

Making Of... Shadowman

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THE MAKING OF...



THE MAKING OF... SHADOWMAN

CAUGHT IN THE NETTIE

The relationship with beady-eyed voodoo priestess Nettie and Mike was extremely important. It was her vision of the impending apocalypse that sent you out on your quest to stop The Five in the first place, and it was her you came back to for hints and tips... as well as a little lurvin' later on too. Sort of. Mike and Nettie *appeared* to get down to some action at one point, though it was never mentioned thereafter. Interesting. Veeeery interesting.



It was the darkest, scariest, most disturbing game ever made for a console, let alone a Nintendo console. Let's hold hands as we get Shad all over.

When we first caught wind of *Shadowman*, way back in **NGC's** late teens, it sounded so far from what anyone else had tried on the N64, we thought it might be some kind of deeply upsetting joke, pencilled in for a Nintendo release only to later appear, strutting its stuff, on the PlayStation, at the time, *the* console for more mature games – or so a countless number of

tunnel-visioned coders would have had us believe. But no. Twelve months later it arrived, and it was stunning – packed to the rafters with the sort of content even *Resident Evil* would balk at. What other game, after all, included *one* head-removing serial killer, let alone *five* – one of whom was the ultimate killer himself: Jack the Ripper.

And as we quickly found out, serial killers were just the start. Based, like the

WHY SHADOWMAN WAS A CLASSIC

MAGIC MOMENT ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

ENEMIES Shadowman's bad guys were amongst the best ever committed to a game, including the notorious Five, a quintet of serial killers hell-bent on destroying the world.



ENVIRONMENTS Shadowman's locations were vast, beautiful and untouched by fog. On the first level, set in Louisiana, you could see all the way to a church in the distance – and, like *Zelda*, Shadowman could adventure his way to it from his starting point. A truly memorable achievement.

MOVEMENT Mike LeRoi and his alter ego were blessed with some incredible animation, as well as the ability to jump, back-jump, climb, roll, crawl, hang and carry two weapons at the same time.

Although the game's basic control system was taken from *Zelda* (including a Link-style lock-on that allowed you to strafe enemies), Shadowman had an additional inventory of extra moves. In fact, he was about as flexible a creation as videogaming had ever seen, with rolls, swinging, climbing, jumping, back-jumping and, best of all, ambidexterity that brilliantly allowed our hero to carry two different weapons at the same time, and fire them off in different directions. Nothing's equalled it since, not on any console.



TATTOOS As well as a number of other quests, Shadsy had to find his way round the sprawling Gad temples, where body-burning tattoos were hidden. Each tattoo gave him extra abilities, such as being able to push aside scalding hot blocks, as here.



AN

Turok games, on one of their own comic books, *Shadowman* was a labour of love, a project the people at Acclaim's spectacular Teesside studios had always fancied, but had never been given the opportunity, or had the hardware available, to realise their vision. Until the N64 arrived, a machine that – in the right hands – could create 3D worlds of unrivalled majesty and beauty. Though, as *Shadowman*'s Creative Director Guy Miller honestly admits: "I rarely think about which format a game is on. If a game's good, then it should work on any format."

Comic relief

So, with the hardware in place, Teesside set about the task of realising their vision for the *Shadowman* game, including marrying the basic ideas and premise from the comic book with their

own original concepts. "I'd say that we probably created more of our own hideous creations for the game than we took from the comic," admits Guy, now recuperating as Design Director on the Harry Potter games, after years spent in the company of Avery Marx, *The Home Improvement* Killer, and couple-

The idea behind *Shadowman* was to create a sprawling, free-roaming world like *Zelda*

murdering drifter Marco Cruz, *The Repo Man*. "Central characters like Mike LeRoi, Jaunty and Nettie were all lifted directly from the comic, whereas the monsters were either products of our own imaginations or were inspired

by gods and demons from the Voodoo religion. The serial killers, Marco Cruz, Victor Batrachian et al, were all of our own making."

Dead or alive

The key idea behind *Shadowman* was to create a sprawling, free-roaming

world, much like *Zelda*, where you could go to places where you could see miles into the distance, explore massive locales without the pressure of objectives or quests, interact with other characters, discover secret areas, and

yet be entertained and gently nudged along by an engrossing, fantastically dark story. In fact the story was, perhaps, the game's strongest element, flipping between *Liveside*, the world we know, and *Deadside*, vast, underground asylums and temples where Mike LeRoi, part-time private investigator, turned into Shadowman, the bare-chested, green-eyed, demon-hunting ace.

And it all worked beautifully... most of the time. While the story was bulletproof, a top-notch narrative that kept the game ticking over magnificently, there were dangers with giving the player that amount of gameplay autonomy – borne out by the fact that *Shadowman* required a lot of backtracking in order to complete certain tasks. "In retrospect, I do think there was too much backtracking," says Guy. "It was our first truly sprawling

THE MAKING OF...

MAGIC MOMENT GAD ALL OVER

The three Gad Temples were staggering, sprawling locales, often awash with lava, hissing steam and lengthy coils of climbable rope. The reason for each were the Gads themselves, tattoos burned onto Shadowman's body, bestowing him with extra abilities. In the Temple of Fire, Shadsy claimed the Gad Toucher, allowing him to push red-hot blocks and hang from flaming ledges; in the Temple of Prophecy was the Gad Marcher, giving him the chance to walk across coals; and in the Temple of Blood, the Gad Nager, handing Shadsy the chance to swim across huge pools of lava.



TEAM PLAY

The original vision for the game was so huge, so expansive and so free-roaming that, in the latter stages of development, things started becoming pretty fraught. "The atmosphere on the team was so thick you could've chainsawed it," admits Guy. Understandable, perhaps, when you considered what they had taken on – creating such a diverse and bewilderingly huge adventure and then tying everything together, was demanding to say the least. Commendably, though, and despite the pressures on the team throughout development, they still managed to stick extremely closely to the original blueprint. "Towards the end we had to cut out a couple of areas due to time constraints," Guy admits, "but I think that the game was as near as dammit to our original twisted vision."



GARDELLE COUNTY JAIL



1 The Five could only be destroyed by Shadowman, not Mike LeRoi, so you had to work out how to get Shadsy across from Deadside. Once done, you found out the jail was home to three of The Five...



2 To make matters worse, the jail was enjoying a full-scale riot, with inmates running around losing their heads. "The headbursting convicts in the jail was my favourite bit of the game," beams Miller.



3 A way in, you meet Milton T. Pike, the Video Nasty Killer. A Vietnam veteran, Pike is as mental as a barrel of squirrels and invites Shadsy in for a bit of a gun battle, as well as some racism.



4 After, you get to meet the equally nutty Dr Victor Batrachian, who starts screaming "I am Doctor Death! I am The Lizard King!" at you and then details his plans to link up with Legion. Scary stuff.

action adventure and I think that there was too much of the sprawling and not enough direction for the player." Even so, while it might not have had the ingenious structure of *The Legend of Zelda*, it certainly had enough set-pieces to match Nintendo's classic.

Scare in the community

Chief among these was the London Underground level, a gorgeous, terrifying journey through an abandoned tube station, with the eventual prize being a meeting with the stunningly mental Jack the Ripper. But

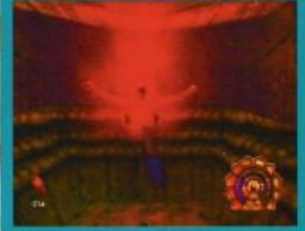
other standout moments occurred in the New York tenement block where the lights were out and you had toiled-up serial killer Avery Marx on your trail (a section that included a neat little nod to the finale of *Silence of the Lambs*), the creepy Asylum Playrooms, where a lullaby played constantly in the background, and the Gardelle County Jail, where Mike LeRoi/Shadowman took on serial killers Milton T. Pike, Marco Cruz and Victor Batrachian. So how did Guy come up with *The Five*? "I took inspiration from a number of books about serial killers – we actually

based our fictional psychopaths on the actual psychopaths in those books.

"My favourite serial killer was the Hannibal Lecter pastiche, Dr Victor Batrachian", Guy goes on to tell us, "mainly because I got to do my ridiculous German/Swiss accent." That's right – Guy even did some of the voices, another remarkable part of *Shadowman*, as the speech squeezed into the cartridge lasted well over an hour. "The guy we got to do Shadsy himself was Red Pepper. You can hear him doing voiceovers for film trailers and BBC dramas. He's a great guy – a

real method actor. While we were recording, he spoke all the time in an American accent, even though he's from London. He was once a tube train driver and used to make announcements in 'funny' voices." And what of Guy's own stab at superstardom? "It felt great doing the voice of *The Lizard King*. It's always good fun playing villains and while I was in the studio I also method acted – I ended up tearing out the recording engineer's throat with my teeth!"

He is, of course, only joking. Er, well, probably. **NGC**



DARK AND DANGEROUS

While other, lesser developers harped on about the N64 being unsuitable for more mature games, Acclaim stuck two fingers up to the naysayers and went ahead to make just about the most adult game money could buy. "I was never worried about the content," Guy assures us. "Actually, I was rather excited at the prospect." The question is, did Nintendo ever express any doubts when they saw what *Shadowman* had in store for N64 gamers? "To my knowledge, we never suffered any interference from Nintendo," he says certainly. "However, Acclaim were very nervous at one point during development. This was just around the time those two idiots went into their high school and blew away a whole bunch of their schoolmates. It all stemmed from the cretinous argument that videogames inspire violence. Which they don't. They just copy the real stuff."

LEVEL TOUR: ASYLUM PLAYROOMS/LONDON UNDERGROUND



● Shadowman's ambidexterity allowed him to carry two weapons at the same time, but it also put constraints on what he could carry – and gave you a tantalising amount of choice when you visited the items screen, especially when you'd progressed in the game.



● The London Underground level was superb, based almost entirely on Down Street, a disused station that Winston Churchill used as a base of operations during WWII. Acclaim took reams of photos to replicate the feel of the dank, neglected terminus.



● One of the game's most inspired touches was FBI profiles of each serial killer. "We managed to get hold of the FBI's handbook on murder, 'Practical Homicide Investigation'," explains Guy, "which was of real use to the artists with its crime photos."



● Using his dead brother's teddy bear to warp between places, Shadowman could take himself along to the Cathedral of Pain, where each of the serial killers had a shrine and a schism, a torso you ripped apart with the Retractor in order to cross back to Liveside.



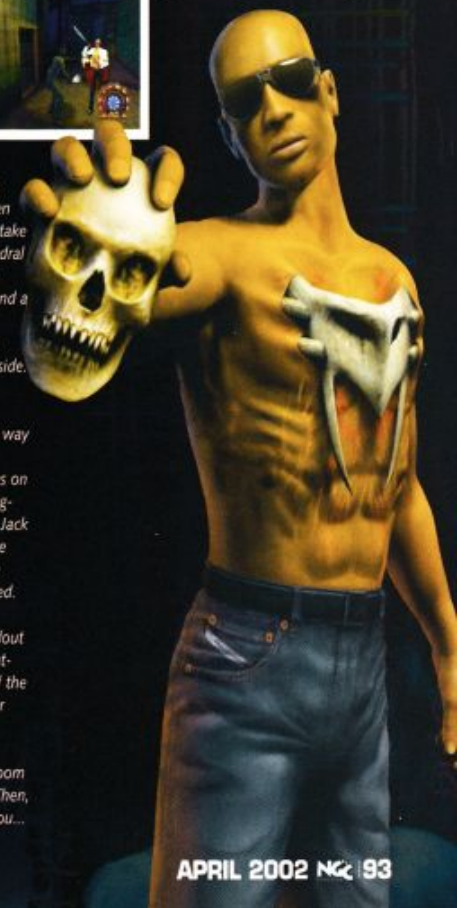
● Part of the tube level required Mike to make his way through a dormant train. Unbeknown to him, he was on his way to the lair of Spring-Heeled Jack – or plain old Jack the Ripper. Or Jack 2, as he wasn't technically Jack the Ripper but... well, it worked.



● One of the game's standout moments was the jump-out-of-your-skin appearance of the lad Jack. After making your way through the disused underground carriage, you found yourself in an anteroom with no idea what to do. Then, Jack drops down behind you...

MAGIC MOMENT SAY WHAT

The amount of speech crammed into Shadowman was incredible, with well over an hour's worth distributed among the many characters, but in order for this to happen, Acclaim had to dump the original 128Mb cart and introduce the more expensive 256Mb version. It was worth it.



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