

= Nightshade (1985 video game) =

Nightshade is an action video game developed and published by Ultimate Play The Game . It was first released for the ZX Spectrum in 1985 , and was then ported to the Amstrad CPC and BBC Micro later that year . It was also ported to the MSX exclusively in Japan in 1986 . In the game , the player assumes the role of a knight who sets out to destroy four demons in a plague @-@ infested village .

The game features flip @-@ screen and isometric gameplay , in similar vein to its predecessors , Knight Lore and Alien 8 . In addition , Nightshade features an enhanced version of the Ultimate Play The Game 's Filamation game engine , branded Filamation II . The game received positive reviews upon release ; critics praised its gameplay traits , graphics and colours , however one critic was divided over its perceived similarities to its predecessors .

= = Gameplay = =

The game is presented in an isometric format . The player assumes the role of a knight who enters the plague @-@ infested village of Nightshade to vanquish four demons who reside within . Additionally , all residents from the village have been transformed into vampires and other supernatural creatures . Contact with these monsters infects the knight , with repeated contact turning the character from white to yellow and then to green , which will lead to the character 's death . The knight may be hit up to three times by an enemy , however the fourth hit will result in a life being deducted .

The objective of the game is to locate and destroy four specific demons . Each demon is vulnerable to a particular object which must be collected by the player : a hammer , a Bible , a crucifix and an hourglass . Once the four items have been collected , the player must track down a specific demon and cast the correct item at it in order to destroy it . Once all four demons have been destroyed , the game will end . In order to defend against other enemies such as vampires and monsters , the player can arm themselves with " antibodies " , which take the appearance of maces . Antibodies can be found in houses around the village , and will slowly deplete once used by the player . Other collectible items include extra lives and boots , the latter of which enables the player character to run at a faster speed .

= = Background and release = =

Ashby Computers and Graphics was founded by brothers Tim and Chris Stamper , along with Tim 's wife , Carol , from their headquarters in Ashby @-@ de @-@ la @-@ Zouch in 1982 . Under the trading name of Ultimate Play the Game , they began producing multiple video games for the ZX Spectrum throughout the early 1980s . The company were known for their reluctance to reveal details about their operations and upcoming projects . Little was known about their development process except that they used to work in separate teams ; one team would work on graphics whilst the other would concentrate on other aspects such as sound or programming . When a journalist reviewing Nightshade for Crash asked Tim and Chris Stamper what the object of the game was they responded : " oh , we can 't tell you that " .

The game was developed with the isometric projection game engine known as Filamation II , an upgraded version of the Filamation engine . The Filamation engine was created by the Stamper brothers to portray 3D imagery . Filamation II used an image masking technique that drew and filled holes in the background , allowing the game to create composite structures out of pixelated drawings without visual overlay , despite the limitations platforms such as the ZX Spectrum offered . Nightshade was first released in the United Kingdom for the ZX Spectrum in 1985 , and was then ported to the Amstrad CPC and BBC Micro later that year . It was also ported to the MSX exclusively in Japan in 1986 .

= = Reception = =

The game received positive reviews upon release . Chris Bourne of Sinclair User praised the game 's new graphics system , opining that it was " wonderfully " detailed and " juiced up " in contrast to its predecessors , Knight Lore and Alien 8 . A reviewer writing for Computer and Video Games praised the graphics as " great " and stated that its sound effects were " up to standard " considering the " dumb " ZX Spectrum . Philippa Irving of Crash thought that the visuals and use of colours were " stunning " and up to Ultimate Play The Game 's " usual standards " , however she did notice a few instances of attribute clash . A reviewer writing for Computer Gamer asserted that the graphics were " as good as ever " , however they admitted that the game seemed " lacking " in comparison to Ultimate Play The Game 's most recent releases . Chris Jenkins of Popular Computing Weekly opined that the game 's interior visuals looked like " featureless squares " , however he admitted that the game 's background drops were more detailed .

The gameplay was also praised by reviewers . Bourne opined that the game was well @-@ paced in similar vein to arcade @-@ style games , however he noted " a sense of déjà vu " with the game 's concept , stating that the developer 's games were starting to " wear thin " . The reviewer from Computer and Video Games appreciated Nightshade 's " nice touches " , summarising that it was an instant classic from Ultimate Play The Game . Irving criticised the lack of instructions or hints that came with the game , and stated that Nightshade did not set new standards with programming , unlike Knight Lore and Alien 8 . However , Irving admitted that the game was still another " technically brilliant " game . The reviewer from Computer Gamer enjoyed the wide range of gameplay elements , stating that it was enough to hold their attention for hours . A reviewer from Home Computing Weekly stated that the gameplay was not as addictive as Knight Lore or Alien 8 due to the game 's lack of obstacles . Jenkins praised the game 's use of its new engine , Filmation II , stating that it was ahead of " everything else " on the ZX Spectrum .