


CASTLEVANIA: LORDS OF SHADOW 2

A conclusion worth dying over? • Words: Nick Pino



A SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENT ON THE ALL-TOO- LINEAR ORIGINAL


Playing 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. 

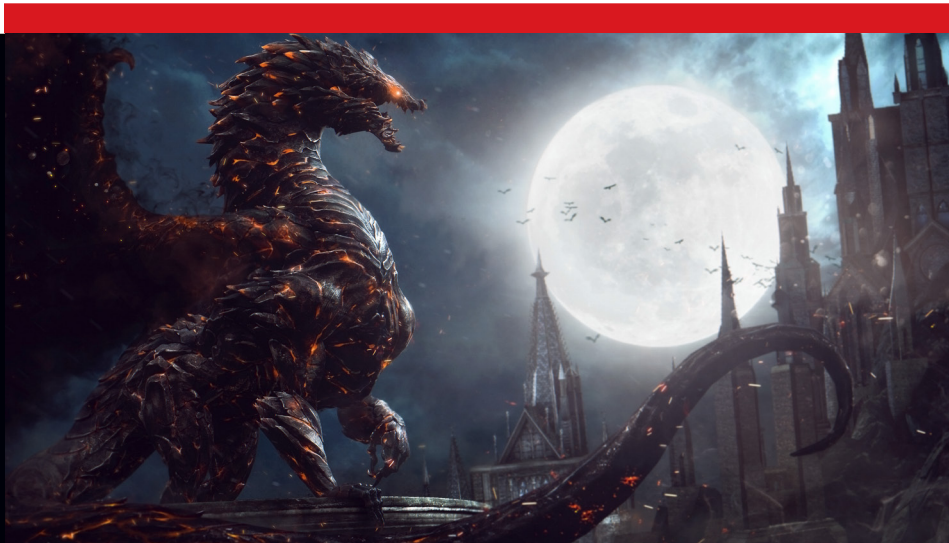


NOSFERATU
Cursed, Gabriel Belmont forever roams this world as a creature of the night.



**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.



**CASTLE CRASHER ** Whereas the original *Lords of Shadow* was harshly criticized for feeling like a *God of War* clone, the sequel completely dispels the notion. This is helped by the game's ever-present goal of rewarding you for exploring its visually rich and painstakingly crafted gothic environment. Unlocking fast-travel map rooms and gaining new abilities later in the game—like a mist form that lets you pass through barred grates—gives completionists incentive to re-tread past footsteps and find easy-to-miss upgrades, which will work to your advantage when you unlock the impossibly hard New Game+ mode.



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.

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:

gamer

3.75