Myst III : Exile

Myst III : Exile is the third title in the Myst series of graphic adventure puzzle video games . While the preceding games in the series , Myst and Riven , were produced by Cyan Worlds and published by Brøderbund , Exile was developed by Presto Studios and published by Ubisoft . The game was released on four compact discs for both Mac OS and Microsoft Windows on May 8 , 2001 ; versions for the Xbox and PlayStation 2 were released in late 2002 .

As in previous games , the player assumes the role of the Stranger , a friend of Atrus . A member of the D 'ni race , Atrus can create links to other worlds called Ages by writing descriptive books . In Exile , Atrus has written an Age for the D 'ni to live on while rebuilding their civilization ; it is stolen , however , by a mysterious figure . The Stranger pursues the thief in an attempt to reclaim Atrus ' book .

The creators of the Myst franchise gave the task of creating the third Myst game to Presto Studios , known for its adventure game series The Journeyman Project . Presto sought to develop a diverse and logical approach to puzzles and Ages , and worked to make the villain sympathetically multifaceted . The developers hired Jack Wall to develop a musical style different from earlier composer Robyn Miller but still recognizable as a Myst game . The project required millions of U.S. dollars and more than two years to complete .

Exile was received well by critics ; The Daily Telegraph called it the best game in the Myst series . Conversely , long @-@ time critics of the series complained that Exile continued to prove that Myst 's slower gameplay did not belong in the fast @-@ paced modern game market ; GameSpot editor Greg Kasavin described the Myst series as having lost its relevance . Despite selling more than one million copies within the first year of release , Exile fared poorer commercially than Myst and Riven , which had sold more than 10 million copies combined . Myst IV : Revelation , the fourth game in the series , was developed and published solely by Ubisoft .

Gameplay

Gameplay in Myst III : Exile is similar to that of its predecessors . The player explores immersive , pre @-@ rendered environments known as Ages by using either mouse clicks or the space bar for movement from set nodes across each Age . Unlike previous games , which employed a series of still images , Exile uses a " free look " system which gives the player a 360 @-@ degree field of view . The game also has an optional Zip mode , like Myst and Riven , to cross explored terrain quickly by skipping several nodes . Clicking allows the player to manipulate objects and pick up items . The on @-@ screen cursor changes in context to show possible actions .

Each of the game 's Ages has a distinctive look and theme . Players begin their journey on the Age of J 'nanin , which acts as a hub linking to other Ages and as a " lesson Age " demonstrating important principles for later puzzles . Three of these Ages are Amateria , a mechanical Age in the middle of a vast sea ; Edanna , a world of preserved nature , with abundant plant and animal life ; and Voltaic , a dusty island riddled with canyons filled with man @-@ made constructions .

By gathering clues and manipulating the environment , the player solves thematically linked puzzles . For example , the book leading to Voltaic is accessed by aligning beams of light across a canyon ; the Age itself contains similar energy @-@ based puzzles . Edanna 's plant @-@ filled puzzles require manipulation of the Age 's ecosystem . Puzzles often involve observing interactions between elements of the environment , then adjusting the links between them . The player can also pick up and view journals or pages written by game characters which reveal back @-@ story and give hints to solving puzzles . Cursor Mode allows the player to select items from a personal inventory at the bottom of the screen .

Plot

Exile begins 10 years after the events of Riven , when the Stranger arrives at the home of Atrus and his wife Catherine . Atrus is a scientist and explorer who has mastered an ancient practice

known as the Art : he can create links to different worlds , called Ages , by writing special books . This ability is by an ancient civilization known as the D 'ni , whose society crumbles after the D 'ni city is devastated by a plague . Atrus calls the Stranger to his home to display his newest Age , Releeshahn , which Atrus has designed as a new home for the D 'ni survivors .

As Atrus is preparing to leave for Releeshahn , a mysterious man appears in Atrus ' study , steals the Releeshahn book and leaves behind another . Following the thief , the Stranger arrives at J 'nanin , an Age that Atrus had written long before as a way to teach the Art to his sons . Because the thief has caused considerable damage to the J 'nanin book , Atrus cannot accompany the Stranger .

The mysterious man is named Saavedro . Twenty years earlier , Atrus ' wayward sons Sirrus and Achenar destroyed Saavedro 's home Age of Narayan and trapped him on J 'nanin . Saavedro believes his family is dead and swears vengeance on Atrus , unaware that Atrus has already imprisoned his sons for their crimes and that Saavedro 's family is still alive . The game can end several ways depending on the player 's actions . In the most ideal scenario , Saavedro returns to Narayan peacefully after giving back the book of Releeshahn . Other endings result in Saavedro destroying Releeshahn or killing the player ; another option allows the player to leave Saavedro trapped forever .

= = Development = =

Cyan Worlds and Mattel (then the owner of the Myst and Riven franchise) offered the task of developing the sequel to several development companies ; according to Game Developer , interested parties developed proposals including story concepts , analysis of the first two games , technology discussion , and technology demonstration . A core team from Presto Studios held discussions which analyzed Myst and Riven , then set out specific goals for the third game . According to Presto founder and producer Greg Uhler , these goals included visual variety in the Ages , a satisfying ending , and a way for players to gauge their progress during the game . The progress goal was very important for Uhler , who stated : " Players who had failed to complete Myst or Riven did so because they were unsure of how much remained of the game and what their goals were . " Initially , Presto prepared three possible storylines for the game to follow ; a meeting between Cyan , Presto , and Mattel yielded a completely different plot , which explored some of the loose ends hinted at in Myst . Presto spent millions of U.S. dollars developing the game , using the studio 's entire staff to complete the project . Development took two and a half years , of which nine months were spent on design and pre @-@ production .

Pre @-@ rendered environments , like those in the earlier Myst games , were used , providing what producer Dan Irish described as the " photorealistic ability to present the world in a convincing way . The 360 @-@ degree camera view also allows you to experience it in a way that makes it feel real . " Particular attention was devoted to strong visual styles and mechanics , which a critic described as " a collaboration of Jules Verne , Rube Goldberg and Claes Oldenburg " .

As in Myst and Riven , the developers used live @-@ action sequences instead of computer @-@ generated actors and props ; Irish stated that using computer graphics would have reminded players they were in a game , " which would wreck the immersion that is so critical to the Myst games " . Live actors were filmed on a blue screen and then placed in the digital environments using chroma key technology . Before any shooting could begin , all the sets were constructed and filled with props the actors could use , costumes for all the characters were fashioned , and each scene was plotted out by storyboard . Rand Miller returned to play Atrus , a role he had filled since the first Myst game . Brad Dourif , a professional actor best known for the Child 's Play films , agreed to play Saavedro because he was a huge Myst fan . Dourif noted that acting for a game was much more difficult than working on movie sets , as he could not see the player or interact with the game environment . Other actors included Maria Galante as Atrus ' wife Catherine , and Greg Uhler 's daughter Audrey in a cameo as Atrus ' daughter Yeesha . Preparation for the video shoots took four months ; filming the scenes took just seven days . Uhler noted that the video was one aspect of Myst that Presto " did wrong " ; because high @-@ definition video cameras were not used , the

resulting video was not as crisp as developers had hoped .

= = = Audio = = =

The music for Myst and Riven was composed by Robyn Miller ; Jack Wall created the score for the third installment . Irish stated that developing the music was one of the hardest aspects of Exile : " We had to match or exceed the surrealistic style of music that Robyn [Miller] had pioneered . It had to be recognizable as Myst , but unique and distinctive . " Wall looked at the increasing complexity of games as an opportunity to give players a soundtrack with as much force as a movie score . Wall also echoed Irish 's opinion that he wanted to make a very different score from the " wonderful sonic pastiche " of Myst and Riven , yet still recognizable as a sequel to the earlier games ; Wall considered copying Miller 's style as the " safe " yet unappealing route that was expected of him .
In preparation for his composition , Wall studied Miller 's music , noting that he and Miller differed on their use of music theory . Miller , according to Wall , felt that " melody could easily get in the way of the experience of playing the game " , but Wall felt that some melody provided something thematic for the player to grasp . Wall wanted the music to have a sense of purpose while still preserving interactivity , so he composed " reward music " for completing puzzles and recorded the score with a real orchestra .

= = Reception = =

Exile was generally received positively upon release ; the PC version holds a 79 % favorable rating at GameRankings and an 83 % rating at Metacritic . The game was the best @-@ selling title in North America within a week of release , selling 75 @,@ 000 copies within two weeks . Exile sold one million units within twelve months .
Exile 's graphics and sound received nearly universal praise , and were credited with completing the game 's immersion . The puzzles were described as less difficult and more contained , meaning that players did not have to experiment with switches and then click several screens away to see the effect , as in Riven . Macworld 's Peter Cohen praised Presto for giving out bits of story throughout the game , rather than providing exposition only during opening and closing sequences . The pacing and rewards system was also appreciated by reviewers . IGN concluded their review of the game by stating that Presto had done " a pretty good job with a notable addition to the series " . The Daily Telegraph offered even stronger praise , saying that Presto had crafted the best Myst game in the series thus far , a sentiment that was echoed in other publications .
Criticism of the game included complaints about the four @-@ disc format of the game , which required players to swap out the installer disc with one of the other discs every time the player entered a new Age . Gamespot 's Scott Osborne noted that due to the frame @-@ by @-@ frame nature of gameplay , it was occasionally difficult to discern where players were allowed to venture and what areas were unreachable . The Los Angeles Times reported that bugs including a lack of sound , incompatibility with certain graphics cards and system crashes were present in as many as 10 percent of the first shipment of discs . Reviewers who had not enjoyed Myst or Riven stated that there was nothing new or substantially different in the game to warrant interest ; The New York Times observed , " Exile has everything you loved or hated about Myst and Riven . "
Despite strong sales , Exile was considered commercially disappointing compared to the phenomenal sales of the first two games , which had sold nearly 10 million units by the time of Exile 's release . GameSpot editor Greg Kasavin told Time magazine that " Myst is no longer as relevant to gamers as it used to be " and that " it represents an antiquated style of gaming " compared to the 3 @-@ D action games being released at the time . Soon after Exile 's release , Presto announced it was discontinuing software development ; the Xbox title Whacked ! was to be the last title produced by the company . Presto employee Michael Saladino pointed to the maverick style of the studio and its inability to develop more than one title at a time as reasons for its folding . The next game in the Myst series , entitled Revelation , would be produced and published by Ubisoft .