

= Cauldron II : The Pumpkin Strikes Back =

Cauldron II : The Pumpkin Strikes Back is a computer game developed and published by British developer Palace Software (Palace) as a sequel to their 1985 title Cauldron . The two @-@ dimensional (2D) platform game was released in 1986 for the ZX Spectrum , Commodore 64 and Amstrad CPC home computers . Players control a bouncing pumpkin that is on a quest of vengeance against the " Witch Queen " . The roles of the two were reversed from the first game , in which the witch defeated a monster pumpkin .

Following the success of Cauldron , Palace employee Steve Brown began work on a sequel . To provide fans of the original title with a new experience , a very different gameplay was implemented for the sequel , although several minor features retained connections to the first . Inspired by the bouncing pumpkin character in Cauldron , Brown designed the game around the character 's movement . The bouncing mechanic proved problematic for the programmers who were unable to perfect its implementation . Technical limitations also prevented them from implementing certain animations , such as turning pages of a book .

Cauldron II was first released on the Commodore 64 . It was released in the following years on other systems and as re @-@ releases . The game received praise , mainly for its audio @-@ visuals , in video game magazines . Difficulty in handling the bouncing pumpkin 's movement was a common complaint , although reviewers felt the overall package was of good value .

= = Gameplay = =

In Cauldron , the protagonist was a witch who became the " Witch Queen " by defeating an enemy called the " Pumpking " . In its sequel , players control a pumpkin that has survived the witch 's ascent to power and seeks to defeat her . Cauldron II takes place in the witch 's castle , and players control the pumpkin , moving it through the 2D game world that is shown as side views . Six magical items ? a Goblet , Axe , Shield , Crown , Scissors , and Book of Spells ? are scattered throughout the castle and when collected by the player character , augments the pumpkin 's abilities , providing it with offensive and defensive capabilities . Collecting the items also allows the pumpkin to access the witch 's chambers and cut a lock of her hair , which is required to defeat the witch and complete the game .

The protagonist traverses the castle by bouncing , and players control the pumpkin by manipulating the direction and height of its bounce . Similar to the previous game , Halloween @-@ themed enemies , such as ghosts , monsters , and skeletons , inhabit the game world . Contact with an enemy drains the pumpkin 's magic meter that also fuels the protagonist 's offensive projectiles . The character dies once the meter is depleted . The pumpkin has a limited number of lives to continue the game , which ends once all of the pumpkin 's lives have been expended . On continuing , the pumpkin reappears on the screen with a refilled meter .

= = Development = =

The success of Cauldron in 1985 prompted Palace Software to produce a sequel . Rather than recycle the previous game 's design , the development team wanted to be innovative and implement new gameplay features . Steven Brown and Richard Leinfellner resumed their roles as designer and programmer , respectively . Richard Joseph handled the audio design and Stan Schembri programmed the Commodore 64 version .

Brown first drew inspiration from the final scene of Cauldron : the witch 's fight against the Pumpking , which bounced around a room . He felt the bouncing pumpkin looked " cool " and decided to base the sequel 's gameplay on this aspect . Although unsure about the idea , the other team members proceeded with development . Intended to mimic a bouncing ball , the pumpkin 's movement could change direction only if force is applied to it while it is in contact with a surface that provides friction . This mechanic prohibited the pumpkin from changing directions while in mid @-@ air , and proved problematic for the programmers to implement . Issues included difficulties with

collision detection , unpredictable movements that led to glitches , and troubles with the firing mechanism . The pumpkin 's ability to fire projectiles was intended to provide offensive game mechanics to players . In early designs , however , the projectile inadvertently generated a force that changed the pumpkin 's direction . The programmers tried to correct this , but were unable to create a perfect solution .

As the gameplay designs were being implemented , Brown switched focus to the game 's aesthetics . Scenes from the game were sketched on storyboards to aid development . Cauldron II 's game world , the witch 's castle , was designed to resemble Palace Software 's logo as an advertising tactic . Brown photographed separate screens of the game and assembled them into a complete map , showing the shape of his company 's logo , for video game magazines . Enemy designs were similar to those in the previous game , based on the Halloween holiday . Brown envisioned a graphical effect for the game 's narration , showing a book whose pages turned as the story is read . However , technical limitations at the time prohibited the implementation of such a visual effect . Brown also wanted the game 's visuals to scroll seamlessly as the character moved through the game world , but flick @-@ screening (showing one section of the world at a time) was more feasible . As with the previous game , Brown created a Plasticine model of the witch character as a reference for a painting that was used for the game 's box art . The group tested the game prior to release and deemed it too challenging . They reduced the difficulty level so that more players could complete the game .

Palace Software developed Cauldron II for three home computers : Amstrad CPC , Commodore 64 , and ZX Spectrum . The game was first released for the Commodore 64 , and then for the Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum . It was later re @-@ released on the ZX Spectrum in 1989 by Telecomsoft under its Silverbird budget label . Cauldron II was also re @-@ released with the first game as a compilation title for Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum computers .

= = Reception = =

The game was well received by video game journalists upon its release . ZX Spectrum magazines Crash and ZX Computing awarded Cauldron II their top accolades : " Crash Smash " and " Monster Hit " , respectively . Similar to the first Cauldron , praise from the video game press focused on the graphical quality , and criticism directed at the gameplay was mixed . Computer and Video Games reviewer Paul Boughton praised the size of the game world , but criticized the audio quality of the Amstrad CPC and ZX Spectrum versions , citing the limited capabilities of the two systems . In concluding his review , Boughton felt any version of the game would be worth purchasing . Phil South of Your Sinclair praised the game 's presentation and design , calling the graphics " lovely " and the platform gameplay " original " . ZX Computing ' reviewer praised the audio @-@ visuals , and recommended the title for fans of the previous game . A Crash magazine reviewer lauded the audio @-@ visuals of the ZX Spectrum version and commented that the gameplay offered more than its predecessor 's . The reviewer described Cauldron II as difficult , but felt that the sense of accomplishment gained from successful completion outweighed the negative aspect . Computer Gamer 's reviewer criticized the bouncing gameplay , citing unpredictable reactions and difficulty in navigating around tough enemies . Rich Pelley and Jon Pillar of Your Sinclair echoed similar comments . Retro Gamer writer Craig Grannell described the game 's difficulty as the " only real criticism " . The ZX Computing reviewer also criticized the bouncing aspect , but praised the overall game design as enjoyable . Phil King , another Crash reviewer , praised the Silverbird re @-@ release . He called the graphics " colorful " and " well @-@ animated " , and felt that the game was of good value despite an excessive difficulty . The commercial success of the two Cauldron games prompted Palace to give Brown more creative freedom for his following project , Barbarian : The Ultimate Warrior .