= Cauldron (video game) =

Cauldron is a two @-@ dimensional (2D) shoot ' em up / platformer computer game developed and published by British developer Palace Software (Palace) . The game was released in 1985 for the ZX Spectrum , Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC home computers . Players control a witch , who aims to become the " Witch Queen " by defeating an enemy called the " Pumpking " .
Designed by Steve Brown and Richard Leinfellner , Cauldron originated as a licensed video game of the horror film Halloween . Brown eventually altered the game to use a theme based on the Halloween holiday . The mix of two genres resulted from Brown and Leinfellner wanting to make a shoot ' em up and platform game , respectively . The developers realized that there were no technical limitations preventing the genres from being combined .
The game received praise from video game magazines , who focused on the graphics and two different modes of play . A common complaint was Cauldron 's excessive difficulty . The following year , Palace released a direct sequel titled Cauldron II : The Pumpkin Strikes Back .

= = Gameplay = =

Players navigate the witch protagonist through the 2D game world from a side @-@ view perspective . Cauldron is divided into two modes of play : shooting while flying and jumping along platforms . Areas of the game world set on the surface feature the witch flying on a broom stick , while underground segments require the witch to run and jump in caverns . In the flying segments , players must search for four randomly scattered coloured keys to access underground areas that contain six ingredients . The objective is to collect the ingredients and return them to the witch 's cottage to complete a spell that can defeat the Pumpking . While traversing the game world , the witch encounters Halloween @-@ themed enemies such as pumpkins , ghosts , skulls , and bats , as well as other creatures like sharks and seagulls . A collision with an enemy causes the witch 's magic meter (which is also used to fire offensive projectiles at enemies) to decrease . The character dies once the meter is depleted . After dying , the character reappears on the screen and the meter is refilled . Players are given limited opportunities for this to occur , and the game ends once the number of lives reaches zero .

= = Development = =

Cauldron began development as a game based on the 1978 film Halloween . Palace obtained the video game rights and assigned Steve Brown to the project . Unable to develop a concept he was happy with , Brown took the game in a new direction . Inspired by the Halloween holiday , he envisioned a game featuring witches and pumpkins . Stuart Hunt of Retro Gamer , however , attributed the switch to Mary Whitehouse 's campaign against so @-@ called ' video nasties ' in the 1980s .
Brown submitted concept drawings to Palace co @-@ founder Pete Stone , who approved further development . Influenced by what he deemed a " classical witch " , Brown designed the witch with a long nose and a broomstick . He created a Plasticine model of the character as a reference for a painting that was used for the game 's box art . Brown was joined by Richard Leinfellner , who served as the lead programmer . The two enjoyed different video game genres ? Brown liked platform games , while Leinfellner preferred shoot ' em ups ? and decided to create a game engine that could handle both methods of playing . Both developers play tested the game , but only played the segments individually rather than in a sequence . In retrospect , Brown attributes the game 's excess difficulty to this along with the fact that the two played with unlimited game lives . The game was released on three home computers : Amstrad CPC , Commodore 64 , and ZX Spectrum . The Spectrum and Amstrad versions lack scrolling graphics in the shoot ' em up levels and use flick @-@ screening to approximate it . A port of Palace 's 1984 game The Evil Dead , originally programmed for the Commodore 64 by Leinfellner , was included on the second side of the Spectrum cassette . Retailers feared a parental backlash , resulting a limited release for the game .

Palace chose to include The Evil Dead to distribute the game to a wider audience .

 = = Reception and legacy = =

 The game was well received by the video game press , who focused on the graphical quality and game design . Computer and Video Games described the game as a " quality arcade @-@ adventure " and called the graphics stunning . Reviewers from Crash magazine praised the animation and detail of the graphics , as well as the gameplay . Three of Zzap ! 64 's reviewers ? Julian Rignall , Bob Wade , and Gary Penn ? echoed similar statements about the graphics . The group complimented the gameplay , specifically the adventure aspects , and considered the large game world a positive component . A Computer Gamer reviewer praised the flying portions of the game , calling the gameplay enjoyable . While he praised the platforming portions , the reviewer commented that design flaws made the game more difficult than it should have been . Clare Edgeley of Sinclair User praised the graphical quality of the ZX Spectrum version , but commented that the colors occasionally overlap and the screen flickers . ZX Computing 's reviewer praised the ZX Spectrum conversion , calling it superior to the Commodore 64 release . The reviewer lauded the graphics and gameplay of the flying segments , but bemoaned the platforming aspect and described it as a Jet Set Willy clone .
 Publications dedicated to the ZX Spectrum platform considered the inclusion of The Evil Dead with the ZX Spectrum release a positive aspect that added value to the overall package . The game 's difficulty was a common complaint . Computer Gamer , Crash , and ZX Computing commented that playing the game with limited lives was very challenging . Retro Gamer 's Craig Grannell described the game as " unforgiving " , citing difficulty landing and excessive precision required in the flying and platforming segments respectively . Following the success of Cauldron , Palace released a direct sequel , Cauldron II : The Pumpkin Strikes Back , in 1986 . The game is set after the events of the first game , and features a bouncing pumpkin that survived the witch 's ascension to power . Players navigate the pumpkin around a castle in search of the Witch Queen to enact revenge . Cauldron was later re @-@ released along with its sequel as a compilation title on Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum computers . The commercial success of the two Cauldron games prompted Palace to give Brown more creative freedom for his following project , Barbarian : The Ultimate Warrior .