

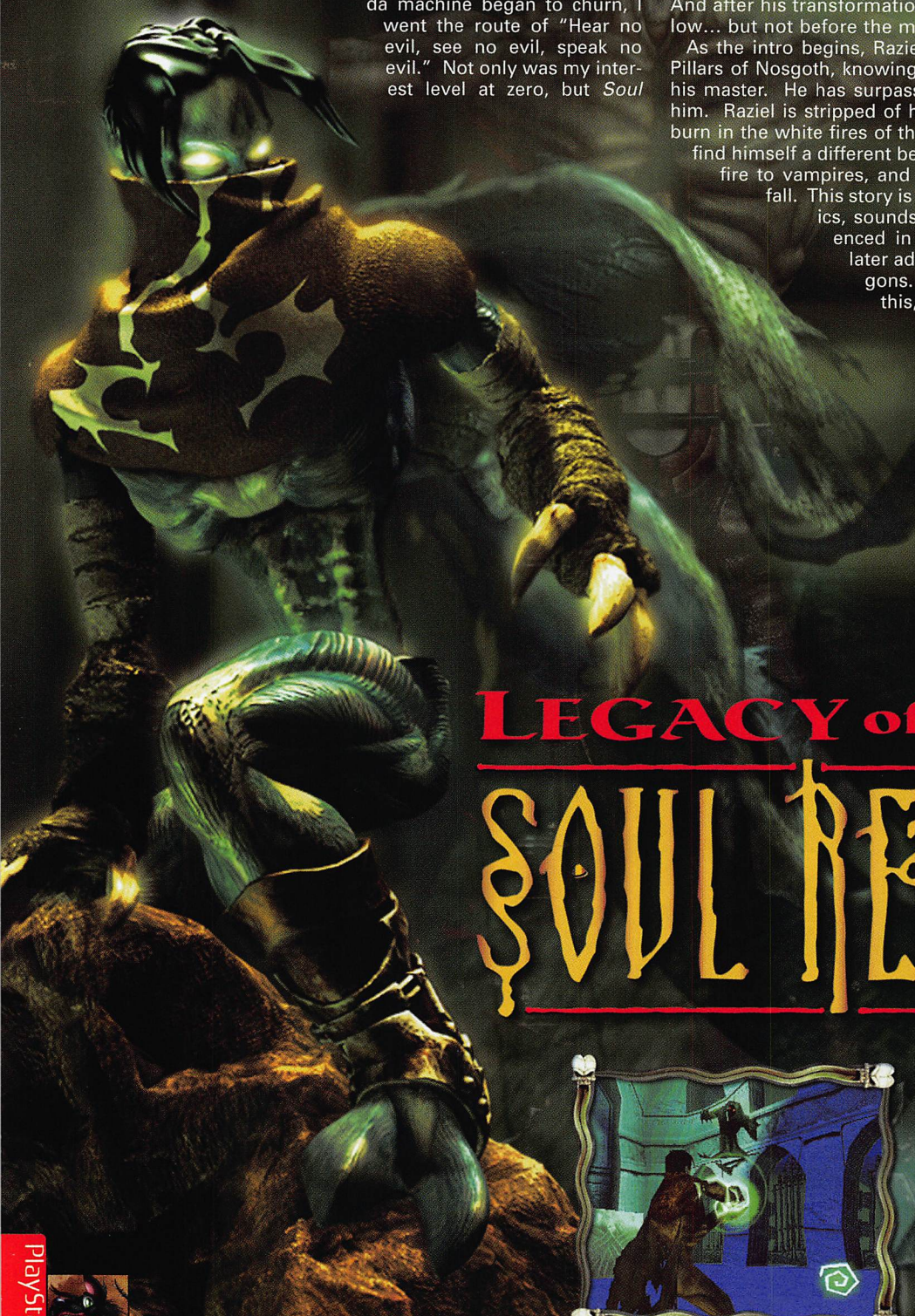
The *Legend of Zelda*, *Metal Gear Solid*, *GoldenEye*: all games that have been covered to death and taken much longer to develop than planned. *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* joins this esteemed party. Nearly four years have passed since the original, which is a helluva long time to design a sequel. I'm not raggin' on long development cycles; in fact, I applaud them. Still, nothing is sacred in this world. *Zelda* and *Metal Gear* weren't perfect, and detractors flamed what flaws they found... no matter how minor. It's unfortunate that *Blood Omen's* successor is fated to run the same gauntlet. Only time will tell how this game fares in the long run. But I'm not letting my jaded-gamer tendencies come through on this one.

When Eidos' *Soul Reaver* propaganda machine began to churn, I went the route of "Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil." Not only was my interest level at zero, but *Soul*

*Reaver* didn't seem like my type of game. The constant delays strengthened my apathy for Kain even more. Ironic that all it took to make me want to play was its motion picture-quality opening cinematic. But it wasn't just the cinematic... the way the story was told in five minutes really drew me in.

According to the story, Kain had the choice of martyrizing himself or ruling Nosgoth and taking it into the Dark Age. *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* begins millennia after Kain chose evil. A thousand years have given Kain enough time to nearly eradicate the human race... making Nosgoth a living hell for humans. To ensure his reign would go unchallenged, Kain resurrected six souls to serve as his lieutenants. In the coming millennium, Kain had plans to evolve into a greater being. And after his transformation, one of his lieutenants would follow... but not before the master.

As the intro begins, Raziel, Kain's first lieutenant, enters the Pillars of Nosgoth, knowing he has committed a crime against his master. He has surpassed Kain, by growing wings before him. Raziel is stripped of his wings by Kain and sentenced to burn in the white fires of the Lake of the Dead. He awakens to find himself a different being. The water from the Lake is like fire to vampires, and Raziel's body does not survive the fall. This story is told with the finest computer graphics, sounds, and voice acting I've ever experienced in video games, though the story is later advanced by the use of real-time polygons. When an intro is as absorbing as this, you want to play the game.



# LEGACY of KAIN™

# SOUL REAVER



PlayStation



**R**  
REVIEW

CERBERUS: RAZIEL,  
YOU ARE WORTHY...

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYNAMICS  
PUBLISHER - EIDOS

1 PLAYER  
AVAILABLE NOW

VIEWPOINT SCORE: **90**



Not a weaking, Raziel becomes a serious bad-ass through the course of his journey. In his first battle with Kain, Raziel becomes one with the Soul Reaver blade. Together, the two become practically unstoppable. The weapon itself is one of the coolest things in gamedom. Imagine a demonic lightsaber fused to Raziel's right arm. Later Raziel and his blade earn the ability to project sonic waves and even fire. How awesome is that? Raziel cannot scale walls or swim in the material realm, but by stealing his brothers' powers, he learns how to use his claws to their fullest. No one can say that Crystal Dynamics spent three years on this game without refining the control. As responsive as he is agile, Raziel makes Spidey look like a cast member in the movie *Cocoon*.

Not many games hide from you the fact that you're actually completing a puzzle. Sometimes you won't even know

## Everything about Soul Reaver is unbelievable, from the story to the architecture.



you've completed one until it's finished. By the way, be ready for some seriously wicked puzzles. If you can complete all the puzzles in *Soul Reaver* without help, apply to the genius organization MENSA (which ironically means stupid in Spanish).

To paraphrase the dubiously-masculine ninja, Eggo, everything about *Soul Reaver* is unbelievable, from the story to the architecture, from the characters and animation to the game engine. The Nosgoth scenery is some of the best I've ever laid eyes on, for a PlayStation game. Dimly lit hallways go dark when Raziel takes the torch from its holder. Stained glass windows project exterior light like a church window. It's frightening how far Crystal Dynamics has pushed the PS—even with all that pesky fogging.

You didn't think I'd get through the review without some gripes, did you? Okay, the fog is

a given when you push this many polygons, but what about other things? Much like *Zelda* for the N64, the areas are so far apart that I did more walking than I'd like. Sure, you can warp, but that's no fun. Enemies are too uncommon—when there's a load of moves at your disposal, you want to use them often. But believe it or not, that's the extent of my grievances.

Take this trip through Nosgoth—playing an angel of death doesn't happen often. And games this good don't come along as often as they should. As I said before, do what I did and put your jaded-gamer tendencies aside <cough, cough—ECM> and give *Soul Reaver* the time it deserves. Vae Victus!

*Cerberus regularly shifts himself back and forth from the material plane to the spectral plane in hopes of avoiding deadlines.*