**The Making Of... Myst**

It was the game that single-handedly proved to the PC-owning world that shiny CDs could be used for something more exciting than just storing the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Join Damien McFerran as he delves into the history of one of biggest selling videogames of all time.

---

"We had proposed a Myst-like game to Activision early on, but they rejected it and told us to stick to children's games. Myst was sung out who approached us asking us if we'd do a game for an older audience."

---

**In The Know**

Few videogames have the ability to polarise opinion quite as sharply as Myst. When it hit shelves back in 1993 many critics scoffed at the idea of an adventure that only allowed players to interact with the environment through the click of a mouse. However, the public was taken by the game's innovative graphics and storytelling that captivated millions of players. Myst's success was due, in part, to the unique combination of exploration, puzzle-solving, and interactive storytelling. The game's success continued with Myst: The Secret of Syberia and Myst IV: The Seal of Kavril.

---

**What's My Line?**

Due to a lack of funds, Rand and Robyn Miller decided to step down from the game and focus on Myst II. They sold the rights to the game to Id Software and the game was released in 1995. The game was a commercial success, selling over 1 million copies and receiving critical acclaim. The game's success continued with Myst IV: The Seal of Kavril.
"There was no single thing we were inspired by. Looking back, I'm sure that some of the inspirations came from my own childhood, but for the Miller brothers their influence was more deep-seated. There was no single thing we were inspired by," reveals Robyn. "Looking back, I'm sure that some of the inspirations came from my own childhood, but for the Miller brothers their influence was more deep-seated. There was no single thing we were inspired by," reveals Robyn. "Looking back, I'm sure that some of the inspirations came from my own childhood, but for the Miller brothers their influence was more deep-seated. There was no single thing we were inspired by," reveals Robyn. "Looking back, I'm sure that some of the inspirations came from my own childhood..."
**The Making of Myst**

The success of Myst has resulted in a whole flood of sequels and spin-offs. In addition to 1993's Ulysses, we've seen Myst III: Exile (2000), Myst IV: Revelation (2003), and Myst V: End of Ages (2006), as well as the virtual recreation of the entire game world in full 3D. Robyn isn't a fan. "I only saw Myst after it was released," she says. As a console, it was a tip-off of some sort that something was different about the original Myst. It definitely wasn't what we originally envisioned Myst as being promoted."

A series of books was also commissioned in an attempt to expand the Myst universe. "I was involved with agreeing to the three-book deal. It was my biggest obligation while at Cyan," says Robyn. "It was a challenge to expand the Myst universe beyond the core Myst experience."

**The Game's Storyline**

"How would a new version approach the puzzle? Was it too difficult, or too easy? We felt our best puzzles in Myst were those that weren't initially tied to the story and the environment, like the maze one. Our best puzzles were the ones that felt cohesive both to their surroundings and didn't really feel like puzzles at all."

The captivating storyline was also a key feature in Myst's appeal. Reading the player in the shoes of a voiceless character known only as "The Stranger," the game showcased a plot that focused on two nefarious brothers (played by Robyn and Robert) attempting to undo their father's work. Despite the rather somber themes, Myst remains a hit for its complete lack of violence. Over time, many people have assumed this to be due to the Miller brothers' strict religious upbringing as sons of a church minister, but Robyn maintains it as overly simplistic. "It isn't because 'fraid and I were on a campaign to stop violence in games," he claims.

"We were just out to make interesting, involving games. I think Richard would agree with me that violent imagery in art, film, games, or any other kind of story can be shocking in a way that can be considered good. jarving, violent imagery is sometimes the only thing that sticks in our memory and makes us think up to something and we never otherwise consider. That's what's art in general is supposed to do—shock us in a way of looking at the world around us, but what doesn't make sense to me is when we turn that shocking sort of violence into fun, like the 'up in the air' type. We cause us to participate and sometimes even laugh at acts of violence. I can't agree with that. It seems as if we are ripping away some small piece of ourselves. It doesn't make sense to me."

**Development Challenges**

Released only a few months after fellow CD-ROM startup The 3rd Guest, it's been argued that Myst helped rapidly accelerate the PC gaming public's uptake of CD-ROM drives and could even be described as the original app that sold the medium to the retailing world. "No a lot of people had the hardware for CD-ROM back then," recalls Robyn. "I don't remember being concerned about this when we shipped Myst—maybe because we never expected it to sell like it did. But suddenly, almost overnight, people began buying CD-ROM drives like crazy. It was one of those sudden changes, and we were caught off guard in the crossfire of it."

Robyn is quick to downplay the perceived significance of the game. "I don't think Myst was responsible for that change. It's not something that represented that change. And that whole Miller brothers' thing represented some of that. That's one of those things about being in a piece of the right time."

This overnight success meant that the siblings were quickly heralded as poster boys for a new generation of game designers and even appeared in a Gap clothing commercial even without knowing it was filming this day. "It was downtownday, like it was

**Conclusion**

"Because of this, Myst may have seemed almost too simple to gamers who were used to the pretentious and fussy games. And yet this is partly what made Myst so popular with the majority of our audience—those who had never played a game before. To them, Myst was approachable, not real."

Although her brother still heads Cyan Worlds, Robyn decided to part company after completing work on Riven in 1998 and now runs her own film production studio, known as Land of Plenty, as well as indulging his musical side as part of a group called Enigma. Although he's turned his back on the videogame industry for now, he's still visible through the unwavering success that Myst has enjoyed. "Creating a world that is black and white, a new and wonderful opportunity, he says with a smile. "But like I said, we never could have foreseen the overwhelming response. It blew us away. Thanks to a fellow who was never even played Myst. Thank you all, sincerely."

"As far as I'm concerned, the quality of the Miller brothers' work that comes from this still book lasts a lifetime after 20 years."

---

**Making Myst**

**PC Magazine**

**Myst Endgames**

**Preset Gates**

---

**Myst Island**

**Myst**

---

**The Making of Myst**

---

**PC Magazine**

**Myst Endgames**

---