



# VAMPIRE THE MASQUERADE: Bloodlines

**DANIEL WILKS** is an angst ridden creature of the night

White Wolf's World of Darkness was one of the most popular roleplaying franchises in the world during the late nineties and early naughties, with Vampire: The Masquerade serving as their vanguard title. It's easy to see the appeal of the game and the world. Players take the role of Vampires (and other creatures of the night) in a world ruled by ancient beliefs, demonic forces and conspiracies only slightly younger than time, all wrapped in a deep and compelling mythology revolving around Caine,



Batter [up]

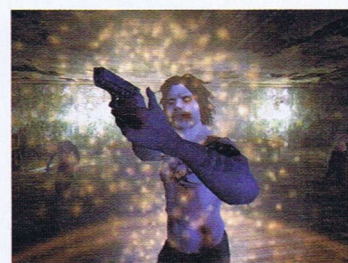
the biblical brother killer and the coming of the end days when the oldest of all Vampires will once again rise and drown the world in a sea of blood. Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines, developed by Troika, best known for the excellent Arcanum, drops players into the middle of this world ripe with intrigue.

## CRAZY PERSON

If you've ever wanted to play an angst-ridden creature of the night then Vampire is the game for you. If you have ever wanted to play a happy go lucky sex fiend of the night then Vampire is also the game for you. Hell, if you want to play a crazy person with some of the funniest dialogue choices yet seen in a game then Vampire will also fit the bill rather nicely. Instead of races and classes, players choose to make a character in one of the available Vampire bloodlines - special clans that carry with them specific merits, flaws and powers. Not only does this

allow players to tailor the experience to their own gameplay needs, it also quite drastically changes the flow of the game, giving a good deal of replay potential. Vampire plays in a manner similar to Deus Ex - players are dropped headfirst into a city with a vague notion of the plot and can discover the larger conspiracies and missions through interacting with NPC characters, exploring, researching and the like.

Although the game looks like a rather attractive first-person shooter for the most part don't go into it thinking you'll be running and gunning your way through hordes of the undead. In the World of Darkness, guns are more of a nuisance than a true threat and skill definitely determines their effectiveness. Although a player may be good at first person shooters, unless the character dedicates a number of skill points into firearms they won't be able to hit the side of a barn. Vampire powers may



[up] He's got a face like a smashed crab

sound like the be all and end all at first but skills are really where the game comes into its own. Boosting up different social skills will open up different dialogue options when speaking to NPCs, intelligence based skills may allow you to spot clues or give you an easier time hacking into a computer, or physical skills can turn you into a whirling dervish of destruction. Like the Vampire bloodlines, allocation of skills can greatly effect the flow and direction of the game. It's unfortunate that players can't always avoid combat as there are quite a number of boss battles, for want of a better

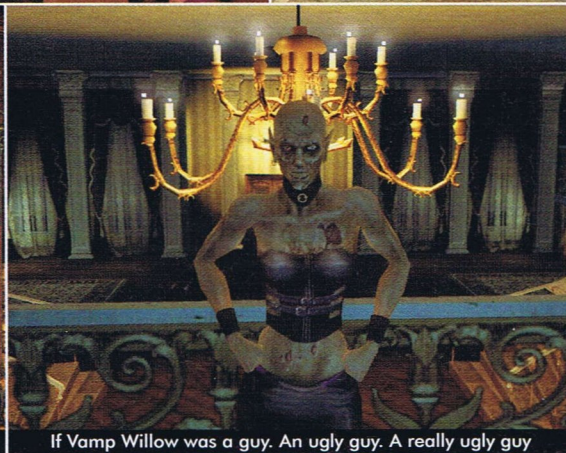




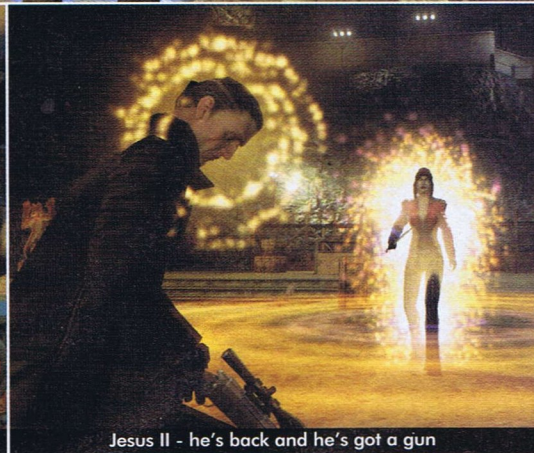
!!! Fingers crossed other White Wolf titles will get games. Changeling, Werewolf or Mage would rule.



We're just trying to have a good time NARC



If Vamp Willow was a guy. An ugly guy. A really ugly guy



Jesus II - he's back and he's got a gun

term. That said, when these bosses do come the script to that point is so tight that rather than think that you've been railroaded into a battle you're far more likely to be thinking, "he needs killing".

The freedom the game gives in allowing players to discover the plot in their own way is a great framework but this would all fall apart if the actual story and characters are dull. It's no exaggeration to say that the writing and characters in Bloodlines rank up there as some of the best ever to grace a game. The writing is plain brilliant, simultaneously rich in nuance as well as being straightforward and entertaining. The amount of conversation in the game, all of which is brilliantly voice acted, is quite staggering, not to mention bloody funny in parts - after helping a young

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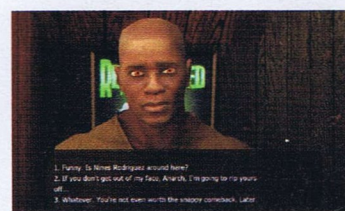
Japanese girl fight the demon that killed her master how many games can you name that give you the option to say "I bet you're glad that thing didn't have tentacles!"

### NEARLY UNFORGIVABLE

By now you've probably looked at the score and are wondering why Vampire only scored in the low 80s after such a positive review. The reason for this is simple. Vampire is riddled with bugs, some small but some catastrophically big, most of which seem to be caused by a somewhat rushed implementation of the Source engine. Throughout the game players will notice many and varied texture problems - walls disappearing, flashing textures, torn

textures, parts of character models randomly disappearing and the like. Numerous clipping issues also rear their ugly heads in the latter half of the game where it is not uncommon to be attacked through a wall or by an enemy immune to damage because it has fallen into the floor. Though frustrating, none of these bugs are game killing. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about a fatal crash bug that brings the game to a grinding halt in the latter stages of the game. With any luck there will be a patch available to assuage some of these problems by the time you are reading this but the simple fact that the game was released in such an unfinished state is nearly unforgivable. <<

**THE WORLD OF DARKNESS** If you're not familiar with the deep back story of the Vampire mythology then don't worry, you won't be left in the dark. As a fledgling vampire the player will have no problem finding numerous NPCs willing to expound at length about the Camarilla, Sabbat, Anarchs, Antideluvians, Caine, Gehenna, prophecy, bloodlines, the war between kindred and kine, Hunters and everything else you could ever want to know about the world of darkness.



**AVAILABLE ON:**  
PS2 / XBOX / PC / GCN

### DETAILS:

**CATEGORY:** RPG

**PLAYERS:** 1

**DEVELOPER:** Troika

**PUBLISHER:** Activision

**PRICE:** \$89.95

**RATING:** MA15+

**AVAILABLE:** Now

### HYPER VERDICT:

**PLUS:** Excellent plot, great voice acting, real roleplaying.

**MINUS:** Bugs galore, fatal crash near end.

GRAPHICS SOUND GAMEPLAY  
85 91 90

OVERALL

83

An excellent RPG with a hideous number of bugs.