= Drowned God =

Drowned God : Conspiracy of the Ages is a 1996 science fiction adventure game developed by Epic Multimedia Group and published by Inscape . The game propounds the conspiracy theory that all of human history is a lie and the human race 's development and evolution were aided by extra @-@ terrestrials . The player attempts to uncover the truth through the course of the game by traveling to a variety of different worlds , interacting with historical and fictional characters , and solving puzzles .

Drowned God is based on a forged manuscript written by Harry Horse in 1983 . After facing legal trouble and fines when he attempted to sell the text , Horse shelved it until playing Myst and 7th Guest in the mid @-@ 1990s , whereupon he decided a first person adventure game would be the best way to tell the manuscript 's story .

Producer Algy Williams hired a team of multimedia artists and programmers to help Horse develop Drowned God . Upon its release , the game sold well , but quickly faded in popularity due to bugs and a lack of patches . Drowned God 's concept and visuals were widely praised , while its gameplay , audio , and puzzles received more varied responses . A planned sequel never came to fruition .

= = Plot = =

= = = Background = = =

Drowned God 's concept centers around the idea that human history has been manipulated to cover up certain facts . The true history , according to the game , is that aliens from the Orion area of space seeded humanity on Earth thousands of years ago and have since guided its development . An ancient , highly developed civilization was lost millennia ago in the Great Flood . The library of Alexandria housed much of what game writer Harry Horse called " forbidden knowledge " before it was destroyed . The Knights Templar , whose membership included luminaries such as Leonardo da Vinci and Isaac Newton , preserved the information for centuries . In the 20th century , the Philadelphia Experiment opened a gateway into another dimension , first freeing the aliens Horse refers to as " the Legion " . An independent government group spent the subsequent decades in contact with the aliens following the Roswell UFO incident .

= = = Story = = =

The game 's plot begins in a chamber containing the Bequest Globe , a device which the player has recently inherited . The Globe is a giant brass cylinder full of gears , fronted by a clock face made of sliding and rotating plates comprising twenty @-@ two Roman numerals , which represent the Major Arcana , with the Jewish Kabbalah in its center . A voice welcomes the player and tells them the Globe is a gift , then explains that the player must unlock the secret of the drowned god .

The player initially must enter their name into the device , which then displays a series of past lives the player has lived . The name is converted into its numerological equivalent . Above and below the central chamber are two other areas , called Kether and Malchut , respectively , each of which houses a display screen with a mask @-@ like face that provides the player with information about the next task . The motivations of the two organizations represented by the faces are murky , although it becomes clear they are acting in opposition to each other . Both masks refer to the player by their assigned number .

The player must enter four different worlds through the Bequest Globe , each of which is an amalgamation of historical and fantastical elements and named after one of the sephirot on the kabbalistic Tree of Life . The player seeks to recover four lost artifacts : the Rod of Osiris , the Holy Grail , the Philosopher 's Stone , and the Ark of the Covenant . According to Horse , " The relics you 're searching for are not what you think they are " . The first world , Binah , includes aspects of

Arthurian legend , including Morgan Le Fey and the Knights Templar , as well as Stonehenge . The second , Chesed , features Aztec ruins and a submarine interior . The third , Din , centers around an underground transit system , a steampunk carnival , and a mechanical maze . The final world , Chokmah , takes place outside Area 51 .

Throughout the game , the player finds and uses Tarot cards to unlock new areas and gain more information about the true history of the world . Upon returning to the Bequest Globe between worlds , the player sees the Roman numerals in its display light up in relation to the cards that have been recovered . After recovering three of the lost artifacts , the player fails to recover the last one , the Ark of the Covenant , which takes the form of a nuclear warhead . The player is able to choose one of three endings , depending on whether they decide to enter a final doorway in the chambers of one of the two opposing factions represented by Kether and Malchut , or enter a new central chamber via the Bequest Globe .

Choosing either of the two doors results in an ending in which the player is trapped in a dystopian world : either Kether 's , a technological police state , or Malchut 's , a society of forced genetic manipulation . Both have ominous men in black overseeing the proceedings . If the player instead chooses to open the central chamber , a scene with a group of grey aliens approaching is briefly shown , wherein they say , " We are coming , for we are Legion . " All three options lead to the same ending credits , which feature a voice @-@ over describing the murder of Osiris .

= = Gameplay = =

Drowned God uses a point @-@ and @-@ click interface and first person perspective typical of games similar to Myst of the mid- to late @-@ 1990s . The player navigates and interacts with the game world by clicking the mouse on different parts of the screen . The mouse cursor changes shape depending on the action clicking will perform : an arrow for moving to another location , a face with an arrow to pick up or place Tarot cards , and an Eye of Providence for activating or interacting with objects in the environment . Frequent cutscenes provide background information and advance the storyline .

The game is filled with a variety of puzzles that must be solved to advance the story . These include memory games and mazes . Others involve competing against a computer @-@ controlled opponent , completing a sequence in a limited number of moves , operating mechanisms , or using an inventory item . Puzzles do not all have to be completed in a precise order ; there is some flexibility in terms of being able to move through game areas and work on different challenges .

One of the best received puzzles in the game involves arranging the pieces of a dialogue between the sculpted heads of Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein . The player listens to the randomly ordered statements made by each head , then decides how to chronologically arrange the statements to form a coherent conversation based on context .

= = Development = =

Harry Horse conceived the game 's ancient planetwide conspiracy . Horse had previously written several children 's books and received the Scottish Arts Council Writer of the Year award for his 1983 book , The Ogopogo : My Journey with the Loch Ness Monster . He began forging documents that same year as a way to earn money . The story which became the basis for Drowned God was originally a phony manuscript Horse wrote in 1983 , ostensibly describing events after the destruction of the lost city of Atlantis . The manuscript , dated 1846 , was said to have been written by the English poet Richard Horne , who shares Horse 's birth name . Horse 's initiation into the concept of an alternate history came in the early 1980s , when he first encountered professor Ian Halpke , who explained to him that information from the Kabbalah and ancient Jewish texts " hide and encipher the secret " , namely , human evolution was aided by extraterrestrial intelligence . According to Horse , Halpke believed the Ark of the Covenant was a nuclear device , and that humans and pigs share compatible genes .

Initially , experts determined the manuscript was genuine , as the date Horse picked matched the

time period Horne had been alive and active , and the manuscript 's topics matched the poet 's interests . Horse had written the manuscript without knowing any of these details . After his hoax was discovered , Horse held onto the text for the next decade , until he played Myst and 7th Guest and decided the point @-@ and @-@ click adventure genre was a good match for his conspiracy theory @-@ inspired ideas . He later said that while the story of Myst did not interest him , the game 's artwork and the sense of immersion inspired him to immediately begin working on Drowned God in 1994 .

The game was originally commissioned by a division of Time Warner and was later taken over by Inscape when that division closed . Horse worked with Inigo Orduna and Anthony McGaw for six months designing the game , then cooperated with the game 's artists and modelers until the project 's completion . The game 's producer , Algy Williams , hired puzzle expert Chris Maslanka , whose output he called " fiendishly difficult " , to design the game 's puzzles together with John Morris . Williams also employed sculptor Greg Boulton , who had previously worked on the Peter Gabriel video " Sledgehammer " . Drowned God 's music was written and performed by an ambient music duo operating under the name Miasma . William S. Burroughs was originally scheduled to narrate the game , but died just before he could begin recording . McGaw and Williams later founded the company Babel Media , which specializes in video game localization .

= = Release = =

Drowned God was released on October 31 , 1996 for the Windows 95 operating system . In its first two weeks , it sold 34 @,@ 000 copies in the United States . It was one of the top ten best @-@ selling video games in United States during the first month after its release , but bugs and poor support from the developers caused it to fall out of favor with gamers by December . By February 1998 , the game had sold over 60 @,@ 000 copies . Around the time of the game 's release , Horse stated that its story was incomplete , and that the rest of the story would be revealed in a sequel called CULT , planned to center around Area 51 . However , he killed himself a decade after the game 's release , and no sequel was ever completed .

= = Reception = =

Drowned God received mixed to positive reviews , with many critics complimenting the game 's ideas and imagery while giving a less favorable response to its audio , puzzles , and execution . GameSpot reviewer Vince Broady wrote that the game sounded very promising , and might " also raise awareness of the thread of deception that runs throughout recorded history . " Steve Ramsey of Quandary said Drowned God presented its massive assortment of conspiracy theories entertainingly . Ray Ivey of Just Adventure called Drowned God " the strangest , creepiest , most psychedelic adventure game I 've yet to come across . " Although Ivey did not understand much of the game , he found it enjoyable , because " it made sense to the game 's characters and creators . "

T. Liam McDonald of PC Gamer wrote that he was " fascinated by the strong sense of style and the intellectual approach to terrific subject matter " . Steven Levy and Patricia King of Newsweek found the game to be " richly detailed and original " . In 2012 , Andy Hughes of Topless Robot put the game at the top of his list of " 9 Surprising Literary References In Videogames " . Hughes wrote that the game was one that could be played from start to finish " without having any idea what the hell 's going on " , noting its references to a wide variety of subjects , including Egyptian mythology , The Man in the Iron Mask , and the Bermuda Triangle .

Boardy complimented the graphics , writing , " Drowned God is loaded with freaky animations and unexpected visual twists " . Ramsey praised the visuals and the audio , saying both contributed to the game 's " shadowy and secretive feelings " . His one significant criticism was that dialogue was difficult to hear , with no option to display text for it . Regarding the game 's audio aspect , Boardy said , " The soundtrack is less impressive , primarily because of overuse : The background effects drone on mercilessly , and many of the game 's narratives (which are universally well @-@ written

and finely acted) must be listened to over and over again . "

 The puzzles , according to Boardy , were of uneven quality . He called some " hopelessly difficult " and others extremely derivative . By contrast he considered the Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton dialogue puzzle " brilliant " , but said , " Ideas as original as Horse 's call for puzzles to match , not rehashes of things we 've seen far too many times already . " Ramsey thought the puzzles were challenging but not overly difficult , arguing " on almost every occasion I felt that I was making progress , and I never felt bogged down and hopelessly lost . " He considered the puzzles to be mostly well @-@ integrated , and found those that were not did not detract from his enjoyment . Ivey remarked , " For puzzle lovers , Drowned God is a treasure trove . ... This collection of tricky puzzlers are challenging and frequently innovative . "

 Boardy panned the navigation for being confusing , counter @-@ intuitive , and requiring the player to revisit locations multiple times . He concluded his review by saying , " The net effect is that the story ? which made this game so intriguing in the first place ? is almost totally lost , and that is a shame . " GameSpot considered the game one of the most disappointing of 1996 in their annual recap , writing " the great premise is buried like the mysteries of the ages themselves under a mediocre Myst clone " . Bob Strauss of Entertainment Weekly opined that the game tried to be too many things , and quipped , " the result is a game so obscure , you 'd be better off perusing something more comprehensible ? like the collected works of Zoroaster . " Mark Reece and Brooke Adams of Deseret News also had mixed feelings about the game , calling it both " clever and deep " and " frustrating and difficult " . McDonald wrote that he was " frustrated by the lack of good game play . " Hughes called the pace of the game and its puzzles both " tedious " and " ponderous " , but said it " had ambition out the genetically modified ears . "