Soul Reaver 2

Soul Reaver 2 is an action @-@ adventure game developed by Crystal Dynamics and published by Eidos Interactive . It is a sequel to Legacy of Kain : Soul Reaver and the third game in the Legacy of Kain series . Originally developed as a PlayStation and Dreamcast project , it was reworked into a PlayStation 2 and Microsoft Windows title in early production , and was released in 2001 . Soul Reaver 2 was followed by two sequels , Blood Omen 2 and Legacy of Kain : Defiance , in 2002 and 2003 .

The game continues the adventures of the vampire @-@ turned @-@ wraith Raziel , the protagonist of Soul Reaver . Though Raziel initially seeks to exact revenge on Kain , his murderer and former master , this objective is superseded by a higher quest for knowledge . Traveling through history , he gradually exposes the truth behind his own past and destiny .

Hoping to deliver a more story @-@ focused , cinematic experience than Soul Reaver , Crystal Dynamics researched time travel fiction , theology , and the works of Joseph Campbell when creating Soul Reaver 2 's narrative . Critics praised the game for its involved storyline , visuals and puzzles , but criticized it for lacking replay value and ending without a definite resolution . Its developers felt the final product fell short of their ambitions , but it performed well commercially , and was included on Sony 's " Greatest Hits " list .

Gameplay

Soul Reaver 2 is a single @-@ player action @-@ adventure game . The player controls Raziel , a ghostly " ex @-@ vampire " , from a third @-@ person perspective . Gameplay , which is based on the original Soul Reaver , prompts the player to shift between two planes of existence ? the material and spectral realms ? to progress . The material realm represents the physical , living world , whereas the spectral realm is a warped mirror of this environment . In the spectral realm , the player cannot manipulate objects and weapons , and water is insubstantial . Raziel 's health slowly regenerates in the spectral world , whereas it gradually depletes in the material realm . If Raziel runs out of health in the material world , he is shunted into the spectral realm , and if killed in this plane , he returns to the nearest checkpoint . Save points enable players to record their progress and continue their game .

Raziel retains most of the powers he possessed in the previous game , such as the abilities to glide , climb walls , fire bolts of telekinetic energy , and swim . To sustain his strength and travel between the planes , he must devour souls ; this is typically accomplished by defeating enemies . The game 's combat consists of a hack and slash system , entailing the use of combinations of attacks before executing a finishing move . Human enemies exist only in the material world , and include mercenaries , demon hunters , and the Sarafan , a monastic order of vampire hunters ; other material creatures include dogs , thralls , and mutants . Sluagh are enemies who exclusively inhabit the spirit world , whereas cross @-@ planar beings such as demons and shades can pursue the player between both realms . Enemies leave behind souls when killed , which replenish Raziel 's health once consumed .

The player 's primary weapon is a ghostly version of the Soul Reaver sword , referred to as the wraith @-@ blade . The wraith @-@ blade is symbiotically bound to Raziel , and can be summoned or dismissed at any time in the material world , but , if overused , the sword can turn against Raziel , siphoning his health . Other weapons include claws , swords and spears . As the game progresses , the player encounters magical forges which imbue the wraith @-@ blade with elemental powers associated with darkness , light , air , and fire . These enhancements have various uses , but are only available in the material realm . If Raziel shifts , he loses his active elemental imbuement , and must re @-@ forge the blade at locations scattered throughout the game world .

Plot

= = = Setting = = =

 Soul Reaver 2 is set in Nosgoth , a fictional land with fantasy aspects . In the first game in the series , Blood Omen : Legacy of Kain , the vampire Kain embarks on a journey to restore the Pillars of Nosgoth ? nine supernatural edifices which are inextricably tied to the health of the land , but become corrupted . During his adventure , Moebius , a manipulative sorcerer , tricks Kain into orchestrating the destruction of the vampire race : Kain is left the last surviving vampire in Nosgoth . After restoring eight of the Pillars , Kain discovers that he would need to sacrifice his own life to restore the final corrupt one . Realizing that his death would ensure the annihilation of his species , he refuses to kill himself . This triggers the Pillars ' collapse , and dooms the world to eternal decay , but enables Kain to live on and revive the vampire race .
 By the time of Soul Reaver , 1500 years later , Kain is a despotic emperor , his vampires dominate the land , and Nosgoth hinges on the brink of collapse . The Elder God , a demiurge @-@ like entity , lurks beneath Nosgoth and controls the cycle of reincarnation ; the vampires , whose biological immortality opposes his doctrine , are his enemies . In Soul Reaver , Raziel ? Kain 's lieutenant ? is executed by Kain , but The Elder God resurrects him and encourages him to exact revenge . Traversing the wasteland and murdering the vampires , Raziel confronts Kain , who attacks him with the Soul Reaver sword , imbued with a spirit which absorbs its victims ' souls . The Soul Reaver shatters when it strikes Raziel , and the blade 's spirit binds itself to his arm . His motives still mysterious , Kain lures Raziel through a time portal into Nosgoth 's past .
 In Soul Reaver 2 , it is established that , in Nosgoth , fatalism is an actuality ? history is immutable , and all individuals are subject to predestination . Raziel , due to his paradoxical destiny , is the only exception to this rule ? his presence enables temporal paradoxes to be triggered , altering history for better or worse . Kain relies on Raziel 's free will in a bid to outsmart Moebius and resolve the dilemma he faced in Blood Omen , ultimately hoping to enable both the restored Pillars and the vampire race to co @-@ exist in the future . Soul Reaver 2 opens as Raziel emerges from the time slip and is greeted by Moebius , having arrived in an era 30 years prior to the events of Blood Omen . Two further time periods , 100 years after and 500 years before Blood Omen respectively , are also explored as the story progresses .

 = = = Characters = = =

 Raziel returns as the protagonist of Soul Reaver 2 . In Soul Reaver , Raziel discovered that he was once a human and a leading member of the vampire @-@ hunting Sarafan brotherhood , and his epiphanies drive the conflict in the story . Kain , the antagonist of Soul Reaver , appears as a non @-@ player character in cutscenes , urging Raziel to unearth his destiny . Moebius the Time Streamer , a sorcerer who was a villain in Blood Omen , attempts to manipulate Raziel into destroying Kain ? it is revealed that he is an agent of The Elder God , Raziel 's ally and guide in Soul Reaver , who is slowly established as a more sinister entity . Ariel , a specter bound to the Pillars who featured in Blood Omen and Soul Reaver , returns , and the vampire Vorador , also from Blood Omen , assists Raziel early in the game . The ancient vampire Janos Audron , a new character who was previously only mentioned in Blood Omen , acts as Raziel 's mentor towards the end of the story .

 = = = Story = = =

 The game begins by summarizing Soul Reaver 's ending : Raziel confronts Kain in Nosgoth 's wasteland , and pursues him through a portal leading to the past . Moebius , the leader of a vampire @-@ hunting crusade in this age , coerces Raziel to re @-@ embrace his former heritage as a Sarafan vampire hunter by killing Kain . Though Raziel is initially eager to do so , his enthusiasm wanes over time as he witnesses the ruthlessness of Moebius 's soldiers . Kain , who is destined to die at Raziel 's hands in this era , implores Raziel to thwart fate and instead facilitate his quest to restore the Pillars . After he learns that Moebius serves The Elder God , and that he has thus been

duped , Raziel faces a decision : indulge his lust for vengeance but submit to fate by killing Kain , or defy his cohorts and exercise his free will by exerting mercy .

While exploring this period , Raziel discovers evidence that two ancient races waged war in Nosgoth 's distant past . One race created the Pillars to banish their adversaries , but the enemy race ? the Hylden ? retaliated with a curse which transformed the Pillars ' architects into the first vampires . Kain explains that , had he sacrificed himself , the vampire race ? the rightful inheritors of the Pillars ? would have become extinct . Raziel chooses to spare Kain , causing a paradox ; history reshuffles itself to accommodate the extension of Kain 's life . He , however , refuses to indulge Kain 's plans any further , instead opting to explore his own past . Vorador tells Raziel that the last of the ancient vampires , Janos Audron , held the key to Raziel 's destiny , but Janos was murdered by the Sarafan five centuries ago .

Deciding to speak with Janos , Raziel orders Moebius to send him further back in time . Moebius deceives Raziel , instead conveying him over a century into the future , where he and The Elder God highlight the consequences of the Pillars ' destruction to turn Raziel against Kain . Raziel navigates the future era and finds his own way back to the age of the Sarafan and Janos Audron . There , Janos presents Raziel with the Reaver , a younger version of the physical Soul Reaver blade which will later house a soul @-@ devouring spirit . Suddenly , a group of Sarafan led by Raziel 's former , human self launch an ambush , and Janos sacrifices himself . Raziel swears vengeance as Janos dies , and pursues the attackers . He uses the Reaver to kill them and his younger self , renouncing his Sarafan past .

The wraith @-@ blade attached to Raziel 's arm , over @-@ aroused after the deaths of the Sarafan , suddenly seizes control of the physical Reaver , and impales Raziel ; Raziel , horrified , then realizes his destiny . He himself has always been the ravenous spirit inside the Reaver , and therefore is fated to be stuck in a time loop ; the sword shattered against him in Soul Reaver because it was unable to consume itself . While his soul is being drawn into the sword , Kain emerges and tears the Reaver from Raziel 's body , saving him in reciprocation and forcing history to reshuffle again . However , this paradox strains Nosgoth 's history too far , enabling the Hylden to return and jeopardize his ambition to restore the Pillars . Amidst Kain 's dismay , Raziel realizes that the wraith @-@ blade is still bound to him , and laments that his destiny has not been changed , but merely postponed .

= = Development = =

Even before the release of Soul Reaver , Crystal Dynamics were aware that they would create a follow @-@ up , but had no " master plan " . Soul Reaver uses the engine of Gex : Enter the Gecko . Prior to the beginning of development , director Amy Hennig emphasized that the role @-@ playing game elements of Blood Omen , stronger dialogue and character interaction , a greater variety of acquirable mechanics , and wider use of the spectral realm should figure into the sequel . Pre @-@ production began in late 1999 , and the project briefly entered development for the PlayStation and Dreamcast with a targeted release date in fall of 2000 . The team was given approval to switch to the PlayStation 2 after creating a proof @-@ of @-@ concept demo for E3 2000 , and the game was announced as an exclusive title for the newer console . Executive producer Andrew Bennett analogized the developers ' design sensibilities to the non @-@ linear nature of Nintendo 's The Legend of Zelda and Mario franchises , but said it was decided that Soul Reaver 2 would not be a " traditional ' complete a level , fight a boss ' type of game " . Level designers constructed a generalized puzzle and object @-@ interaction system , helping to prevent an undesired re @-@ emergence of Soul Reaver 's abundant block puzzles . Instead of creating more inherent and optional abilities for Raziel , they focused on including new , mandatory enhancements for the Soul Reaver weapon .

On the decision to downplay Raziel 's quest for vengeance against Kain in this sequel , Hennig explained , " he 's being pretty simple @-@ minded , he 's sort of being very black @-@ and @-@ white in his interpretation of things , and being kind of petulant [...] he 's not really as heroic as Kain is , and he has a lot of stuff to figure out , basically , about what 's going on " . Soul Reaver 2 was

crafted to feature a more cinematic , story @-@ focused experience than its predecessor , which the developers felt had been " patchy " in this regard . It entered production after Blood Omen 2 , but shipped almost six months before the latter game . A separate team within Crystal Dynamics , with creative autonomy , developed Blood Omen 2 , and contradictions created by its scenario hindered work on Soul Reaver 2 . After researching time travel fiction , Hennig devised a subplot concerning temporal paradoxes to resolve the continuity problems between both titles , and established that Blood Omen 2 's story is a product of the final paradox created when Kain saves Raziel at the end of Soul Reaver 2 . Other themes were inspired by the works of Joseph Campbell , and theology surrounding Gnosticism . Concepts which formulated the crux of the story included the idea " that the only way a hero can ever succeed is by following his own path " , and the question , " can you change history or not ? And if so , what does it mean to change history - in terms of being responsible for the repercussions ? "

British comic book writer Paul Jenkins was drafted by Crystal Dynamics to help refine the game 's script . Though Soul Reaver features a variety of boss encounters , Soul Reaver 2 does not ; this was a conscious decision on the part of the staff , to ensure the game 's pacing more closely emulated that of a novel or a film . While expanding the series ' fiction , Hennig sought to take people back to the characters and mythology of the original Blood Omen , and built on its latent themes , including issues of fatalism , ethical dilemma and morality . In an interview , she stated that " the game will have a proper ending this time " , and said " it has a conclusion . It 's the end of a chapter . There won 't be a cliffhanger " . However , the story needed to be restructured several times before its completion , and , like the original Soul Reaver , many planned areas and abilities were excised , including three elemental forges (earth , water and spirit) , more Reaver enhancements , and nine " spell @-@ type things " . She explained that the project 's small programming crew , its switch to the PlayStation 2 , and its limited 17 month production schedule had forced the team to " pick their battles " , leading numerous features to be simplified or eliminated . Commenting on the final product , lead designer Richard Lemarchand said that Soul Reaver 2 " fell short of what the team had wanted to accomplish . In particular , some puzzles were too opaque , the combat was rather one @-@ dimensional , [and the story] ended without a decent resolution " .

= = = Audio = = =

Soul Reaver 2 was composed by Kurt Harland , of American band Information Society , and Jim Hedges . Harland and Hedges had already collaborated on Soul Reaver , but Hedges had not previously contributed compositions . The adaptive audio framework from the previous game returned ; depending on signals from the game in certain situations ? such as combat , puzzles , danger or suspense ? the game 's soundtrack actively changes . Music from both Soul Reaver and Soul Reaver 2 was released on a promotional soundtrack in 2001 .

Gordon Hunt returned as the game 's recording director , with Kris Zimmerman as casting director . Voice actors from both Blood Omen and Soul Reaver reprised their roles , with Michael Bell playing Raziel and Simon Templeman portraying Kain . The Elder God was again voiced by Tony Jay , Richard Doyle voiced Moebius , and Anna Gunn played Ariel . Paul Lukather , absent from Soul Reaver , rejoined the cast as Vorador . René Auberjonois , the only newcomer to the Legacy of Kain series , provided the voice of Janos Audron .

= = Release = =

Publisher Eidos Interactive was " broadly satisfied " with the commercial performance of Soul Reaver 2 , which sold more than 500 @,@ 000 copies by June 2002 . Later , Sony re @-@ released it under the " Greatest Hits " label . Shortly after the initial PlayStation 2 release in October 2001 , the Microsoft Windows port shipped , developed by Nixxes Software BV . The PlayStation 2 release featured bonus material , including voice casting outtakes , artworks , a soundtrack , trailers , the game 's dialogue script , and a compilation of Nosgoth 's history . In 2002 , the game was

released in Japan by publisher Titus Software . In 2012 , digital distribution services GOG.com and Steam made the Windows port of Soul Reaver 2 available for purchase .

= = Reception = =

On the PlayStation 2 , Soul Reaver 2 respectively received an aggregate score of 80 @.@ 71 % and 80 / 100 from rating websites GameRankings and Metacritic . Various reviewers held its storytelling , visuals and sound in high regard , but described its gameplay as dull and unsatisfying . Doug Perry of IGN praised the game 's dark atmosphere and intriguing story , but said that it can become tiresome and drag on . He thought the " haughtiness " and drama of the dialogue , particularly between Raziel and Kain , was often overdone , and noted that its gameplay was near identical to that of its predecessor but with less replay value . Perry enjoyed the new puzzles involving the elemental powers of the Reaver for being more complex and diverse than the block puzzles of Soul Reaver , and praised the combat system . He gave the game a score of 9 @.@ 0 , but in his later review for Defiance , he revised his opinion , saying this rating was " way too high " and " that game told a great story , but just didn 't deserve that score " .
Joe Fielder of GameSpot gave Soul Reaver 2 a score of 8 @.@ 8 and called it an excellent sequel , again praising the change to elemental puzzles and the combat system , but criticizing the dearth of sidequests and boss fights , and the lack of definite resolution to the storyline . Electronic Gaming Monthly 's reviewer said that it triumphed as an aesthetic showcase , but deemed its gameplay mediocre and unappealing . The reviewer for Game Informer regarded Soul Reaver 2 as " quite engrossing " . Star Dingo of GamePro similarly praised its graphics , sound design and voice acting , but condemned missed creative opportunities concerning the potential of the spectral realm and time travel , saying that the game " takes as many steps back as it does forward , and ends up teetering precariously over the brink of being a disappointment " . The review concurred with IGN that the plot and dialogue , though entertaining , sometimes bordered on pretentiousness , and Game Revolution 's Duke Ferris repeatedly compared the story to a soap opera .
Other critics , such as GameZone 's Michael Lafferty , were less reserved in their praise of the narrative ? The Electric Playground referred to it as " a textbook example to other console developers on how to write videogame prose " ? but agreed that its complex and involved backstory could alienate some players . The Adrenaline Vault 's Mike Laidlaw stated that " the folks at Crystal Dynamics obviously have no kindness in their heart for game reviewers trying desperately to describe the plot " . Journalists also commonly cited Soul Reaver 2 's poor lifespan and replayability as an issue ; the reviewer for Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine opined that " the problem is that there just isn 't much gameplay there " and Fielder warned that play " burns bright , but not as long as you 'd like " .