HINT: GOING TO THE CHAPEL

Though navigating *Shadow Man*'s world should be no problem for *Tomb Raider* fans, finding the Church early on in the Louisiana swamp can be tricky. Knowing that players would think it was a dead end, Acclaim even gives a hint in the manual, but it's still not helpful enough.

In this locale, keep going through the mine shaft/cave until you come to what appears to be a dead end. If you look up and to the left, you'll see another opening.

Go to the lower end of the ledge to the right and grab on. Since you can't pull yourself up, you'll have to slide using the Move Left key. Inexplicably, this doesn't work sometimes. When that happens, hop off and keep trying until the Move Left key kicks in and you can shimmy across the ledge.

Once you've grabbed the Cadeaux, keep shimmying over until you get directly in front of the opening. Then hit the Forward/Up key until you pull yourself up. Now walk into the Church and talk to Nettie.

Shadow Man

ATMOS-FEAR-IC VOODOO CHILE

Known for the sports-game mojo that it conjures so well, Acclaim has worked its magic in a different genre with *Shadow Man*. The best nonsports game the company has ever released, *Shadow Man* offers immersive atmosphere, a compelling storyline, and unique characters that catapult this game above your typical *Tomb Raider* clone.

Based loosely on the Acclaim comic books of the same name, *Shadow Man* places you in the role of Mike LeRoi, a desperate dude who's been turned into the Shadow Man by a vindictive voodoo priestess. While being the Shadow Man means you're immortal, it also turns you into the priestess's zombie-warrior-love slave.

THE SPECS

3D CARD SUPPORT
Direct3D only
3D SOUND
DirectSound only
MULTIPLAYER
None

PLUSES
- Unrivaled atmospheric gameplay
- Rich, compelling storyline
- Top-notch graphics

MINUSES
- At times, felt like a typical shooter
- Good but not great voice acting
- No big difference between lower and higher resolutions and color depth

Debuting the proprietary Virtually Integrated Scenic TerrAin (VISTA) engine, *Shadow Man* drops you into a world filled with the sights and sounds of Voodoo magic, from the muffled cries of Louisiana swamp life to the painful groans of the horrific Deadside inhabitants.

The gorgeous landscapes are rendered in 32-bit color, with 256x256 texture maps bringing rich detail to each eerie location. We were excited by the 1280x1024 maximum resolution, and the VISTA engine makes for some pretty impressive visuals. VISTA's most compelling feature is that it allows you to see as far as the horizon without using a depth-cuing fog engine. At 800x600 on a Pentium II 266MHz, *Shadow Man* ran at about 30 frames per second; at 1280x1024, that number dropped down to about 25. All of the now-standard lighting and transparency effects looked superb on our TNT2.

Throughout the game, you must navigate worlds from an over-the-shoulder, *MDK*-like point of view (with an optional sniper mode). But the camera can be moved to a nearly infinite number of gameplay positions. You'll spend a great deal of time running, jumping, climbing and shooting, though there were times when we felt we were missing too much of this rich world while shooting, especially since our opponents were slow-moving, AI-challenged dead guys. We'd rather have been conjuring Voodoo, solving puzzles, or navigating the levels. Power-ups aren't just left laying around (save for the occasional soul hidden in the ubiquitous breakable pottery)—the only way to regain your strength in Deadside is to use your Shadow Gun to literally rip and absorb the souls from the attacking dead. If you get lost on your journey—which isn't so tough—pay close attention to the cut-scenes, as they will often point you in the right direction.

Everything in Shadow Man is consistent with the Voodoo feel and atmosphere, from the in-game menus to the opening credits.

At a time when multiplayer is as hot as an Internet IPO, this game is surprisingly solo. However, this turns out to be a better thing than one might expect; the designers seem to have spent that much more time focused on creating a truly intense single-player experience.

It's a rare game that can weave such a rich tapestry, filled with atmosphere and compelling subplots; it's an even rarer action game that can do so. From the cinematic opening, to the background sounds, and even to the in-game menus, *Shadow Man* offers some of the best atmospheric effects we've seen in years. Any action gamer with half a soul will gladly let *Shadow Man* work its Old Black Magic on him.

—Shane Mooney

Shadow Man boasts unique and compelling characters, revealed in cinematic cut-scenes, including Jaunty, a former human whose present form and predicament are the a result of a bungled Voodoo experiment.

MAXIMUM PC VERDICT

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