Legacy of Kain:
Soul Reaver

1 This statue and accompanying architecture serve as a testament to the game's brilliant level of detail.
2 Stealing the souls of your fallen adversaries is key to the game.

Stock up on garlic and refill your holy water— a bone-chilling vampire adventure is on its way

It's enough to have Buffy quaking in her hi-tops. No, it's not a bad hair day or the latest Nielsen ratings — it's the surprise announcement that the most ghoulish crew of vampires ever seen on a console are making their way toward Dreamcast in *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver.*

Raziel is your name. You're one of six lieutenants to Kain, the vampire lord. Cast out of his council for the insolence of evolving wings before your master, you now wander the gothic realm of Nosgoth, slaying your ex-brethren and stealing their souls on behalf of the Elder. This ancient entity needs their power to regain control over the land, and, as part of the deal, vows to give you a shot at defeating Kain.

It's not going to be a simple hack-and-slash road to vengeance. Before reaching Kain, you must claw your way through five legions of vampires and destroy the vampire lord's remaining lieutenants. Worse yet, numerous natural (and supernatural) obstacles stand in your way that can be surmounted only by learning special skills and powerful spells.

In order to progress, you must defeat powerful enemies and warp the very fabric of reality itself while doing battle on both the material and spectral planes. It's an impressive visual effect, but the impact it has on the game world is more than cosmetic. Both planes feature different sets of enemies, and you will often have to shift between them in order to pass certain obstacles. It further affects gameplay once you've acquired the *Soul Reaver* itself, a sword-like weapon that can initially only be used on the spectral plane.

Warping between realities and overcoming obstacles will certainly be crucial in the game, but that's not to say that pure action and more traditional puzzle-solving won't factor into your quest. You'll be able to rip your foes limb-from-limb using razor-sharp claws, and utilize a number of weapons and powerful spells to aid in the dirty work. The environments themselves will also be called into play, as you'll be able to grab enemies and throw them onto spiked walls for added effect. Raziel's ability to glide, drag objects, and later to swim to great depths factors heavily in *Soul Reaver's* style of puzzle-solving, from the traditional opening of passageways to

far more elaborate brain-twisters.

So, what's to look forward to if you've already taken this adventure on other platforms? Developers at Crystal Dynamics have left the gameplay and storyline untouched, but on a technical level it's another matter altogether. Tapping into Dreamcast's unparalleled processing muscle, they've managed to increase the resolution at which the game runs by two-fold and to institute a whole slew of new visual touches, as well as ensuring that it'll all run at a consistent 30 frames-per-second. Although the game makes use of largely game engine cinematics to develop its plot line, you can also expect those that are pre-rendered to be of far greater quality.

Staggering in scope and blood-curdling in presentation, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* is the first truly massive adventure outing on Dreamcast, and from our early glimpse at the game, it should be one well-worth embarking on. That is, unless you're one of those mamby-pamby faint-hearted types that are spooked by their own reflection. You are? Oh.

RANDY NELSON

Seeing the Light

In addition to upping the resolution at which the game runs and locking the frame rate at a steady 30 frames-per-second, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*'s developers have added a number of new graphical effects, such as elaborate realtime lighting, illustrated by the brilliant lighthouse beam above.

1 You'll be stalked by multiple enemies at once. **2** An ominous sign of things to come? **3** Raziel will gain the ability to swim for long durations later in the adventure. **4** Some puzzles involve the environments themselves. **5-6** The game's pre-rendered cinemas boast amazing detail, though its realtime ones are nearly as stunning. **7-8** Locations range from gothic churches to Romanesque pillars.
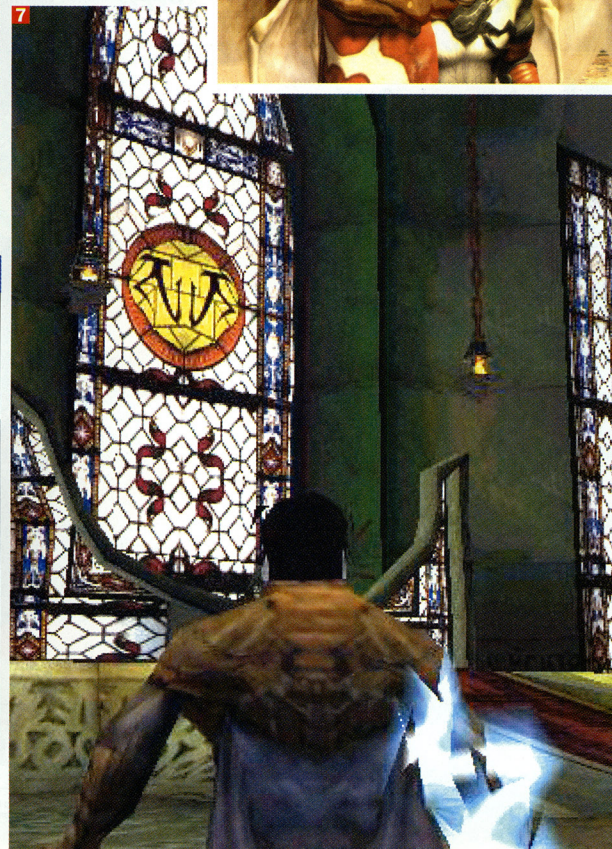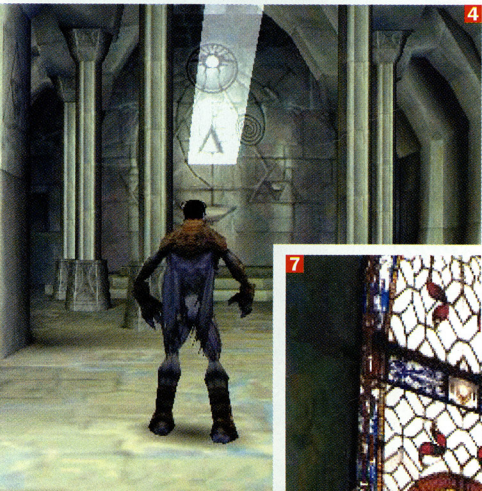
In Brief

PUBLISHER EIDOS
DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
GENRE ADVENTURE
PLAYERS 1
ORIGIN US
PERIPHERALS JUMP PACK
ONLINE NO
RELEASE DATE JANUARY

(+) POINTS

• The game's world promises to be absolutely huge.

• Incredibly detailed (and varied) gothic environments.

(−) POINTS

• Don't expect any new surprises if you've played the PlayStation and PC versions.

• Will the storyline inconsistencies be fixed?

BOTTOM LINE

Eidos brings its massive 3D adventure game to Dreamcast, improving its audio-visual aspects but leaving the gameplay and storyline untouched.

Spellbinding

How's a renegade vampire supposed to make quick work of his former brethren with only a pair of sharp claws and a lousy spear? He's not. Over the course of the adventure, you'll acquire a number of spells from your more powerful fallen foes. They'll be used to solve many of the game's puzzles, as well as to deal devastating blows against enemies, such as the wall of fire which engulfs a pair of them in the sequence above.