

# Adventure Lantern

ISSUE #37

DECEMBER 2012

## REVIEWS

- Resonance
- Yesterday
- Shadows on the Vatican, Act 1
- Myst Collection



We wish you a happy New Year  
and many fun adventures ahead!

## EDITORIAL

Amidst the plethora of junk mail that clutters my inbox are occasional advertisements about video games. I delete most of these ad e-mails, either because the titles featured do not particularly appeal to me or I do not see them in time to do anything about the discounts offered. Of course, from time to time there is a title that piques my curiosity. I first came across Letters from Nowhere in such an advertisement e-mail. According to the ad, Letters from Nowhere was a casual adventure where a woman went on a search for her missing husband. The ad was offering the original game and its sequel as a bundle at a fairly deep discount.

It was the Spring semester of 2012; a hectic yet somewhat lonely period. There was an overwhelming amount of information I had to digest each day to keep up with school. I had long given up in attending lectures in person. Instead, I was trying to stay afloat by watching lecture videos and reading. As such, outside the few hours I got to spend with my family in the evenings, the majority of my days were spent at home, alone, and in quiet contemplation.

At another time, I might have glossed over a title like Letters from Nowhere. It is difficult for any game to stand out among the wide selection of casual adventures currently available. Even robust casual adventures that offer substantial amounts of content and gameplay styles comparable to commercial adventure games are easy to overlook. Yet the name Letters from Nowhere resonated with me, capturing the sense of isolation I felt.

I did not purchase the game the day I saw the ad. There wasn't enough time to play through even a short casual adventure. It would be just one more thing to gather dust on the proverbial shelf. Nevertheless, the name stayed with me. A few weeks later, I found a demo of the game and had an opportunity to see its first chapter and listen to its soundtrack. The first chapter was called 'Welcome to Nowhere.' The protagonist Audrey's loneliness in her search for her husband and the haunting tunes of the game's soundtrack once again reverberated with me. Though my days were far less dramatic than Audrey's, in a sense, I too felt that I was Nowhere, carrying on a seemingly endless journey. But I did not purchase the game on that day either.

In the months that followed, Letters from Nowhere became something of a symbol. At times when I felt particularly worn down, I would load the demo or visit a site that was selling the game. It became a reminder that others also worked through what I did and felt what I felt. It became a small glimmer of hope and one of several little things that made it easier to continue the journey. I refused to buy the game for a long time, thinking that actually playing it would somehow diminish the special meaning its title came to hold for me.

I finally bought the game and its sequel a few weeks ago, in anticipation of my upcoming winter break. When I finally got around to playing it, Letters from Nowhere did not disappoint. It was a pleasure to play through both games, helping Au-



Cover image:  
Yesterday

**ADVENTURE LANTERN**  
#12 (37) December 2012

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## EDITORIAL

drey complete her quest. While the adventure-gaming veterans reading this might frown on me for liking a casual adventure, this old and simple yet entertaining and surprisingly atmospheric game provided exactly the kind of break I needed.

Like several other games, movies, and books, Letters from Nowhere will always hold a special meaning for me. The circumstances under which I encountered the game allowed it to become more than a simple hidden object hunt. It is not a game I can recommend to all adventurers, but it is most definitely one I will remember for a long time.

In the months since I saw the Letters from Nowhere ad, Jonathon worked hard to keep Adventure Lantern going. With his help, we have been regularly publishing issues since July 2011. From the hefty news sections to the thoughtful reviews, I found the PDFs to be consistently entertaining. Thanks to Constantin and more recently Igor, we also had a tremendous opportunity to improve magazine formatting. Our recent PDFs look very vibrant and crisp with elegant layouts.

The December 2012 issue you are about to read is another shining example of the kind of hard work Jonathon, Nick, Constantin, and Igor are turning out each month. The news section is as thorough as ever and the reviews of Yesterday and Shadows on the Vatican Act 1 are engaging. However, my favorite piece is Jonathon's lengthy review on Myst. It is clear that Jonathon put a great deal of thought into this article and really considered the impact Myst

had on the adventure industry. More importantly, I hope you will agree that Jonathon's love of the adventure genre really comes through in the review.

My only regret is that I have not been able to actively contribute to the magazine with my role limited to publishing the completed PDFs and maintaining the Web site. This editorial is my first writing contribution in months. It is hard to say when I will be able to do more writing. My personal journey through Nowhere is not yet finished. However, I am confident that the magazine is in good hands. I am very proud of what Jonathon, Constantin, and Igor have accomplished and can't wait to see where they will take Adventure Lantern in 2013. Here's hoping you will stick around and enjoy the ride. May your lanterns always burn bright.

Until next time,

– Ugur Sener



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Among a bunch of other interesting news this last month comes news of sequels to long dead series. It was not very long ago that I reviewed the entire Dracula trilogy which started in 1999 with Dracula: Resurrection and ended in 2008 with a new company, Kheops, developing a new game with a completely new story and set of characters. I have no trouble saying that I love every entry in this series and that it is one of my personal favorite adventure game series. A fourth entry has finally been announced and I am

very excited to see more details in the near future.

Even closer to my heart is the newly announced Syberia 3 deal. Up to a month ago Syberia 3 was very clearly vaporware with every indication that it was never going to start development; But completely out of the blue came the announcement that Sokal had just signed a deal to begin development on the title.

– Jonathon Wisnoski



### Agustin Cordes Interview

A new whopping six page interview with Agustin, of Scratches fame, was posted on the Adventure Gamers site this last month with lots of new details.

### ResidualVM

The first stable release of the Grim Fandango launcher for modern computers is finally here. Which is not to say they are done development or it is perfect, but this is a stable release and Grim Fandango is completable with only a few minor glitches according to their compatibility page.

## ResidualVM

Over the years ResidualVM has expanded, so it is no longer just a way to play Grim Fandango on new hard-

ware. In fact it is a cross-platform 3D game interpreter which allows (or will allow) you to play Lua-based 3D adventures: Grim Fandango, Escape from Monkey Island, and Myst 3 Exile, provided you already have their data files. ResidualVM just replaces the executables shipped with the games, allowing you to play them on systems for which they were never designed!



## Announcements



### Memoranda

Set to be released sometime in the second quarter of 2013, Memoranda is a hand drawn point and click adventure inspired by Haruki Murakami's short stories.



### Dracula 4

What appears to be the fourth installment in the famous, and personally loved, Dracula series has been announced, or at least I think it has. No one is actually saying Dracula 4,

but it is the right company so I assume they are talking about some sort of continuation of the series. It is scheduled for a second quarter of 2013 release.

### The Red Queen of Oz: Two Fates

The people that have been trying to resurrect the old Delaware St. John series have launched another Kickstarter for a casual sounding adventure set in the Wonderland and Oz. The game will feature point and click navigation, puzzles, and a story driven objectives as well as turned based JRPG style combat. Apparently, most of this gameplay can be skipped, creating a custom playthrough. You you only have to play the sequences you like, and focus on one gameplay type or the other.





### Syberia 3

As of the 26th of November Syberia 3 is no longer vaporware. Benoit Sokal, the original designer of the first two Syberia games, has signed a deal with Anuman Interactive to produce the game for a 2014-2015 release.

### Adamantus

A newly announced game under development with the Dagon engine from the upcoming Asylum Sensecape adventure. Adamantus will be a classically styled first-person

adventure with 360 degree panoramic scenes. Set on an abandoned world once inhabited by a idyllic human society, Adamantus promises a lot of exploration, interesting locales, and puzzles.



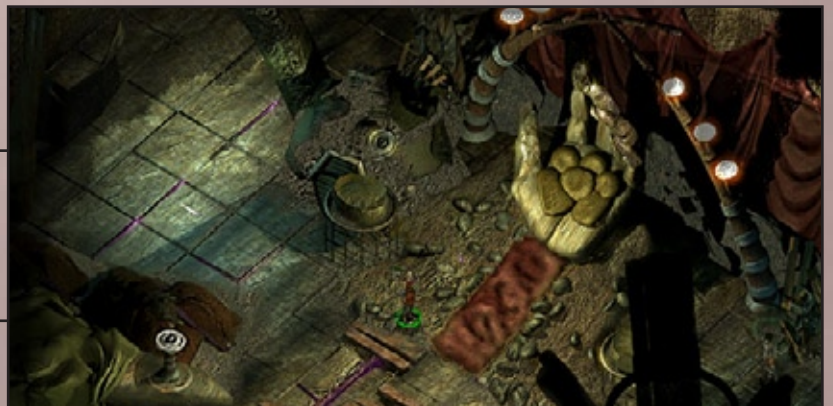
# GOODBYE DEPONIA

### Goodbye Deponia

The third and final installment in the Deponia series has been announced with a fall 2013 release date.

### Planescape: Torment

The story driven cult classic Planescape: Torment has gotten itself a lot closer to a remake/sequel with the purchase of it rights by Inxile.



### Cognition Episode 2: The Wise Monkey

The second episode of Cognition: And Erica Reed Thriller has been announced with a January 30th release date.

When someone close to Erica is kidnapped by the Wise Monkey, a se-

rial killer fixated on the gruesome mutilation of their victims, and Erica is in a race against time to save his life. With the Wise Monkey case in her hands and the FBI's resources already stretched thin, she's on her own to find the killer before it's too late — again.



### Metal Dead Encore

It has just been announced that Metal Dead's sequel, featuring the return of Malcolm and Ronnie, will be coming to the PC sometime 2013.

## Upcoming Releases



### Shadows on the Vatican, Act 2: Wrath

With a planned release of January 2013 the second chapter of Shadows on the Vatican has gotten more details and a trailer released.

This second installment take continues the story of money laundering and murder sounding the Vatican in modern day Italy.





### Leisure Suit Larry in the Land of the Lounge Lizards: Reloaded

The successfully funded Leisure Suit Larry remake is on Steam Greenlight and needs your votes. Al Lowe himself, and other Sierra On-Line veterans, will be working on this 25th anniversary, ground-up, remake of the original Leisure Suit Larry game. The game will have a modern point and click style interface and sport high-res graphics and a fully voiced cast.

### A Short Tale of Solitude

With a first quarter 2013 release planned, and an ongoing Greenlight campaign, Solitude is looking interesting. It is a game that is supposed to combine the genres adventure, survival horror, and slasher action, all with a physiological horror black and white look.

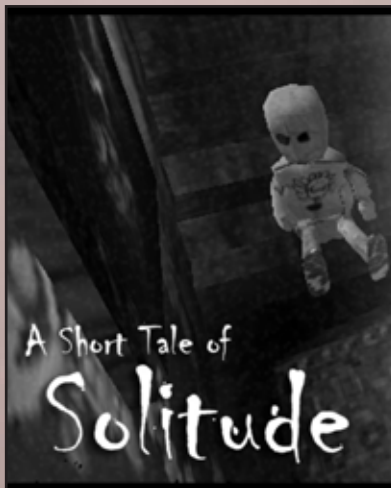
I will let the developer do the rest of the explaining: "Set in northern France during World War I, players are thrust into the role of Sebastien, a 10-year old boy living in an abandoned orphanage. Inspired in part by literary works such as Lord of the Flies, the orphanage's power structure has given way from adults to warring groups of children. Sebastien, lonely and distraught, must find his place amongst the adolescent society as the story takes an otherworldly turn."

### Cradle

Things are not going good at the Flying Cafe development studio. They have lost their game developer and spent all of their available funds. The remaining team are currently planning on taking a small holiday before they resume development with a presumed end of summer 2013 release date.

Cradle is a science-fiction first-per-

son quest with freedom of movement. The story is built around the relations of the protagonist and a mechanical girl, who by enigmatic circumstances find themselves together in a yurt among the desert Mongolian hills. The player is to restore the lost functions of his companion's mechanical body parts and together reveal the mystery of the neglected entertainment park found not far from the yurt.





### Against the Wall

Against the Wall has launched a Greenlight campaign and is currently looking for votes. Apparently, pre-orderers will get a Steam key if it makes it.

Against the Wall is a first-person puzzle-platformer set on the side of an infinite wall. Entire civilizations and ecosystems cling for survival on the side of the wall, every-

one and everything existing under the constant threat of tumbling into an endless sky. The wall is made up of square white bricks of varying sizes. You can pull these bricks out of the wall to form platforms, stairs, and paths. Along the way, you'll encounter cities, forests, volcanoes, castles, and other environments in your journey through this strange world.

## New Releases



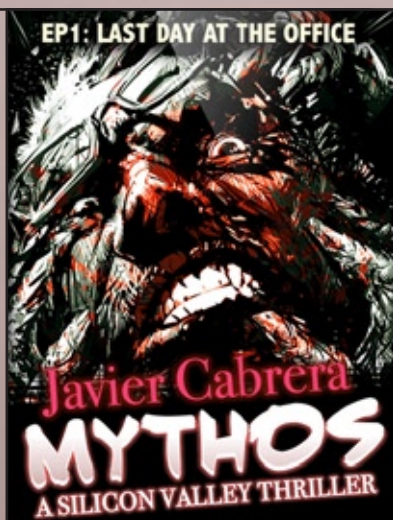
### Miasmata

The game that really gained fame with its immensely successful Greenlight campaign was released November 28th on both GOG and Steam.

Miasmata is a game of survival, exploration and discovery. During your adventure, you'll encounter a mysterious and deadly creature. This creature can stalk you for miles, lurking behind grasses and vegetative cover. By treading carefully and quietly, you may be able to elude the creature. If you're careless, however, you will be forced to confront the creature head-on. Exploration is a key component to Miasmata, so you will need to make full use of an interesting cartography system. You can use landmarks, such as ruins and statues, to triangulate your location and construct a map of Eden's boundaries and contours.

### Mythos: A Silicon Valley Thriller

The two brothers behind the recent Cypher text feature have released the first two episodes of a serial science fiction novel. A series of Mythos contains five short episodes and costs \$4.99, but also offers a discount for the physical book, which will be printed at the end of the season and contains all episodes from the season. Each ebook also comes with loads of extra content like audio files, characters profiles, and other special downloadables; Which are delivered to you in-between episode releases.





### Haunted

A supernatural comedy adventure by DECK13 Interactive and DTP Entertainment, *Haunted* was just released for Windows. It is available now in both disc and downloadable versions from Viva Media, or download- from GamersGate, and The Adventure Shop.



### Moonlight

By Jonas Kyratzes, *Moonlight* is an interactive story about life, dreams, and Stephen Fry.



### Bientôt l'été

The latest game from Tale of Tales, *Bientôt l'été* is a game where you can "smoke, drink, play music, play

Chess™, speak French (to others!), walk along an Earth sea shore and discover its strangely absurd and picturesque secrets."

### Reperfection: Volume One

The first of five planned indie episodes in the style of a graphical novel, *Reperfection: Volume One* has been released and is available on Desura and Zodiac.

*Reperfection* has some interesting sounding mechanics that they describe as: "You unlock new panels and pages of the game by solving different puzzles. By doing so you influence the events in the past and change the future reality, discovering more and more about the exciting storyline."

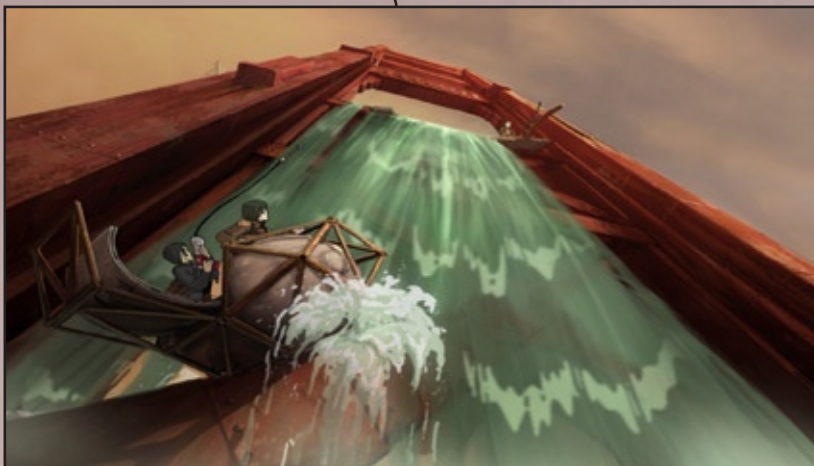


## Updated Releases

### A New Beginning - Final Cut

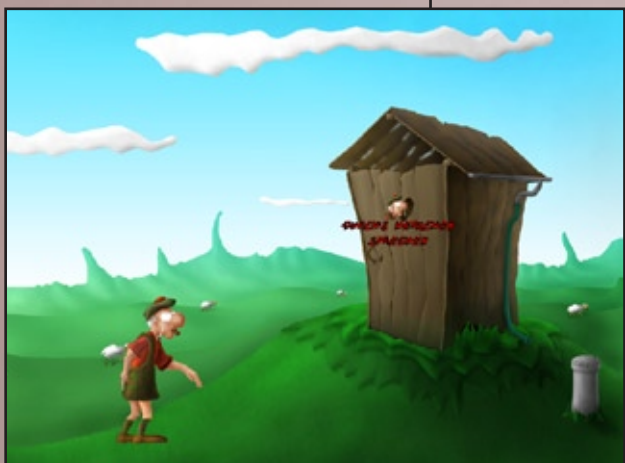
Daedalic Entertainment's A New Beginning has finally made it to Steam with its Final Cut edition. This Final Cut does not seem to include any new content, but either way \$9.99 is not a bad deal for this adventure title.

A New Beginning is a cinematic adventure-thriller done graphic novel-style. In this charming and witty adventure, earth is on the brink of impending climate cataclysm. It's essential to travel the world in order to spare mankind and save the whole from this terrible fate.



### Earl Bobby is Looking for a Loo

The third Earl Bobby adventure game, previously a commercial product, has now been released as Freeware.



### The Journey Down: Chapter One

The Journey Down has been launched on the Apple App Store for the iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch. Additionally, the game will make it to Steam on January 9th.



## News From the Big Blue Cup



**Errand (Crystal Shard)** - Sara wants to go out and play in the sunshine, but she has a few errands to complete before she does that. Nothing special, just sweeping her room, feeding the dog, that sort of thing. What could possibly go wrong?

Featuring two different endings, epic soundtrack by Brassfire, and shiny artwork by Bit Priest, Gameboy, and Corby. Special kudos to Bit Priest, who stuck to drawing while his city was struck by the infamous Hurricane Sandy, and managed to complete quite a lot of art in spite of the force of nature! See the people.

**Future City 3000 (PlantMonster)** - A future hacker in a future city! What does the future hold in FutureCity3000? A short and sweet clicking adventure.



**Gray (Fitz)** - Meet Gray - an unbearably cute and insanely smart alien. Being an alien, he's... well... alienated. Living alone on the Moon, with nowhere fun to go. So one day he decides to go someplace... Follow his unfortunate excursion to Planet Earth!

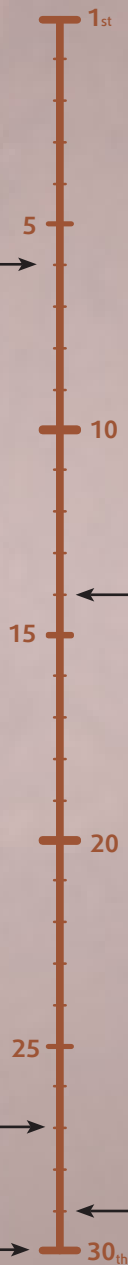


**Donald Dowell and the Ghost of Barker Manor [demo] (Athena Games)** - Donald Dowell is a nice old man in his eighties, retired for many years. Donald's life, except for his "intolerable" wife, is quiet. But Donald feels empty. He has the so-called retiree's syndrome: he's bored to death! The only way to cure his boredom is TO GO BACK TO WORK. After many hours spent in his city, trying to get hired for various jobs, he finally finds his calling: to be a GHOSTBUSTER!

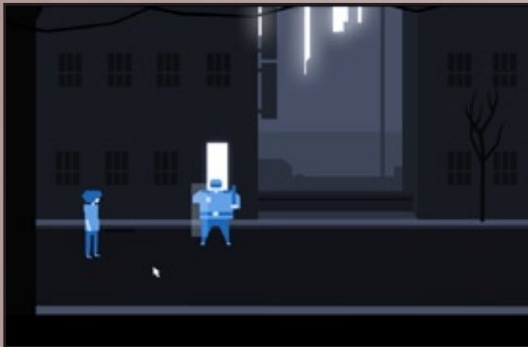
Donald will try to become Bob Delano's assistant (the most famous occult detective in Ireland), be involved in the investigation of Barker Manor and, hopefully, solve the mystery.

**Sister's Little Helper (Pierrec)** - This game was made in less than a week for the Super Friendship Club Compo, the theme was "Ritual".

It is the story of Chloe, a girl who got troubles to sleep, smokes weed, and tells herself stories.

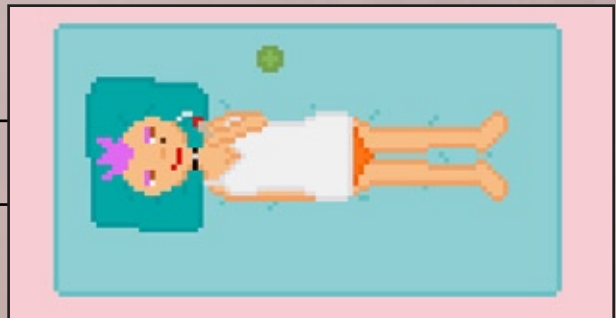


**Errand**  
(Crystal Shard)



**Future City 3000**  
(Plant Monster)

**Sister's Little Helper**  
(Pierrec)



# Resonance



Genre: adventure Developer: XII Games Publisher: Wadjet Eye Games  
Release date: June 19th, 2012 Platform: Microsoft Windows  
Website: <http://www.xiigames.com/resonance>

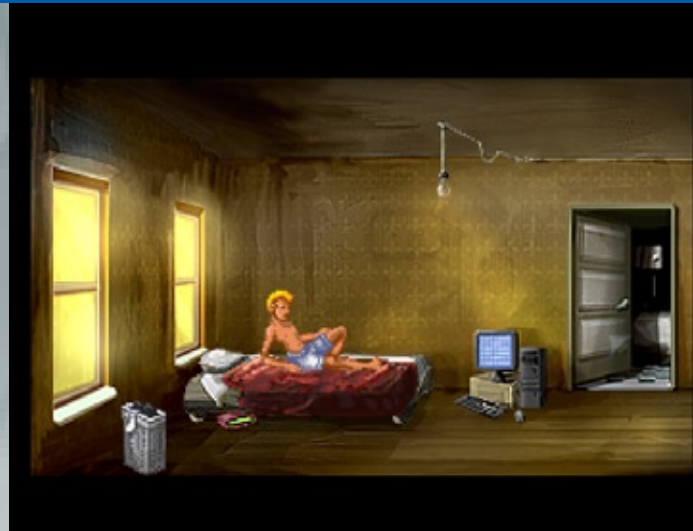


The last game from *Vince Twelve*, of *Linus Bruckman* and *Anna* fame, *Resonance* is a science fiction, espionage adventure developed in tandem with *Wadjet Eye Games*, and the very first commercial game to come out of Vince Twelve's studio. It was a long time in coming, but after the teamed up with Wadjet Eye Games earlier this year it was finally released this June 19th to much critical acclaim.

## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The first thing I noticed when I started playing *Resonance* is the unconventional and confusing interface. In fact it is so unconventional I really think that more emphasis should have been put on the little «How to Play» tutorial, specifically asking the player to view it on the start of a new game. This interface might need some introduction, but its complex nature allows some complex gameplay. Specifically, it is outfitted with two categories in excess of the standard inventory. One, LTM (standing for «Long Term Memory») is a list





of past important ideas and scenes. The other, STM («Short Term memory») is a list of your own devising of any and all objects in any given area. These lists are used together with the inventory in dialogue situations; In addition to the prescribed dialogue options you can ask anyone about any object you hold, any past event or idea that is considered important or, though use of the STM, any object in this general game area. This setup gives you an almost unlimited number of options

in any conversation. Luckily the game is kept quite logical and fairly simple, or you would never be able to guess the expected solution.

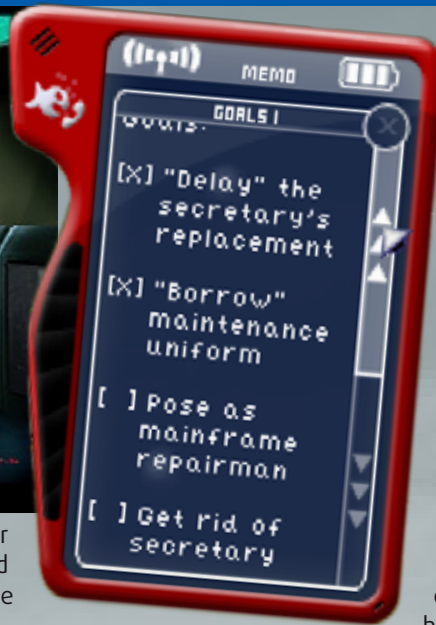
Adding to this customizability of solutions is quite common use of text input. You have to input multiple username and password combos, interact with a simple command line interface, and solve an encrypted cypher, to name a few. The game also puts you in control of four separate individuals

simultaneously for most of the game. Some of the challenges require specific people, others require multiple people; So there is nearly no end to the possibilities.

In Resonance there really is not very many «use item on hotspot» type puzzles, it goes for a more unique approach and pulls it off terrifically. A lot of the challenge comes from logic puzzles, and what inventory based action there is is mostly just story filler and obviously







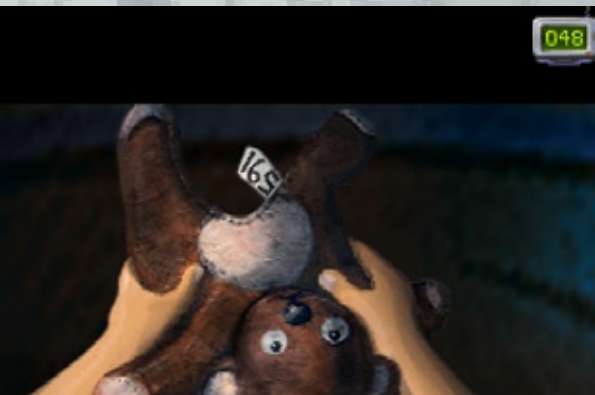
two endings. It is hard sci-fi adventure, filled with espionage, mystery, and murder; You can never be sure of anyone's intentions, or what will happen next. When I say hard science fiction I am particularly talking about the level of detail put into the science descriptions as it actually rather fails at being at all believable or accurate. The story does not even come close to holding up to even High School level physics, and comes off as rather unbelievable and fictitious, but as a whole works

not supposed to be challenging in the least. Another big puzzle genre you will find in Resonance is dialogue based, and requires you to talk about the right thing with the right person to advance the story. It succeeds at being unique, and it is refreshing to see a new take on puzzles. Resonance also provided a lot of alternative content; With multiple ways of solving challenges, extra unnecessary content, multiple paths, and quite a few achievements to unlock. The biggest problem I would say that the gameplay has is a lack of polish in the difficulty. For the most part the game is pretty easy but there are a few really hard ones and for no reason at all it

was rather complicated to get to the cemetery.

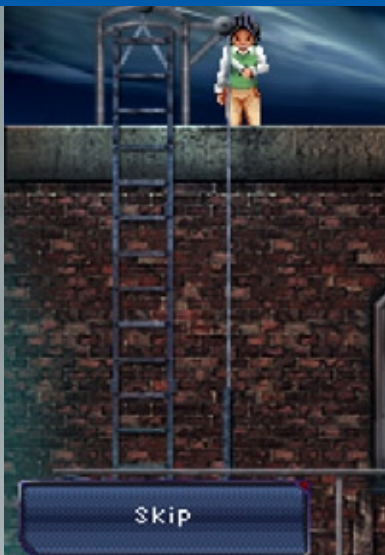
Resonance has beautiful pixel art graphics, and the voice acting is top notch. The music is less memorable, and one thing I noticed is its absence on a few occasions; Sometimes the game was completely silent, which I found strange. The interface is well done and nicely animated; It is an all around good, if not quite terrific.

The story is the second pillar of the game. It is unique and very engaging, with one big twist and



decently well with the story to create an engaging narrative and world.

As a whole Resonance is terrific. It is unique and contains a medium amount of content with a good story. It is a professional production all the way through, and worth checking out.



### **BRIGHT MOMENTS:**

The alternative routes, multiple solutions, and ingenious logic puzzles.

### **FUMBLES IN THE DARK:**

The unbelievable science descriptions.

### **VERDICT:**

A great, unique, adventure.



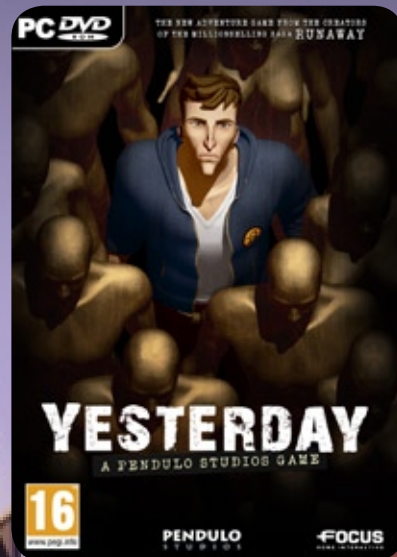
# Yesterday



Genre: adventure Developer: Pendulo Studios Publisher: Focus Home Interactive

Release date: March 22, 2012 Platform: Microsoft Windows

Website: <http://www.yesterday-game.com/>



The latest game from the legendary *Pendulo Studios*, *Yesterday* is a dark, mature, adventure available on PC. It has a strange, touchscreen style, interface that works decently well; A decent spattering of puzzles; And a unique story. It was released for the PC in early 2012.



## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

The game interface for *Yesterday* is quite strange, it feels like it was designed for touchscreens, but is so polished it is not really an annoyance for mouse based users. This interface allows you to go back and replay any scene, get a hint for the current puzzle, see the scene's hotspots, as well as using, combining, and examining objects. Its best feature would have to be the up close view for every hotspot, giving you a detailed view of what

you are interacting with; I found it made a few instances easier because it was obvious what I was interacting with, and what I was not; It was obvious if I had clicked on a whole table, or just one item on the table, for example. The interface is all round very polished, but there is one aspect that needs some work. The scene hotspots are not at all obvious, and the hotspot viewer produces some rather inconspicuous results, making it very hard to take in everything in one glance. I found I was using it

over and over again on a single scene to find all the hotspots.

The graphics of *Yesterday* are a good unique cartoon style, that I found slightly reminiscent of *Another World*. The character animation is fantastic; The cinematics numerous and interesting; And it has a cast of excellent voice actors. It is a professional creation, and it definitely shows it.

What makes the game is its story. Everything else is professional and decent, but ultimately bland. The



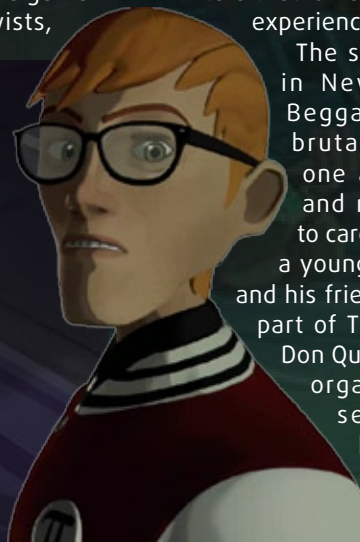


story is 100% original and I have never seen anything else like it in a game. This story is extremely mature and filled with torture, murder, psychopathy, and sex. It is

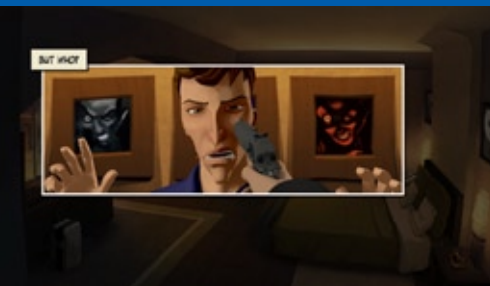
dark and disturbing, and about and filled with death; This makes it not for all audiences, but it also makes it a very original adventure game story. It is filled with twists,

mystery, suspense, action, and romance; Hope, despair, rage, fear, and pride. It is a terrific gripping tale that is very much worth experiencing.

I HIRED YOUR MOTHER FIRST, JOHN, BUT AFTER A WHILE SHE CAME TO A DEAD END. I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO GO FROM THERE.



The story starts off in New York City; Beggars are being brutally murdered one after another, and no one seems to care. Henry White, a young and rich heir, and his friend Cooper, are part of The Children of Don Quixote, a charity organization that seeks out the homeless to offer aid. They care, and are



the first to investigate. Years later, the killer has still not been caught but White has not given up and, armed with his inherited fortune, has hired John Yesterday to investigate. By the time we take over his story, Mr. Yesterday has lost all of his memories after apparently making a breakthrough in the case he no longer remembers.

There are a lot of good puzzles in *Yesterday*, and few amazing ones. And when it works, the hint

system works well. I liked how, in some instances, the comment for an incorrect solution directed you towards the correct solution. The game also had a more conventional hint system, but sometimes even this did not give enough of a hint. Probably the biggest issue I had with the puzzles is a few instances of completely ambiguous goals that really got me stuck. The game features four endings, all picked at the very end. Otherwise, the game

is completely linear, but it felt quite open, and they did a good job of hiding the invisible walls.

*Yesterday* is a great game and I think my favorite of all *Pendulo Studio's* games, and I am a fan of the *Runaway* series. At the very least I think it is definitely the best game they have made since *Runaway* original. Its story is like nothing I have seen in an adventure game before, and personally I found it thrilling and enthralling. ●



### BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The twists, turns, and surprises in this fabulously unique story.

### FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The subject matter makes this a mature audience only adventure. Also, the puzzles could of been better.

### VERDICT:

One of the best adventures I have played this year. A true masterpiece, and easily my favorite *Pendulo* game.



# Shadows on the Vatican

## Act 1: Greed



Genre: adventure Developer/publisher: 10th Art Studio  
Release date: December 22, 2011 Platform: Microsoft Windows  
Website: <http://www.shadowsonthevatican.com/>



*Shadows on the Vatican (SotV)* is an 2012 episodic adventure game by the same people behind the new *Zodiac* adventure game store. It tells a tale of greed and murder surrounding the Vatican in modern day Italy. It has been involved in a few bundles and PWYW sales already, so it has been available at very good prices, But normally it is available in their store or Desura for just under \$8.00, a decent price for its roughly five hour length. *Act 1: Greed* is the first of the planned quadrilogy and sets the scene for the following adventures by introducing James Murphy, a doctor and ex-priest who is thrown into a mysterious conspiracy when his best friend gets seriously injured, and put into a coma, under suspicious circumstances.

### Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

*SotV* installs very strangely. There is a single installer for all systems but you are made to choose your resolution bracket, and if you choose wrong the game will simply not work; With no way to change your decision after the fact. I originally thought I should install the high resolution



JAMES: Cardinal Brahman.



JAMES: Here we are, finally.

version, since I was not all the far removed from the size and it could be scaled slightly and still come out way better than the low resolution version. *SotV* does not have this feature, it runs at exactly two resolutions with no options for scaling.

When I did finally get the right graphics installed the game ran pretty well. The soundtrack is good; The graphics are a little rough, at least the low resolution version, but decent. But, some of the settings did not seem to save between sessions; I was constantly turning the sound down. And while you can skip the walking animations between scene changes otherwise you are stuck with some of the slowest movement I have ever seen. It is not horrible, since most scenes are quite small, but when you are forced to travel any decent distance you notice the walking time.

*SotV's* story is only just introduced in *Act 1: Greed*, but there is enough to have an idea of what you will be getting into. It seemed like a decent story filled with intrigue and danger, and at least this first episode's story is enjoyable. There was a lot of reading, I completely skipped one approximately ten page book, but did pull through for the similarly sized diary and all of the numerous and lengthy conversations; Not that you actually have to read these conversations; the game is fully voiced, by professional voice actors, and sounds great. But I would not say that the dialogue was great, it seemed to suffer a little from translation problems; It was just slightly off at times. In particular, I liked the little graphical features that they did for the conversations; They have conversation arc icons appearing



## James Murphy

James Murphy is an ex-priest who decided to become a doctor after ending his relationship with the Catholic Church. 38 years old, he is a handsome man whose appealing looks stand in contrast to his serious and unselfish personality. His bigger conflict – which he doesn't deny – is with the Ecclesiastical Authority, but his trust in God, his sense of justice and the deep respect he feels for people and life in general have never been in doubt. He works in a hospital in Chicago, the city where he was born, but he speaks fluent Italian thanks to the years he lived in Rome, especially in the Vatican. He has yet to get over the loss of his mentor Dellerio, who died in Africa years earlier.







throughout all conversations, at the time that the topic is first mentioned. So when the barman mentioned his family, in the beginning of his opening monologue, the barman's family

icon flashes on the screen; When he finished talking you could then select this story arc icon among a few others to get further details on this topic. This feature does not change the gameplay

at all technically, but is just a very intuitive and delightful way to go about presenting the conversations.

The gameplay is decently varied. The game has inventory puzzles,



puzzles involving questioning NPCs, logic puzzles, and even mini-games. The logic puzzles in particular were nothing to complain about, I think there were at least a few of these puzzles that were really enjoyable. The inventory ones made up most of the gameplay and were pretty normal; Great filler for the story, but nothing to get excited about. The only complaint I have is with the car chasing mini-game. I believe this was 100% a fail and remember for next time type challenge, where you just play it over and over again until you have everything memorized; It is simply a boring, horrible, experience.

*Shadows on the Vatican, Act 1: Greed* is an all round good adventure



title, but it does not stand by itself. It is just an introduction to the series and until I get to play more I really cannot say if it will be great, decent, or sub-par. If this was the one and only *SotV* title I would say it absolutely is not worth playing, but since it is just the first episode of a series I have to say it is a

successful one. I was introduced to many major and minor characters and got an idea of that is happening in the story. Ultimately, it got me excited for the next chapter of the adventure; I think there is a lot of potential here for a great adventure game, but everything is far from assured at this point. ●



### **BRIGHT MOMENTS:**

The logic puzzles, music, voice, and the conversation interface.

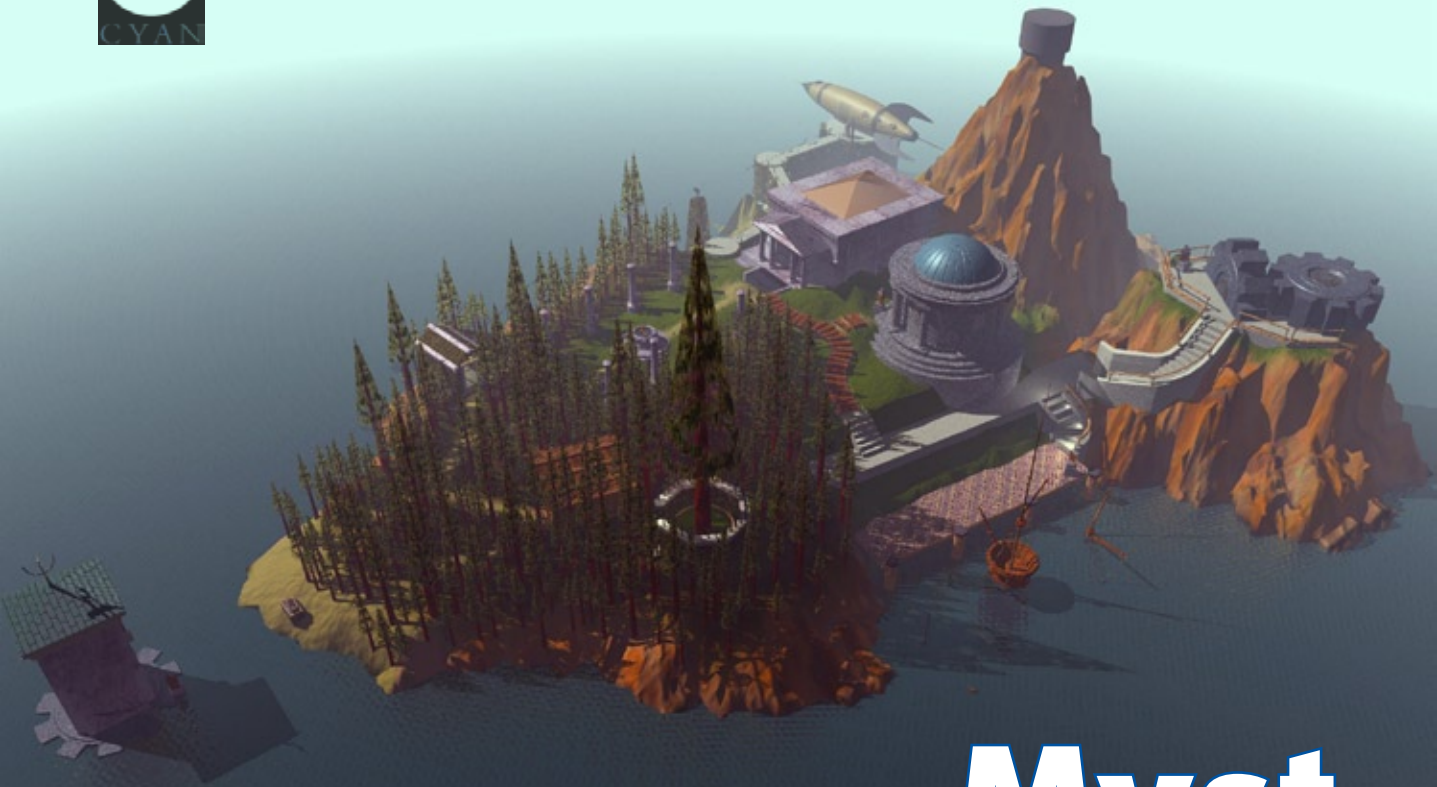
### **FUMBLES IN THE DARK:**

The car chasing mini-game, and the installer.

### **VERDICT:**

A decent beginning to the series.





# Myst

## Myst: Masterpiece Edition *realMyst* and Myst-likes

*Cyan Worlds* was formed in 1987 by the brothers *Rand* and *Robyn Miller*. In the lead-up to *Myst* they focused completely on children adventures; But on September 24th, 1993 *Cyan* released *Myst*, and for good or ill it changed the entire gaming landscape and nothing has been the same since. It was initially released for *Mac OS*, but quickly got ported to *Windows* and eventually got to many consoles, and more recently mobile devices; Beating all previous sales records of the time. It also got not one but two remakes, a total of five sequels, and an unofficial parody game, as well as a mountain of clones.



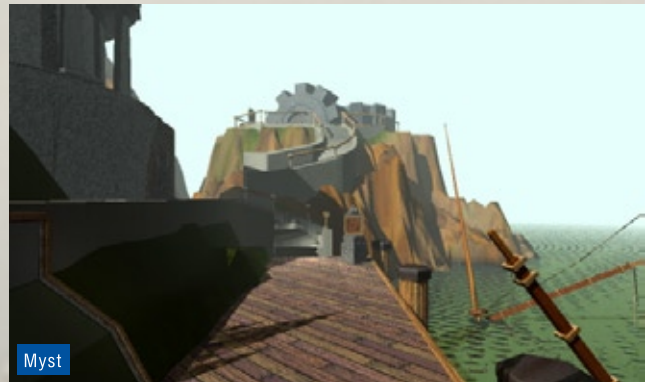
Genre: adventure Developer: Cyan Publisher: Brøderbund  
 Release date: September 24, 1993 Platforms: Mac OS, Microsoft Windows, Sega Saturn, PlayStation, Jaguar CD, AmigaOS, CD-i, 3DO, PlayStation Portable, Nintendo DS, iOS  
 Website: <http://www.cyanworlds.com/products/myst.php>

## Review by Jonathon Wisnoski

This is the second part in our series of articles on the *Myst* franchise, the gameplay article and *Myst* review. To see our previous article; *The Myst Reader and the Story of the D'ni*, our story and novel series review; see our September 2012 issue of *Adventure Lantern*.

*Myst*, in general terms, is a slideshow, node-based, graphical adventure game. It has first-person, pre-rendered, graphics, and is set in a fantasy sci-fi world. In 1999, Cyan went back and remade *Myst*, producing *Myst: Masterpiece Edition (MME)*. For the most part, this remake just took advantage of improving technology to

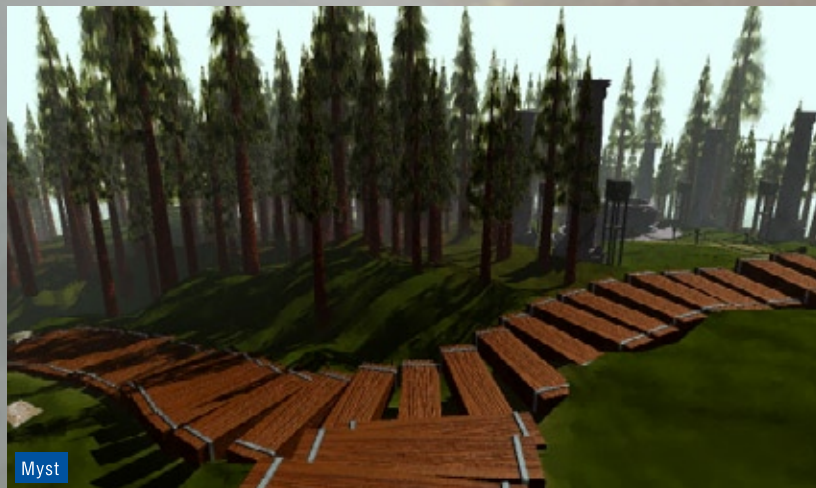
release a version with the original graphics, sound effects, and FMV cutscenes. Back in 1993 the CD-ROMs were just too slow, the HDDs too small, and in general the computers were just not advanced enough to show the full 24-bit images that were initially rendered for the game. So, along with the music and video, these images were reduced; The 24-bit images and video became 8-bit, and the music got a reduced bit-rate. To compensate for this loss in color depth, Cyan used dithering, which produces an illusion of a wider range of colors but also gives a grainy effect. But at least in this case this effect is hardly noticeable,



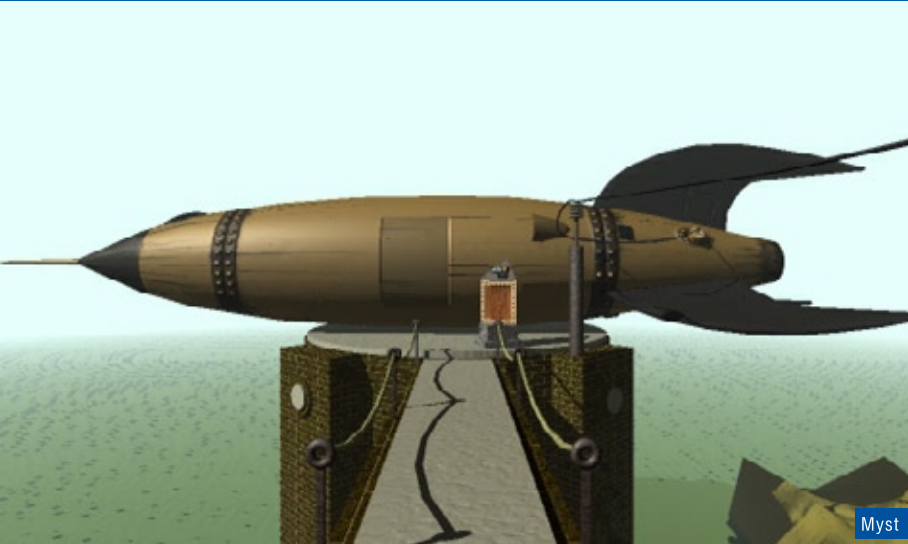
Myst

and the 24-bit graphics of *MME* are basically identical to the dithered 8-bit graphics of *Myst* original. Similarly, for the music and video you are not going to likely notice any big differences. *MME* also added a few minor features, like a help/hint system, an in-game map, and a few additional game screens. All in all, it is a rather disappointing remake, but at least it is clearly superior to the original version, if only very slightly.

*Myst* was again remade in 2000 into a fully 3D game, called *realMyst*. Unfortunately, the average consumer PC was not quite ready for it, meaning it ran extremely slowly on most computers. This contributed to *Robyn Miller* saying: "I only saw *realMyst* after it was released. As a remake, it was a lapse of reason and directionless; overt merchandising of the original *Myst*. It definitely wasn't how we originally envisioned *Myst*, as was promoted." Not that this is something that you will have to worry about with computers nowadays. In addition to the new 3D movement, *realMyst* also adds a few small tidbits such as a day cycle, some weather effects, and Ti'ana's gravestone.



Myst



Myst

few additions in *realMyst*. If possible I recommend playing through *Myst: ME* and then rushing through *realMyst* (it only takes 2-3 minutes) to see the Rime age and perhaps stopping off to see Ti'ana's tombstone along the way. If you only want to play/purchase one, I cannot really give you any advice. Either is fine, they both contain mostly the same content. I would make my decision based mostly on the slideshow vs full 3D aspect.

As discussed in my previous *Myst* article, *Myst's* story is rather unusual. Literally nothing, or almost nothing, happens during the game. You do unravel what happened before you came on the scene, as well as having the option of learning a lot of general world history, and there are three endings to choose from; it is not really much of a choice if you had been paying any attention at all. Because there is no real storyline nor a big list of linear things you must accomplish in *Myst*, the entire game is spent learning about the backstory and how to win. So if you have already beat the game once it only takes about three minutes to beat it a second time, as long as you are willing and able to forgo the learning stage. More interesting than

But by far the biggest addition, and the reason to play *realMyst*, is the new age Rime, which is visitable at the end of game. It is not a particularly big age, but there are some interesting things you can do, and any substantial additional content is nothing to complain about. The graphics are similar, everything is just a little different. I would not say that one is absolutely better than the other, but *realMyst* does allow far higher resolutions, better video, and far improved video integration into the scene; it fixes most of the little graphical problems with the original. The biggest change is of course the free-roaming aspect of the game world, but this cannot easily be called either good or bad and really depends completely on personal preference. One absolute I can say about it is that it makes navigating a few of the environments easier, making the unnecessarily maze-like sections of the game simple to navigate.

One of the main questions asked about *Myst's* remakes is, which one do I play, 2D vs 3D, node based movement vs free-roaming? There is no absolute answer but I do prefer the classic slideshow style and graphics of *Myst: ME*. Not that I would neglect the

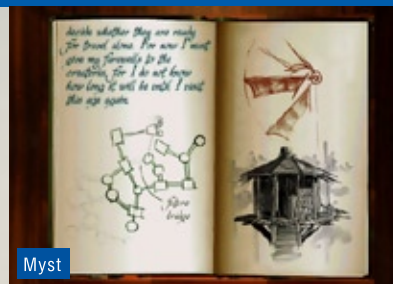


Myst



Myst

# MYST ISLAND



the particular events that directly lead up to *Myst* is the world and its history. *Myst* is set on *Myst* island, where a single family, the last of the ancient civilization of D'ni is based. These people have the knowledge of the Art, a way to bridge the gap between universes and travel to any place they can imagine. They call these worlds ages and use special books to travel between them. So with *Myst*, and its library as your hub, you travel to a series of four ages, in addition to *Myst* island, learn their history, and solve many puzzles.

When you initially arrive on *Myst* you find the place completely deserted, with only a quickly scribbled note to give you a hint as to what might of happened. You find two books with pages torn out, but these are not any ordinary books and when you recombine them with their lost pages the connection to someone trapped within seems to become stronger. The pages from both books are scattered throughout the other four ages. You must travel to these ages and bring back the pages to release the brothers trapped inside, but is it even a good idea to do this? Both brothers blame the other brother, who

is telling the truth? Are both of them guilty? At least for now, they are your only source of information, so there is really no other option but to trust them.

*Myst* is heavily inspired by *Jules Verne's Mysterious Island*; The creators have gone on record as saying that it inspired *Myst's* name as well as the overall solitary and mysterious atmosphere of the island. But the real meat of the game is all the brothers *Miller*, from the graphical design to the detailed world and backstory that they created. It has to be the single most unique world ever imagined, and while it has its faults it more than makes up for them.

*Myst* has a node-based gameworld, separated into individual screens. There are less of these screens than in most comparable games, every node really only has the screens that it needs; There are no path-side screens, and only a very few up or down screens. This makes the game easier and faster by removing a lot of extraneous visuals, but also somewhat wastes the few added extra views, as you are not expecting them so you are likely to walk right past them. It has first-person, pre-rendered, graphics,

and is set in a fantasy sci-fi world; With about 6-7 hours of gameplay within.

It is a very simple game with the simplest of interfaces and controls. In fact it has been said that the modern casual adventure genre shares some similarities, and that certain modern casual adventures are not that far removed from *Myst*. But *Myst* goes one step further than any game I have ever seen. It tries, and I would say succeeds, at creating a game that does not require previous gaming knowledge to play. Sure, problem solving skill plays a big part, but the game's rules could not be any simpler. Click to interact with the game world; Forget about interact/look, you have a single button; And forget about your inventory, you can carry a single item in your hands at a time. All of this allowed *Myst* to appeal to the absolute biggest audience. Unlike most other casual games *Myst* has a depth to it. There is a LOT of reading you can do, and there is nothing casual about the amount of exploration you need to do into the game world. And while I somewhat disagree, *Myst* is not considered an easy game, which casual games necessarily are.



Myst: Masterpiece Edition



Myst: Masterpiece Edition

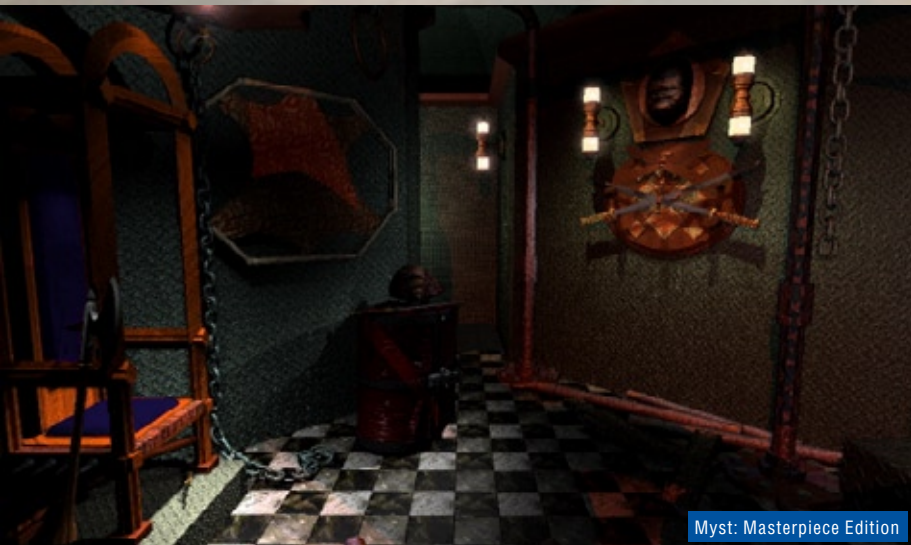
*Myst's* audio and visuals are noticeably dated, but also noticeably evocative. The visuals are low resolution, and there are clearly apparent low quality areas. At the same time a lot of detail has obviously been put into the game's visuals and they look great in spite of their limitations. It is the animation that normally is obviously flawed, or at least its integration with

the other graphics. For example, the door animation simply looks horrible, but then the game also features some very nice looking animated butterflies in the center of *Myst* island. You also get to see animated aerial views of the islands that look fantastic, but then when they try to integrate some live-action cutscene animation into the scene they leave obvious edges. Most of these graphics are quite surreal sci-fi graphics, with a moderate amount of fantasy thrown in. The actual genre is steampunk, but you do not really see all that much of that in *Myst*. *Myst* is filled with both computer-generated animation and live-action cutscenes. Both are technically well done, though I cannot say that the content of live-action is of a similar caliber.

The sound in general is not that great, yes the ambient music is very good, but the individual game sounds are far from polished. Originally, the developers did not want to include any music, fearing that it would interfere with the gameplay; But when they finally did see how music affected the gameplay experience it became obvious that it was needed; Leading to *Robyn Miller* composing the entire

soundtrack. *Myst's* OST is simply put, amazing ambient music, and worth listening to all by itself but even better when accompanied by the game's visuals. I personally, think it is one of the better game OSTs ever created and a must have for game soundtrack enthusiasts. The one aspect of *Myth's* presentation that I think is all-round horrible is its live-action cutscenes; The acting and script is just completely unbelievable and uninteresting, it is literally laughably bad at times.

The gameplay of *Myst* contains many puzzles, and most of the time spent in *Myst* will be trying to figure out these puzzles; Experimenting with controls and figuring out what machines do, or working out some logic riddle. In this way it was very much like the later adventure, *The Dig*, but with more emphasis placed on observation of the entire environment, which contains all the information you need to solve that age's puzzles. *Myst*, in general, has a reputation for challenging puzzles, but I disagree with this assessment. The puzzle themselves are actually quite easy; As long as you fully explore; Observe everything, with an eye for patters and details; And experiment



Myst: Masterpiece Edition



Myst: Masterpiece Edition



Myst: Masterpiece Edition



Myst: Masterpiece Edition

with the various contraptions. If you are not paying attention to the game world than the puzzles will be hard or even impossible, but add just a little sticktoitiveness and a willingness to actually play the game and watch the cutscenes and they become incredibly easy. Also for the casual audience that *Myst* attracted, it is no surprise that *Myst* was considered hard. In general these puzzles are quite good, but there are some exceptions; The spaceship sound puzzle on *Myst* island is just impossible for the tone deaf and quite hard to use either way as the machine controls are extremely finicky. The game also concentrates 99% of all reading into one library, instead of spreading it out. And every single hint needed for *Myst* island's four major puzzles are similarly in one location.

The single biggest issue I have with the gameplay is the handling of the red and blue pages. Every age has two book pages, one red and one blue. You can bring these pages back to the *Myst* Library to reconnect them to their respective linking books; Repairing the connection with the the two trapped brothers, one to a book. In general you want to do this for both books, but you can only carry one page at a time. So you have to do a lot of backtracking for the second page. Most ages do not make this too hard, but it is still

a big inconvenience, and one age in particular forces you to navigate a maze each time. I do not understand why this was not improved in latter remakes and ports, but it never is fixed, and there is no logical reason why you would only ever be able to carry one page to begin with.

*Myst* is not a great game, but I feel it continues to be evocative to this day, even without any consideration being paid to any legacy. It is an interesting game with some faults, but looks and plays moderately well, even 20 years after its first release. If it was released today it would seem very dated, but I believe I would still give it a score ranging from 2-3 stars. *realMyst*, since it fixed most of these dated graphics, would score better; Not that I really think it is more enjoyable to play.

*Myst* was built on an early predecessor to the World Wide Web, HyperCard, and simply consists of documents interconnected with hyperlinks. HyperCard was primarily used for text, but with a little retrofitting, it was repurposed to show *Myst*'s rich images, video, and sounds. Additionally, the original version of *Myst* had a lot of compression done to all the multimedia content, and they did quite a good job; Producing true-color-like scenes while reducing the size from 500KB to around 80KB per screen. Of course, *realMyst*

uses completely different tech; It is built on an early engine from their then ongoing project *Mudpie*, which eventually turned into *Uru Live*. *Myst*'s world, or more precisely worlds, were created in full 3D, and then rendered into all the individual scenes, more than 2,500 of them. In addition to these images, more than 66 minutes of video is used and 40 minutes of synthesized music.

*Myst* was rather revolutionary at its time and has a unique place in history. But even bigger than its list

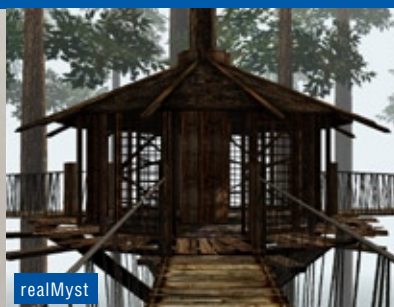
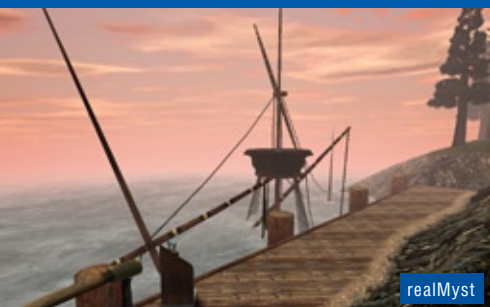


realMyst



realMyst



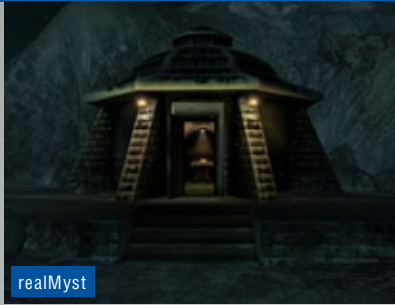


of real accomplishments is its list of falsely accredited firsts. It has been called the first exclusive CD title; The first first-person adventure, or even the first adventure game; And the first photo-realistic game (aka the first with completely pre-rendered graphics). All of these false assumptions are easily disproved with the singular example of the adventure game *7th Guest*, that was released one year prior to *Myst*; Not that many other, far older, examples, like *King's Quest*, do not exist that disprove most of these false assumptions as well. But *Myst* was a revolutionary game and arguably the best looking game of its time, and was considered photorealistic. Because of these state of the art graphics, and minimalistic gameplay, it was the first computer game to appeal to everyone, from hardcore gamers to

people without computers, and even demographics who had yet to show any interest in video gaming at all, such as women. Because of this wide appeal, *Myst* was by far the biggest selling computer game of its time; A record it kept for nine years, until *The Sims* was released in 2002. Because of all of these sales, *Myst* was a major contributor to popularizing the CD-ROM, and undoubtedly caused many sales of both CD-ROMs and whole computers. There is a little uncertainty about its actual popularity and the fairness of its sales numbers. Back in its heyday, *Myst* was given away with pretty much everything: printers, computers, and particularly CD-ROMs. So it is not certain how many people who owned *Myst* even played it, and how many had multiple copies.

*Myst*-like and *Myst* clone are terms thrown around a lot, but what does it really mean? What can be considered a *Myst*-like and where should the line be drawn? Most noticeably *Myst* is a first-person adventure, and while that is a very important quality, by itself it is no longer enough to qualify a game as a *Myst*-like, if it ever was; Undoubtedly *Myst* exemplified the first-person adventure for years after its release, but there are numerous other important characteristics. Another very important feature is the exploration heavy aspect of the game; You explore every square inch of the game-world, unlocking new areas, exploring the game's backstory alongside the physical world, and even using the exploration for the puzzle solutions; With detailed observation of your surroundings being all the hints that you will need/get. In my opinion, this is the important key factor that makes *Myst* *Myst*, and makes a *Myst*-like, like *Myst*; Which is in direct opposition to playing through a story, conversing with NPCs, and in general having a dynamic story based game-world. This makes *Myst* classifiable as a puzzle adventure, specifically its own sub-category of puzzle adventure.





realMyst



realMyst



realMyst

The success of *Myst* caused many of these *Myst*-likes to be created; With an emphasis on looking like and marketing as a *myst*-like instead of actually being at all like *Myst*. Many of these on purely commercial bases, others as a sort of homage, and still others purely by coincidence. Some nearly right away, most within the next decade, but we are still seeing some pop-up to this day, and there were even a few released before *Myst*. Many of these games were just churned out by publishers in the years following *Myst* and were not quality adventures. It is these many low quality clones that are often blamed for the following decline of the adventure game genre; Similar to how the many many low quality games produced in the 1980s was the main factor which caused the great video game crash of 1983. But as always, nothing is that simple, and improving tech can be said to have been as big an influence as anything, allowing 3D action sequences with every bit as much graphical fidelity as slide-based adventures. Which is not to say that there were not also many critically acclaimed adventures that could be said to be *Myst*-likes. There have been many great *Myst*-likes, some arguably far better than *Myst*, far more than are listable here.

*Cyan's Myst* is a controversial game; It either makes it into "best of" or "worst of" lists and generates a lot of discussion even 20 years latter. Personally, I think it is a decent game that was amazing at the time.

But more so than any other individual game, *Myst's* footprint on the industry is irrefutable. It did have at least one important first, and was a generally

unique game. Made so much money it influenced what developers were creating. And most of all headed the huge *Myst* franchise. ●



realMyst

### BRIGHT MOMENTS:

The backstory and world, though most of this is not revealed in this one game.

### FUMBLES IN THE DARK:

The acting and the actors script is horrible.

### VERDICT:

A decent game, with a very strong and stylish presence.

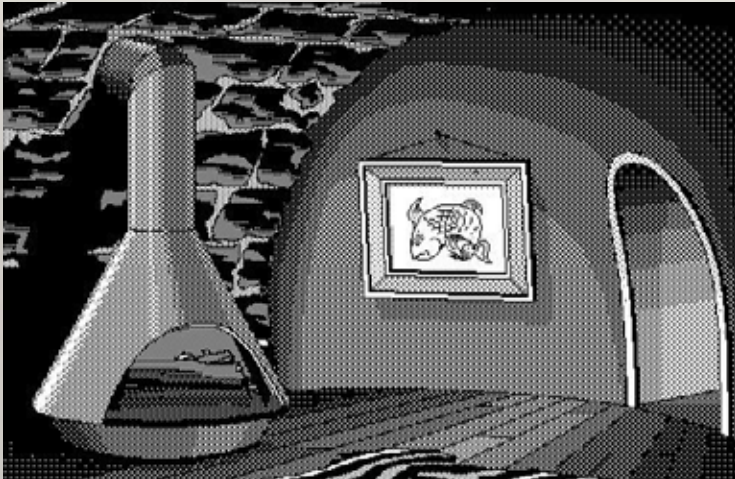


Rating note: My rating is for all versions of *Myst* and does take into account the age of the games and their legacy to a degree. A rating is hard enough to give in a normal situation, in this particular case it is impossible to pick a single number that really has any meaning at all.

Pre-Myst, Cyan Worlds Adventures



The Manhole (1988)



Cosmic Osmo (1989)



Spelunx (1991)

Computer Adventure Games

Adventure

First Game

Zork

First Graphics

Point & Click

King's Quest

First Animation

Modern CD-ROM

Text Adventures •

Decline of Genre •

Monkey Island

CD-ROM Exclusive

Pre-Rendered

Graphics

Myst

SCUMM •

Infocom •

Grim Fandango

Commercial Failure

2000

1980

1990