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Myr Myr, Off The Wall



Mark Rosewater · Making Magic
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Welcome to Myr Week! This week we're honoring one of the newest members to the creature type family. I thought long and hard about what I wanted to do this week. So, I decided to take a look back at some of my past columns about creature types (goblins – “[Mons Made Me Do It](#)”, zombies – “[Lcc: Dead People](#)”, squirrels – “[Squirrels of My Dreams](#)”, etc.) and I realized that I have a long history of doing very offbeat things during creature type theme weeks. So I figured, why stop now?

When I started thinking about what to say about myr I realized that I had so many different kinds of columns I could write. And as my regular readers know, one of the hallmarks of “**Making Magic**” is my constant change in tone and presentation. I have many different types of columns. Which kind of column should I use for my myr column? And then it hit me, why not all of them?

Huh?

This is the point where the hairs should start to be standing up on the back of your neck. Uh oh, Rosewater's about to do something weird.

How many of you have ever seen an improvisation comedy troupe (aka an improv troupe)? It just so happens in college that I started, ran and performed in an improv troupe called Uncontrolled Substance. Most comedy improv revolves around various formats. Each format has a particular item or items that the performers ask for and then a structure that makes use of the audience suggestions. A very popular format in improv is known as a “switching sketch”. A switching sketch is one where the troupe collects a list of items (usually something that can flavor a scene such as emotions or genres of entertainment). Then the performers receive a relationship and a location.

As an example, let's say the performers are a man and a woman. The relationship is a first date (the most popular answer given for opposite sex performers) and the location is the moon (another oddly popular answer). The two performers start acting out their first date on the moon. About thirty seconds into the scene, someone on the side yells out an item from the list (Depression or Silent Film, for example). The scene then continues using the yelled out item to guide it.

Why does this have anything to do with myr? Or “[Making Magic](#)” for that matter? Because today I am going to be performing the very first ever switching sketch column. Here's how it will work. I am going to start my myr column. And then, periodically, a voice ([in blue](#)) will yell out a style of “**Making Magic**” column and I will shift my column to the new style. Still confused? Just read, you'll get the hang of it.

The Myr Has Two Faces

I'll be honest I have a soft spot for myr. But then I tend to have a soft spot for anything cute and little (squirrels, beebles, atogs, etc.) So when Scott informed me it was going to be Myr Week I was quite excited, as I love talking about the myr. Heck, I love just saying the word myr...

SWITCH – FACTUAL ARTICLE

...which I have done exactly 22 times during the *Mirrodin* block. Alphabetically, here are all the cards that either are myr or make myr tokens:

- Alpha Myr** Artifact Creature — Myr 2/1 *Mirrodin* common

2.	Copper Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
3.	Coretapper	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Darksteel</i> uncommon
4.	Genesis Chamber	Artifact		<i>Darksteel</i> uncommon
5.	Gold Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
6.	Iron Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
7.	Leaden Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
8.	Lodestone Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	2/2	<i>Mirrodin</i> rare
9.	Myr Adapter	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
10.	Myr Enforcer	Artifact Creature — Myr	4/4	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
11.	Myr Incubator	Artifact		<i>Mirrodin</i> rare
12.	Myr Landshaper	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Darksteel</i> common
13.	Myr Matrix	Artifact		<i>Darksteel</i> rare
14.	Myr Mindservant	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> uncommon
15.	Myr Moonvessel	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Darksteel</i> common
16.	Myr Prototype	Artifact Creature — Myr	2/2	<i>Mirrodin</i> uncommon
17.	Myr Quadropod	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/4	<i>Fifth Dawn</i> common
18.	Myr Retriever	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> uncommon
19.	Myr Servitor	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Fifth Dawn</i> common
20.	Omega Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/2	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
21.	Silver Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	1/1	<i>Mirrodin</i> common
22.	Suntouched Myr	Artifact Creature — Myr	0/0	<i>Fifth Dawn</i> common

It's interesting to note that **Coretapper** is the only Myr that doesn't have the word "Myr" in its title. Also, notice that no myr have a power greater than 2 with the sole exception of **Myr Enforcer**, the one myr that has seen the most tournament play. It's also interesting to note that the **Myr Enforcer**...

SWITCH – DESIGN STORIES

...was put into the very first *Mirrodin* file (a partial file compiled October 31, 2001) exactly the way he was printed. The only difference was its name (called Artifact Lover) and its creature type (it didn't have one).

Here are some early versions of some other myr. First, we have **Myr Adaptor** from an old file:

```
CA01_BCN
Squire Gnome
1
Artifact Creature - Gnome
1/1
CARDNAME gets +1/+1 as long as it's equipped.
```

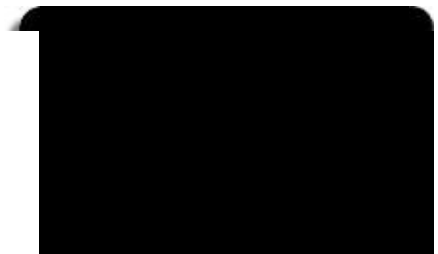
The very first *Mirrodin* (then called Bacon) file had three creatures with the enhanced if equipped mechanic. One was a white creature that got a boost from having armor (remember, equipment had subtypes back then) and a black creature that got a boost from having a weapon. And the Squire Gnome.

And let me tell you from early playtest, the Squire Gnome was a little beatstick. The old black "sword" (called Sword of Yawgmoth) gave +2/+1 for 2 (this is back when artifact equipment worked just like creature enchantments). Turn one the squire, turn two the sword. Attack with your 4/3 creature. Good times.

As the ability got shifted into white, we felt a need to make the Squire feel different. So instead of a single bonus, he got a bonus for each equipment he had. This drove up his cost from 1 to 3.

Next let's take a peek at an early **Lodestone Myr**:

```
UA06_BCN
Magnetron
4
Artifact Creature
2/2
Tap an artifact creature: CARDNAME gets +1/+1 until
end of turn.
1: CARDNAME gains trample until end of turn.
```



At first blush this might seem almost identical but there are two key differences. First, the original version only allowed you to tap artifact creatures. I did this because it seemed confusing to tap equipment when it was equipping a creature. But, in the end, a combination of a desire to make the card cooler and give it a needed power boost changed the activation.

Second, the trample went from an activated ability to a static ability. Oh and I guess there's one more change. The card became a myr. Originally, as you can see, it didn't have a creature type and...

SWITCH – EDITORIAL RANT

...that bothers me to no end. You have to understand that I'm a long time proponent of functional creature types. I made **Coat of Arms** to give creature decks a shot in the, well, arm. I'm one of the guys that fought very hard to make **Onslaught** the tribal block. I made **Kangee**, **Aerie Keeper**. When I made it, it was good. Honestly, it was badass Bird Lord. Stupid development.

The point is that I am a strong proponent of creature types so it burns me to no end when creatures are printed without creature types. Wait, you're saying, all creatures have creature types. No, all living creatures (and undead creatures) have creature types. Artifact creatures only get one if they happen to have one of the few supported creature types.

What absolutely kills me is that often there is a logical creature type for an artifact creature but it's not a golem or a myr and it goes creature-typeless. Like **Frogmite**. No creature type. What possible creature type could a robotic frog have? Let's see, robotic dragons are dragons. Robotic goblins are goblins. But robotic frogs? Heaven forbid we further the frog decks.

And trust me, I've gotten mail on this. All of you might not have communication with frog lovers, but they and I seem to be pen pals. (Along with the slug and goat people.) I'm not sure how to justify...

SWITCH – WHY WE DO ____ BAD THING ON PURPOSE

...such bad decisions other than to explain directly why bad R&D decisions are crucial to the game. You see, part of what makes playing **Magic** so special is figuring out the good R&D decisions from the bad ones. If they were all good, it would take away an important element of the game: complaining about **Magic** on the Internet. We often talk about the importance of the metagame in the design of **Magic**. Making **Magic** is not simply about making the cards but building a larger group experience. Calling R&D idiots is no fun if we never do anything idiotic...

SWITCH – COLOR PHILOSOPHIES

...like the color Red. You see, red is very much about the here and now. Red wants to do what it wants to do... now! This short-sightedness is red's greatest weakness. Red never thinks about the ramifications of its actions. As such, red is the color most likely to have stuff blow up in his face, often quite literally.

What is interesting is that the myr and red share a short-sightedness but for completely different reasons. Red doesn't think about its long-term well-being. The myrs don't really care. The myr were designed to be disposable and have no qualms with disposing of themselves. Their entire goal is to fulfill their purpose and if that requires them getting blown up, so be it. Besides, if they lose an arm and a leg they can just get a new one. (And it won't cost... well, you know.)

Myr also have a white aspect. They are very much creatures of order. As such, myr...

SWITCH – TYPE I DISCUSSION



What do you mean it's not a frog?!

...as a whole aren't expected to see significant play in Type I. Except the **Myr Retriever**. And possibly **Myr Enforcer**. (I'm sure I'll have numerous decklists before the day is out.)

Which brings up an interesting point from my last Type I article. In it, I made the statement that I make little effort to keep up to date with the Type I metagame. I then went on to explain that I was trying to design more cards with Type I in mind. Many readers thought this was a contradiction. How could I design Type I cards if I don't understand the metagame?

The answer to this question is that it misunderstands how design works. With the sole exception of occasional hole filling design during development, cards are not designed to a particular metagame. Why? Because for starters, we never know the metagame when we're designing the cards. Yes, development spends a lot of time trying to figure out where a set will take the metagame, but by that point the design is already handed off. (And note that they're trying to understand where the set will take the metagame, not vice versa.)

I don't need to know the Type I metagame to design for it because we never design to the metagame. (And while I might not know the metagame, I do understand the larger issues concerning Type I.) Rather, we try to design sets to move the game in new directions. To shift the focus to some aspect that hasn't been dominant. When I design Type I cards, I try to make cards that will shift Type I in new directions. Cards like **Mindslaver** or **Chalice of the Void** force Type I players to take new factors into consideration when building and playing their decks.

Design is not about simply enhancing what already exists. Design is about shaking things up and forcing change. It's about pushing the game in new directions. That is what **Magic** is all about. If you don't like your metagame shifting, then...

SWITCH – FICTION

...I highly recommend staying clear of R&D's metagame centrifuge. It's a blunt hammer that development doesn't like to use except every once in a while when the environment gets stagnant."

"How about that round green thing. What does it do?" Aaron asked.

Mark could tell that Aaron was simply stalling. But before he could say anything, a little myr ran up to him.

The myr, named Marvin, was one of the older myr. Around the office, it was understood that Marvin was the reason that the flavor guys finally broke down and put the myr in a set. Marvin was quite a character. His job was the most mundane of tasks but he treated each one as if the world depended upon it.

"Master Rosewater," Marvin began, "I've been told to strongly impress the importance of Master Forsythe proceeding immediately to the Forbidden Room. *Strongly* impress."

"Thank you, Marvin," Mark replied.

Marvin did not move. "Yes?" Mark asked.

"I've been instructed to stay by Master Forsythe's side until he meets with... you know."

Mark turned to Aaron. "I understand you're a bit intimidated, Aaron, but this really needs to happen now. Trust me, the other option is far worse."

"Far, far, *far* worse," Marvin chimed in.

"Marvin!"

"I heartily apologize for being so blunt in my truth-telling. I was simply hoping to encourage Master Forsythe to move towards the door of the Forbidden Room."

Aaron took a breath and started walking towards the Forbidden Room. Two feet behind him was Marvin. When Aaron reached the door, Marvin bowed toward him and said, "It was nice meeting the old you."

Aaron turned towards Mark. "Those myr. Always making inappropriate jokes," Mark shot back.

"I didn't think myr made jokes. I mean, they don't in flavor text. That's really all I have to go off of."

Mark gestured towards the door. Aaron turned the knob and pushed it open. Inside, was...

SWITCH – R&D STORIES

...a table covered in Silly Putty. Now, this leads to several questions. One, where does one get enough Silly Putty to cover a table? And two, why would you do it if one had that much Silly Putty?

The answer to the first question takes us to the desks of Brandon Bozzi (a member of the Creative Team responsible for names and flavor text) and Brian Tinsman (a game designer that often works on **Magic**). Both of them are fans of slime-based entertainment. As such, they had a number of various Silly Putty eggs lying around. I don't know what exactly made them mix them all together one day but they did. And thus was born the Silly Putty Ball. Every once in a while Brandon or Brian would find or buy new eggs that they would "assimilate" into the larger ball. As news of the Silly Putty Ball spread, more and more Wizards employees donated their Silly Putty to the ball. (Some of them were different colors, which is why the Ball is more brown than pink.)

And then one day, a local game store closed. Brian struck a deal to buy 98 eggs of Silly Putty. This was added to the ball (which according to calculations based on weight is currently around 148 eggs). Brandon and Brian brought the Silly Putty Ball over to the main section of TCG R&D (Brandon and Brian work in a different but nearby section.) While talking about what we could do with the Silly Putty Ball, someone (I don't remember who) said, "You know, I think we have enough Silly Putty that we could cover that table."

And many man hours later, we had the very first R&D Silly Putty table. And now, for the first time, I am happy to share the fruits of our labor.



I'm sure there are some of you out there that might be asking why. I don't know if those people have what it takes to work in R&D.

This leads to the next question...

SWITCH – MAILBAG

...What's your issue with gnomes? I've read numerous times how all the myr in Mirrodin used to be gnomes. Why the switch? What does R&D have against gnomes?

A gnome lover,

Tara (yes, I'm a girl)

Tara,

Gnomes have several strikes against them. First, gnomes, traditionally speaking, are flesh and blood creatures. In fact, the first appearance of a gnome in



Magic was as a red creature in *Legends* (**Quarum Trench Gnomes** – I know, not the most auspicious beginning). For some reason the *Homelands* design team decided to make a **Clockwork Gnome** and the transition began. The gnome proliferation happened because I think R&D liked having a small creature race in artifacts. The problem is that artifact gnomes don't really make a lot of sense. As a single random card, fine. But as an ongoing race? It just didn't make sense.

But R&D liked what the gnomes represented. They liked the idea of the small subservient artifact creature that was super adaptable yet very carefree about its own welfare. *Mirrodin* seemed like the perfect place to re-visit the small artifact creature race. I think the myr do an excellent job of fulfilling this role. As for gnomes, I don't think we've seen the last of them. While not in the near future, I believe someday the gnomes will return. This time as flesh and blood creatures in a color, most likely red.



The most impressive thing is that I got this far into answering your letter without a good “gnome” pun. So let me quickly rectify that by making a comment about the delicate features of a gnome's face. Because in all of Dominaria, there's no...

SWITCH – PREVIEW WEEK

...equal to what you'll see in *Unhinged*. I'm not quite sure how one pushes an envelope, but trust me when I say that R&D is littered with pushed envelopes.

But hey it's preview week, so I finally get to fill you all in on the cool stuff that I've been biting my lip about for over a year. Over a year! It's kind of like the myr. You see, normally when we create a new creature race, I'm always hesitant until I see the audience's reaction. But with the myr, I knew we'd hit a home run as soon as I saw them. I just knew you all would like them. That's how I feel about *Unhinged*. I knew we had a hit on our hands last year.

But enough teasing. Let's get to the preview card. And before I reveal it, let me stress that yes, that card does what it says. No really. Really! What kind of chaos...

SWITCH – “ROSEANNE” NAME DROPPING

...does working in R&D require? A lot, but then I worked with Roseanne (you know, during my time as a staff writer for “Roseanne”), so I know chaos. Chaos and I are old buddies. When Chaos needs a favor...

SWITCH – DESIGN THEORY

...I look to red rares. It's interesting how different designing rares of different colors is. For example, if you want to make a crazy Timmy or Johnny card, a red rare is very easy. But making a popular Timmy blue rare or popular Johnny white rare is much more of a challenge.

The colored cards though are a piece of cake when compared to the artifacts, especially the artifact creatures. This is why the myr are a challenge. Artifacts have a fuzzy relationship with the color pie. They can do anything but not very effectively. And artifact creatures? It gets even harder.

This is why designing good myr was such a challenge. Here's what a good myr requires design-wise.

1. It's an artifact creature.
2. It's small. Combined power and toughness should really not get much above 4. (I believe Myr Enforcer as a myr was a flavor mistake.)
3. It needs to not step on the toes of any color with its ability.
4. It needs to be vanilla or have a small, unique ability.

Now make nineteen of them. It's not easy.

As a designer, one of things I'm proudest about the myr is the fact we managed to design so many that are actually cool cards (and no, I'm not claiming all nineteen are cool; there's a special place on *Mirrodin's* Worst Top 10 List for **Omega Myr**).

The big question is will we see the myr again? And to that I say...

SWITCH – OUT OF THE BOX ARTICLE

...this isn't out of the box enough?

Let me wrap up today column by asking what you thought. I like to try new things every once in a while, so I'm curious to get all your opinions. And hey, if you have any comments on the myr send those along as well.



Too big for a myr?

Join me next when I take a look behind some of my favorite *Fifth Dawn* cards.

Until then, may you find at least part of the column you wanted (or maybe all of it).

Mark Rosewater

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