= Skullgirls =

 Skullgirls is a 2D fighting game independently developed by Reverge Labs and co @-@ published by Autumn Games and Konami . The game was released through the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live Arcade in North America , Europe , and Australia from April to May 2012 , and later received a Japanese release by CyberFront for the PlayStation Network in February 2013 . A Microsoft Windows version , developed by Lab Zero Games and co @-@ published by Autumn Games and Marvelous , was released in August 2013 . A mobile version of the game , developed by Hidden Variable Studios , will be released for Android and iOS devices in late 2016 .
 In Skullgirls , players engage in combat against one another with teams of one , two , or three characters , attempting to knock out their opponents or have the most cumulative health when time runs out . The setting of the game revolves around the " Skull Heart " , an artifact which grants wishes for women . If a wisher with an impure soul uses the Skull Heart , she is transformed into the next " Skullgirl " , a monster bent on destruction . Skullgirls received generally positive reviews from critics , who praised the animation and gameplay mechanics , while criticizing its limited roster size and online multiplayer features .
 Development of post @-@ release content faced numerous setbacks . In May 2012 , publisher Autumn Games was sued over allegations of fraud regarding an unrelated property , Def Jam Rapstar , cutting off Skullgirls ' financial support and forcing developer Reverge Labs to lay off the entire development team . The core team would eventually reform as Lab Zero Games in November 2012 , launching a successful crowdfunding campaign to raise funds to continue their work . After Autumn Games severed ties with co @-@ publisher Konami in December 2013 , the latter formally requested to have the game removed from the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live Arcade . The game was later re @-@ released on both platforms as Skullgirls Encore .

 = = Gameplay = =

 The engine and playstyle for Skullgirls were intentionally modeled after Marvel vs. Capcom 2 : New Age of Heroes , incorporating several similar game mechanics such as tag team @-@ based combat , character assists , snapbacks , and delayed hyper combos . The game can be played using different ratios of characters , with each player able to select up to three fighters on their team . The teams are then balanced based on the number of team members . A single character possesses more health and deals more damage , while larger teams gain the ability to perform character assists and recover health when tagged out . Players can also customize their character assist attacks .
 The game includes a story mode , arcade mode , versus mode , training room , tutorial mode , and online play using the GGPO networking library . Skullgirls includes various unique features to address system and balance problems , such as infinite combo detection . When the game detects a looping combo through monitoring the players ' attacks , the other player can break free of the infinite by hitting any button . In addition , Skullgirls offers protection against " unblockable attacks " , which occur when a player , for example , uses a low @-@ hitting move and a high @-@ hitting assist attack at the same time , making it nearly impossible for the opponent to block . The game attempts to remedy the issue by offering a brief period of unblockable protection after successfully blocking any attack .
 At release , Skullgirls Encore saw numerous gameplay adjustments and additions , including character balance tweaks , faster gameplay , an online training mode , and a stun meter designed to limit lengthy combos without compromising creativity . A new local game mode called " Typing of the Skullgirls " , a mode inspired by games like The Typing of the Dead , was also added . When enabled , teams automatically generate meter and all attacks deal negligible damage . Super moves give typing prompts to the player , awarding damage for typing accuracy . In addition to fully voiced story modes and cross @-@ platform play across the entire PlayStation family , Skullgirls 2nd Encore introduced challenges , where players fight against opponents under unique battle conditions ; trials , which test players ' skills by having them perform combos ; and survival mode ,

which pits players against endless waves of enemies . The mobile version of Skullgirls will incorporate RPG @-@ like progression , customization , and deck @-@ building mechanics .

= = Setting = =

Skullgirls takes place in the fictional Canopy Kingdom , a country reminiscent of 1940s postwar America . In a corrupt and war @-@ torn world , several individuals and organizations seek to obtain an artifact known as the Skull Heart . Once every seven years , the Skull Heart grants one woman 's wish . However , if a woman with an impure soul attempts to use the Heart , her wish will be corrupted and she will be transformed into a monster known as the Skullgirl . Hundreds have sought after the Skull Heart , yet none of its wielders have been deemed worthy and spared of its curse .
Seven years following the Grand War , a battle fought between three nations , the newest Skullgirl , Marie , has emerged and begun to terrorize the Canopy Kingdom . The game follows several fighters and their journeys to confront Marie and claim the Skull Heart . Each character has their own motive for seeking the Heart , whether to destroy the artifact or use its power for their own interests .

= = = Characters = = =

The Skullgirls roster initially consisted of eight playable characters : Filia , Cerebella , Peacock , Parasoul , Ms. Fortune , Painwheel , Valentine , and Double . Following the conclusion of the game 's Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign , an additional five downloadable characters were developed : Squigly , Big Band , Eliza , Beowulf , and Robo @-@ Fortune . On April 1 , 2014 , a clone of Filia , named Fukua , was added to the game . The character was intended to be a temporary inclusion for April Fools ' Day , but was kept in response to fan feedback .

= = Development = =

Skullgirls was originally conceived as several stray character designs that illustrator Alex " o _ 8 " Ahad had been creating since high school . While attending college , Ahad had the hypothetical idea to use the characters concepts for a fighting game roster . The idea would later become a reality when Ahad was introduced to fighting game enthusiast and tournament @-@ goer Mike " Mike Z " Zaimont , who had been working on a fighting game engine during his own spare time . Early work on their new Skullgirls project began in 2008 . Engine development and pre @-@ production began in 2009 . Ahad and Zaimont pitched Skullgirls to several companies , eventually teaming up with recently founded independent developer Reverge Labs in 2010 . They later went on to sign with publisher Autumn Games . At the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2011 , Japanese developer and publisher Konami announced that they would help distribute the game .
Following the game 's release , the Skullgirls team began teasing future content for the game , including new voice packs , color palettes , and downloadable characters . However , shortly thereafter , Autumn Games was hit with a series of lawsuits regarding Def Jam Rapstar , which " gummed up everything related to Autumn 's funding . " The entire Skullgirls development team was laid off by Reverge Labs in June 2012 after Autumn Games and Reverge Labs allowed their contract to expire without agreeing upon a new one . This prompted the team to reform under a new moniker , Lab Zero Games , to continue work on the PC release and downloadable content . Autumn Games , revealed to be in full possession of the IP , claimed it was " fully behind the new studio " and promised to " continue to work with [Lab Zero Games] in the future on all Skullgirls @-@ related endeavors . "
From January through February 2013 , fighting game website Shoryuken hosted a charity donation drive to determine the final game to be featured in the 2013 Evolution Championship Series ' tournament lineup , with all proceeds sent to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation . The Skullgirls community raised over US $ 78 @,@ 000 , placing second to eventual winner Super Smash Bros. Melee , which raised over $ 94 @,@ 000 . Although the game did not win , Shoryuken

announced that EVO 2013 event organizers would support the Skullgirls side tournament by providing prize money and exhibition support due to their effort in the fundraiser .

= = = Crowdfunding and publisher transition = = =

Despite Autumn Games ' support and desire to expand Skullgirls , their continued litigation prevented the publisher from providing any financial backing . Attempting to pick up where they left off , Lab Zero Games decided to ask its fanbase for help once more , following the success of the EVO 2013 charity drive . On February 25 , 2013 , Lab Zero Games set up an Indiegogo page for Skullgirls , in an effort to raise $ 150 @,@ 000 for the development of the game 's first DLC character , Squigly . Contributors received various rewards , including desktop wallpapers , a digital copy of the official soundtrack , Steam keys for the PC release , Steam keys for Half @-@ Minute Hero , and the chance to add a background character to the game , among others . The campaign reached its initial goal in less than 24 hours , while the stretch goal of a second DLC character , Big Band , secured funding in just over 2 weeks . A third DLC character , determined by fan vote , was funded during the final two days , along with a playable robotic version of Ms. Fortune named Robo @-@ Fortune . With minutes left before the end of the drive , the last stretch goal was met , securing funding for another fan @-@ selected DLC character . The Indiegogo campaign raised nearly $ 830 @,@ 000 of its original $ 150 @,@ 000 goal . Several alternate character and announcer voice packs were also funded . All downloadable characters and voice packs were free to download on all platforms within the first three months of their release .
On November 7 , 2013 , Lab Zero Games announced that Autumn Games had severed ties with Konami , citing Konami 's unresponsiveness as a major hurdle to the release of further console patches . Following the dissolution of the partnership , Konami requested the removal of Skullgirls from the PlayStation Network and Xbox Live Arcade by the end of 2013 . In response , Lab Zero Games announced on December 17 , 2013 that Skullgirls would be re @-@ released on consoles as Skullgirls Encore , a new build including up @-@ to @-@ date changes and additions , in January 2014 . Encore marked the transition of the console versions to its new publishers , Marvelous and CyberFront , and coincided with the console releases of Squigly and the " Character Color Bundle " DLC . While Encore was released as a title update for the Xbox 360 version , the PlayStation 3 version required owners to re @-@ download the game at no cost ; leaderboard rankings , save data , and trophies were not carried over . The PC version was later patched to reflect the new title .

= = Soundtrack = =

The Skullgirls Original Soundtrack consists of 28 original compositions . The album features music by Michiru Yamane , Vincent Diamante , Blaine McGurty , and Brenton Kossak . The soundtrack was released on April 24 , 2012 on iTunes . People who donated at least $ 10 to the Skullgirls Indiegogo crowdfunding campaign received a digital copy of the soundtrack . An exclusive , physical CD release of the Skullgirls Original Soundtrack was offered , among other rewards , to those who donated $ 150 or more to the drive .
On April 20 , 2011 , Reverge Labs officially announced that they had enlisted Yamane , primarily known for her work on Konami 's Castlevania series , to help create the soundtrack for Skullgirls . According to Richard Wyckoff , CEO of Reverge Labs , the developers sought out Yamane because " [they] knew her mixture of haunting gothic themes , jazz and rock would lend itself perfectly to Skullgirls ' ' Dark Deco ' style . " When Reverge Labs requested Yamane to write " jazzy " music , she " played a bit with the rhythm and different sounds to try and heighten the impact and almost primal nature of the unique graphics . "

= = Release = =

Skullgirls was released on the PlayStation Network in North America on April 10 , 2012 , and the

Xbox Live Arcade on April 11 , 2012 . Europe and Australia later received the PlayStation Network version on May 2 , 2012 . The game was released in Japan by CyberFront on the PlayStation Network in February 14 , 2013 , and was also brought to Japanese arcades through the NESiCAxLive digital distribution system . The public beta test for the Microsoft Windows version of Skullgirls began on July 4 , 2013 . The official Microsoft Windows version was released by Marvelous on August 22 , 2013 .

Skullgirls Encore launched on the PlayStation Network in North America on February 11 , 2014 , and Europe on March 19 , 2014 . The Xbox Live Arcade version of Skullgirls received an update for Encore on April 22 , 2014 . On July 10 , 2014 , Lab Zero Games announced that Skullgirls Encore would be released on PlayStation 4 and PlayStation Vita sometime in 2014 . The PlayStation 4 and Vita port , later titled Skullgirls 2nd Encore , would eventually be delayed until 2015 . 2nd Encore was released for the PlayStation 4 on July 7 , 2015 . The Android and iOS versions will be released in late 2016 .

In May 2013 , when Lab Zero Games was asked on their official Twitter account about a potential release for Nintendo 's Wii U console , the developer replied that while it was possible , it " [wasn 't] looking likely " , citing the console 's low sales and not having an established " digital presence " at the time .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Skullgirls received " generally positive " reviews , according to video game review aggregator Metacritic .

Several reviewers praised the presentation and animation . Ryan Clements of IGN praised the graphics , claiming that the game created " some of the best hand @-@ drawn character sprites ever used in gaming . " Clements also gave the game an Editor 's Choice award . John Learned of GamesRadar also praised the art style , stating that the art deco design gave playable characters and backgrounds added flair . However , some reviewers criticized the art style and overtly sexualized all @-@ female cast , including accusations of sexism . Dan Ryckert of Game Informer stated that while Skullgirls was beautifully animated , some animations were " juvenile and unnecessary " . Ryckert expressed disappointment with the artistic focus on " anatomy and fetishistic outfits . "

Reviewers also praised the gameplay and system mechanics . Maxwell McGee of GameSpot credited the ability to adjust team sizes , adding that the trade @-@ off between strength and versatility helped to accommodate a wider skill range of players . Neidel Crisan of 1UP praised the tutorial system for teaching beginner players about the fundamentals of the fighting game genre . Daniel Maniago of G4 complimented the custom assists , anti @-@ infinite system , and online play , praising Reverge Labs for utilizing feedback from the fighting game community during development .

Skullgirls received its share of criticism . IGN 's Ryan Clements criticized the small selection of gameplay modes , missing character move lists , and overly aggressive AI . GameTrailers criticized the limited roster size , stating that the tag @-@ based battling felt underdeveloped as a result . Simon Parkin of Eurogamer pointed out the lack of online features , such as a spectator mode , replays , and endless lobbies . Jordan Mallory of Joystiq reprimanded the game for its " goofy and immature " premise , sexualized art style , and unoriginal character movesets . Mallory concluded that the series would have been better off spending another year in development .

Skullgirls received Best Fighting Game nominations from IGN , 1UP , and the Official E3 Game Critics Awards . The game was nominated for 2012 Best Animated Video Game at the 40th Annual Annie Awards . Skullgirls was also recognized in the 2013 Guinness World Records Gamer 's Edition for the most frames of animation per character , reaching 11 @,@ 515 total frames for its initial eight characters and averaging 1 @,@ 439 frames per fighter .

= = = Sales = = =

The game sold over 50 @,@ 000 copies across both platforms within the first ten days of its release date . Skullgirls became the highest selling game on the Xbox Live Arcade upon its release . It was also listed as the third best @-@ selling title on the PlayStation Network for April 2012 . The game saw a similar performance in Japan , climbing to the top spot on the PlayStation Network ? s list of best @-@ selling downloadable PlayStation 3 titles within a week of its release . According to Peter Bartholow , CEO of Lab Zero Games , Skullgirls met Japanese publisher CyberFront 's lifetime sales estimates in the first two weeks of its release .