



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE HISTORY CHANNEL® PRESENTS A TWO-HOUR SPECIAL  
EXAMINING THE WORLD'S FIRST SUPERPOWER THROUGH ITS  
ASTOUNDING ARCHITECTURAL ACHIEVEMENTS**

## **EGYPT: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE**

**August 20, 2006 at 9-11 pm ET/PT**

**Network to Launch New Weekly Series Focusing on Other Great Civilizations,  
ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE, August 21, 2006 at 10pm ET/PT**

**Peter Weller to Host Both Series and Special**

**NEW YORK, NY, MAY XX, 2006** — Five thousand years ago, nearly two millennia before the Romans built their first mud huts, ancient Egyptians began creating edifices so vast and architecturally sophisticated they remain to this day among the most impressive structures ever built. For thousands of years, without the benefit of computers, cranes, trucks or power tools, the Pharaohs' engineers oversaw the construction of monumental masterpieces whose scale, beauty and craftsmanship still boggle the mind. But Egypt's road to architectural and imperial glory was paved with blood, betrayal and outright disaster. Hosted by actor and art historian Peter Weller, the two-hour special **EGYPT: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE** explores the fascinating stories behind the creation of the world's first great civilization. **EGYPT: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE premieres Tuesday, August 20th at 9 p.m. ET/PT on The History Channel.**

Egypt's massive pyramids, lavish burial temples, impenetrable fortresses and towering obelisks were the result of unparalleled architectural genius, unrivalled technology and millions of man-hours of backbreaking labor. As Egypt's succession of Pharaohs alternately conquered and ceded vast expanses of what is today the Middle East, their dedicated royal architects stretched the boundaries of imagination and human potential, essentially inventing the science of structural engineering as they went along. Using cutting-edge computer graphics and interviews with noted Egyptologists, **EGYPT: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE** brings to life this astonishing ancient world.

This fast paced follow-up to **The History Channel's** critically acclaimed **ROME: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE** covers the remarkable period from the First Dynasty in

3050 B.C. to the end of the reign of Ramesses the Great in 1213 B.C., chronicling the great Pharaohs and the startling accomplishments that helped make Egypt the world's first empire.

Highlights include:

- Menes, the founding king of the First Dynasty and the first Pharaoh to unify Upper and Lower Egypt into one kingdom, oversaw the construction of the world's first dam, a massive, 50-foot-high wall that protected Egypt's capital, Memphis, from the Nile's ravaging flood waters.
- An enterprising young Pharaoh named Djoser commissioned in 2668 B.C. a colossal burial tomb that would become the first of Egypt's 100 pyramids, the largest structures to be seen on Earth for the next 45 centuries.
- Pharaoh Snefru, who married his half-sister in an effort to solidify his claim to the throne, was a benevolent leader but a brutal warrior who looted neighboring kingdoms to finance his architectural ambitions. Through a series of trials and catastrophic errors, he elevated the art of pyramid building to a new level.
- Snefru's son, Khufu, built on his father's engineering experience to create the biggest and most perfect pyramid ever constructed: the Great Pyramid at Giza. Each of the building's four 700-foot sides was almost perfectly symmetrical, and each corner of the pyramid was level within fractions of an inch.
- Essentially inventing military architecture, Pharaoh Sesostris III, the great warrior, conquered gold-rich Nubia with the help of a network of 17 vast and sophisticated fortresses stretching hundreds of miles into enemy territory.
- Pharaoh Hatshepsut, Egypt's first female ruler (predating Cleopatra by 14 centuries), commissioned a grand mortuary temple on the west bank of Thebes from the architect Senenmut, who was also believed to be her lover. The queen (who dressed as a man in public) later disappeared, probably at the hands of her stepson, who succeeded her to the throne.
- The rebel Pharaoh Akhenaten (father of Tutankhamen) who, based on a religious vision, moved Egypt's capital to a barren patch of desert virtually overnight, requiring his engineers to develop far faster building techniques. Within two years, the bustling city's stone buildings housed 20,000 people.
- Obelisks, solid granite structures that could stand as tall as 100 feet and weigh as much as 500 tons, were quarried, transported hundreds of miles and erected, all without the aid of a single mechanical device.
- Ramesses II, who fathered more than 100 children, combined engineering and ego on an unprecedented scale to build two temples at Abu Simbel, one for himself and one for his beloved queen, Nefertari. Carved from the face of a virgin cliff, Ramesses'

monument was adorned by 69-foot solid rock statues and a lavishly decorated sanctuary built 200 feet inside the mountain.

Executive Producer for **The History Channel** is Dolores Gavin. Host is Peter Weller. **EGYPT: ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE** was produced for **The History Channel** by KPI. Producer-Writer is Chris Cassel.

### **ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE: THE SERIES**

On August 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:00 p.m. ET/PT, **The History Channel** will launch a new weekly hour-long series, **ENGINEERING AN EMPIRE**, focusing on the architectural triumphs of great civilizations. The series launches with episodes GREECE (8/21), GREECE: AGE OF ALEXANDER (8/28), THE AZTECS (9/4) and episodes on the Chinese, Russians, Carthaginians, Persians, and Byzantines as well as on the British Empire, the Age of Architects and Napoleon's Empire. Similar in format and structure to the special, each of the programs will use the society's engineering accomplishments as a prism through which to view its history and culture.

**The History Channel**® is one of the leading cable television networks featuring compelling original, non-fiction specials and series that bring history to life in a powerful and entertaining manner across multiple platforms. The network provides an inviting place where people experience history in new and exciting ways, enabling them to connect their lives today to the great lives and events of the past that provide a blueprint for the future. The History Channel has earned three Peabody Awards, six News and Documentary Emmy® Awards and received the prestigious Governor's Award from the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for the network's Save Our History® campaign, dedicated to historic preservation and history education. The History Channel reaches more than 89 million Nielsen subscribers. The website is located at [www.History.com](http://www.History.com).

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