

RIPPED NEWS Release

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NEW INTERACTIVE COMIC
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ARTIST RELEASES EXPERIMENTAL NEW INTERNET COMIC STRIP “BANDITO LOVES KITTY”

A tongue in cheek comic strip written by visitors to TheBandito.com.

**Submissions are immediately added to the cartoon. Could
“Bandito Loves Kitty” one day become artificially intelligent?**

**Sick, twisted humor for the people, by the people.
Over 2000 panels available for viewing online. New cartoons are added daily.
Add your own and vote for your favorite ones.**

Upon entering TheBandito.com, you are confronted with a stylized Nintendo-esque cartoon set in one of five different server generated backgrounds. The main characters are the sprite-ly Bandito and his small feline companion. The cartoons range from bizarre, to funny, to explicit, to pure character development. The unique part is just below the cartoon, where users can enter their own text and backdrop for the latest panel.

“It’s pretty amazing,” says self proclaimed “Madman New York artist” Roger Kenny, “how my poorly thought out experiment in artificial intelligence could blossom into a new kind of comic strip, that is pretty funny and has a cult following.” Since the site went up late last year, over 2000 panels have been added. “I write new ones every day, but many more are coming from anonymous users at an increasing rate.”

Each cartoon is generated on the fly by server software written in the PHP scripting language. The list of panels is stored in a MySQL database. Both mainstays of modern internet technology. Each time you view a panel it will be different, even the same one. If no background is specified, the software will choose one based on what Bandito and the Kitty are saying. “If you make Bandito say ‘I really need some whiskey,’ ... the software will choose the saloon backdrop” There are some hidden behaviors as well. Like the rare Butterfly

(continued on page 2)

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character, or Bandito's little flags that show up occasionally. "I plan on adding a lot more 'easter eggs' for users to find, as well as evolving the cartoon itself. That part excites me."

The cartoon has been evolving. "When I first wrote the Bandito, way back in 2003, it was just Bandito all by himself in the spring background. Users could only add the next thing Bandito would say, and could only access the panels randomly. Slowly I'd add things like the desert background, then the butterfly, then the error landscape, then the cat, and the winter scene." But Roger shelved Bandito for almost a year before picking it back up in November 2004.

"People kept asking me about Bandito. They actually liked it, and were sad when I took it down. So I dusted off the files and set to work improving it. I gave the cat the ability to talk, the text can now link to somewhere, you can choose your panel's backdrop, added the saloon and lunar landscapes, and reworked the navigation system with links to the most recent submission, as well as next and previous buttons and a text box for viewing a specific panel. I just finished the new Top 20 feature, that allows readers to vote for their favorite panels and list the most popular ones. I have plans for additional characters, new Bandito images, new backdrops, and more."

But what about all this artificial intelligence talk? Surely we can't be expected to buy that this simple cartoon could exhibit intelligence, or could it? The idea is this, as the artist explains: "If you're talking to something, and it's convinced you that it is intelligent, that's all there is to it. That's the basis behind the well known Turing test for artificial intelligence." But can Bandito convince me that it is intelligent? "Sure," Roger laughs with a big bearded smile, "it's a very simple system, with only randomness determining the next phrase he'll say, but as the database grows, those random slideshows could become eerily coherent, randomly of course. It already reminds me of talking to some people I know, but they're all crazy anyway"

Bandito Loves Kitty is available any time day or night at **TheBandito.com**. Also available **The Bandito REVIEW Volume 1**, published by Ripped Productions™. Printed by CafePress. Bandito is a Ripped Production™

For further information, or to arrange an interview with Roger Kenny, please contact him at thebandito@gmail.com.

Ripped Productions is a New York based company involved in publishing and production of magazines, websites, video games, books, music, events, and video. Formed in 1998 they are best known for Ripped Magazine, and The Buffalo Readings poetry series.

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