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LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER



PUBLISHER EIDOS DEVELOPER CRYSTAL DYNAMICS PRICE £44.99 RELEASE AUGUST WEB SITE www.eidos.com PLAYERS ONE

Do you sleep in a box? Do you fear the sunlight? If yes, then there's a very good chance you're a bloodsucking undead demon of the night. Or a UPC staff writer...

AN average arcade arcade blast from a couple of years ago might not sound like the ideal basis for a blockbuster hit, but this is just what Eidos are hoping to achieve with *Soul Reaver*. After some shaky titles and

the one-game-wonder tag which has dogged them in the past, the company have emerged from the shadow of Lara Croft's ever-expanding chest with a host of triple-A games. *Braveheart* and *Official Formula 1*

Racing both caused a big splash recently and now this, possibly the best of the bunch.

The story follows on from one of *Legacy of Kain's* two possible endings. If you never finished it or didn't read last month's preview, at the end of *Legacy* the player was presented with a choice - either to martyr themselves in order to save the world, trees, sheep, fluffy clouds etc. or to live, thereby plunging creation into a dark image of hell. *Soul Reaver* continues from the latter ending.

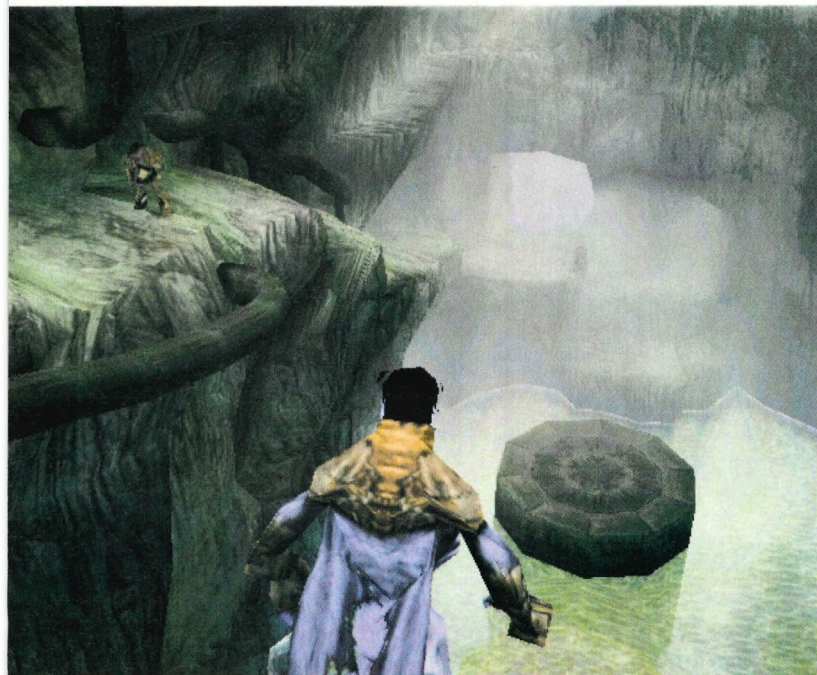
"BRAVEHEART AND OFFICIAL FORMULA 1 RACING BOTH CAUSED A BIG SPLASH RECENTLY AND NOW THIS, POSSIBLY THE BEST OF THE BUNCH"

This time you don't play Kain, however. A thousand years have passed in the land of Nosgoth and Kain is a twisted, infinitely more evil form of his former self. Maintaining his



tyranny throughout Nosgoth was a tough job even for Kain, so he spawned seven Lieutenants to help him. Every so often Kain

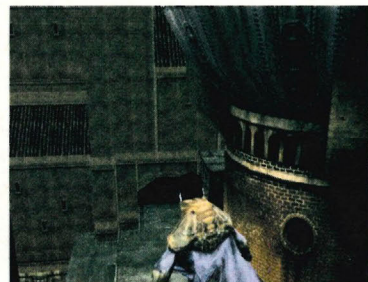
would be blessed by the gods with a new gift of a skill, power or ability. A few years later the same gift would be bestowed upon the Lieutenants.



YOU CAN USE YOUR WINGS TO GLIDE ACROSS GAPS THAT APPEAR TOO WIDE TO JUMP



AS A RULE VAMPIRES DON'T LIKE TO GET WET



EXAMINE THE HIEROGLYPHS FOR CLUES



GARLIC

The arrangement went swimmingly for a millennium until one of the Lieutenants, Raziel, gained a gift before his master Kain – the gift of wings. Taking this as a major personal insult, Kain smashed Raziel’s wings, consigned him to centuries of torture in some nasty alternative dimension. When he finally emerges, Raziel is no longer your run of the mill vampire. Instead of blood he must now absorb the very souls of his victims to sustain his power. He is the Soul Reaver. The



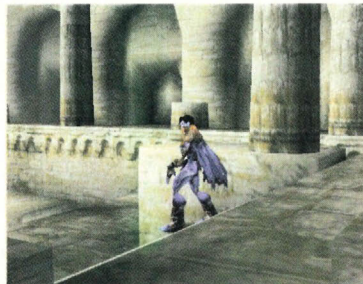
the creatures encountered along the way are some form of undead type bods, they

“NOSGOTH IS AWASH WITH NASTY CREATURES WHO’D LIKE NOTHING BETTER THAN TO PULL RAZIEL’S INTESTINES OUT THROUGH HIS NOSE”

player takes over as Raziel emerges from his torment weak and broken, to avenge himself and destroy Kain.

Without wanting to mention a certain raider of tombs, the third-person viewpoint is immediately reminiscent of an earlier Eidos title... the name of which escapes me. Ahem. As you begin to explore, the narration gets you to speed with the story and also offers the chance to learn and practice many of the moves you’ll need to perfect later on. Raziel is capable of many different kinds of skills and moves, all of which will be tested at one time or another. Nosgoth is awash with nasty creatures who’d like nothing better than to pull Raziel’s intestines out through his nose.

can’t simply be bludgeoned to death. There are a few ways to do away with such creatures – impaling, burning them

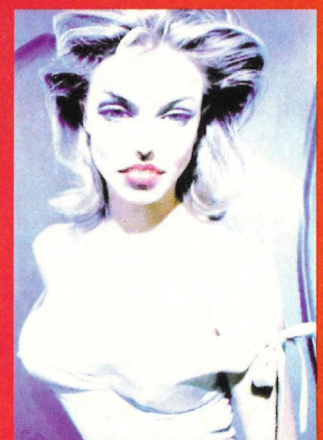


STAKE

Luckily our toothsome hero has several mean attacks at his disposal. In fact the combat sequences are one *Soul Reaver’s* strongest elements – gruesome and enormously satisfying. Being as most of

REALITY BITES

It’s a scary fact that there is a large and growing community of HLVs (Human Living Vampires), or ‘psychotic nutbags’ as some might prefer, particularly in the States. Those HLVs who actually indulge their cravings are called ‘blood vampires’ or ‘sanguinarians’ and obtain blood from voluntary donors, taking only small quantities from self-inflicted cuts. Many describe the bloodlust they experience as very similar to a drug craving, but all claim to resist any anti-social nocturnal behaviour during blood-droughts when donors are scarce. At such times they find temporary relief in blood drained from raw meat, raw meat itself, dairy products and chocolate – a typical American diet in fact.

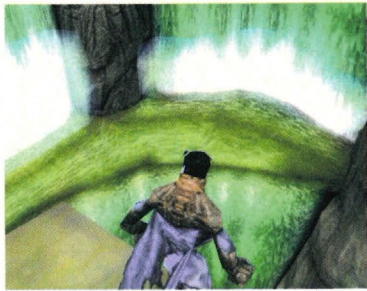


OTHER OPTIONS...

Tomb Raider III
 UPC 18 - 84% Lara’s latest adventure is an epic quest for sure but lacks any real sparkle. Too similar to its predecessors. **NOW 79%**

Deathtrap Dungeon
 UPC 5 - 92% Another Eidos third-person game. It was a big title for them at the time but failed to set the world alight. **NOW 75%**

The Fifth Element
 UPC 16 - 68% Dreadful interpretation of the dreadful film from Ubi Soft starring Bruce Willis. If you ever see a copy, walk on quickly! **NOW 50%**



with fire or exposing them to direct sunlight tends to do the trick. First they have to be slapped about a bit until they go into a daze. They can then be picked up and chucked onto any handy spikes, fires or sunbeams to finish 'em off. There are also various weapons to be collected. Flaming torches can be used to ignite

a few more weapons and moves. It's good, but could have been even better.

HOLY WATER

It's not all biffing bad guys over the head, though. Raziel can jump grab and drag certain blocks in order to reach certain areas and use what remains of his damaged wings

“RAZIEL CAN SWITCH BETWEEN TWO LEVELS OF REALITY KNOWN AS THE MATERIAL AND SPECTRAL REALMS AT WILL”

troublesome foes, but much cooler are spears which litter the levels. These can be thrown to take an enemy out at distance, or you can run them through at close range and lift the still-twitching body above your head – very cool. My only grievance on this score is that there aren't

to glide short distances. He can also switch between two levels of reality known as the Material and Spectral Realms at will. Most time is spent in the Material Realm, which is the real world. Here objects are solid and everything behaves pretty much as you would expect. As an undead Raziel cannot



STUNNED ENEMIES CAN BE DISPOSED OF IN A VARIETY OF PLEASINGLY UNPLEASANT WAYS

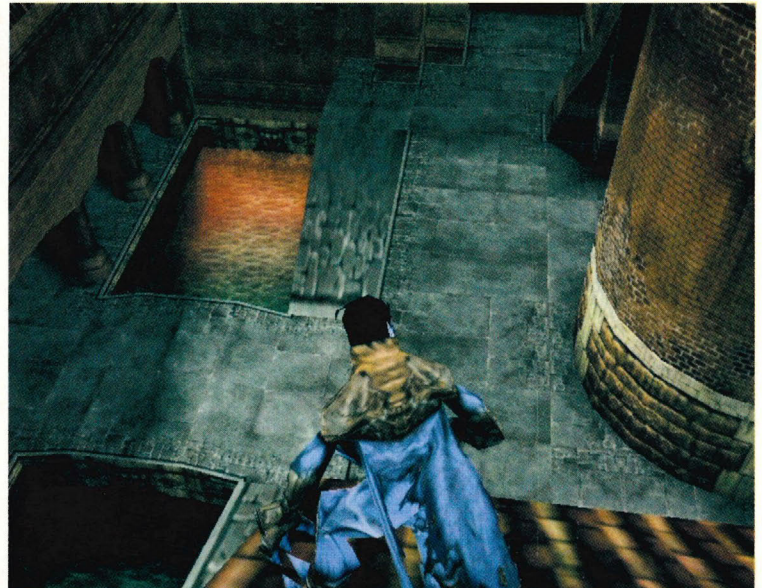
die as such, but should his energy reach zero through fighting or contact with water, for example, he will slip into the Spectral Realm. This is a kind twisted reality where the scenery becomes warped on objects, the visible is no longer really 'there'; they're just images – echoes of the Material Realm. In order to return to the Material Realm Raziel

must fully replenish his energy then find a special portal. To regain energy he needs to kill and consume the souls of Spectral Realm creatures. Creatures exist in one or other of the two realms, but not both. In the Spectral Realm, for example, Material Realm creatures appear as harmless concentrations of energy. Occasionally Raziel will need to enter

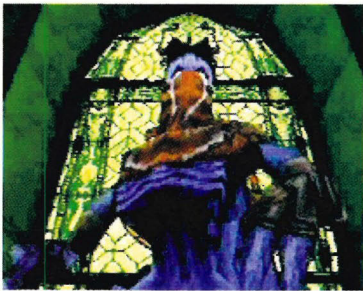




THERE'S A USEFUL BUTTON WHICH TURNS YOU TO FACE THE NEAREST ENEMY. INVALUABLE IN COMBAT



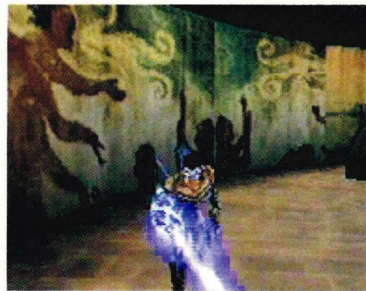
IF AN AREA DOESN'T APPEAR ACCESSIBLE IN THE MATERIAL REALM, TRY IT AGAIN IN THE SPECTRAL



the Spectral Realm at will as the twisting architecture occasionally enables access to areas unreachable in the Material Realm.

CHICKEN KORMA

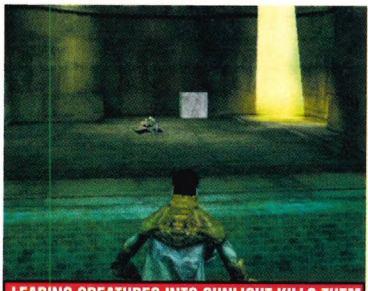
Puzzles play a part as well, although they're not particularly sophisticated to start off with, they get positively devious later on. At first it's simply a case of pulling the odd lever to open a door. Later, however, you



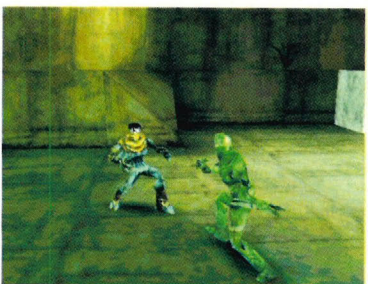
The dark world of Nosgoth is a foreboding place and the sound, graphics and visual effects do a great job of conveying this to the player. The voice-overs too are highly effective as a strong storyline is developed throughout the game, leading up to the final showdown with Kain himself. You know straight from the intro, however, that you're in for something special. It sets a dark and mysterious

"SOUL REAVER'S GOTHIC NATURE AND ANTI-HERO STAR INCREASE ITS APPEAL"

really need to get your lateral thinking cap on. Symbols on walls or floor tiles can often offers clues at an apparent dead end, but you've got to be switched on.



LEADING CREATURES INTO SUNLIGHT KILLS THEM



SO YOU WANT SOME DO YA, TOUGH GUY!

theme that's maintained right through. The gameplay offers something for everyone: adventuring and exploration, some excellent and innovative puzzle solving and blood-splattering combat come together in one package with great style and finesse.

Soul Reaver's gothic nature and anti-hero star increase its appeal. Raziel isn't the kind of chap you'd want to bump into in the street, which makes a change from the usual do-gooding heroes.

Core and Eidos pioneered the third-person adventure style, but while LC 'stars' in increasingly formulaic adventures, *Soul Reaver* brings plenty of new ideas and a much darker ambience to the format. A soul-searching triumph of style and substance! **MILES**

TRANSITION VAMP

The changing faces of some favourite suckers...

BELA LUGOSI

Bela Lugosi was the original film vampire in the 1931 production of *Dracula* by Universal Studios. Following *Dracula's* huge success, Lugosi was teamed up for many films with Boris Karloff and became America's favourite monster man. His image has been more recently revived over here by the *Fast Show*: "Monster, monster!" Spookily enough, Bela Lugosi was born near the western border of Transylvania in 1882, within flapping distance of the fictional home of Count *Dracula* in the Carpathian Mountains.



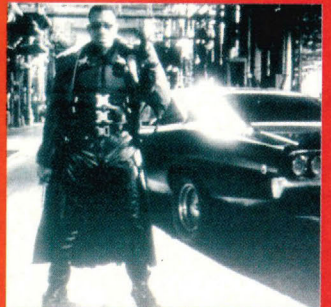
COUNT DUCKULA

Produced by Dangermouse creators Cosgrove-Hall, and featuring the voice of David Jason, *Count Duckula* was a big hit with kids and big kids alike. The less than scary *Duckula* would have sympathised with *Raziel's* new lack of bloodlust, himself preferring a broccoli sandwich to a virgin's neck.



BLADE

These days it seems that vampires are, like *Raziel*, turning on their own and feeding on the undead. Wesley Snipes, as *Blade*, carried the popular comic book hero onto the big screen in a non-stop action bloodfest, with a final scene whose environment and action would not look at all out of place in *Soul Reaver*.



FOR	SPEC	MIN	REC	VERDICT	OUT OF 100
Excellent graphics, the story is cool and the gameplay is well balanced. It also has a great line in gothic architecture	PROCESSOR	P200	P266	Eidos have come up with another winner. <i>Soul Reaver</i> has already earned rave reviews on the PlayStation and it's sure to do the same thing on PC	90
	MEMORY	16MB	64MB		
AGAINST Combat could have been explored more and some of the puzzles may prove too cerebral for your average hack 'n' slasher	HARD DRIVE	150MB	150MB		
	GRAPHICS	DIRECTX	3DFX		
	CONTROLS		KEYS, STICK		