= Myst V : End of Ages =

Myst V : End of Ages is a 2005 adventure video game , and the fifth and final installment in the Myst series . The game was developed by Cyan Worlds , published by Ubisoft , and released for Macintosh and Windows PC platforms on September 20 , 2005 . As in previous games in the series , End of Ages 's gameplay consists of navigating worlds known as " Ages " via the use of special books and items which act as portals . On each Age , the player solves puzzles and discovers story clues hidden in the Ages or written down in diaries and journals . The player 's actions in the game decide the fate of the ancient D 'ni civilization .

In a departure from previous titles in the Myst series , End of Ages replaces pre @-@ rendered environments with worlds rendered in real @-@ time 3D graphics , allowing players to freely navigate the Ages . The faces of actors were digitally mapped onto three @-@ dimensional character models to preserve realism . Cyan paid attention to making the game more accessible to new players by the addition of multiple methods of navigation and an in @-@ game camera . Myst creator Rand Miller decided to give players the ability to decide the fates of the game 's characters as a gift to Myst fans .

End of Ages was positively received upon release . Despite complaints such as lessened interactivity compared to previous games and poorer graphics , publications including Macworld , Computer Gaming World , and The Washington Post judged the game a fitting end to the series . After End of Ages 's release , Cyan abruptly announced the end of software development and the layoff of most of its staff , but was able to rehire much of the development team a few weeks later . Including End of Ages 's sales , the Myst franchise had sold more than 12 million copies by November 2007 .

= = Gameplay = =

Myst V : End of Ages is an adventure game taking place in the first person . Players travel across several worlds known as " Ages " , solving puzzles and gathering story clues by reading books or observing the environment . End of Ages offers players three navigation modes to explore . The first , " Classic mode " , uses the same controls used in Myst and Riven ; Ages are divided into locations of interest , or nodes , and the player 's view is fixed at every node . Players advance to other nodes by clicking on portions of the screen . The " Classic Plus " mode uses the control scheme of Myst III : Exile and Myst IV : Revelation ; movement is still node @-@ based but players can rotate their view 360 degrees in any direction . The final navigation mode , known as " Free Look " or " Advanced " mode , allows players to navigate and observe the Ages freely like Uru : Ages Beyond Myst . The WASD keyboard keys are used for walking forward , backward , and sideways , while the mouse changes the player 's point of view .

A new game mechanic to the series is the use of a slate found on all the Ages . These slates can be carved using the mouse to create shapes and symbols . The use of the slate is necessary to communicate with a shadowy race of creatures known as the Bahro . The Bahro understand certain symbols drawn on the slate and will respond to them ; the creatures also retrieve the slate and return it to its original space if the player drops it . Slate symbols can cause environmental changes such as rain or increased wind , which may be necessary for solving puzzles . The slate cannot be carried everywhere due to its size . For example , the player will have to leave the slate behind if he or she wants to climb a ladder .

End of Ages has several features designed to help players complete puzzles . To recall clues or important items , players can use a camera feature to take screenshots , which are then placed in a journal the player can access at any time . Player interactions with other characters are similarly recalled via another journal ; everything a character tells the player is stored and can be viewed at any time . Journal pages are narrated by the voice of the character , and missing pages of the journal appear translucent in menus .

= = Plot = =

End of Ages takes place in the present day , sometime after the events of Uru : Ages Beyond Myst , and begins as the player responds to a letter from Atrus . Atrus is a writer of special volumes called linking books , which serve as portals or links to worlds known as Ages . A linking book to the Age of Myst , the setting of the original game , lies sealed in the ruins of the ancient D 'ni civilization . The D 'ni had the ability to craft linking books , but their society crumbled from within ; Atrus and his family have been trying to restore the D 'ni people and created an Age for the survivors to live on , known as Releeshahn (introduced in Exile) . Atrus by this period is an old man , mourning the deaths of his sons Sirrus and Achenar in Revelation , and the death of his wife Catherine in the period after . In his letter , Atrus expresses concern that his daughter , Yeesha , may be lost as well .

The player starts in Atrus ' old study on K 'veer , an island near the ruins of the main D 'ni city ; in the antechamber outside the study , there is a strange tablet locked in place on an altar . Yeesha links in and explains that legends state that in order to fully restore D 'ni , someone known as the Grower must utilize the tablet . The artifact has the ability to fully control a mysterious enslaved race known as the Bahro . As Yeesha made the wrong decision upon unlocking the tablet , she can no longer use it ; Yeesha instead charges the player with uncovering the tablet 's power . After leaving Yeesha , the player meets a man named Esher near " the Great Shaft " , connecting D 'ni to the surface (as detailed in Myst : The Book of Ti 'ana) . Esher is a survivor of the fall of D 'ni and tells the player that Yeesha cannot be trusted , warning the player not to give her the Tablet . Throughout the Great Shaft , the player collects twelve fragments of Yeesha 's journal . The writings appear to confirm Esher 's warnings , as the narration seemingly indicates that Yeesha has descended into madness , believing herself to be the Grower .

At the urging of both Yeesha and Esher , the player travels across four Ages , collecting four slates that unlock the tablet 's power . Esher occasionally appears in the Ages to offer his counsel , or reveal the histories of his people and the worlds the player explores . Once all four slates are collected , Esher requests that the player bring the tablet to him in the now @-@ unlocked Age of Myst . The player is then returned to K 'veer , where they have four possible choices . Travelling to Myst without the tablet will cause Esher to angrily abandon the player with no way out . If Esher is given the tablet , he will explain he wishes to use the tablet for domination , and will also leave the player trapped . If the player gives the tablet to Yeesha , the tablet simply slips through her hands and disappears into the ground ; she walks away , disappointed , leaving the player trapped in D 'ni . The only good ending involves giving the Bahro the tablet , ending their enslavement . Arriving at Releeshahn , the new home Age of the D 'ni , Yeesha and Atrus thank the player and speak of a new chapter for the D 'ni people ; Esher is handed over to the Bahro to be punished for his crimes . The game ends on a visit to Releeshahn .

= = Development = =

Robyn and Rand Miller , Myst 's creators , had initially decided against creating sequels to 1997 's Riven . However , the publishing rights to the series later transferred to Ubisoft , who commissioned two sequels : Myst III : Exile and Myst IV : Revelation . Myst V : End of Ages was officially announced at the 2005 MacWorld Expo by Myst and Riven 's developer , Cyan Worlds . In the announcement , Cyan stated that the game would be the final installment in the series .

Whereas most previous Myst titles had forgone 3D graphics rendered in real @-@ time in favor of interactive prerendered environments , Rand Miller decided that technology had advanced to the point that End of Ages could use real @-@ time graphics without sacrificing player immersion . " Over the years the Myst games have become increasingly sophisticated , culminating in Myst V , where we offer striking graphics that players can walk smoothly through , " Miller stated in an interview . Miller emphasized that the goal of the game remained for players to become immersed in Myst 's alternate worlds .

A focus in development was to make End of Ages more accessible than previous Myst games , which had often stymied uninitiated players with their puzzles . Learning from the control scheme used in another real @-@ time Myst game (a remake of the original entitled realMyst) , Cyan

decided to develop multiple control methods to allow new players to quickly learn the controls , as well as provide a familiar interface for franchise veterans . Esher 's experiences with the player 's quest allowed a hint system to be built into the story . Miller wanted to make a significant change from previous games in the series , in that the player 's actions decide the fate of the characters . When asked about the ending , Miller explained , " The future of civilization is down to this point , and the choices you make determine where it goes . "

Myst games had typically used chroma key to insert footage of actors into digital backgrounds . The models of End of Ages 's characters were instead computer @-@ generated , but Cyan did not want to lose the warmth and feeling provided by using a live actor . Instead Cyan created a contraption mounted to the actor 's faces that captured video of the actor 's faces while they spoke their lines . The video was then manipulated and used as a facial texture which was mapped onto the 3D characters , and the facial movement was also tracked and used to animate the faces of the characters in @-@ game . Motion capture of the body was also used to ensure lifelike movement . Cyan staff were worried that the audio synching for animation would not be finished in time for the E3 unveiling of the game , but were happy with the end results . Critical reaction to game previews and impressions at E3 was highly positive . Miller was relieved , stating that when the mostly shooter game @-@ dominated showcase declared that End of Ages might be the best game in the series , " That feels good " .

= = = Audio = = =

Composer Tim Larkin , a sound designer and audio director at Cyan who had previously worked on realMyst and Uru : Ages Beyond Myst , was given the task of developing Myst V 's musical score . Larkin stated that whereas earlier Myst games had been constrained by technological limitations , the available technology allowed End of Ages to have a more dynamic environment , with the music changing with various timings of different sound effects . Surround sound provided a more realistic and immersive gameplay experience . A major challenge in writing the music was that the score had to be flexible enough to match the non @-@ linear gameplay events . " Games are totally interactive experiences , " Larkin explained . " You don 't guide a player through , since you can 't count on being at a certain place at a certain time . I can 't write cue music to get the player to do this , this and then this . One player might hear the cue and run the other way ! " Larkin had to step away from what he had learned as a jazz composer and musician writing pieces with a definite beginning and end , instead creating music with " less arc " and structure . Larkin admitted that some Myst fans would have preferred a musical style similar to Robyn Miller 's scores for Myst and Riven , but replied by saying that change happens and players would find something to like in the new music if they kept an open mind .

Due to a tight budget , Larkin was unable to hire an orchestra to perform the music ; all the instruments in the soundtrack aside from Larkin 's own trumpet playing are sampled instruments . Larkin used a variety of synthesizers , samplers , and computers to create the score , working at his home studio and Cyan 's offices . Larkin found that the biggest challenge with the score was finishing it on time for the game to ship . The soundtrack was released in CD format on October 25 , 2005 .

= = = Release = = =

End of Ages was packaged in two different retail versions for release in September 2005 , to coincide with the 12th anniversary of the franchise 's debut . A standard edition , containing only the game , was released for Windows @-@ based PCs in a CD @-@ ROM format . The limited edition contained the original soundtrack , a collector 's lithograph , strategy guide , and a bonus DVD with a " making of " retrospective on the Myst franchise . The video was made by GameTap , a subsidiary of Turner Broadcasting System ; the behind @-@ the @-@ scenes feature was the first game @-@ related documentary developed by Turner . The limited edition was shipped on hybrid Mac OS X / Windows DVDs , with Macintosh conversion provided by Quebec @-@ based

developer Beenox ; this was the only commercial option for Macintosh players .

Shortly before End of Ages was released , Cyan announced the layoff of most of the staff and that the company would be ceasing software development . The reason for the sudden closure was a failure to gain financial backing for a new project after End of Ages 's development . Part of the blame for the company 's financial troubles were placed on the commercial disappointment of Uru : Ages Beyond Myst . The company was , according to Rand Miller , " able to pull a rabbit out of a hat " and rehire " almost all " the employees a few weeks later after backing for a new project was secured . With the release of End of Ages , Cyan stated that their next game would have nothing to do with the Myst series . While pitching an unnamed online game to publishers , Cyan produced Cosmic Osmo 's : Hex Isle with online content site Fanista .

= = Reception = =

Overall , End of Ages was well received by critics . The game was judged a fitting end to the series , and in combination with the other games in the series sold more than 12 million copies by November 2007 .

As with previous games , the visuals of End of Ages were widely praised . The switch to real @-@ time rendering was generally seen as a positive step . The game 's music was lauded ; GameSpot 's review noted the use of music in End of Ages was sparse , but the little audio present set the proper tone for different Ages . A few reviewers , such as Charles Herold of the New York Times , felt that the graphics fell short of what was possible , especially compared to the prerendered visuals of Myst IV : Revelation . While Greg Kasavin of GameSpot felt that though the visuals were on par with previous games , End of Ages was missing several elements which made Myst IV more immersive ; only important , story @-@ driving items could be interacted with , for example , and the player makes no sounds or footsteps in the game .

The characters of Myst , occasionally ridiculed in previous games , were well received in End of Ages . Publications such as GameSpot and IGN praised the voice acting and the switch to character models ; Jaun Castro of IGN stated that though the player could not interact directly with the characters , the rendered characters wound up " feeling more genuine and real " than in previous games , speaking with genuine conviction and animation . Special praise was given to David Ogden Stiers for bringing Esher to life . A dissenting opinion was presented by reviewer Mark Saltzman , who thought that players might become bored by the " overly dramatic " character dialogue .

Critics warmly received the addition of the slate and its related puzzles . Oliver Clare of Eurogamer called the slate system a welcome addition to the Myst formula , although he felt that the recognition of symbols was occasionally too precise . Paul Presley of Computer and Video Games felt that the slate concept could have been explored further , while GameSpot enjoyed the environmental effects created by the slates . End of Ages won several awards upon release , including IGN 's " editor 's choice " . Larkin 's music was nominated under the " Best Interactive Score " category at the 2006 Game Audio Network Guild Awards , and won the 2006 Game Industry News award for best soundtrack .