

= Sabre Wulf =

Sabre Wulf a 1984 action @-@ adventure game by Ultimate Play the Game and the first game of the Sabreman series . The player , as Sabreman , navigates a 2D jungle flip @-@ screen maze aiming to reconstruct an amulet and escape . The maze is divided into 256 edge @-@ to @-@ edge screens filled with colourful flora and enemies that spawn randomly . Ultimate released the game for the ZX Spectrum in 1984 at an above @-@ average price to combat piracy . The game 's premium packaging became a company standard . Ultimate , a developer known for its secrecy , had finished Sabre Wulf 's sequels in advance of its release , but withheld them for marketing purposes . They were swiftly released the same year . Ultimate hired outside developers to make Sabre Wulf ports for the BBC Micro , Commodore 64 , and Amstrad CPC platforms , and the game was subsequently included in multiple compilation releases , including the 2015 Ultimate and Rare retrospective Rare Replay .

Reviewers lauded the game 's graphics and found its gameplay similar to Ultimate 's previous release , Atic Atac , though preferred Sabre Wulf . Reviewers also noted the game 's difficulty . It was recommended in several gaming publications and won " Best Maze Game " in the 1984 Crash Reader Awards . Sabre Wulf was a financial success and reached the top of the format charts . It was listed in multiple lists of top Spectrum games . It introduced the Sabreman character , who has recurred throughout Ultimate and Rare intellectual properties , and the Sabreman game series .

= = Gameplay = =

The player , as the adventurer Sabreman , must fight their way through a 2D jungle and reconstruct an amulet in order to leave . After collecting four pieces of the ACG Amulet (Ashby Computers & Graphics , the developer 's former name) , the player can bypass the gatekeeper guarding the cave exit , which leads to the game 's sequel , Underwulde . Sabre Wulf is presented as a flip @-@ screen maze with paths bordered by tropical flora . The player only views a single small and static area of the maze at any time . When the player character reaches the edge of the screen , the next section of the maze loads . There are 256 screens in the maze . The player does not receive any explicit guidance on how to play and is left to decipher the game 's objectives through trial and error . Sabre Wulf 's graphics fill the full screen with no interface , inventory , or damage indicators apart from a high score meter in the top corner . Sabreman can eat orchid power @-@ ups , which bloom for only a few seconds . He turns the colour of the orchid and receives one of five abilities : some are helpful , like invulnerability or faster walking speed , and others impair him , such as slower walking speed , or reversed controls . Sabreman also collects treasure and extra lives scattered throughout the maze .

The Sabre Wulf map is drawn in a 16 by 16 grid populated by attacking enemies and bordered by landforms . The player swings Sabreman 's sabre with the push of the joystick 's fire button to defeat enemies that spawn in random locations on @-@ screen . Enemies include spiders , scorpions , snakes , bats , indigenous people , sleeping hippos , and a fast wolf (the titular Sabre Wulf) . Some enemies , such as the hippos , flee when hit . The sword does not affect the wolf or cave guardians . An indestructible bushfire appears and pursues the player who idles for too long in the same screen . Apart from the jungle , the game 's settings include mountains and lakes .

The game begins with an electronic rendition of classical music composed by Bach . The Spectrum and Commodore 64 versions have an optional two @-@ player mode in which players take turns controlling Sabreman .

= = Development = =

Ultimate Play the Game , the developer of Sabre Wulf , was known for its secrecy , distance from game development circles , and reticence to reveal details about their development practices and upcoming games . Little is known about their process apart from that they used Sage IV computers . They also preferred to develop for the ZX Spectrum 's Z80 microprocessor and chose to outsource

development for other platforms , such as those that ran 6502 microprocessors . After releasing Atic Atac at the end of 1983 , Ultimate went silent until it ran teaser advertisements for Sabre Wulf in April 1984 . (The company rarely depicted actual gameplay in their advertisements .) They had already prepared Knight Lore , the third game in the Sabreman series , before the character 's introduction in Sabre Wulf . Ultimate founders Tim and Chris Stamper withheld Knight Lore for about a year because they felt Sabre Wulf would not have sold as well once players saw the former 's graphical advancements . (Knight Lore became known as a seminal work in British gaming history and an iconic game of the 1980s for its popularization of the isometric platformer format .)

Ultimate released Sabre Wulf for the ZX Spectrum in 1984 and the other Sabreman titles soon followed . Sabre Wulf was Ultimate 's first game to use what would become the company 's standard price and mysterious , unadorned packaging . Ultimate nearly doubled its usual retail price in what they saw as a " bold step " to combat piracy . They expected legal owners to be more protective over letting friends copy their more expensive copies . Ultimate had seen competitor prices slowly increasing and felt that their full price was fair for their time invested . The game retailed in a high @-@ quality , big cardboard box with a glossy instruction manual , which were both upgrades over regular game packaging . It became Ultimate 's standard packaging for new games . The company 's game packaging was nondescript and showed no screenshots of the in @-@ game world . Ultimate 's games did not display internal credits , and they hired outside developers to complete Sabre Wulf ports for other consoles . Paul Proctor wrote the BBC Micro conversion , and in 1985 , Greg Duddle wrote the Commodore 64 conversion , which was licensed under Firebird . Sabre Wulf later appeared in the 1985 compilation They Sold a Million , a collection of Spectrum games that had together sold a million units . When the compilation was released for the Amstrad CPC , Sabre Wulf was converted for the platform and eventually released in a standalone edition . Sabre Wulf also appeared alongside Underwulde , its sequel , in a Commodore 64 pack , and in the August 2015 Xbox One compilation of 30 Ultimate and Rare titles , Rare Replay .

= = Reception = =

Reviewers appreciated the game 's graphics and found its gameplay similar to Ultimate 's previous game , Atic Atac ? particularly in its opening sequence and maze format ? though reviewers preferred Sabre Wulf . Critics also noted the game 's difficulty and above @-@ average pricing . Sabre Wulf was a selected recommendation in Crash (July 1984) , Personal Computer Games (August 1984) , and Popular Computing Weekly (June 1984) . The game was named " Best Maze Game " in the 1984 Crash Readers Awards . Retro Gamer reported that Ultimate 's new pricing strategy was a success and that Sabre Wulf broke the company 's sales records and reached the top of the format charts , though Computer and Video Games (CVG) reported in December 1984 that Sabre Wulf had sold only 30 @,@ 000 copies ? not as many as the company 's prior games . Eurogamer reported that 350 @,@ 000 units were sold in total .

Crash confirmed rumors that the game was similar to Atic Atac , but declared Sabre Wulf the better of the two , and predicted that they would have similar legacies . Crash wrote that their inability to intuit Sabreman 's current inventory or resistance to damage added to the game 's mystique , and that Ultimate was particularly skilled at not giving hints but leaving sufficient clues through the game 's design . Personal Computer Games found one such tip : that the indigenous enemies will play a sound when they align both horizontally and vertically with a piece of the amulet . In a similar experience , Popular Computing Weekly slowly learned to use rather than avoid the orchids . CVG described the game 's instructions as " cryptic " . Crash had high praise for the colourful and detailed graphics and animations , as well as the sound . One of their staff called it " a Software Masterpiece " . The magazine 's chief complaints were of a bug in two @-@ player mode and of the game 's high price , nearly double the average . They predicted that the cost may lead to more piracy . A year later , in 1985 , Crash repeated that Sabre Wulf was among the top games available for the Spectrum . They added that the game did not feel antiquated and that comparisons to Atic Atac at its launch were unfair , similar to calling any two text adventures identical . They received more mail in praise of Sabre Wulf in 1984 than for any other game .

CVG wrote that Sabre Wulf carried Ultimate 's momentum from Jetpac and Atic Atac . In their opinion , Sabre Wulf had the best graphics on the Spectrum , with graphical detail that surpassed what previous reviewers thought was possible . In describing the game 's difficulty , CVG mentioned the narrow window in which sword swings register as enemy hits . Their Commodore 64 review two years later approved of the port and said that the game remained a classic . They recommended drawing a map of the maze , without which it was easy to get lost . Personal Computer Games found that many of Sabre Wulf 's 256 screens were repeated from elsewhere in the game world . Sinclair User liked how the hippo enemies forced the player to vary their hack @-@ and @-@ slash gameplay style . They thought that the game 's price was too high and noted that while Sabre Wulf had some flicker issues , it altogether met Ultimate 's high quality benchmarks .

A retrospective review from Retro Gamer said that Sabre Wulf was " essentially an interactive maze " packed with colour and hack @-@ and @-@ slash gameplay . They likened the game 's colour choice and setting to what the magazine considered Ultimate 's best arcade game , Dingo (1983) . Retro Gamer disliked Sabreman 's inability to hit enemies above or below him . Eurogamer 's Peter Parrish found the game 's collision detection imprecise as well . In The Routledge Companion to Video Game Studies , Simon Niedenthal used Sabre Wulf as an example of games that maximized the limited colour palette of 8 @-@ bit computers . He described its colours as pure , with a glow like stained glass and a strong figure ? ground contrast against the Spectrum 's black background .

= = Legacy = =

The Spectrum release was included in multiple lists of top games for the platform . Parrish (Eurogamer) wrote that the game was " much @-@ beloved " in a retrospective review . Sabre Wulf was the first of four titles in the Sabreman series for the ZX Spectrum . Retro Gamer wrote that the Sabreman character was memorable both in name and appearance , and fit the " 8 @-@ bit hero " archetype : an ordinary human with a hat and exaggerated nose . The last , unreleased game in the Spectrum Sabreman series , Mire Mare , was planned to have been similar to Sabre Wulf in gameplay . Rare , the successor to Ultimate , later released the side @-@ scrolling platformer Sabre Wulf for the Game Boy Advance in 2004 that had Sabreman enlist jungle animals to solve the Sabre Wulf 's puzzles . It was not received well by fans . Elements from the original Sabre Wulf appear in other games , including Rare 's Jet Force Gemini . Retro Gamer considered Sabreman 's recurrence to be proof that Rare was interested in the character and series .