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SOUL REAVER: KAIN'S LEGACY

Here's how Crystal Dynamics plans to breathe life into the vampire legend!

By Scary Larry

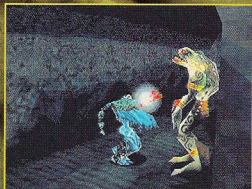
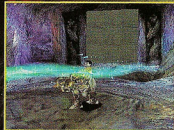
LEGACY of KAIN SOUL REAVER

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS knows you can't keep a good vampire down. *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* was a dark sleeper hit for the PlayStation, a Gothic classic that mesmerized players with its vampiric tale of revenge, epic-length action/RPG gameplay, and foreboding, open-ended conclusion. But how do you build upon the Kain legacy and still serve gamers well? With *Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain* for the PlayStation, Crystal literally goes to Hell and back.

UNEARTHING THE PLOT

One of the first things that had to be done was to continue the Legacy of Kain story line. Blood Omen fans will recall that at game's end, the vampire anti-hero Kain faced a choice: either sacrifice his undead self for the good of all or rule the world as lord of the vampires. *Soul Reaver* finds Kain taking the latter course of action (see sidebar, "Honor and Gory: The Legacy of Pain"). You'll play as Raziel, a vampire seeking to overthrow Kain's vicious rule.

While developing this story line, Crystal Dynamics added more Gothic touches than you'll find in a Nine Inch Nails video. Kain's vampire empire is dark, dank, and creepy. The intricate plot is one of the game's bright spots. In *Soul*



Raziel's battle with the armies of Hell will have you lusty for blood!

HONOR AND GORY: THE LEGACY OF PAIN

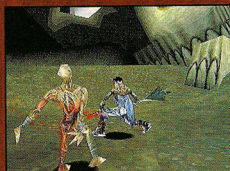
In the first game, *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, Kain is unjustly murdered. In the land of the dead, he vows revenge, but returns to the material world as a vampire, killing the helpless humans and drinking their blood. At the end of *Blood Omen*, he must choose between returning to the dead for the good of the many or remaining in the world of the living as head bloodsucker.

In *Soul Reaver*, Kain's decision becomes painfully clear. Kain has set up a vampire city in Nosgoth, the underworld realm, and humans everywhere have consequently become walking liquid refreshment. Kain has also created a legion of vampires with six lieutenants drafted to help him rule. Raziel and his boys, who sit on Kain's high council, watch the lesser lads with bored vampires' eyes, hoping for a

savage battle to break out just so they can have some fun. Purgatory sounds a lot like Iowa.

But soon Kain has a new passion. He takes his trusted upper-crust vampires, including Raziel, to a distant place where their bodies evolve into higher forms. Raziel sprouts wings, but makes the mistake of showing them off to Kain. In a fit of jealous rage, Kain rips them off and casts Raziel into a magic vortex of water—and H₂O is the only thing that hurts a vampire more than a root canal. Raziel loses face (literally watching his jaw disintegrate), dons a cowl and a scowl, and meets up with the mysterious Elder to plot the demise of Lord Kain. What Raziel doesn't realize, however, is that while he took his mystic dunking, several thousand years have gone by in Nosgoth. And as anyone will tell you, things change with the passage of time.

Being a vampire can be such a pain in the neck.



Reaver, you're totally hooked the minute the beautifully crafted computer-generated scenes start running. You soon become familiar with 10 classes of vampires who are out to rid the underworld of Raziel, along with almost a dozen grim and feral bosses. In their design stages, these bosses looked more frightening than Congressional impeachment prosecutors.

Additionally, 20 different types of enemies will haunt your world. Not surprisingly, throughout the dark and sinister levels, you'll engage in extensive hand-to-hand combat using a variety of weapons to slice, dice, torch, and, of course, impale your foes.

MORE FANG FOR THE BUCK

To bring all this vampire vamping to...er, life, Crystal decided to imbue *Soul Reaver* with a revamped look. It went Lara Croft's route, using a super-charged version of the Gex 3 game engine to give Raziel a 3D playing field. The game's visual tour de force, however, is based on Raziel's ability to shift between two realities: the material realm and the spectral realm.

If you imagine the light and dark worlds of *The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening*, you'll get the idea. When Raziel shifts from one realm to the other, the environments are physically changed so that solutions to otherwise dead-end puzzles may be revealed. For example, if a chasm appears to be too far to jump across in the spectral realm, morphing to the material realm may reveal a helpful stone

ledge. This terrain morphing is an innovative and spectacular-looking visual effect that brings depth and nuance to *Soul Reaver*'s gameplay.

BEATING THE BLOODSUCKERS

Of course, when it comes to vampire slaying, it's good to be prepared. After Raziel steals the awesome *Soul Reaver* weapon from Kain, he's more than up to the task. The Reaver actually attaches to Raziel's arm like an organic lightsaber, and when he finds special forges, he can upgrade the *Soul Reaver*'s potency.

Raziel also will be able to build up other powers in several ways. In some locations, he'll find magic Glyphs. These mystic stones serve as power-ups that enable him to command potent forces such as earthquake and rings of fire. He'll also steal powers from boss vampires. For example, if a boss climbs up walls or swims underwater as a tactic against you, you'll acquire that ability if you defeat him.

WILL THE DEAD RISE AGAIN?

If you're wondering what's going down (or rising again) in Kain's world, you'll definitely want to play *Soul Reaver* when it hits the streets in late March. *Blood Omen* fans and newbies should get ready for a vampire's feast that definitely does not suck. **G**



Meet the inhabitants of hell and try to get out—before you become a permanent tenant.