

Big Box PC Game Collectors Admin Group

Response to Questions

At present, the individuals involved in the investigation as well as those named in the official group Facebook post do not wish to grant personal interviews. If this changes, they will reach out to the press. In lieu of that, please accept the following answers to the questions most frequently asked.

Please see the original announcement here: [Announcement from the admins of the Big Box PC Game Collectors Facebook group](#).

Q: How big is this?

At present, we have identified an estimated €200K+ in transactions of suspected counterfeit game items. These items include suspected counterfeits of:

- Full game boxes
- Game manuals
- Game registration cards
- Game paper inserts
- Disk labels
- Box labels
- Game data (cracked versions of software copied onto production disks, blank disks or non-data recorded onto disks)

Q: What means of comparison was used?

In the identification of suspected counterfeit items, we used:

- Analysis of materials via microscope
- Analysis of game data (or lack thereof) on game disks or cassettes
- Comparison to known copies of originals with established provenance

Q: How far back do these suspected counterfeits go?

The current earliest identified case of a suspected counterfeit is 2015.

Q: Having reviewed the evidence and having compared the real, verified examples to the suspected counterfeit copies, these seem like apparent fakes. So why wasn't this discovered sooner?

We agree that it is not hugely challenging to spot when the verified vs. the suspected counterfeits versions are right next to one another. However, getting to that point--the point where we can say "this is verified" and "this is a suspected counterfeit" is hugely challenging. Why?

- Scope: It involved collectors across the globe, data forensics and visual/paper identification under microscopes.
- Rarity: The software that is involved in the suspected counterfeits is exceedingly rare. Most collectors will not see one of these in their lives, let alone two or more. Finding examples to compare your alleged real version to is incredibly challenging. This is aggravated when the seller of the suspected counterfeit is trusted and vouches for its authenticity.
- Secrecy: The suspected counterfeiter also always insisted on secrecy from in his trades. This was for various reasons: he didn't want people to become jealous because he had allegedly refused to sell to someone else, he got the copy from the developer and now had an extra so he can let it go and so on. This artificially restricted public comparison and scrutiny.
- Original Production Quality: In the early 1980s, production quality varied widely. Garriott produced the first 20 Akalabeths in his house. What seems to be sloppy production methods or just photocopied paper in plastic bags was indeed the very beginning of our industry.

Q: Is anyone else involved with these suspected counterfeits?

At this point, we do not know.

Q: Are legal actions being taken?

The individuals affected are choosing the best recourse for them and do not wish to discuss this publicly.

As a mod team, we investigated this thoroughly and released a statement to our members about our findings. We created the [anti-scammers guide](#) to help people understand the social engineering a scammer employs to get the sale.

Q: What titles are affected?

We have identified suspected counterfeits of early titles from Sierra as well as Origin Systems, including multiple copies of *Ultima: Escape from Mt. Drash*, *Akalabeth* and *Mystery House*.

Q: Are there any telltale patterns?

This seems to be the most common pattern:

- Offer to sell the item
- Story of questionable or vague provenance (usually, an old man who sold a bulk lot of games)
- Request to keep that sale private
- Sharing photographs before the sale to prove it's original. These photographs are often of the suspected counterfeit item itself.

Other patterns are documented in our [anti-scammers guide](#).

Q: Why don't people test these disks?

These disks are 40 years old, and the software is widely available online via emulators at this point. The goal in getting these games is not to play them, but to collect them (people who collect baseball trading cards do not trade them much either). "Testing" a 40-year-old disk can risk damaging the disk. Further, some collectors do not have access to the computers which originally ran these games.

Q: Is there any way I can help?

Yes. If you have any of the affected titles, and believe yours to be authentic, we would appreciate hi-res scans, particularly of the orange Castle Akalabeth cover. You can use bigboxpcgamecollectors@gmail.com to send detailed pictures. This list will be updated.

Q: What should people do if they suspect they have a counterfeit copy?

The BBPCG Investigation Team is composed of individuals who have direct experience encountering game fraud and who wish to share their learnings with others in the community so that incidents of fraud and counterfeit materials are avoided as much as possible. **If you suspect an incidence of game counterfeiting, please feel free to reach out to any admin of the PC Big**

Box Group with details, and your information will be shared confidentially. You can use bigboxpcgamecollectors@gmail.com to send detailed pictures.

Please note that these are our learnings and not a full-proof guide to avoid being scammed. We will update this document as needed. [The anti-scammers guide can be found here.](#)

Q: Does this affect the group?

No. The individual suspected of trading counterfeit games acted as a private individual and conducted all the trades as such. The person just happened to be a member/moderator. The Big Box PC Games Collectors group does not take any responsibility for transactions between members. We're just a forum for conversation.