How independent from Aventuras AD was it?**

At Aventuras AD, there were always money problems, because there just wasn't enough coming in. The original idea of having an Aventuras AD fan club with its own publication specialized in adventures was quickly cancelled. In fact, the only financing that Aventuras AD provided to the CAAD was 15,000 pesetas, about 90 euros, to photocopy the first issue. From that moment on, the CAAD kept alive with subscription fees and my own money, which always covered what we were missing to be able to print and mail the next issue. Financially, the CAAD was always losing money, but since it was my baby, I did not hesitate to keep it afloat as long as I could.

In short, CAAD was not the official magazine of Aventuras AD. In fact, even in the first issue three Spanish adventures by other companies were reviewed. I always wanted to maintain impartiality, although it was difficult given the name, but I think

you can see it by looking at those first numbers. The great advantage of me working at Aventuras AD is that I had first-hand information about projects and launches.

**The CAAD community is still very much alive these days, which might make it the oldest text adventure community in the world. How do you grow and cultivate such a community as the genre undergoes such large changes? Were there dry spells, or was the community large enough and motivated enough to always be active and busy?**

Perhaps CAAD has been active for so long because I have tried to diversify its field of action. Originally it was just the fanzine, used as a means of expression for CAAD members, but as new technologies appeared, I tried to use them to continue raising awareness of CAAD and the adventure. For example, I created a newsgroup about Spanish adventures, also an electronic mailing list on the ONElist list service, which was merged with eGroups, which in turn was bought by Yahoo... and which was eventually deleted. I spoke on a national radio program about the adventure contest that we were organizing in the CAAD; I talked with national magazines to ask if they wanted to publish adventure creation systems with the CDs that at the time accompanied most magazines and were full of demos and sharewares. We also started the website, which has a forum, a wiki and other services. At the moment, I directly use my Twitter account @Juanjoide to talk about adventure games-related topics and to advertise the contents of the next issue of CAAD.

I believe that having a presence on so many fronts helps keep CAAD active. It is true that it has never been a massive community in numbers. We are few but very enthusiastic. Of course there have been ups and downs in participation and number of participants, but at least, the community has always been active since 1988.

For me, the first ten years of CAAD were exhausting in many ways, and I had to take a break. It is what today they call burnout. About 20 years ago I delegated all the functions I could to very capable people, who went ahead with the CAAD. When fanzine issues stopped appearing, the activity continued through the internet, with the aforementioned ups and downs, and I continued to be there, albeit with a low profile.

**Looking at the text adventures in Spanish, it has always struck me how most Spanish players seem to think "if there aren't any graphics, it's not an adventure game". A lot of great tools for multimedia adventure games, like Glulx extensions and code, or professional-looking games like *Transilvania* *Corupcion* and *A.L.I.E.N*, came out of the Spanish scene. Would it be fair to say that Spanish-speaking players love graphical adventures?**

I disagree somehow on the sentence "if there aren't any graphics, it's not an adventure game". Hard adventurers like any kind of text adventure game, no matter if it has graphics or not. Some of them dislikes graphics, because they think the memory used on them can be better employed on more text or puzzles, but... of course, graphics are pretty. Imagination can help you to depict better images than any picture, but sometimes, a little help is welcome. In Spain, nice graphics were a must in any game, and that applies also to adventures. So, if nice graphics could help you sell your game, then companies did it. And if we talk about solo authors, a nice picture might catch the eye of a casual gamer, more than a block of text for sure, but you know... then you start getting into arguments similar to books vs comics, radio vs cinema and so on. The thing Spanish adventurers like the most is arguing about preferences.

**You are now editor-in-chief of the CAAD magazine, which is free, loaded with content, and very professional-looking. What are the things that interest your readers?**

After regaining energy, I continued to participate as much as I could, especially on the mailing list and later on the CAAD forum. The world of text adventures has always been with me, as shown by the book I wrote about it and *Aventuras AD*, entitled *AD: una aventura contada desde dentro (AD: an adventure told from within)*, whose documentation process began more than six years ago.

As the 30th anniversary of the publication of the first issue of the CAAD approached, I felt that a commemorative issue would be well received, due to a resurgence of interest in the classic text adventures that was happening alongside the recovery of the DAAD, the system that we used in *Aventuras AD* to create our adventures. Indeed, when launching issue 50 of CAAD, I received good reviews and messages of support, so I decided to resume the publication of the CAAD fanzine.

I was very lucky to find a designer like Carlos Cabezuelo (@cabezuelostudio), who is the one who gives CAAD the magnificent look it has now. I tried to dig up some old CAAD collaborators, looked for new ones, asked for collaboration agreements (such as Mark Hardisty and his excellent *The Classic Adventurer*) and wrote articles that may interest the general adventurer, and that is what the contents of the CAAD are mainly based on: news, reviews, solutions and reports.

The CAAD is not based on retro text adventures, but simply text adventures. This does not exclude the old ones or those currently created on old machines – that is, the retro. I think an adventurer can enjoy an adventure on any platform, if the game is good enough.

**Where do you see text adventures go in the future? What's left to do?**

It is difficult to make future projections, and I am sure that more than 30 years ago, no one would have thought that new games would continue to be made for the then leading machines.

Without making crazy ramblings, I envision in the near future text adventures where verbal commands can be used instead of a keyboard (but as an option or add-on) something that can be of great help to blind people.