= Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos =

Ninja Gaiden II : The Dark Sword of Chaos , known in Japan as Ninja Ryukenden II : Ankoku no Jashin Ken (????? II ?????? , lit . " Legend of the Ninja Dragon Sword II : The Demonic Sword of Darkness ") and as Shadow Warriors II : The Dark Sword of Chaos in Europe (alternatively known as Shadow Warriors II : Ninja Gaiden II) , is a side @-@ scrolling platforming video game developed and published by Tecmo for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) . This is the second installment in the Ninja Gaiden trilogy for the NES and it was released in Japan on April 6 , 1990 (1990 @-@ 04 @-@ 06) , in North America in May 1990 , and in Europe on October 27 , 1994 (1994 @-@ 10 @-@ 27) . The game was later released for the Commodore Amiga and DOS @-@ based PCs by GameTek in 1991 . It was then released for the Virtual Console North America service on October 15 , 2007 (2007 @-@ 10 @-@ 15) for the Wii and on August 22 , 2013 (2013 @-@ 08 @-@ 22) for the Nintendo 3DS .
The events in Ninja Gaiden II take place one year after the events in the first Ninja Gaiden game . It is about an evil emperor named Ashtar who , after hearing of Jaquio 's defeat , devises a plan to take over the world and engulf it in darkness through an evil sword called the Dark Sword of Chaos . A U.S. Army agent named Robert T. Sturgeon recruits the game 's protagonist Ryu Hayabusa and tells him that he is the only person who can stop him . The game received positive praise in previews from Electronic Gaming Monthly and Nintendo Power and continued to receive high ratings and coverage , being nominated for several awards from Nintendo Power in 1991 . Overall , reviewers have said that visuals and controls of Ninja Gaiden II improved over its predecessor while maintaining a high level of difficulty for players ; the game was criticized for having a more generic and predictable plot . The game maintains lasting appeal among players , with one reviewer saying that Ninja Gaiden II is " a challenging experience the likes of which gamers in the 8 @-@ bit era lived and died for " .

= = Plot = =

The story begins one year after the events of the first Ninja Gaiden game . The story opens in the Realm of Darkness as Ashtar , the evil lord who controlled Jaquio , is informed of Jaquio 's defeat ; he devises a plan to rule over Earth by opening the Gate of Darkness . A U.S. Army Special Intelligence unit member named Robert T. Sturgeon is sent to find Ryu to take out Ashtar . Robert informs Ryu that Irene Lew has been captured and that he must go to the Tower of Lahja to save her . After hopping on a freight train and then battling up the mountain in which the tower lies , he is ambushed by a figure who describes himself as a tribesman of the World of Chaos , led by the Emperor of Darkness Ashtar . After making it to the top of the tower , Ryu finds Irene , who has been captured by Ashtar . Ashtar then blasts Ryu with energy from his own sword ; before Ashtar can finish off Ryu , Robert appears and shoots Ashtar in the back , stopping him . Robert orders Ashtar to hand over his sword and give up , but Ashtar escapes with Irene , telling Ryu to follow him into the Maze of Darkness .
After Ashtar escapes into the Maze of Darkness , Robert tells Ryu about Ashtar 's plot to take over the world by using the full power of his sword , the Dark Sword of Chaos . Robert implores Ryu to stop Ashtar before his Dark Sword reaches full power . After battling through the Maze of Darkness and into the World of Chaos , Ryu hears echoes of Ashtar 's plan in the distance . Ryu then catches up with Ashtar . He releases Irene , but immediately after releasing her he stabs her with the Dark Sword . Robert then shows up , only to find out that Irene has been mortally wounded ; Ashtar then blasts Robert with energy from his Dark Sword and then challenges Ryu to battle . Ryu defeats Ashtar , and before he dies , he says that the forces of Darkness will soon awaken and implores the forces of Chaos to engulf the world into darkness . While he is saying this , the Dark Sword of Chaos vanishes into thin air . After Ashtar 's death , Irene tells Ryu that an evil altar that Ashtar prepared to open the Gate of Darkness must be destroyed . Ryu then leaves Irene behind and tells Robert to take her and leave the World of Chaos .
As Ryu enters the World of Darkness to destroy the altar , Irene and Robert , while traveling back ,

are stopped by a shadowy figure that Irene has seen before . Meanwhile , after defeating Kelbeross whom he noted he fought in his fight against Jaquio (in the previous Ninja Gaiden game) , Ryu finds Robert on the ground and mortally wounded . He tells Ryu that Irene has been captured again and that he must prevent the Gate of Darkness from opening . Robert then tells Ryu to leave him behind while he fends off the demons . Ryu eventually makes it to the evil altar where he finds Irene and the shadowy figure who captured her ; the figure reveals himself as Jaquio ? the antagonist from the first Ninja Gaiden installment ? who was reborn after his first battle with Ryu .

Jaquio tells Ryu his master plan of using Ashtar as a pawn , used to awaken the true evil . He plans to use the Dark Sword of Chaos to use Irene 's life force to open the Gate of Darkness and call up all the demons , while Ryu awakens them from their sleep . Jaquio then challenges Ryu to a showdown in which Ryu defeats him . Before Ryu and Irene can destroy the evil altar though , Jaquio 's blood awakens the Dark Sword , which opens up the Gate of Darkness , shocks Irene and Ryu with its energy . The Demon Jashin arrives through the Gate of Darkness and reanimates the corpse of Jaquio . He then turns into a demonic wall , which Ryu , after borrowing strength from his Dragon Sword , defeats . Jashin is once again sealed away , the Dark Sword then breaks apart , the Gate of Darkness closes and disappears , and Ryu flees with Irene out of the temple just as it collapses . He then begins to mourn for Irene , who is presumed to be dead , when the power of the Dragon Sword revives her . Irene tells Ryu that she felt like she had been dreaming for a long time . Ryu tells her that the incident is over , and the game ends as the two watch the sun set .

= = Gameplay = =

As with the previous Ninja Gaiden game , the player controls Ryu Hayabusa through a series of platforming levels called " Acts " . Players have the ability to jump and latch on and off walls and ladders . Two new abilities that Ryu can do in Ninja Gaiden II are climbing up and down walls and attacking with " Power Boosting Items " while on walls and ladders . Ryu has a strength meter on top of the screen that decreases whenever he takes damage from enemies . The player loses a life if Ryu 's strength meter runs out , Ryu falls off the screen or if the timer runs out ; the game ends if players lose all their lives . The player can continue and restart the game from the beginning of the level in which they lost all their lives .

Players dispatch enemies by either thrusting at them with his Dragon Sword or by defeating them using Power Boosting Items . These special items consume Ryu 's " ninja power " , also located on the top of the screen . Power Boosting Items include the following : shurikens ; " Windmill Throwing Stars " that move back and forth like a boomerang ; " The Art of the Fire Wheel " which hurls fireballs diagonally upwards ; " Fire Dragon Balls " which hurls fireballs diagonally downwards ; and the " Invincible Fire Wheel " that creates a barrier of three fireballs around Ryu , destroying any enemy that touches them . These items can be found in various crystal balls scattered throughout the levels , and they can be switched out by collecting another Power Boosting Item . The amount of ninja power used depends on the type of Power Boosting Item used . At the end of each Act Ryu fights a boss which has its own strength meter , located on the top of the screen . The boss 's strength meter decreases every time the player damages it , and the boss is destroyed when the player completely depletes its strength meter .

Along the way , the player can collect items that are found in crystal balls scattered throughout the levels . These items include the following : items that increase Ryu 's ninja power ; bottles that increase the player 's score ; " Scrolls of the Spirit of the Dragon " that increase Ryu 's maximum ninja power ; medicine that partially refills Ryu 's strength meter ; Power Boosting Items ; and 1 @-@ ups . Another new feature in Ninja Gaiden II is the ability for Ryu to " split his body " and clone himself when the player collects an orange ninja symbol . Collecting this symbol creates for Ryu an orange shadow of him that follows behind and copies every move Ryu makes , including climbing walls and ladders and attacking enemies . Using this technique , the player can strategically position Ryu and his clones to more easily defeat enemies and bosses .

= = Reception = =

Electronic Gaming Monthly previewed Ninja Gaiden II in late 1989 and early 1990 . The game first appeared in its September ? October 1989 issue and again in its November 1989 issue ; they noted the new levels , power @-@ ups , and an " explosive story that 's loaded with twists and turns " . In the magazine 's January issue , Steve Harris praised the game for its new power @-@ ups , scrolling backgrounds , and more detailed cinematic cutscenes . He said that the game was going to take the series " one step further than before " . The game was shown to the public for the time at the Winter 1990 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas , in which Nintendo Power gave " four star ratings for its great cinema scenes and challenge " . The same magazine previewed the game in its " Pak Watch " section in their March ? April 1990 issue . They said that at first look the game had better cutscenes than the first Ninja Gaiden game , and they noted the great and diverse gameplay and high level of challenge . After the game 's release , it debuted at # 4 on the magazine 's " Top 30 " list for September ? October 1990 . In March 1991 , the game was nominated for the " Nintendo Power Awards ' 90 " in the following categories : " Best Theme & Fun " ; " Best Play Control " ; " Best Hero " (Ryu Hayabusa) ; " Best Bad Guy " (Ashtar) ; and " Best Overall " . It did not win any of those categories . Later , in its 100th issue in September 1997 , Ninja Gaiden II was listed as the 49th best game of all time on its " 100 Best Games of All Time " list . It was also listed as having one of the best 100 cheat codes of all time , which was pressing a series of buttons on the title screen to enable various sound tests . In a 1991 issue of Game Players in its list of Annual Awards , the game received the " Game Player 's NES Excellence Award " as one of the best NES games of 1990 . GamesRadar ranked it the 20th best NES game ever made . The staff felt that it was a large improvement over its predecessor due to improved gameplay , audio , visuals , and control .

 Ninja Gaiden II was reviewed in the July 1990 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly and received very high ratings . Steve Harris said that the game improved on its predecessor 's gameplay , graphics , and cinematic cutscenes ; he praised the diverse level environments and the new abilities that Ryu has received , but he noted that some power @-@ ups from the first Ninja Gaiden game were missing in this one . A reviewer under the pseudonym " Sushi @-@ X " echoed Harris ' praise but pointed about that some of the bosses in the first game were reused ; he added afterwards that " it 's still worth the price of admission " . Ed Semrad called Ninja Gaiden II one of the best video game sequels to ever be released ; he referred to the graphics , difficulty , gameplay , and storyline as " near @-@ perfect " , though he points out that the game does get very difficult in the latter levels . Martin Alessi called it one of the best NES games ever and one of the best video games of 1990 . In the same issue , Ninja Gaiden II was featured on the front cover and was denoted as the " Game @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Month " . The game received further praise for taking the Ninja Gaiden series to new levels and featuring other surprises . They showed a partial walkthrough of the first Act and provided short tips for the second through fourth Acts . Near the end of the feature the staff pointed out rumors of a third installment to the series (which would eventually become Ninja Gaiden III : The Ancient Ship of Doom) . At the end of the feature rock band Anthrax members Charlie Benante and Frank Bello were shown with Tecmo developer Jason Magness playing Ninja Gaiden II in a private showing .

 Ninja Gaiden II was reviewed again in 2007 when the game was released for the Virtual Console and received some praise as well as criticism from reviewers . Austin Shau from GameSpot compared the game with the first Ninja Gaiden game as examples of " mean @-@ spirited games " on the NES with high , unforgiving difficulty and excellent controls and gameplay . He applauds Tecmo 's artistic detail in the cutscenes , saying that it enhances the storyline and offsets the tedious dialogue . He said that the visuals are better than those in the first game with the usage of " dynamic environments " such as speeding trains , and he praises the game 's fast @-@ paced sound . He and IGN 's Lucas Thomas praised the improvement in the controls from its predecessor , more specifically Ryu 's ability to freely climb up and down walls and use special weapons while on the walls . Thomas enjoyed the game 's " chief innovation " of Ryu 's ability to clone himself and use them to take care of enemies ? something in which he says " make progressing through levels and taking down bosses much easier and quicker " . Reviewers said that the game 's difficulty remains

high for players as with the previous Ninja Gaiden game . Shau noted that the game is still difficult as was its predecessor but said that the sequel is slightly easier . Thomas stated that the sequel is not any easier to beat than its predecessor and that players will still get frustrated , especially with new environmental features such as blowing wind and rain and absolute darkness in which flashes of lightning illuminates the platforms . Thomas ' only criticism of the game was that the storyline was not as good as its predecessor , saying that the plot seemed more predictable and that the cutscenes seemed more generic the second time around . Overall , he noted the lasting appeal of the game , saying that Ninja Gaiden II is " a challenging experience the likes of which gamers in the 8 @-@ bit era lived and died for " .