

<p style="text-align: center;">Rayman 2: The Great Escape Interview with Pauline Jacquey & Michel Ancel</p>

Pauline Jacquey
Producer

Q: What is the story line of Rayman 2?

A: Cruel pirates from outer space have invaded Rayman's world. Their mission is to capture the inhabitants and to sell them to an inter-galactic circus. However, the arrival of the pirates have disturbed the harmony of the planet by spreading the planet's energy all around. Even Rayman has lost most of his powers. So, the big quest of the game is to find a way to call upon the creator of the planet, Pollochus the Magician. He is the only one who is capable of giving Rayman all his powers back and helping him save the world. At the same time, Rayman has to fulfill the mission of freeing his friends. He will then take advantage of their skills and talents to get some help and rid their world of the frightful pirates!

I would say that the story line of the game could be summarized in two words: "action" and "epic".

Q: What kind of gameplay will we find in Rayman 2?

A: While designing the game and the character we really wanted to focus on keeping a fast pace and a good rhythm in the gameplay. In most free 3D games, the player can spend hours exploring huge universes without anything happening, sometimes even leaving the player with a feeling of not knowing what to do. But in Rayman 2, players are swept away with the intensity of the action and do not even have a second to breathe because everything is falling apart under their feet!

Q: Controlling a character in 3D is harder to grasp than 2D. How will you teach people what moves your character can do?

A: It is true that 3D is still quite new in action games, and the player might need some time to become comfortable with it. But we've done everything to make exploring this 3D-universe a pleasurable experience for gamers. Specifically, we have focused particular attention on the camera movements and have created a progressive model for game difficulty. With these elements in place, controlling the character is really quite intuitive. In the focus groups we conducted during the development, all the gamers - even the young kids and those who had never played 3D games before - enjoyed character controls.

Our general goal on Rayman 2 is to give the player the feeling that they are right there in the heart of the action. So the enemies and the camera movements have been especially designed to fulfil this aim. When they play, they really feel that they're doing a great job, but actually the gameplay is not that hard, it's just challenging and spectacular.

Q: If we except the gameplay, what makes Rayman 2 different from other games?

A: Rayman 2 is innovative and unique. First, there is this unique graphical touch that was provided by Michel Ancel who is the creator of the original Rayman game. Second, the work on the lights and the textures is really new and unique, particularly when you look at the Nintendo platform.

Moreover, I think that this feeling of living out a Hollywood-like movie when playing a game is new on Nintendo. The Rayman 2 animators are among the best in the industry. They all come from the cartoon or movie industry. The intervention of the cinematic sequences in the game is different from what one usually experiences in other video games: they have been filmed, shot as a real cartoon film, with shot/reverse shot effects..., not just a shot featuring two characters. In a few seconds they really immerse the player into the characters' personalities, emotions and missions.

Q: And from a technological point of view, what is new in Rayman 2?

A: The display engine is really powerful even on Nintendo and we worked especially hard on including a fluid high-resolution mode for this platform. In this mode, the sharpness of the console is increased so a person plays in a universe where the textures are as detailed as on a PC and that's really new.

I want to mention the soundtrack as well because the work that has been done on the sound is amazing. We have many levels of sound effects and atmospheres, as well as interactive music. I don't think many other games on Nintendo have gone so far on this aspect.

Q: Will the game be different on each platform?

A: The story line is the same across all the game platforms. On each system, the player will follow the same amazing adventures enhanced by the fast-paced gameplay. But players will also experience different topography and gameplay that best suits each different machine!

On the Nintendo 64, we have gone really far in exploiting the technical possibilities, such as with the effects and the high-resolution mode. The graphics are really impressive! But it will be even more spectacular on the PC and Sega Dreamcast with amazing textures in higher resolution and a 60-image/second game. Even a lower-end PC like a P133 or P166 will display stunning graphics. As for the Sony PlayStation version, the gameplay will be also adapted to the abilities of the console.

Our overall objective is, of course, to create the best action game on each platform!

Q: You are currently at the end of the project on Nintendo 64 and PC. Do you already have other Rayman products under way? And from a more general point of view, what does Ubi Soft have planned for the future?

A: Development of Rayman 2 on the PlayStation console and Sega Dreamcast is already under way. Ongoing development of the character is part of the creation of the license of the Rayman character. He has great richness, which is due in part to his originality, but also to his personality. For instance, Ubi Soft is developing a Rayman TV series to

be released in September 2000 and Rayman is the main hero of this series. Not only is this a new adventure for Rayman but it is a new adventure for Ubi Soft as well.

This is just the beginning of the adventures with Rayman for Ubi Soft.

Michel Ancel
Director

Q: Who is Rayman for you?

A: To me, Rayman is a character with a strong personality, lots of energy and a good sense of humor. His key features are humor and the love of action. You cannot limit him to a certain number of actions or powers since new game situations continuously demand that the character evolve. Depending on what challenges he faces in the game, he develops different abilities that are new to the player and always create new sensations. This evolution gives birth to new situations and ideas.

Q: What is the main evolution between the original Rayman and Rayman 2?

A: There are a lot! If I have to choose one, I would say that one of the main differences between the original Rayman and Rayman 2 is the increased role of the story-line in the game. It adds to the coherence of the world in which the player evolves. Rayman 2 is more story-oriented than the original game, featuring a richer story-line that furthers the player's overall involvement. I really think having a strong story is a new trend in the gaming industry for this kind of game. Now, the goal is no longer to move from one level to another, but to write a story. So this element is a very important difference from the original Rayman. It creates more of an epic dimension to Rayman 2. The story-line also ties in meaning with the action, which is a strong feature of Rayman 2, and provides the players with more surprises and, above all, more emotion!

Q: What were some of the biggest influences on Rayman 2, in term of art design?

A: Rayman 2 is based on a fantastic background that includes contemporary touch. My sources of inspiration are numerous and mostly unconscious. When I was a kid, I used to read all kinds of stories: Russian, Chinese, Celtic, etc...Rayman borrows different elements from all these universes, but adds a more contemporary and cartoon touch. Tex Avery, among others, inspires the cartoon aspects. Rayman is a true high-performance hero who keeps a good sense of humor like Indiana Jones, for instance. He is also a rebel, fighting against the bad guys, as in Star Wars or Robin Hood.

Q: How did you achieve this unique "graphic touch?"

A: We really wanted to achieve a new style with a strong creative identity. My team in the Montpellier independent studio is composed of talent coming from various professional fields. Some of them come from animation, some from the movie industry or comic strips, some have quite extensive experience in video games while others are illustrators, animators, painters. As different as we each are, we are all united by our passion. That is what creates a great atmosphere within the team, allows us to express our creativity and gives us the power to create such a rich character!