

= Astaroth (Soulcalibur) =

Astaroth (????? , Asutarosu) is a fictional character in the Soul series of video games . Created by Namco 's Project Soul division , he first appeared in the original Soulcalibur and its subsequent sequels , later appearing in various merchandise related to the series . He is voiced in Japanese by Banj? Ginga for Soulcalibur and Ry?zabur? ?tomo in later titles ; in all English @-@ language versions of Soulcalibur II , Astaroth was voiced by Jay S. Gilbert .

Introduced in Soulcalibur , Astaroth is a golem created by a cult worshiping the Greek god of war Ares to locate a cursed sword named " Soul Edge " . Though Astaroth has consistently pursued the sword , his character has changed as the series progresses , eventually transforming into a power hungry creature desiring to consume the sword . Regarded as an iconic character of the series , Astaroth has been noted as fitting a large character stereotype seen in fighting games , featuring strong attacks but slow speed . Astaroth has been described as having easy @-@ to @-@ master gameplay and being popular with fans of strong , hard @-@ hitting characters in fighting games .

= = Conception and creation = =

As a character introduced in Soulcalibur , Astaroth 's weapon , a giant axe , was decided upon before other aspects of the character were . His design revolved around it , starting with gender , then physical measurements , and lastly background details . Once established , his appearance and movement were fleshed out by the team 's concept artist Aya Takemura and rendered as a 3D model by a design team that worked solely on the character . Astaroth was then animated mainly by Nobuko Nimura using motion capture and working directly with the team , while other motion designers created the movements for his grapple attacks . During this phase the team additionally worked with the Soulcalibur story creators , refining the character 's own role in the plot as needed throughout development . Soulcalibur IV lead programmer Masaaki Hoshino called Astaroth his favorite character , stating that because he is " so powerful there 's always a chance to make a comeback " .

During development , a golem devoid of facial features , armed with a sword and shield , and accompanied by a small girl was considered as a possible character , but scrapped . Before finalizing his appearance several other designs were considered , ranging from a Frankenstein 's monster @-@ inspired character to a medieval berserker . Despite having a male voice and physical build , Astaroth was referred to as " it " in terms of gender for the character 's Soulcalibur background information . However the background information in other character profiles instead refer to him as male , and his background information in later titles followed suit .

= = = Design = = =

Astaroth is shown to be a large , muscular , bald , dark @-@ skinned humanoid with solid white eyes . A black mask wraps around and covers the lower portion of his head , while a black open gorget covers the nape of his neck and spiked spaulders cover his shoulders . Black spiked braces and boots cover his hands to the elbows and feet to the knees respectively , and black garters wrap around the middle of each thigh . A large black belt surrounds his abdomen supporting a fauld and cloth loincloth . Two black straps of leather crisscross the vertical center of his chest from the gorget to the belt , in between which lies his exposed , protruding heart . During development of the design , a flame positioned over his head alongside flaming eyes were considered , but were cut from the finished product . Astaroth stands 7 feet 3 inches tall , making him the largest character with a recorded height in the series .

In subsequent titles of the series Astaroth 's appearance changed , showing more signs of damage and armor loss in II and in III shifting to a dark maroon skintone . By Soulcalibur IV , Astaroth 's appearance was completely changed , altered to resemble a " rugged rocky " golem . Facial features were completely removed , replaced with a large @-@ mawed fractured head design with a headscarf covering the area around his forehead , eyes , and the back of his head . The remaining

areas of his body featured several cracks over his build with red veins glowing from within . Large stone spikes jutted from each shoulder , while a similar pair jutted from each knee . Broken metal armor pieces protected his arms , legs , and chest , while a fault surrounded his waist . Fans reacted negatively to the character 's modified appearance once unveiled , complaining it was " monster @-@ ish " .

In most Soulcalibur titles , Astaroth 's secondary character models contrast heavily against his primary design . Amongst these have included designs with several bone or spike protrusions from Astaroth 's body , to designs inspired by punk fashion . This trend was discontinued in Soulcalibur IV , where his appearance from Soulcalibur was reused instead .

= = In video games = =

Introduced in Soulcalibur , Astaroth is a golem created by a cult of Ares to retrieve the cursed sword known as Soul Edge . Upon finding the blade , Astaroth realizes that it is damaged and allies himself with its wielder Nightmare to harvest living souls necessary to restore the blade , planning to steal the blade once completed . However , before he can complete this task , he is confronted by a survivor of his attacks , Maxi , and is slain . Revived by Ares in Soulcalibur II , Astaroth continues after the sword . However , the cult that created him regards this as a betrayal , and places a curse on the golem to dominate him . Astaroth resists and counterattacks the cult , learning in the process his design is not original but instead modeled after a human being , Rock . To assert himself as unique , Astaroth finds and nearly kills Rock at the conclusion of Soulcalibur III , breaking free of Ares ' control and transforming in the aftermath . Now hungering for power , he is offered it in return for servitude to Nightmare during the events of Soulcalibur IV , an offer he accepts with the secret goal of devouring Soul Edge itself . Destroyed instead by Maxi , Astaroth 's heart is retrieved by the cult responsible for his creation , and a new series of golems all bearing the name " Astaroth " are created from research conducted upon it .

Outside of the main games in the Soulcalibur series , Astaroth also appears in a Dreamcast VMU mini @-@ game called " Cannon Dare " , in which the player must shoot him out of a cannon by guessing the correct fuse , and later as a playable character in Namco 's Pac @-@ Man Fever . Astaroth also appears briefly in Soulcalibur : Broken Destiny 's Gauntlet storyline , a side story set after the events of Soulcalibur IV , tearing through a forest and challenging the protagonist and allies after they defeat a rampaging Maxi . In the prequel Soulcalibur Legends a similar prototype golem , Astaroth ? , is discovered by game protagonist Siegfried . Upon defeat , he joins Siegfried 's party as a playable character .

= = = Gameplay = = =

Astaroth 's gameplay was developed around the concept of a powerful fighter that struck at a distance , and has been noted as one of the strongest characters in the Soul series , requiring few mistakes to be made when fighting against Astaroth to defeat him . Measures were put into effect to make the character unique by allowing the player to hold attack buttons in order to strengthen attacks , to contrast against other large character fighting styles in Soulcalibur such as Nightmare 's multiple fighting stances .

Though noted as having slow attacks , Astaroth has been described as being an easy @-@ to @-@ learn character capable of dealing high amounts of damage , though his advantages and disadvantages have been described as part of the " big guy " role he has in the game 's roster . Several of his attacks cover a wide range , while several of his grapple attacks allow room to deal with various defensive measures by opponents . Other attacks such as " Poseidon Tide " allow Astaroth to control the opponent 's distance from himself while simultaneously dealing damage , with the additional feature of offering defensive measures of their own .

= = Promotion and reception = =

In 2000 , Epoch C @-@ Works released a series of action figures based on characters from the original Soulcalibur , amongst them Astaroth . The semi @-@ posable figure of Astaroth was packaged with equipable weapons from the title . In August 2003 , Todd McFarlane Productions released an Astaroth sculpture amongst a set of five based on characters from Soulcalibur II . The immobile figure was modeled after his secondary outfit and stood six inches tall with a base .

Astaroth has been described as one of the " staple " and " stalwart " characters of the Soulcalibur franchise . He has been noted as being a stereotypical large character villain in the series , described commonly as " the big brute with the axe " . JIVE Magazine described him as a " total crutch for mediocre players " , due to his strength and attack power . GameDaily named him one of their favorite heavily muscled characters in video games , noting his strength and the impact of his weapon . Insert Credit 's Tim Rogers stated " It takes a certain kind of gamer to prefer Astaroth " , noting him to be a character popular with fans of " kickass " or " evil " characters . The New York Times noted his size and appearance alongside Nightmare 's as standouts in the series , adding " they offer characters made for the sort of player who would have preferred Sonny Liston to Muhammad Ali , or Shaquille O 'Neal to Michael Jordan " . In 2013 , Complex enlisted the 20 best characters from the series , ranking him the tenth best character .