



# CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

A conclusion worth dying over? • Words: Nick Pino



## A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT ON THE ALL-TOO-LINEAR ORIGINAL

**P**laying as Dracula is more than just a marketing gimmick in the final chapter of the *Lords of Shadow* trilogy; I guarantee that after you've finished this 20-hour(ish) quest you'll never see Dracula, or the series itself, in the same light again.

*Lords of Shadow 2* explicitly explores revenge, redemption, and religion, and it's through these themes that you'll come to sympathize with the blood-covered monster you're controlling. The plot's surprisingly heartfelt, filled with quiet moments spent with Dracula's former love,

Maria, and remorse-filled scenes with his neglected son-turned-vampire Trevor that made me—more often than not—root for the bad guy. Indeed, the game explores a path not taken by any *Castlevania* before it, including the all-too-linear original *Lords of Shadow*. By presenting a real protagonist filled with motivations and foibles (and aided by smart-sounding dialogue and acting), *Lords of Shadow 2* enjoys the best character development in the series.

As good as the story is, however, gameplay often fails to meet the same standard. Even at its most intense moments, unresponsive-feeling

blocking and the ability to get by on just two or three repetitive moves prevent *Castlevania* from competing with combat greats like *God of War* and *DmC*. For a game so clearly designed to foster over-the-top action, it feels like a mistake to let you traipse through without more thoroughly exploring your options.

Even so, *Lords of Shadow 2* is still a substantial improvement on the all-too-linear, more button-mashy original. If you're willing to look past the game's undemanding combat and simply enjoy the emotionally charged plot, you'll find *Castlevania* to be well worth its asking price. ☀



**NOSFERATU**  
Cursed, Gabriel Belmont forever roams this world as a creature of the night.

## BRAVE NEW WORLD //

Waking up after several centuries of inactivity, Drac must regain his previous powers if he wants to stand a chance against the soon-to-be-resurrected Satan. It's in this quest for power and passing glances at Gabriel's past (i.e., intimate moments with his wife Maria and young son Trevor) that we get real insight into his character. As the story progresses, however, Satan won't be the only one you have to worry about. A series of apocalyptic events will set Castlevania City P.D. on your tail as well—just their way of saying thanks to the vampire who's trying to save the world.



## GAME DETAILS

BUY NOW!



### CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

#### INFO

Publisher: Konami  
Developer: MercurySteam  
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360  
Reviewed on: PS3

#### RELEASE DATE

February 25, 2014

#### MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE

Single-player only

#### GENRE

Action-adventure



#### WHAT'S GREAT:

- ♥ You'll actually feel sympathetic for Dracula (I can't believe it either)
- ♥ It's a massive improvement on the original



#### WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✗ If you're fixated on mashing one move, the game rarely stops you
- ✗ Even at its most complex, combat doesn't feel better than, say, *DmC* did one year ago

#### OVERALL RATING:



3.75



#### ACOLYTE'S DELIGHT \\\

Sure, they're not as tough as ol' Satan himself, but his son and daughter—lovingly referred to as "his acolytes"—put up one heck of a fight. Taking these two down requires you to dodge lightning-fast attacks, battle three enemies at once, and perhaps most difficult of all, walk away from a fight.