

GAMING INSURRECTION

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YEAR 15

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ISSUE 46



VAMPIRE COLLECTION

GI EXAMINES THE
FRIGHTFUL FIGHTING
FRANCHISE

from the editor



What's good guys and gals? Thankfully, summer has ended, and it's time to start cooling off finally.

We love the fall around these parts and with cooler weather and Halloween just around the corner, we thought we'd delve into the spooky games we love and hate this issue.

We've been fans of Capcom's Vampire series for many years at this point, and we love sharing that passion and love for it with everyone! Darkstalkers, as the series is known here in the U.S., is one of the best fighting games not called Street Fighter that has come out of Capcom. That's saying a lot since it also has the heavy hitters of Rival Schools and Marvel vs. Capcom in its repertoire. Vampire combines campy gothic horror and macabre with a fun fighting system and recognizable fighters that everyone should be familiar with at this point. Because GI considers itself a connoisseur of fighting

games in particular, this issue delves deep into the lore and mystery surrounding the frightful fighting fest of yesteryear.

While we're at it, we get down in the sewers with the newest TMNT game to rise up and float: TMNT: Shredder's Revenge. It's a fun sequel beat-'em-up that trades on the nostalgia you immediately feel as a child of the '80s who loved the lean green machine. If you were like me and camped out in the living room after school to catch episodes of the radical '80s cartoon, you're going to love the game just as much as we do.

We hope all of the spookiness is joyful and frightful this fall season. Stay safe and healthy, and enjoy the issue!

Lyndsey Beatty, editor-in-chief



LYNDSEY BEATTY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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GI REVIEW POLICY

Scale is from 1 to 5 as follows:

- 1 — **Broken.** Absolutely do not play this game. A broken mess from start to finish. Game is unplayable and irredeemable in all areas.
- 2 — **Substandard.** The game isn't for everyone. Some mechanics work; others need work. Overall design is questionable in some areas.
- 3 — **Average and meets expectations.** Mechanics work and it's a decent package overall. It's playable, and you'll come back to the game.
- 4 — **Above average.** Exceeds expectations. Overall, a great game worth keeping in a gamer's library. Presentation and mechanics all work as expected and add to or enhance the gaming experience.
- 5 — **Masterpiece.** Everyone should play this title at least once to experience what it has to offer.

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Vampire soundtrack scares up freakishly good grooves

Capcom's sound department has a stellar reputation that's well earned. The fighting game composers regularly outdo themselves with great beats and memorable tracks designed to bring you back to the fight constantly. The Vampire franchise is no different. It's a well-designed sound juggernaut that has some of the funkier beats Capcom could muster back in the day that didn't involve Street Fighter. These are our favorite tracks from the series about monsters real and imagined.

- 1. Amazon Jungle (Rikuo's theme, Vampire):** This colorful jungle theme is fantastic. It's upbeat with sweet horns and animal sounds punctuating the background. It fits Rikuo well and it's a fun dance track.
- 2. Egypt (Anakaris' theme, Vampire):** An offbeat representation of a pharaoh's theme, Anakaris' theme is fun and mysterious. It's one of the better themes to represent this type of stage. The offbeat and ancient nature is the draw here.
- 3. Unknown (Donovan's theme, Vampire Hunter):** Donovan's theme has always been intriguing, much like the character. It's got a lot of horns and a saxophone in the background that don't seem like they would go together well, but they mesh perfectly. The remix found in Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection, titled Revenger's Roost, is also on our list for much the same reasons.
- 4. Deserted Chateau (Morrigan's**

theme, Vampire Savior): This iconic theme makes us stan Morrigan for all the right reasons. It's very 1990s but it invokes fond memories of learning to play the series and learning Morrigan's origins. The version found in Vampire Savior is the best in the main Vampire franchise; however, there are remixes that are worth looking for, such as the remix found in Capcom vs. SNK: Millennium Fight 2000.

- 5. Feast of the Damned (Demi-tri's theme, Vampire Savior):** The main vampire protagonist's theme is what makes us want to play him. He's a mid-character but his theme is a banger that makes you want to tap your foot while shooting bats at opponents.
- 6. Vanity Paradise (Hsein-Ko's theme):** Beautiful and soothing, Vanity Paradise has a slow start but it's fun and features a gong. You can't do better than a dance track with a gong for a jiangshi. The accompanying stage is gorgeous as well, which enhances the calming experience.
- 7. Character Select 01 (Vampire Savior):** The character select for Vampire Savior is a true banger. It's interesting and sets the tone for the monster fighter from the beginning.
- 8. Forever Torment (Vampire Savior):** This banger of a dance track is one of the more gruesome stages in the game, but it fits Vampire so well. It's a shame it came so late in the franchise's lifespan because it's extremely well done. The synth is the main feature

of the track, and the added accent of torture devices in the backing is just a chef's kiss at this point.

- 9. Staff Roll (Vampire Savior):** One of the best staff roll tracks Capcom has ever done is for Vampire Savior. It matches the game well even though it's a product of its time. It sounds Enigma-like but the vibe it sets is perfect.
- 10. War Agony (Vampire Savior):** This track is so dark and perfect for Vampire that much like Forever Torment, it's a shame that it came so late in the game, no pun intended. It's a dance track but also a harken back to a time of dreary war, darkness, and death. Somehow, that makes a banger of a track.
- 11. Fetus of God (Vampire Savior):** Jedah's track is one of the best fighting game tracks I've ever heard. It's got a nice groove, the breakdown is fantastic and the special choir intro with Jedah is great also. It's slightly offbeat and that makes it all the more fun. This is a track that actually makes the character better.
- 12. Revenger's Roost (Dee/Donovan's theme, Darkstalkers: Vampire Collection):** This banger of a remix is one of the best I've ever heard. I love Donovan's theme, but this is so much more of a better mix. It fits the character's turn storyline-wise, but it's the addition of a hip-hop drum beat that takes it to the next level. It's a pleasant surprise if you like Donovan's theme at all.

Vampire finds a way to sink its fangs into fighting game fans

Vampire/Darkstalkers is one of those fighting game franchises that draws you in and you don't know exactly why. It's got great character designs, deep and familiar gameplay, and a banger of a soundtrack. Considering all of that, you still don't have any idea why Vampire sticks with you. And then you sit down and do an entire deep dive and you remember the allure: It's because it's not Street Fighter.

Sure, I love Street Fighter as much as anyone who loves fighting games. But at the same time, I want something spicier and different. I want something that thinks differently and isn't scared to take chances. Vampire satisfies all of that with the first three games in the series. And it gets better with age. I recently replayed the first game in the series extensively, and I have a newfound respect for the origin of the series. It's not nearly as bad as I once judged it to be, and it has a certain charm that makes it stand out against the other offerings of



Lyndsey Beatty
CRY OF WAR

1994.

So, aging like fine wine, depth, charm and playability? This can only make for a monster of a good time.

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VAMPIRE

COLLECTION

BY LYNDESEY BEATTY



Vampire is one of those series that you never hear about, but everyone says they love it. That love, while widespread, doesn't always translate into sales. Despite having a solid cast of characters based on horror icons, fantastic gameplay, three fun-to-play full games and a tangential relationship to Street Fighter, Vampire has never garnered the respect from maker Capcom that it deserves.

Vampire hit the scene in 1994 with a good fighting game, but it has never managed to sell more than 1 million copies in its franchise lifetime. There's so much to love about the quirky fighting series, and we're aiming to put it on display. The gothic horror aesthetic, great soundtracks, tight fighting mechanics and fun characters make the series a joy to experience at least once. Though Capcom keeps moving the goalposts on our hopes to ever see proper follow-ups beyond Vampire Savior, we'll keep our absinthe-tinged love alive for the solid horror fighting series with an in-depth look at all things Vampire.

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VAMPIRE ORIGINS

VAMPIRE - THE NIGHT WARRIORS



THE STORY SO FAR ...

Vampire lord Demitri Maximoff is an impudent and brash noble in the Darkstalkers' realm of Makai. He believes he should lead the Darkstalkers and challenges demon lord Belial Aensland to a fight. He loses the battle terribly and is banished from Makai for his challenge and crimes. For 100 years, Demitri recovered from this battle and created a field to hide his castle. At the time of his reawakening, he gained power and experience to ready himself to challenge Belial again. He sets up a tournament to take on monsters of the night to see who is the strongest and most capable of leading Makai.

FACT FILE

Released: August 1994 (Arcade); 1996 (PSOne)

TIER LIST

Source: GameFan guide

- A** Morrigan, Rikuo, Demitri
- B** Anakaris, Bishamon, Lord Raptor, Sasquatch
- C** Jon Talbain
- D** Victor, Felicia

VAMPIRE HUNTER - DARKSTALKERS' REVENGE



THE STORY SO FAR ...

Demitri Maximoff begins to invite challengers to take on in his tournament. However, as he readies himself to challenge his old foe Belial, he finds that Belial has died and in his place is Belial's daughter, Morrigan. Demitri decides to challenge Morrigan for supremacy instead, but as he readies for that battle, Pyron — an alien entity preparing to invade Earth — reappears and also attempts take over Makai. Demitri and the other Darkstalkers — including two new revenge-minded hunters in Lei-Lei and Donovan — then face the threat of Pyron and his advanced guard of Phobos/Huitzil in a last-ditch attempt to save Earth and Makai.

FACT FILE

Released: March 1995 (Arcade); 1996 (Saturn)

TIER LIST

Source: wiki.supercombo.gg

- S** Sasquatch, Bishamon
- A** Pyron, Huitzil, Rikuo, Morrigan
- B** Jon Talbain, Anakaris, Lord Raptor
- C** Demitri, Felicia, Hsein-Ko, Donovan
- D** Victor

VAMPIRE SAVIOR - THE LORD OF VAMPIRE



THE STORY SO FAR ...

With the threat of Pyron vanquished, the Darkstalkers must turn their attention to a new threat in the form of Jedah Dohma. The resurrected high noble of Makai is intent in creating a realm of his liking and forms the Majigen to rule over everything. To suit his ends, he draws the souls of the previous Darkstalkers into the dimension as well as three others — Q-Bee, B.B. Hood, and Lilith — to begin his quest to unite all beings into a singular entity and feed his new world.

FACT FILE

Released: June 1997 (Arcade); 1998 (Saturn, PlayStation)

TIER LIST

Source: wiki.supercombo.gg

- A** Lord Raptor, Sasquatch, Q-Bee, Jon Talbain
- B** Rikuo, B.B. Hood, Bishamon, Felicia
- C** Lilith, Hsein-Ko, Demitri, Jedah
- D** Morrigan, Victor, Anakaris

VAMPIRE IN NAME ONLY

CHARACTER NAME CHANGES



AULBATH/RIKUO



PHOBOS/HUITZIL



GALLON/JON TALBAIN



LEI-LEI/HSEIN-KO



ZABEL ZAROCK/
LORD RAPTOR

Character	Vampire	Vampire Hunter	Vampire Savior	Vampire Hunter 2	Vampire Savior 2
Morrigan	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Demitri	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Aulbath/Rikuo	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Sasquatch	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Pyron	Y*	Y	Y**	Y	Y
Phobos/Huitzil	Y*	Y	Y**	Y	Y
Victor	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Bishamon	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Felicia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Jon Talbain/Gallon	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Lord Raptor/Zabel Zarock	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
B.B. Hood/Bullea	N	N	Y	N	Y
Donovan	N	Y	N	Y	Y
Dee ***	N	N	N	N	N
Q-Bee	N	N	Y	N	Y
Oboro Bishamon	N	N	Y**	Y	Y
Lilith	N	N	Y	N	Y
Jedah	N	N	Y	N	Y
Lei-Lei/Hsein-Ko	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shadow	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Marionette	N	N	Y**	Y	Y

Legend
 * = Not playable
 ** = Available in console ports only
 *** = Available in Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection only

CHARACTER APPEARANCES EXPLAINED

NAME CHANGES

Vampire/Darkstalkers has several name changes throughout the franchise. It's not just in the name of the franchise, either. A few characters have different names depending on the region.

GAME NAME CHANGES

JAPAN

NORTH AMERICA



VAMPIRE OF YESTERYEAR

VAMPIRE CHRONICLE BITES INTO COMPETITION

By **LYNDSEY HICKS BEATTY**
GAMING INSURRECTION

Editor's note: This review previously ran in the 4Q2009 issue. It has been edited for grammar, spelling and clarity.

Ah, Vampire Chronicle. What would an importing gamer girl to do without her trusty Dreamcast and DC-X to play one of the most complete and good versions of Vampire (aka Darkstalkers to us Americans)?

Vampire Chronicle for Matching Service is a must-have in any fighting game connoisseur's library. Released only in Japan in August 2000, Vampire Chronicle takes every character in the franchise, throws them together and lets the player figure out what game style they want to use (Vampire, Vampire Hunter, Vampire Savior, Vampire Savior 2) before battling. What's interesting is that you can have characters use styles from the games they weren't in, such as B.B. Hood using Vampire Hunter style. With altered movesets, a lot of depth is provided.

There aren't that many game modes, but what little there is plays extremely well. The controls are fluid and easy to use. My only gripe is that some of the supers are a little ridiculous to perform because of the button combinations. Other than that, the controls are beautiful.

Vampire Chronicle really shines in the presentation. The audio and the backgrounds literally shine. The artistry and care is evident when you look at the different stages. Of particular note is the fact that Morrigan's sprite doesn't look so out



of place here as it does in other games.

The music is a standout piece of the action. Many tunes are memorable and some of them even get a remix of sorts (check out Revenger's Roost hidden stage). The game's sound is memorable with the announcer who sounds like he's right out of a horror film. In a game about mythological horrorfest beings, it sounds perfectly dreadful, just the way it should. Although the game is import only, you'd be doing yourself a favor by finding it. Your best bet is PlayAsia.com, which specializes in import games. While you're at

it, get a DC-X or a Gameshark because you will need it to boot the game.

Unfortunately for Americans, that Matching Service part is out of the window; that's a Japan only feature. If you can find a way to get on Japanese servers and find a working Matching Service port, by all means go for it. Despite this, the replay value is high for this one of Capcom's unsung heroes on the Dreamcast. You'd think they only made Street Fighter, but Darkstalkers proves that the company's best games aren't always so involved with Ryu and his destiny.

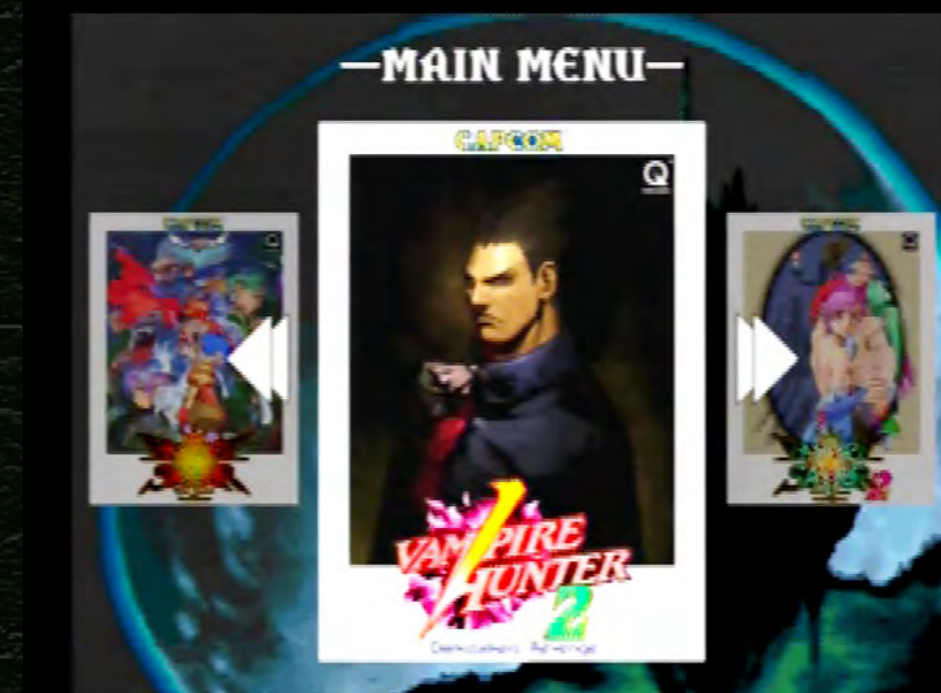
VAMPIRE COLLECTION, A SCARY GOOD PACKAGE

By **LYNDSEY HICKS BEATTY**
GAMING INSURRECTION

Editor's note: This review previously ran in the 3Q2012 issue. It has been edited for grammar, spelling and clarity.

Having previously reviewed Dreamcast's Vampire Chronicles for Matching Service, I am pretty certain I have an affinity for the Capcom's fighting series about fabled monsters and beings. I came into the series by way of print ads for Darkstalkers (the American name for the series) in the late 1990s and then a chance rental of Darkstalkers 3 in 2000. Learning that I generally prefer Street Fighter spinoffs as opposed to the real thing, I fully embraced the collection of games when it was released in Japan. This is one collection I can get behind.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: I'm not a big fan of collections. Generally, there's not enough of the good stuff in the collection to warrant spending gobs of money. But the Vampire Collection is different. Much like Namco Museum and Sonic Mega Collection, the best of the best is represented here. Sure, it's all of the games ever released with the name Vampire on them, but it's worth picking up for that point alone. Throw in the fact that it's arcade perfect and has added features and you have a surely worthy title to experiment with and learn everything you ever wanted to know about the series but were



afraid to ask.

All Vampire games are included. That means Vampire (Darkstalkers), Vampire Hunter (Darkstalkers 2), Vampire Savior (Darkstalkers 3), Vampire Hunter 2 (Japan only) and Vampire Savior 2 (Japan only). A bonus, compilation mode is also included. Here, you can play what amounts to Vampire Chronicles: All game types are available. So, for example, say you wanted to play as Vampire Hunter Donovan versus Vampire Hunter 2 Jedah. You could do that by picking their game type at the character select screen. The combinations that could play out are nearly infinite

and easily add to the replay value of an already enticing set up. It also goes without saying that if you can import the game, it eliminates the need to track down Vampire Chronicles for either the DC or PSP.

A neat feature is the ability to set up the individual games to play as the individual revisions did in the arcade. The concept involves accessing dip switches, similar to the flags found in the Genesis version of Mortal Kombat. Changing these switches to on or off can change the way the game plays, what characters are available or character movesets and

abilities. There are detailed guides out there that detail exactly what switches do what in which games, but there's a lot of replay to be had just in exploring.

While we won't review the individual games in this review, let's just say that if you played any of the games, they're exactly the way you remember them.

Thanks to the arcade-perfect nature of the games, you can pick it up and play quite easily. The controls are solid and the excellent-if-not-interesting soundtrack is intact. The games also look just the way they did in the arcade, though Morrigan's sprite is still outdated and awkward as ever. But if Capcom had changed it in any way, it wouldn't be the same old quirky Vampire.

This is one of the few collections that I can safely say is a must-buy and must-have. If you don't have a clue about the Vampire series, this is the place to start. There's nothing like getting a history lesson, fairy tale and beat down all in one package.

Score: 5 out 5



VAMPIRE QUICK REVIEWS

VAMPIRE - THE NIGHT WARRIORS

Night Warriors come together in frightfully good origin tale

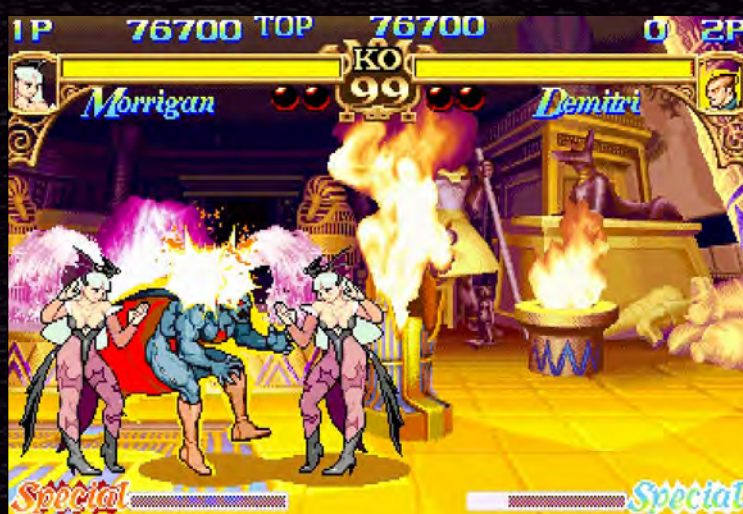
By Lyndsey Beatty

Vampire deserves to be retread. I played it originally years ago and it was not to my liking. The mechanics, though Street Fighter-ish, seemed stiff and unforgiving. And the difficulty was more than I would have liked even on the lowest, easiest level.

But it's amazing what a difference time makes.

Going back and playing it again, it's way more interesting and plays infinitely better. The soundtrack is better, and the graphics aren't terrible. Sure, it's showing its 30 years (!) of age quite well, but it holds up. And, as an origin story for a beloved and missing franchise, I can cut it some slack now with the benefit of wisdom and experience with other, lesser games. Vampire could be much worse in hindsight, but it doesn't fall down on the job of being a serviceable start to the monster fest that we know and love.

Score: 3 out of 5



VAMPIRE HUNTER - DARKSTALKERS' REVENGE

Darkstalkers masters the hunt in sequel monster mash up

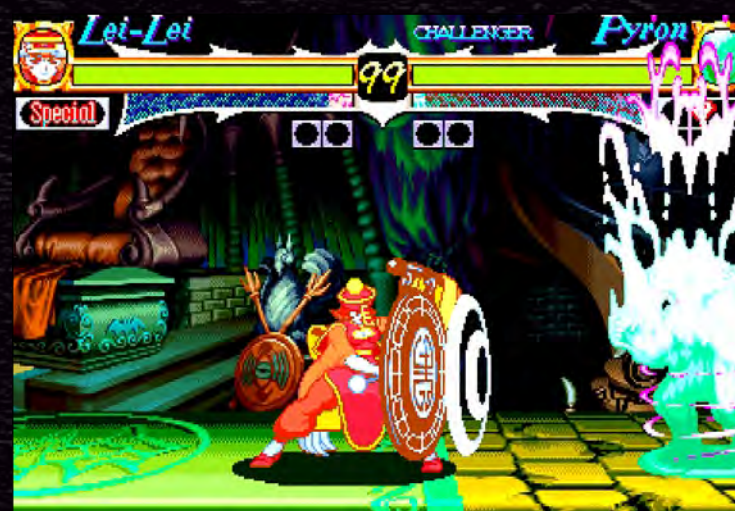
By Lyndsey Beatty

The second go-round with the Darkstalkers is much improved and a better experience overall. Vampire Hunter: Darkstalkers' Revenge takes everything I loved about Vampire: The Night Warriors and improves the process.

The gameplay is tighter and smoother, with more pliable combos and a better thought process about the combo system. Combos seem easier to perform, and the Hunter chain system makes understanding the game's theory much easier. The soundtrack is slightly better with reworkings of the original themes and additions for the new characters, and the new additions of Lei-Lei and Donovan make the roster a little more fun to play. The improvements made to the game overall help it supersede the original in almost every way, including its story.

Vampire Hunter is one of the better fighting game sequels from Capcom, though it's not Street Fighter to Street Fighter II leaps and bounds better. It's a good fright fest with solid mechanics, something we cannot complain about.

Score: 4 out of 5



VAMPIRE SAVIOR - THE LORD OF VAMPIRE

Savoring the best for last: Darkstalkers 3 scares up good

By Lyndsey Beatty

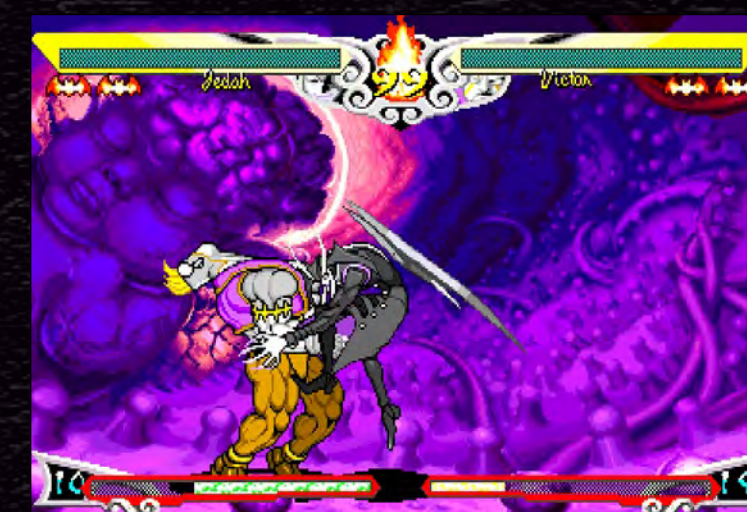
When we think about the definitive Vampire/Darkstalkers experience, Vampire Savior should be at the forefront.

While there is still a tournament scene for Vampire Hunter, Vampire Savior is the definitive tournament game in the series for a variety of reasons. Savior is the best of the three main games in the franchise by far.

The gameplay has reached a zenith here, and high-level Savior play is still something to behold 25 years after its release. The fast-paced nature of the game comes from speeding up the combo system, which Savior benefits from immensely. The graphics are better, and the soundtrack is much improved over both previous games. It's nearly the perfection of all things Vampire and the Street Fighter spinoff experience.

If you're going to play Vampire, you could theoretically play Vampire Savior first and not miss anything by doing so. Despite being a Vampire enthusiast and loving all of the games in the series, Savior is the one I'd recommend over anything else.

Score: 4.5 out of 5



MONSTERS & MYTHOS

FREAKS AND GEEKS

Vampire's monsters and mythos collide in terrifying fighting fest

By **LYNDESE BEATTY**
GAMING INSURRECTION

The roster of Vampire (or Darkstalkers as it's known in America) isn't just purely video game design motifs. They come from the tales of history and from the imaginations of some of the world's greatest authors.

There are at least 18 types of ghouls and ghosts to choose from, and these are their archetypes and origins.

- **Morrigan:** Succubus. These female creatures were said to seduce men and drain them of their life force.
- **Demitri:** Vampire. Vampires have been around a long time, with the prominent fictional version of Dracula connected to the real Vlad the Impaler and Countess Elizabeth Báthory, who was said to be known (unreliably) for bathing in the blood of virgins.
- **Victor:** Golem. The human construct is the game's interpretation of Frankenstein's Monster from the epic novel "Frankenstein" by Mary Shelley.
- **Hsein-Ko:** Jiangshi, or Chinese vampire.

The twin sisters Hsein-Ko and Mei-Ling are transformed into a Jiangshi, which is a type of Chinese zombie/vampire that is said to hop around and attempt to steal life force from the living.

- **B.B. Hood:** Darkstalker hunter. She is based on Little Red Riding Hood but is in reality a human serial killer who focuses on Darkstalkers and creatures of the night.
- **Lord Raptor:** Zombie. The undead rocker was formerly human and exhibits obvious traits of the recently, and resurrected, dead.
- **Lilith:** See Morrigan's entry.
- **Jedah:** Blood god demon. Blood gods are referenced in many cultures around the world, and usually demand tributes in blood from humans.
- **Huitzil:** Robot. Created by an alien life form in Pyron, the robots become sentient at some point, which is a fear of using AI.
- **Pyron:** Alien. This cosmic being is confirmation of life beyond known human comprehension.
- **Q-Bee:** Soul bee. These human-sized bees are sentient and soul sucking, instead of the normal small honeybees seen flying around.
- **Donovan:** Dhampir. Dhampir are the combination of a human and a vampire. See Demitri's entry above.

- **Bishamon:** Demon-cursed samurai. There are many tales of samurai becoming possessed by a vengeful spirit who cannot rest. These ghosts generally do not move on and are obsessed with honor and duty.

- **Rikuo:** Merman. Mermen were said to exist in the fabled lost continent of Atlantis and dwelled deep in the ocean's depths away from the surface world.

- **Anakaris:** Mummy. The Egyptians practiced mummification as a means of honoring their dead, and historians believe it originated in predynastic Egypt (6000 – 3150 BCE).

- **Jon Talbain:** Werewolf. Some modern cultures believe that werewolves exist through the mating of wolves and humans, and lycanthropy being passed through bites from a werewolf. Common fictional werewolves (and vampiric) origins are most prominently seen in the Underworld movie franchise.

- **Felicia:** Catwoman. Catwomen are said to exist as creatures who are descended from cats and humans mating. They resemble human women but are also extremely agile and catlike in folklore.

- **Sasquatch:** Abominable snowman/Bigfoot. Bigfoot has been repeatedly said to exist in the mountainous regions of the world, where snow is plentiful, and supposed sightings are mysteriously hidden in blizzards. The creatures are said to be massive and beastly.

Darkstalkers' predilection toward the known horror archetypes was no accident.

According to an interview with Gamest magazine in 1994, series producer Junichi Ohno said: "One reason, as you can probably guess, is that we wanted to create a new, different style of versus fighting game. In the midst of our brainstorming, someone proposed, well, why not make it all about monsters then?" He continued, "With monsters, we wouldn't have to create brand new characters from whole cloth, and we could use famous monster characters that people would already be familiar with."

Noritaka Funamizu, longtime Capcom producer, also spoke about the roster creation during the interview. "We were considering monsters from all over the world. In the beginning, there were a lot of yokai (traditional Japanese monsters), but we trimmed that number down because we realized most international players wouldn't be very familiar with them."

It stands to reason that the more people were familiar with the cast, the more incentive there would be to play. Unfortunately, while the game was founded with familiar characters, it wasn't a commercial success. Capcom has never released total sales figures for the franchise, but from the sporadic numbers we found, Darkstalkers has sold less than a million copies worldwide. That's a tough pill to swallow when the characters it's based on are making millions in other media properties. Despite the poor showing of these monsters and horror icons in the three main games, Darkstalkers' legend lives on in re-releases and compilations.

Capcom should stick its neck out for Vampire

Vampire has long been the redheaded stepchild of Capcom's formidable fighting game arsenal. That's obvious by the vast indifference shown to the series in a time when fighting games are thriving.

Indifference you ask? Pay attention because it keeps coming up in a cycle of foolishness and folly that Capcom feels content to perpetuate constantly. This is how I imagine that conversation goes every time:

Consumer: You know what I'd like to see? A new Vampire/Darkstalkers entry. We love those characters!

*Capcom: *gauges interest in Darkstalkers* OK guys, we'll release this compilation/re-release/downloadable title that focuses on Darkstalkers. If you buy enough of it, we'll think about making a new game. Darkstalkers isn't dead!*

Consumer: YEAH! A new Darkstalkers? We'll buy it.

Consumer goes out and buys the latest re-release of all five Darkstalkers games

Consumer: OK, we bought it! We bought it on all three systems it's available on and the DLC icon packs and books and T-shirts. Now can we get a new game please?

Capcom: New game? Why? You didn't buy enough Darkstalkers XXXX. So, we can't justify making a new game.

Consumer: But, but ... you said if we bought it, you would make a new game!

*Capcom: Ah, yes, we did. But we didn't say how much you needed to buy. You clearly didn't meet our internal, unknown numbers that we were never planning to tell you. That is *checks notes* that.*



Lyndsey Beatty
EDITOR'S TAKE

Consumer: We'll never give up hope of getting a new Darkstalkers game.

Capcom: So, you know what guys? We'll release this compilation/re-release/downloadable title that focuses on Darkstalkers ...

This is a never-ending situation. Capcom is never going to make another Darkstalkers game because they claim it doesn't sell well. But, then they gauge interest because there is always a low rumbling of faithful Darkstalkers fans out there (read: me) that constantly bemoan the fact that we are never getting a new Darkstalkers. Capcom then preys on our weakness and gets our hopes up only to move the goalpost and dash our dreams when the resulting test product (i.e. Darkstalkers Resurrection or Capcom Fighting Collection) doesn't meet their non-verbalized high sales expectations.

It makes me angry because I love Vampire. I fell in love with the series in the late '90s when I discovered Darkstalkers 3 and learned there was something else other than Street Fighter going on at Capcom. Vampire spoke to my dark heart, with its gothic and macabre leanings capturing my attention and dollars once

I had the means to acquire it. Once I learned the character backstories, it was all over but the shouting in terms of what my favorite Capcom fighting game series was. If Morrigan shows up in a fighting game, you already know who I'm maining.

So, forgive me if I'm a little bent about the way this Vampire season of living has unfolded. There is so much to love about the series, from the quirky characters and boss soundtrack to the smooth lovely Street Fighter-esque gameplay that somehow manages to play better than its inspiration.

The folly that is Capcom's Vampire abandonment and constant baiting in collections grates on my nerves, but yet I still show up and show out when it comes to the gruesome fighter. I currently own: Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge and Vampire Savior for Saturn, Vampire Chronicle for Dreamcast, Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection for PlayStation 2, Darkstalkers Resurrection for PlayStation 3 and Capcom Fighting Collection for PlayStation 4. I might even consider owning the Tower of Chaos if I had the inclination to own a PSP. I think it's safe to say I'm in the vocal minority that buys and loves on Vampire even now. And, as is my love, my disappointment and irritation with Capcom is palpable and personally loud. I want new Vampire games; I don't want more re-releases and I want to see the love. Getting a bite of the potential Vampire profits won't hurt in the long run.

Lyndsey Beatty is editor-in-chief of Gaming Insurrection. She can be reached by email at lyndseyb@gaminginsurrection.com

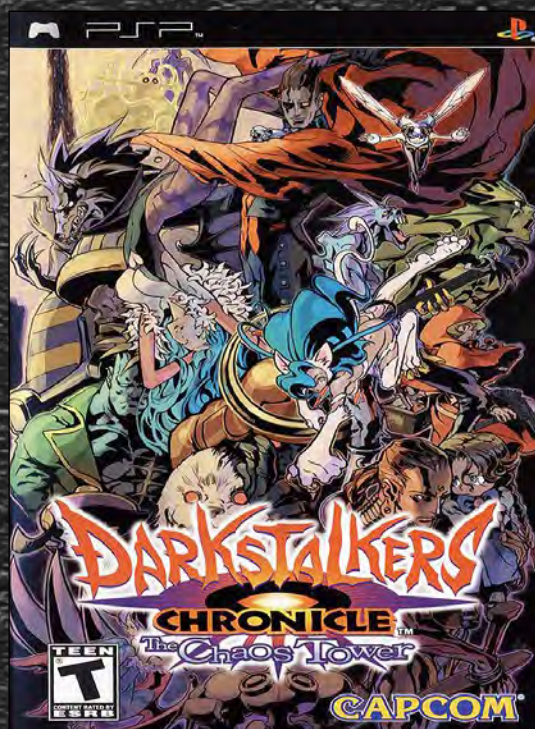


VAMPIRE - BEYOND THE STAKE

PORTS



Vampire Chronicle
Released: 2000
Console: Dreamcast



Darkstalkers Chronicle: The Chaos Tower
Released: 2004
Console: PSP



Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection
Released: 2005
Console: PlayStation 2



Darkstalkers Resurrection
Released: 2013
Consoles: PS3, Xbox 360



Capcom Fighting Collection
Released: 2022
Console: Multiplatform

RESOURCES

Supercombo Wikia
[https://wiki.supercombo.
gg/](https://wiki.supercombo.gg/)

Mizuumi Wikia
<https://wiki.gbl.gg/>

Darkstalkopedia
[https://darkstalkers.
fandom.com](https://darkstalkers.fandom.com)

Dustloop Forums
[http://www.dustloop.com/
forums/index.php?/forums/
forum/154-vampire-savior/](http://www.dustloop.com/forums/index.php?/forums/forum/154-vampire-savior/)

**Twitch & YouTube
channels**
Vampire Arcadia

[https://youtube.com/@
VampireArcadia](https://youtube.com/@VampireArcadia)

[https://www.twitch.tv/
vampirearcadia](https://www.twitch.tv/vampirearcadia)



TECH GEEKS



All photos courtesy of Apple.com



APPLE 2023 MACBOOK PRO WITH M2 PRO CHIP

**Editor's note: David was able to get this MacBook for \$1,860 through Best Buy's open box policy. Because it was an open box, it did not come with a charger brick.*

Longtime friend of GI and Apple enthusiast extraordinaire David dropped by with his new purchase: a 16-inch MacBook Pro with the M2 Pro chip. David let us get a good look and try out the MacBook, and we were impressed enough to start contemplating ways to acquire one immediately. With 12-core CPU, 19-core GPU, 16.2-inch Liquid Retina XDR display, 16GB Unified Memory and 512GB SSD storage, this MacBook is no joke. This is one of the quietest laptops we've ever seen and it's also the most technologically advanced and gorgeous, too.

When we were allowed to play around with it, it was fantastic to use. Everything seemed natural as an already iPhone user, and the laptop was light and thin. The speakers included are

absolutely the best on the market and made lots of design sense, with Apple placing them on top of the laptop where they could project best. There were many connection options as well: Three Thunderbolt 4 ports, an SD card reader slot and an HDMI port were immediately available as well as a MagSafe port. The best part, however, was the battery life. With the M2 Pro chip, the MacBook gave a noted 20 hours of battery life. There is nothing else on the market doing that well in terms of battery life in a laptop. This will cost you a pretty penny as most Apple products do, but it's worth it. The computing power, the stellar and best-in-class battery life, and the beautiful and sleek design all make this a must-buy if and when you have the chance to get a new laptop.

Price: \$2,445.94*

Where to buy: Apple.com, Amazon.com, BestBuy.com



SDXC

Thunderbolt 4

HDMI

GAME OF THE ISSUE

TMNT: SHREDDER'S REVENGE

The four green dudes with attitudes make a triumphant return in the excellent beat-'em-up sequel, **PAGE 13**

GAME OF THE ISSUE

INSIDE

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Darkstalkers Resurrection

This gruesome twosome collection features Vampire Hunter and Vampire Savior, a most frightful fighting combination.

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Pokémon Puzzle League

Mixing the nuance of Pokémon and Tetris Attack never gets old, and this classic puzzler makes it all the more fun.

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Demon's Crest

Capcom's platformer isn't the devil's toothpaste but it is a smooth and interesting look at the antagonist's side of things. RIP GamePro.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: SHREDDER'S REVENGE

Developer: Tribute Games, Release: 2022

Shredder's Revenge served hot in sequel

As a connoisseur of most things related to the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, I find that the first two movies, the comics and the first animated show are worth my time. In addition to those mentioned, certain games are acceptable uses of my hard-earned scrilla. I am a discerning fan, and my dollars and time are precious. So, it is with great joy and elation that I spread the word that TMNT games have recovered slightly from the Dimension X portal that the franchise fell into and the latest game, Shredder's Revenge, is proof of this return to glory.



By
Lyndsey Beatty

Conceived as a tribute game of sorts, Shredder's Revenge takes everything we found awesome about TMNT II: The Arcade Game and TMNT IV: Turtles in Time and ramps up the awesome level. The story continues Turtles in Time, which was a wise choice. The Turtles find Rocksteady and Bebop and their adjacent villain associates guarding Krang's exoskeleton head in various locations including Manhattan and Dimension X.

Apparently, Shredder is alive and kicking again after being toppled on top of the Statue of Liberty in 1992. In 2022, he wants revenge for the Turtles stopping this particular plot of mayhem of using Lady Liberty to take over the world. Because they're used to Shredder's foolishness — bear in mind this is 1986 cartoon Shredder, not comic book Shredder who wasn't a major villain — the Turtles and their friends

and family band together to stop the revenge plot once and for all.

Adding April O'Neil, Casey Jones and Splinter alongside the Turtles was a smart move. It's almost inconceivable now that we were never able to play as those three supporting characters in a Turtles beat-'em-up before, and it has to be allowed in future games. Once you get going with a character chosen, the level-up system is quick and easy to learn. And learn you will because there are so many ways to dispatch Foot Clan soldiers and other enemies for points that work within the system. It's almost too much to keep up with, especially in the heat of battle where knowing the correct way to dispatch a boss is important. Having some previous knowledge of Turtles in Time helps tremendously, and there are in-game instructions and a tutorial, but it's nigh overwhelming. Though, to be fair, I'd

**SCORE:
4.5 OUT 5**

rather have too much than too little. The game is giving me a feast and thankfully, the controls are easy to grasp and clean as you romp through 16 gorgeous levels.

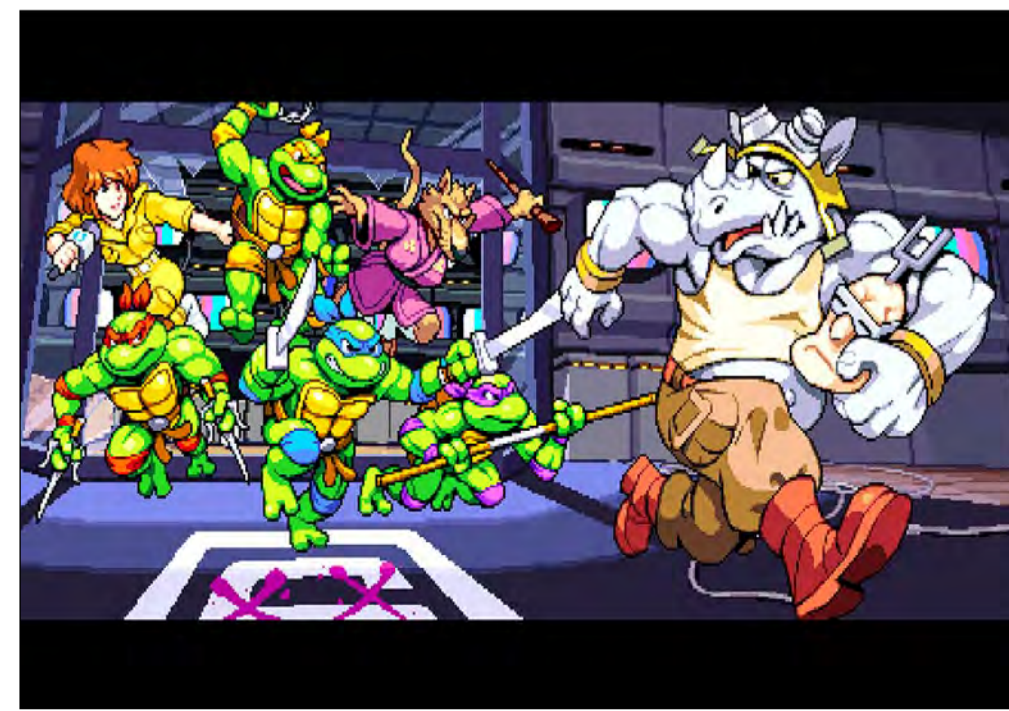
The game looks just as fantastic as well as it controls. The art immediately dips into the nostalgia of the original afterschool show and had me humming the super '80s theme song. This is the area where that tribute comes into play. If you're a fan of the show, you will love everything about how the game looks, feels, and sounds. Well, almost.

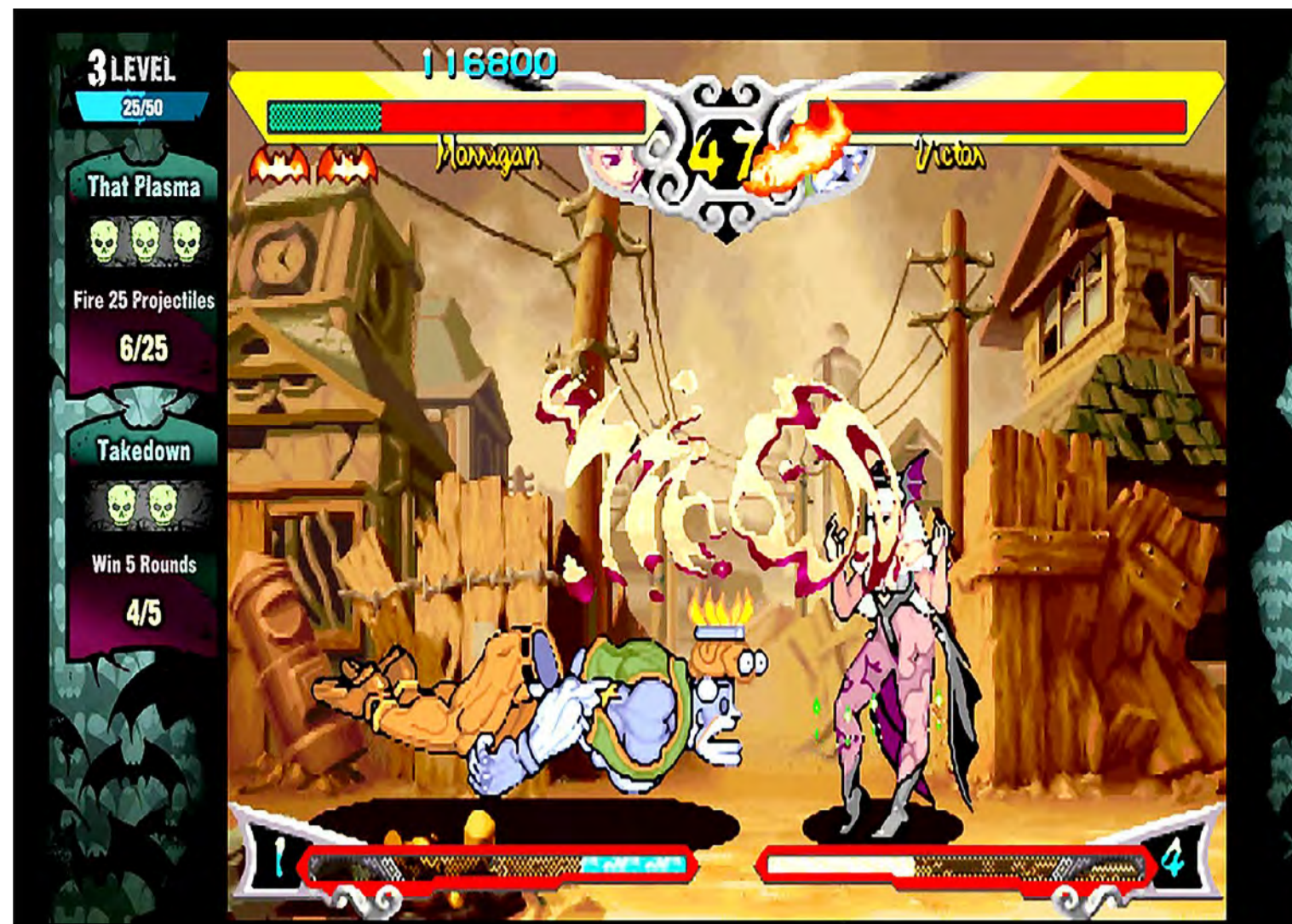
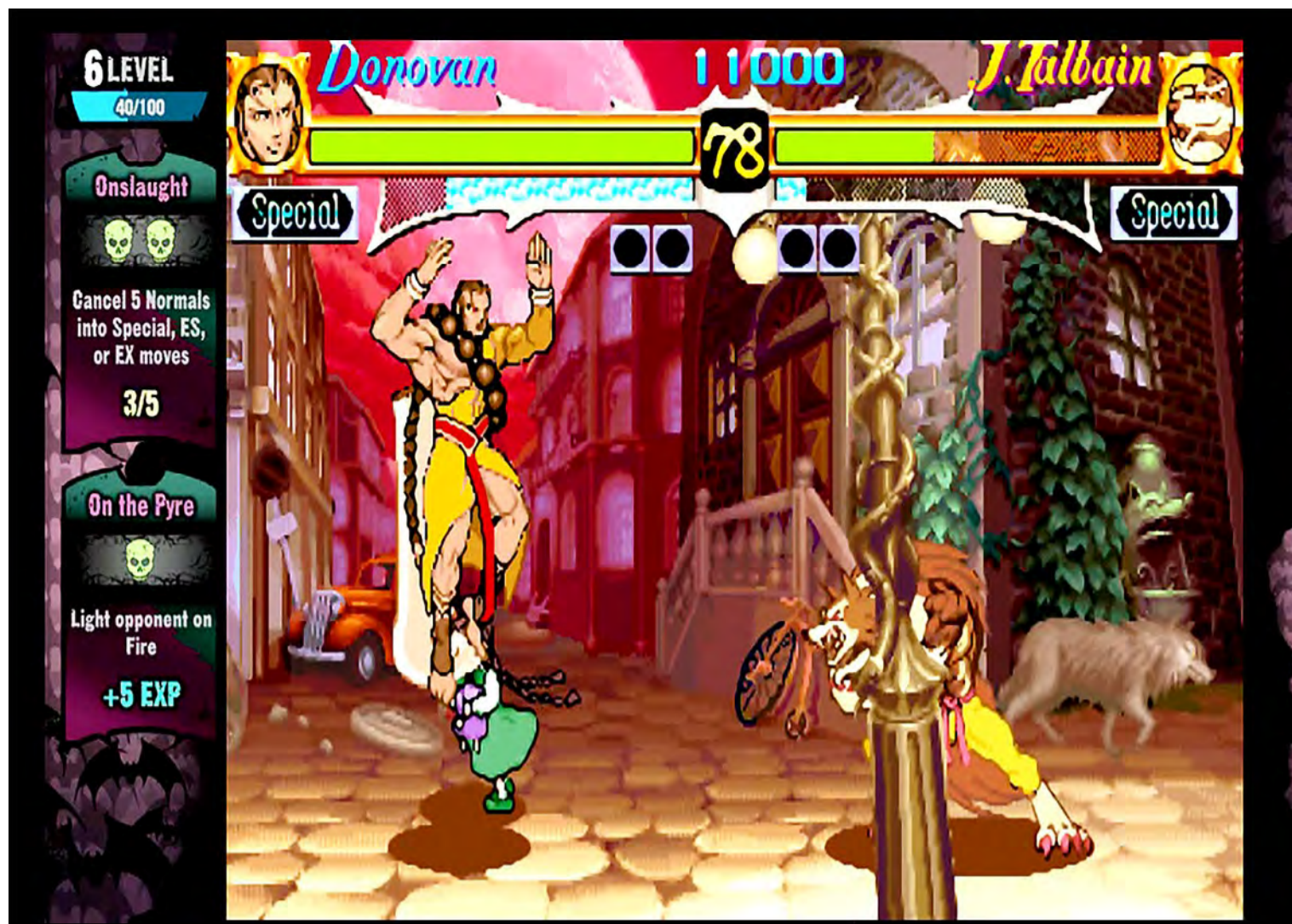
While the soundtrack is also fantastic, we can't not mention the atrocious remake of the theme song. Of all of the music chosen to remake, the theme show is the one track that you don't mess with. It is a reverent piece of pop culture history and is sacred to most Turtle fans, including myself. My 42-year-old adult self knows the words by heart and has it in digital form; it's on that level for me. So, hearing the theme butchered as it were in Shredder's Revenge had me taken aback. I was grievously wounded but the soul still burns in this old Turtle girl. Because the rest of the soundtrack is great '80s centric pop, tunes snatched directly from the early seasons of the

TV show, and beautiful voicework from the original animated cast, I can let the remake theme slide, but it better not be in the sequel.

My only other gripe here is the difficulty level. Even on the easiest difficulty, there were a lot of arcade rip-off tendencies going on. Tactics like enemy AI ganging up on characters with already low health, not-so-clean hits from off-screen enemies that you can't see and losing health rather quickly ran as rampant as those Stone Soldiers that Krang employed. Any levels involving vehicles and flying are impossibly hard and feel designed to be annoyingly frustrating. Boss fights, I'm fine with; they're supposed to be hard. But regular levels beyond the first stage were like this on easy difficulty, which is obnoxious. It was like trying to play TMNT II: The Arcade Game all over again and watching the cabinet steal my money out of my pocket. It feels unfair and set up to be against the player, which is unfortunate. Knowing that going into the experience now makes it a little easier to navigate but is a detraction.

Despite a try-hard collision system that keeps it from obtaining legendary status, Shredder's Revenge is a nice love letter to older TMNT fans who were around for the original craze. The quirks are noticeable, but Shredder's Revenge tries really hard in every other area, and it succeeds well. Let's call it a Cowabunga for now.





DARKSTALKERS RESURRECTION

Developer: Iron Galaxy Studios, Release: 2013

Darkstalkers combo a fun frightful fight

Duo of Vampire Hunter, Savior offered in package



By
Lyndsey Beatty

SCORE:
4.5 OUT 5

At this point, we know what Darkstalkers is and isn't. My worried brow of concern isn't with getting a new one but more with the re-releases of the trilogy of games and the two supplemental games released as upgrades. We know what to expect when it comes to Darkstalkers, but as occasional compilations are released, we have to take a critical look at whether it's worth your time and currency to engage in Capcom's release the Kraken in the form of remakes strategy.

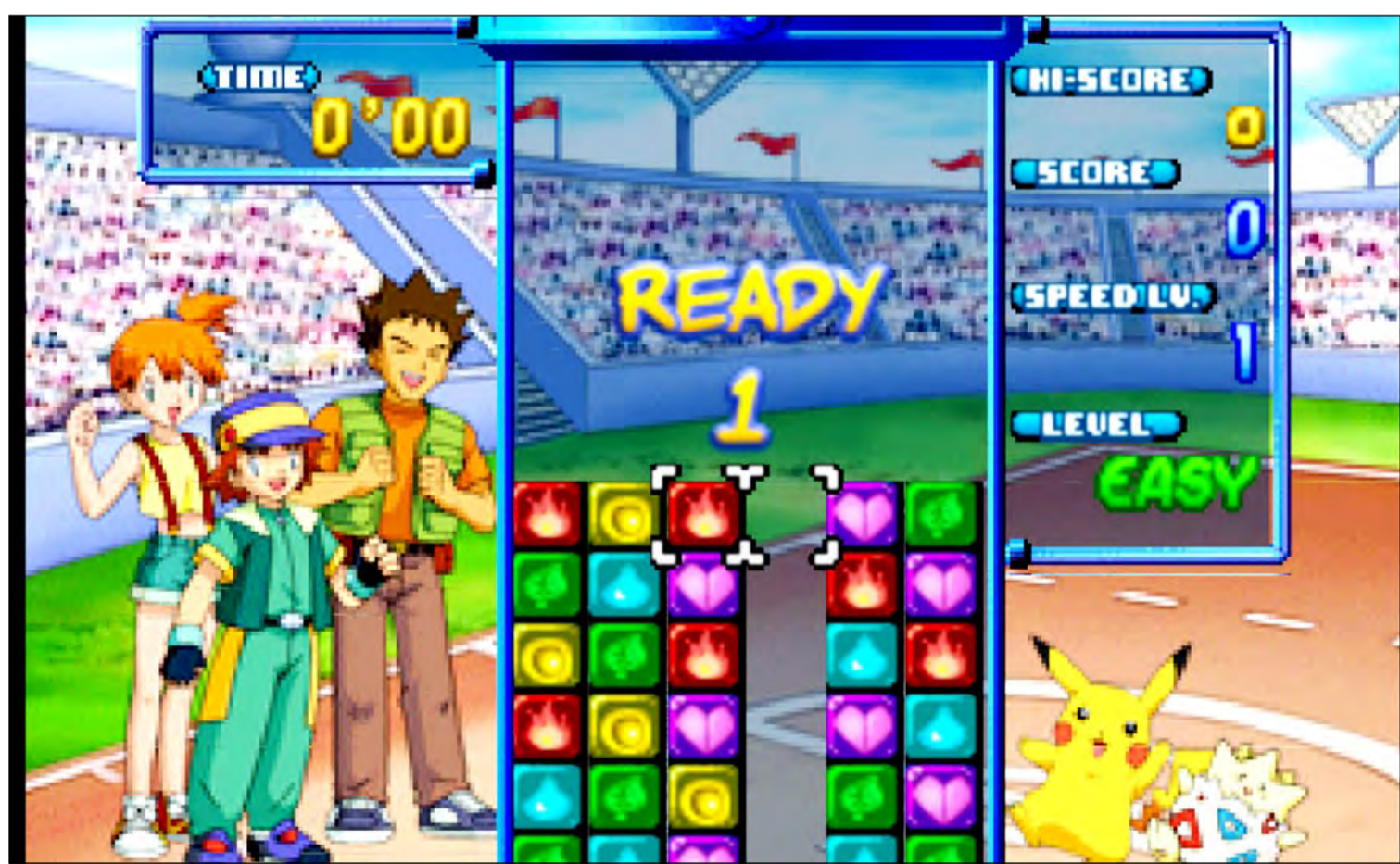
Darkstalkers Resurrection aims to do what Capcom's previous release in Marvel Origins did: Release two games in the series as starting points to get you to explore more. Resurrection consists of two games: Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge and Darkstalkers 3. Both games are included in their entirety as American arcade ports emulated on disc with extras added for the home release. Much as with Marvel Origins, there's online play and gallery unlocks from challenges added. Everything has been given a fresh coat of paint with newer art and visuals, which means a lot considering Darkstalkers 3 was released in 1997. All of this results in a nice-looking, souped-up package.

The gameplay is as clean as it ever was, and because it's emulated from the arcade ports, it's better than any other release that came before it with the exception of the PlayStation 2 Vampire Collection. Everything works the way it should in terms of combos and Darkstalkers' notoriously hard-to-do moveset. The moves land the way you

want and there's no lag. Noting that this is an acceptable port for high-level competition, Resurrection hits the right spot in terms of playability. If you wanted to know how Darkstalkers played in the arcade without trying to emulate it with MAME or Fightcade, Resurrection is your answer.

There really isn't anything wrong with Resurrection, either. The only annoying thing about the game is the fact that it didn't sell well. That isn't the game's fault, though. This is a technically sound port of two fantastic fighting games that play well and work well in what they're being asked to do: Be a representative of a long-dead fighting franchise to introduce newer folks to the Vampire/Darkstalkers scene. It's done its job admirably with strong mechanics and gorgeous updated visuals. You can't ask for more from a retro fighting game. This fantastic fighting fright fest deserves more respect for its ability to shine 25 years after its last release and should scare up a spot in your fighting game collection.





POKÉMON PUZZLE LEAGUE

Developer: Nintendo, Release: 2000

Pokémon Puzzle League catches the best traits of Tetris Attack

The zenith of Pokémon came rather startling and early, somewhere in the heady days of 2000. After all, by then, Pokémon was in the zeitgeist as a video game and cultural phenomenon. You could stick your arms out in any direction and hit Pokémon products. So, it goes then, that the video game sphere received its share of the wealth after the initial fervor wound down. At this point, however, the Nintendo 64 was on its last legs and received a few games bearing the Pocket Monster license. Out of that smoke arose Pokémon Puzzle League.

Pokémon Puzzle League isn't a terrible use of the license. Sure, it's gratuitous Pokémon everywhere, but it's not a bad puzzling game in general. The premise is simple: Take what you already know about Tetris Attack and slap Pokémon on it. That's all Pokémon Puzzle League is, and since Tetris Attack isn't terrible either, Puzzle League benefits from a solid foundation. The mechanics remain the same except there's Pokémon involved, and the Pokémon don't really affect anything beyond aesthetics.

Pokémon Puzzle League feels like a Tetris Attack clone ought to feel. The puzzling mechanics are tight and quick movement is clean and precise, even with the wonky N64 controller. This is one of the first Tetris Attack clones produced, but it carries on the tradition of tight, good puzzling gameplay well.

There is a bounty of modes to play, including standard 2D and 3D line clearing, a 1P stadium mode and versus. The variety makes for a good rollicking time and fills up playtime with quality offerings. And, I'd be remiss if I didn't say something about the difficulty level. If you're not prepared and don't understand the mechanics of Tetris Attack, you will get wrecked even on the easy level. The AI does not play around and while it's part of the



SCORE:
4 OUT 5

voicework and the anime artstyle, so hopefully you like the anime enough that you don't mind that it's based on the Pokémon Original Series generations.

The soundtrack is appropriately Pokémon, which means the music is good. There are a few bangers on the soundtrack that make it a must download, including most of the Team Rocket themes, Lorelei's theme, and Professor Oak's theme. Despite this being cartridge-based, Puzzle League doesn't skimp on the sound quality.

Pokémon Puzzle League is a joy to learn and get serious about even if you remotely like Tetris Attack. It's got the Pokémon aesthetic from the successful anime and handheld games, a nice Pokémon-centric soundtrack and a fun, challenging puzzle mechanic that's begging to be explored. If you love Pokémon and puzzle games, cast your Master ball out to catch this one.

charm of Puzzle League, it can be daunting to have to replay levels multiple times on Normal or even Easy difficulty level because the AI caught a lucky break.

But what you came here for, let's be honest, is the Pokémon presentation. Thankfully, this is the draw. It's a buffet of Pokémon-dom, with all of the anime favorite characters thrown in as well as the main gym leaders and Elite Four from the games at higher difficulty levels. The Pokémon represented here are all using the 4Kids



DEMON'S CREST

Developer: Capcom, Release: 1993

Firebrand reigns supreme in ghoulish, ghostly, fiendish romp

Capcom is known for its globally renowned roster of video game characters. From Mega Man to Nemesis, these characters have cemented their legacy. Firebrand, the red demon of death that is on that renowned roster, made his bones and shows up to show out in Capcom's *Demon's Crest* (no, not the devil's tooth-paste).

In *Demon's Crest*, you take the role of the fire-breathing, head-butting hero Firebrand through six stages as he tries to recover magical crests, which are artifacts with control of the elements and time. According to *Demon's Crest* legend, when these items fell into the demon world, a civil war erupted with Firebrand as the victor claiming the crests of Earth, Fire, Wind, Water and Time. Firebrand fought another demon named Somulo, who held the crest of Heaven, and secured a victory over the rival demon. However, another demon named Phalanx attacked Firebrand while he had low health, taking possession of all the crests. This allowed Phalanx to summon another crest that controls infinity. While Firebrand recovered, he was imprisoned in an arena guarded by the revived Somulo. After defeating Somulo, Firebrand begins his quest for vengeance and recovery of his well-earned spoils of war.

Gameplay is a combination of platforming and Japanese RPGs mixed with elements from *Castlevania* and *Metroid*. Firebrand has the usual platforming moves such as running, and jumping, but can climb walls, temporarily float, and launch projectile attacks with the help of the Fire crest. Firebrand can pick up various powerups from fallen enemies to increase health and attacks in addition to collecting coins to purchase for various items found in shops throughout the demon realm. I also love that Firebrand has some allies: Phorapa, a demon who sells potions with various abilities; Malwous, a demon that tells Firebrand the secrets of talismans found from the human realm; and, Morack, who sells magic spells to



**SCORE:
3 OUT 5**

boost Firebrand's arsenal.

The controls are simple, yet require some nuance to remember all of Firebrand's abilities. The fact that Capcom decided to take a fresh approach on the platforming instead of making another *Ghosts n' Ghosts* was a wise choice to make here. The music fits the theme of each stage and maintains the theme of the stage well. And much like the music, the graphics also won me over for the colors and artistry, especially when played on a modern television.

While I love most parts of *Demon's Crest*, there are some not-so-good nitpicks to make. Certain stages where perfect timing is needed to land on float-

ing platforms across killer obstacles are annoying. The precision isn't there and it's frustrating to attempt it multiple times. Another strike comes when you play the bonus game. You must time your head-butting attack against demon skulls in a Whack-a-Mole-style game with a time limit. Considering that if you lose, you also lose money, this is a problem with the in-game economy. It makes you not want to play the mini-game at all. I also had issues with the Mode 7 view in *Demon's Crest*. Although awesome most of the time you use it in navigating the demon realm, it weirdly affects your vision if you fly around for a prolonged time.

Demon's Crest comes from Capcom's attempt to do something new and exciting. Ushering in a new era of platforming and hop 'n bop action was Capcom's agenda and it paid off. In the case of *Demon's Crest*, they understood the assignment and passed.



Welcome
to

RETRO GAME CORNER

GOODS AND MONSTERS

The Vampire fighting game franchise is chock full of interesting characters and ideas. And, alongside the awesome character designs, the most striking elements are the background stories of the memorable roster. These are our favorite biographies that stick out among the colorful and monstrous cast of characters.



VICTOR

Character type: Frankenstein's Monster
Origin: Victor von Gerdenheim is the ultimate creation of Dr. Victor von Gerdenheim, a scientist who experimented with the boundaries between life and death. Gerdenheim wanted to achieve creation of a human life, and Victor was the result of many years of research and work. While he was successful, Victor awoke after the professor died. The monster then worked to secure a means to revive the professor and his sister, Emily, an earlier prototype.

Why we love him: This is Frankenstein's Monster from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein in video game form. He's kindhearted and a tragic creature who does good. We do love Shelley's work and have read the book many times. It's a fascinating horror icon.



MORRIGAN

Character type: Succubus
Origin: Morrigan Aensland is an extremely powerful succubus who was adopted into Makai ruler Belial Aensland's high noble family. When she was young, Belial locked some of her power away so that Morrigan would grow into using it instead of destroying herself. This power would later gain sentience and become another separate being named Liliith, thanks to Jedah. Morrigan ultimately becomes head of the Aensland family and reunites with Liliith.

Why we love her: Morrigan is the iconic face of Vampire. Even if you've never played the franchise, you're more than likely familiar with the character. She's cool and fun to play. Also, succubae are extremely cool mythological creatures.



JEDAH

Character type: Blood god demon
Origin: Jedah Dohma is a high noble in Makai who decided to dominate his surroundings through his concern over the state of the demon realm. As an S-class demon, he attempted to absorb all of the power of the gate of Makai but died in the process. Revived a hundred years later, Jedah decided that all souls needed cleansing, so he began his process of creating the Majigen. The Majigen would be a dimension where Jedah ruled and all souls would be united to serve him.

Why we love him: It's obvious that Jedah is one of the coolest boss designs ever, and he's the best villain that Capcom has ever created. His theme is even one of the best from Capcom's outstanding repertoire of video game tracks.



LEI-LEI/HSEIN-KO

Character type: Chinese vampire
Origin: Fraternal twin sisters Lei-Lei and Lin-Lin were born into a family that practiced Senjutsushi, who fought Darkstalkers in their time. The night the girls had their coming-of-age ceremony, their village was attacked by Darkstalkers, their master was killed, and their mother sacrificed herself. Because of this, their mother's soul was trapped in darkness. Lei-Lei uses a forbidden technique, Igyo Tenshin, to transform into a jiangshi to release their mother's soul. Lin-Lin transforms into a paper ward to help her sister control the darkness inside of her.

Why we love her: Lei-Lei's character design is extremely unique and cool. Her design is based on real descriptions of the jiangshi, which were said to exist in China in the Qing dynasty. Lei-Lei is fun to play and is cute, especially against some of the other character designs in the game.



DEE

Character: Vampire
Origin: Dee is a what-if scenario if Donovan succumbed to his darker vampire side. Donovan is a dhampir who struggles to control his vampire nature. Dee is if Donovan's ending in Vampire Hunter is canon.

Why we love him: Dee was a creation for Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection in 2005. Though he's just Donovan's head plastered on Demitri's body, the character is all of the best things about both characters. Also, we've always wanted some resolution to Donovan's tragic story. And his stage theme is one of the best remixes Capcom has ever done.



BB HOOD

Character type: Vampire hunter
Origin: Bulleeta serves as a high-level Darkstalker hunter. She works with other hunters to take on Darkstalkers for bounty payments, not caring about who lives or dies in the process. She is drawn to the Majigen solely through greed, because after all, there's no better place than a demon dimension to practice your skill in killing demons.

Why we love her: The fact that she appears to be a lovely Little Red Riding Hood knockoff is fun. Considering that she is, in fact, the wolf in sheep's clothing makes her one of the best characters in the series.



ZABEL ZAROCK/ LORD RAPTOR

Character type: Zombie
Origin: The Australian rocker had a fascination with the occult hidden in plain sight through his music. Eventually, the frightening truth was revealed. Lord Raptor performed a song, titled Sacrifice, at what was his last concert and killed himself and 100 of his fans during the live performance. After his death, he was resurrected as a zombie and transported to Makai to serve the god for whom he performed the cursed song lyrics.

Why we love him: The serial killer rocker not only killed himself but also 100 fans at a live concert. His character design and his origin are never not wild.



BISHAMON

Character type: Demon-cursed samurai
Origin: Bishamon found a cursed sword and armor in an antique shop while traveling with wife. The sword made him black out and kill to satisfy its bloodlust. Hoping to be rid of the sword and armor, Bishamon and his wife joined monks to find peace. But the sword wouldn't let go and sucked him back into a cycle of violence and death.

Why we love him: Our love for samurai is well known. Bishamon caught our attention early in the franchise's life and because of that love for samurai — and the giant gaping hole in the armor's center — we can't let him go or look away.

SONG SPOTLIGHT

By Lyndsey Beatty



Don't forget to download our DDR glossary of terms!



Artist: Tenth Planet
Difficulty: 3/6/8
Chosen difficulty: Heavy
BPM: 138

Ghosts is a fun track to play. There are a lot of specific 1/4th-1/8th note-triplets that repeat throughout the song on beat if you're tackling the Heavy stepchart. It's also a good trance song that sticks with you because of the memorable lyrics and melody. It's a favorite around GI because of its unique stepchart that makes a lot of sense. We recommend speeding it up to make the chart easier to read and handle the triplets. Be prepared to be extra tired once you're finished with Ghosts.

Suggested Speed Mod: x2



Artist: Terra
Difficulty: 3/6/8 (SuperNova) and 3/6/7 (DDR PS3)
Chosen difficulty: Heavy
BPM: 171

You'd think Mugen would be fun to play because it's a Terra/Naoki-Jun song. You'd be wrong. No matter how gorgeous it sounds, it's not a good time song. Everything about the song seems off, as if the stepchart does not go with the song track at all. What should have been a straightforward run turns into an unexpected set of triplets or random 1/8th-note placement that doesn't make sense. We recommend speeding it up to space out the chart so that it's easier to handle, and also to use multiple playthroughs so that you can learn the weird chart. This is one of the few instances where we do not suggest learning the song first. It won't do any good because it doesn't match well.

Suggested Speed Mod: x2



Artist: Tatsh
Difficulty: 5/7/9/10
Chosen difficulty: Heavy
BPM: 170

One of our favorite songs that requires a lot of sight reading is Xepher. It's a fast-paced track once sped up and provides a lot of challenge with twisty runs and a great stepchart. The stepchart overall is the star here as well as the melody. Both are cool and fun to learn, and once you get used to spacing out the steps and comfortable speed, you'll find that it's a fun song to step to. It's one of the best to come out of the SuperNova era, and it's one we consistently do well with because we took the time to learn the song. Some of the best parts are the long runs and the jackhammers at the end of the song. Conserve your energy for the runs and you should be OK.

Suggested Speed Mod: x2

dance dance revolution spotlight

1st mix	2nd mix
3rd mix	4th mix
5th mix	6th mix
7th mix	Extreme
SuperNova	
SuperNova 2	

LIGHT
楽 STANDARD
音
HEAVY
激 CHALLENGE
鬼

UPCOMING SONGS

- STOMP TO MY BEAT
- BYE BYE BABY BALLOON
- SEDUCTION



Vampire: The Night Warriors (1994)

Starting out of the gate

This is the game that started it all. Built as an evolution to Super Street Fighter II Turbo, Vampire features air blocking, crouch walking, chain combos and super combos. The super combo meter, once filled, constantly drains until empty and refilled. And, individual rounds are present.

An all-star cast

The earliest version of the franchise roster focuses on different types of monsters and horror icons. The final roster includes eight playable characters (Aulbath/Rikuo, Gallon/Jon Talbain, Zabel Zarock/Lord Raptor, Morrigan, Demitri, Bishamon, Felicia, and Victor) and two non-playable boss characters (Pyron and Huitzil/Phobos).



Vampire Hunter: Darkstalkers' Revenge (1996)

New to the sequel

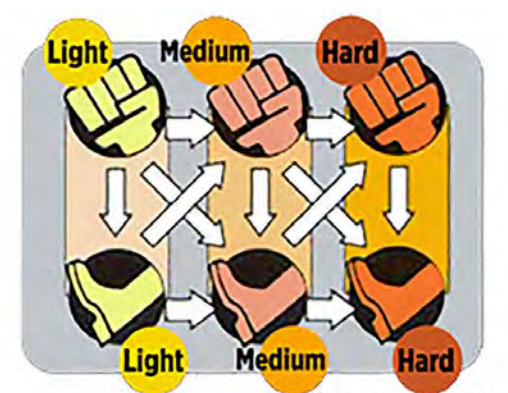
The sequel game is confirmed to be a retelling of the first game story-wise. Features-wise, Vampire Hunter has stockable super combo reserves, ES Specials (extended versions of special moves), EX Specials (super moves), a round system, and choices between Normal mode or Auto blocking mode.

Two newcomers

Donovan, a dhampir, and Lei-Lei, a Jiangshi, join the cast of characters. They are the titular vampire hunters.

Chain-gang

Chain combos are important in Vampire Hunter and became widely used in later fighting games. Chain combos start with Light Punch or Light Kick and move up in strength as hits are strung together.



Source: Mizuumi Wiki



Vampire Savior: The Lord of Vampire (1997)

Final round

Vampire Savior is the last truly new game in the series. Instead of rounds, the game features the Damage Gauge System. Similar in concept to Killer Instinct, the characters are downed with life markers instead of using rounds.

New concepts

The biggest introduction in Vampire Savior is the Dark Force mode, where each character gains things such as special moves, flight, shields or doppelgangers to fight alongside them in a timed environment. Damage dealt while in Dark Force mode is not recoverable as normal damage is in the course of normal play.

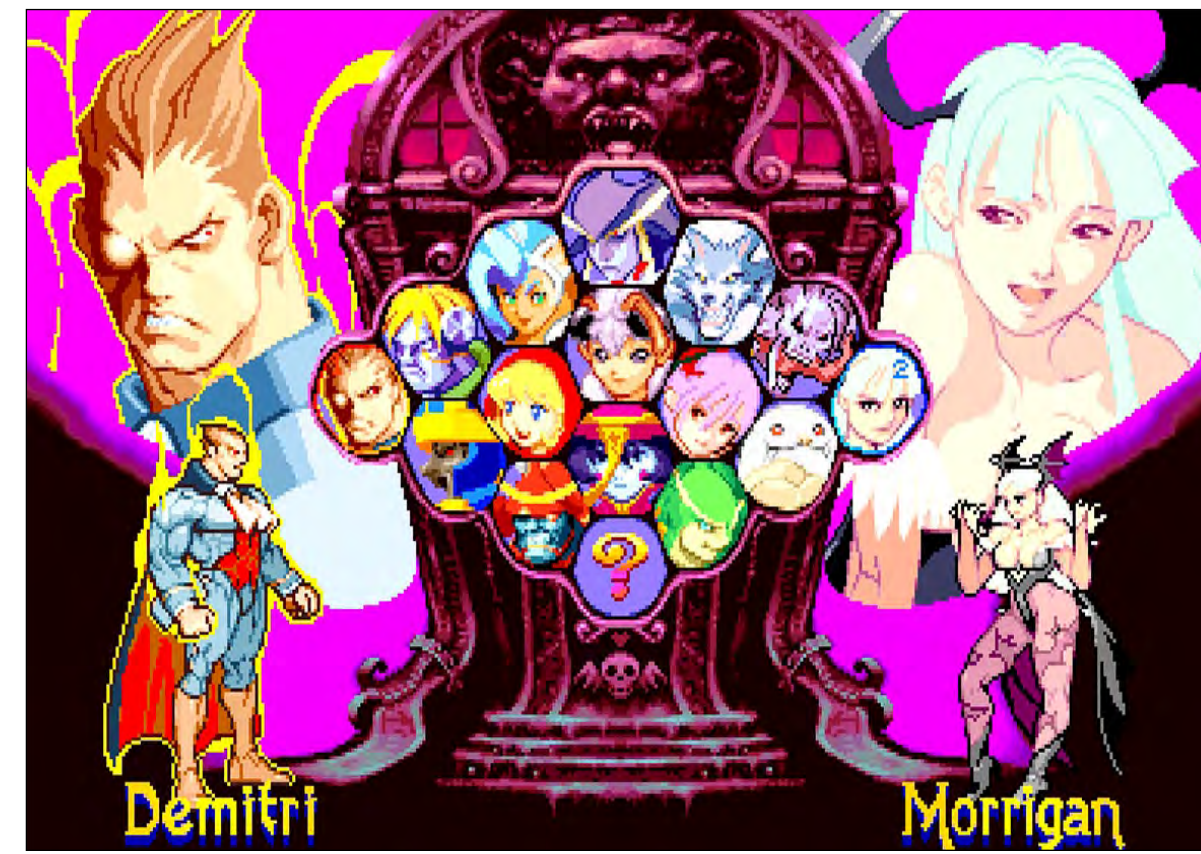
Roster changes galore

Vampire Savior overall saw four new characters added: B.B. Hood, O-Bee, Lilith and Jedah. The arcade versions eliminate Donovan, Pyron and Huitzil/Phobos, but most console ports of the game added them back to the roster. There were further changes in the sequel games Vampire Savior 2 and Vampire Hunter 2.



What's the best version?

Vampire Savior is considered the definitive version of franchise and is the most played in modern fighting game tournaments. Hunter 2 and Savior 2 are not considered definitive because of massive changes to the game engine. The best ports of Vampire Savior are the CPS2 board for arcade, Darkstalkers Resurrection for PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 and the version found in Vampire: Darkstalkers Collection for PlayStation 2.



MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

LYNDSEY BEATTY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Welcome to a small tournament called Mortal Kombat ...

Hello all, I'm a longtime Mortal Kombat enthusiast who dived headlong into the world of MK Mobile in 2018. This new section delves into the intricacies of character card collection, fusions and team creation for towers.

Look for information on the basics to get you started and how to conquer the 100-level Shao Kahn's Tower to help you when you're ready to take on the challenging themed towers.



MK MOBILE STATISTICS

- **Number of cards owned:** 162
- **Total number of cards (as of press time):** 165
- **Percentage owned:** 98.1%

Cards missing (as of press time)

- MK11 Nightwolf
- Classic Movie Sonya Blade
- Edenian Blood Rain

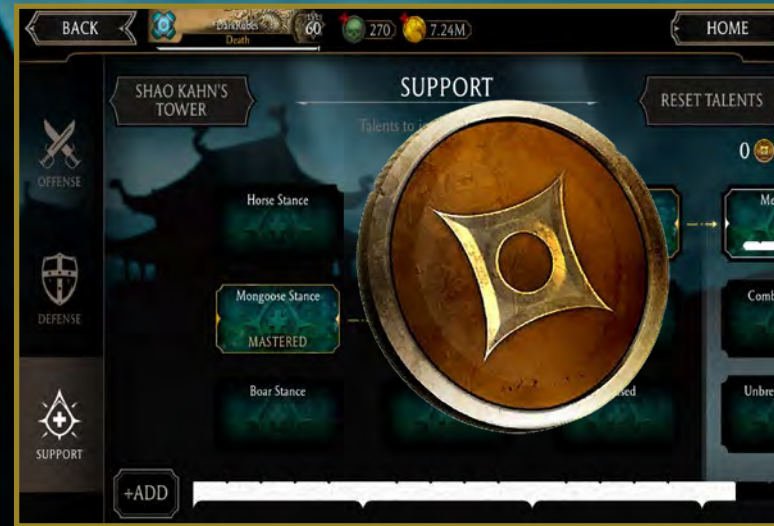


Shao Kahn's Tower

A challenging 100-story tower that rewards Koins, Souls, Spirit Fragments and Talent Tree Points. Sometimes with unique conditions to overcome, the matches will test your strategy skills and ability to form teams suited to the challenge.

Matches are in increments of three before a refresh is needed to continue. We also will approach this Tower as the warmup to the various Normal and Fatal towers that appear to get you prepped for the real thing.

Individual tower match guides, team formation and strategy will be discussed.



Talent Tree Guide

The ultimate helper in keeping your teams on top is the Talent Tree. Skills will help you stay alive longer, boost your team's damage output or take less damage against the myriad conditions thrown at you in various modes. Talent Tree points are earned in Shao Kahn's Tower and can help change the tide of battle. The talents you unlock give bonuses to your entire account.

We will break down the best choices in the three tree branches and help you chart a path to a well-balanced fighting squad for nearly any situation.



Character Spotlight

Who you have fighting on your side is important, and character analysis helps you stay victorious in Mortal Kombat Mobile.

We're going to look at all available characters, their strengths and weaknesses with rankings for each. We will also spotlight team synergy; who you work with can determine if you're working at all.

MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

KHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

THIS ISSUE:

- Covert Ops Cassie Cage
- Circle of Shadow Liu Kang
- Monk



Covert Ops Cassie Cage
Class: Gold
Tier: 3

Covert Ops Cassie Cage has one thing going for her: A 25 percent chance of unblockable attacks for Spec Ops teammates. Her gimmick is about team synergy so placing her with the right Spec Ops folks and other stackable gear will make fights go faster with increased hits for potentially more damage. Link her up with the right people and this Gold standby can take you far.



Circle of Shadow Liu Kang
Class: Diamond
Tier: 4

Circle of Shadow Liu Kang is a beast once he's powered up. His passive — Overwhelming Darkness — puts him close to the top echelon simply because it causes Stun immediately at the beginning of the match. He's also especially dangerous in Faction Wars because of his Lethal Blow buff that can help restore health. Overall, he's another version of the Chosen One, which means he's a force to be reckoned with and a highly prized character to build around.



Monk
Class: Bronze
Tier: 2

The Monk is useful in the Bronze class when you need a good card as a sacrificial lamb. His passive, which provides a bar of Power to his teammates upon death, is helpful if you have other cards that thrive on Specials. If the other cards can carry the load, let the Monk tank to get the bar. Otherwise, use him only when needed and sparingly at that. There are far more useful Bronze class cards available.



TIER RANKINGS

Tier 1: Garbage tier. This tier is for cards that don't do a lot of damage or contribute with their passives, even with add-ons from Shao Kahn's Tower or gear. Use these only if you absolutely are required. These mostly consist of the bronze and silver characters, except for Kenshi Prime.

Tier 2: Slight useful. Their passives either contribute or a special move is useful in service of another card. They can be made to be somewhat useful with gear and add-ons and higher fusions, but they struggle to be useful even with

the best gear.

Tier 3: A solid mid-level card. These cards are useful in passives and special moves. They can hold their own on point and win matches.

Tier 4: An above-average card. These are highly useful and can be used in any of the Challenge Towers (Shirai Ryu, Lin Kuei, etc.) and are more than capable of holding down a roster spot and surviving against high-level cards if their close in level. These cards have

excellent special moves and do a lot of damage quickly.

Tier 5: The top echelon of cards. These cards are the best in the game and their special moves and passives have game-breaking potential. They are the cards that you buy packs for and try to build up for Challenge Towers and will potentially make it to the 170 and higher levels of a tower at even a low fusion. They are most diamonds but there are a few gold cards in the mix.

Credit: Murdoink @ Mortal Kombat Warehouse for all background and logo art and renders/www.mortalkombatwarehouse.com

SHAO KAHN'S TOWER GUIDE

THIS ISSUE:

- Match 22: None
- Match 23: Empowered
- Match 24: None



Match 22: Sub-Zero (Prime), Level 42/Sonya Blade (Prime), Level 42/Kano (Prime), Level 42

Conditions: None

This match is a pushover, despite all of your opponents being Level VI fusion. They aren't too dangerous regardless of which run you're on, and if you use higher Gold or Diamond fusions on the second run and later, it should be easy. There are no conditions to distract from the main mission of finishing the match as quickly as possible.

First tower run: Anyone
Second tower run: Anyone



Match 23: Johnny Cage (Prime), Level 44/Kung Jin (Prime), Level 44/Cassie Cage (Prime), Level 44

Conditions: Empowered

This match isn't hard as the AI has only improved by two levels with no difference in fusions. The only issue is the match condition, Empowered, which grants the AI more starting power. You could use a Power Drain character, but it's much faster to just knock out everyone with your most powerful attacks.

First tower run: Anyone
Second tower run: Anyone



Match 24: Reptile (Prime), Level 46/D'Vorah (Prime), Level 46/Sonya Blade (Prime), Level 46

Conditions: None

This fight is much like Match 22. There are no conditions, and no one is at a level where they could be considered dangerous. Use your strongest fighters and plow through to get to the next match in the tower.

First tower run: Anyone
Second tower run: Anyone



MORTAL KOMBAT MOBILE



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TALENT TREE GUIDE

THIS ISSUE:

- Offense talent 01

OFFENSE

Talents to improve your attacking.

ALLOCATION	
Offense	0
Defense	65
Support	35

MANAGE

- Mantis Stance
- Lion Stance
- Tiger Stance

+ADD

ADD MORE TALENT POINTS TO ADVANCE TO THE NEXT TIER

It is highly recommended to focus on the Support and Defense tiers of the Talent Tree before using any skills in the Offense tier. This is because the Support and Defense tiers can and will save your team before any of the Offense skills will at any given time. Offense has its place but nothing in the tiers will ever come close to the same usefulness as say Shinnok's Teachings or Revenant. Offense is still useful because not everyone plays the same way, and neither should you.



Offense Tier 1

Mantis Stance: This skill is the best choice as it increases damage of blocked attacks by 10 percent if mastered. Since the AI tends to block a lot more now and getting unblockable attacks are relatively hard even with block-breaking gear, it's the one to go for. Increasing basic damage boost or ignoring toughness are relatively poorer choices.



WORKING WITH TALENT POINTS

Courtesy of TestYourMight.com

Earning Talent Points

There is only one source of earning talent points: SHAO KAHN'S TOWER. Before you play the tower for the first time, you are given two talent points to start. The tower has 100 battles with increasing difficulty, and you are rewarded one talent point for winning each battle.

However, you are limited to playing three matches each day by default. However, you can play more than three matches by spending 50 souls to refresh the limit, and this can be done twice in a 24-hour period, which increases your limit to nine matches a day if you decide to spend souls to progress at a much faster rate.

Investing Talent Points

On completing Shao Kahn's Tower, you are rewarded with a total of 102 talent points which you can spend any way you like. There are two areas of the talent tree in each category where talent points can be invested, unlocking skill tiers and buying skills and their upgrades.

There are seven skill tiers in each category and there are a total of 20 skills to choose from. The first six tiers have three skills each to choose from and the seventh tier has two skills. The first tier is unlocked by default, and you are allowed to invest in one of the three available skills. To unlock the subsequent tiers, you are required to buy a skill in the current tier that is accessible to you and then spend five Talent Points. This is done by clicking the Add button at the bottom left of the tree. You are given a choice of spending one, three or five Talent Points towards unlocking the next tier. Selecting the five-point option will automatically unlock the next tier.

Additionally, skills can also be upgraded as well to increase the effect beyond what the skill provides at default. There are five upgrade levels and each upgrade costs one Talent Point, so a skill costs five Talent Points to master. To have a 100 percent complete tree in a category, you have to buy and master seven skills and also unlock six tiers in the process. This will cost a total of 65 Talent Points. To have 100 percent completion in all three categories, the cost is 195 Talent Points.

Choosing your skills and upgrades

This is the most crucial part of the whole talent tree system, and it requires careful planning of knowing what skills to invest in. This requires a thorough understanding of your own play style, the kind of characters you use and knowing which skills from the list will bring the most benefit to the majority of the cards you use more often in Faction Wars.

You cannot purchase more than one skill in a tier per category at a given time, so you are only allowed to choose seven out of the 20 skills in a category. The fact that you only have 102 Talent Points to spend means that it is possible to master seven skills only in one of the three categories.

After having a look at all of the available skills across all three categories, investing of Talent Points more on the DEFENSE and SUPPORT categories is highly recommended.



Nightmare come true: Elm Street game goes down in flames

What happens when a now-defunct gaming company partners with a former up-and-coming gaming developer to create a game based on one of the most well-known horror movie characters of all time? I'll tell you: A complete AND absolute Dumpster fire known as A Nightmare on Elm Street.

Published by LJN and developed by Rare, Nightmare on Elm Street has you going one-on-one with Wes Craven's great one Freddy Krueger, known for terrorizing and murdering teenagers in their dreams for a final showdown.

The game is a side-scroller that supposedly allows you to search various locations to find Mr. Krueger's bones and burn them in the furnace at Elm Street High. There are some areas that require a key to go inside and gather the bones before you fight him in various forms as an end boss, which makes this an aggravating slog through levels filled with unnecessary armies of enemies.

I played this game and within the first five minutes, I was ready to remove this garbage from my



NES, take a hammer and bash it to pieces. The controls are simple but are near useless in fighting off other low-level enemies. Another

frustration is that Freddy will come mid-level to attack you with unfair advantages such as underground hands that cut your life energy. After I finally learned Freddy's attacks and won, I turned off my NES questioning how LJN got licensed by NOA to make games. The game is sloppy, unnecessarily hard, and has all the makings of a tie-in cash grab based on a popular property that should have stayed unmade.

Folks, do yourself a favor and

do not play this game. If you have the original cartridge, research its collector value on Ebay or add it to your horror movie collection. Shame on you, LJN and Rare, for this rip-off. I join the legion of gamers who will riot against gaming companies taking hard-earned coins and producing garbage like this.

Forget you, LJN and Rare.

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On tap this issue:

STRIP TALK
Editor Lyndsey Beatty talks Superman

PROPERTY REVIEW
Darkstalkers OVA measures up to the fight series

MARVEL HIGHLIGHT
Everything you wanted to know about Ghost Rider

OTAKU CORNER
Brandon Beatty digs deep on High School of the Dead

ANIME LOUNGE
Afro Samurai sequel not quite up to par

TOP 5
Our favorite X-Men villains unite

View this content at www.gaminginsurrection.com/TheStrip

PROPERTY REVIEW

Night Warriors: Darkstalkers' Revenge

Madhouse Studios, 1997-1998



Darkstalkers OVA scares up thrills

Forget for a moment that you know anything about the Vampire series from Capcom. Yes, forget about the games and the god-awful USA Network animated series. You're learning, for the first time, about the monsters and darkness that is Capcom's side fighting game franchise, and you love anime, as well. Your introduction is this OVA of four episodes. Congratulations, you've gotten the best there is to offer in the animated series category that is Vampire/Darkstalkers. It's time to get you educated.

Darkstalkers' Revenge takes everything you could possibly love about the fighting game series and makes it digestible in anime form. The titular Darkstalkers are all here from the first and second game: Morrigan and Demitri are leading the charge as the faces of the franchise. Other favorites such as Felicia, Jon Talbain and Lord Raptor are here, too. You even get Donovan and Hsein-Ko in major roles. And that's part of the joy of the story: You're getting the full Darkstalkers experience without having to play the games. Sure, it's preferable that you do play the series enough to know who's who and what their motivation is, but it's not necessary and this OVA does a great job of informing.

This isn't necessarily your typical shonen anime, though. Demitri is an anti-hero here as he is in the games and Morrigan is as well. They fight each other for supremacy, however, and it's only after the overall big bad Pyron is introduced that they stop for a moment to assess whether to get involved. Along the way, all of the other Darkstalkers are introduced and given some type of screen time,

either as main characters or as cameos. The story is good as it follows the games very well, making more sense of the plot of the games than those properties actually do. The only gripe is that the ending is rushed and makes zero sense in the grand scheme of things. The ending is the only time where things jump off the rails as far as faithfulness to the games is concerned. The animation is smooth and fluid, the voice work is fantastic in the sub and mostly good in the dub, and the overall package holds up for a critiqued release 25 years later.

As a lover of all things Vampire/Darkstalkers — it should be obvious in this issue by now — we can highly recommend this OVA as a gateway to the drug that is the fright fight fest. It's got fast-paced action, recognizable characters and is an excellent adaptation to a good series. Sharpen your fangs, this is only the beginning if you're ready to delve into the world of myths and monsters of the dark.

Like the games?: 9
Voice work: 10
Animation: 10

Total score: 29 out of 30 or 9.6

HOW WE GRADE

We score the properties in three categories: Casting (or voice acting in cases of animated), plot and similarities to its source material. Each category receives points out of the maximum of 10 per category and 30 overall. The percentage is the final score.



Lyndsey Beatty
STRIP TALK

No equal for Cavill as Supes

Old folks usually say you don't miss someone until they're gone. Henry Cavill hasn't been Superman for a number of years and was ousted from the role approximately five minutes ago and I miss him.

You know, if there were a viable alternative, I could stomach this ridiculous decision. Cavill stepped into the role after the massive disappointment of Brandon Routh, and we let it slide because we were already familiar with Cavill and what he could bring to the table. Sure, he was Mr. Charles Brandon in the Tudors on Showtime and Edmund Dantes' son in *The Count of Monte Cristo*, but there was something there, even if he's British. Yes, I admit I can now wrap my head around a British Superman. But he had something that Routh did not: Charisma. Cavill brings a certain something to the role that was all but shaped by the venerable late Christopher Reeve, and it wasn't hard to see that Cavill loved the work and wanted to do the memory of Reeve right without also pretending to be him. Routh tried and failed to do this, and it was a sad sight to witness.

So, forgive me if I'm a little bitter about the foolishness that James Gunn and Peter What's His Name are peddling by getting rid of Cavill. It seems petty, ignorant, and simpleminded in execution and dumb at the highest level of thought. Why get rid of something and someone who worked? Cavill is a fan of the comics, knows the material and gives everything in the role every time he's sucked into a nonsensical story that needs remakes to straighten out — see *Justice League*. He's donned the tights and cape with aplomb, but his considerable talents have been wasted and now thrown out with baby and the bath water. Call me a cynic, but I don't have the time or attention for whatever Gunn and Peter What's His Name are cooking, selling, crafting, or scheming. I want no parts of whoever they've got stepping into the role, and I'll simply acknowledge Cavill as this generation's best choice alongside Reeve as my generation's best choice. Gunn and Peter What's His Name can keep that bargain-bin Kryptonite they're selling as the next choice for Superman.

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High School of the Dead relives the goriest of days

During the Covid-19 pandemic, I prohibited myself from games such as Yakuza: Dead Souls and horror-based anime like Hellsing to keep myself from needlessly doing harm to my mental health. Now that society is opening again, I'm reviewing an anime series that reflected Covid-19's fearful grip on our world: High School of the Dead.

Based on the manga of the same name by the late Daisuke Saito and illustrated by Shoji Sato, HOTD tells the story of high-schooler Takashi Komuro and his classmates along with their high school's nurse who struggles to survive a deadly pandemic known as the "outbreak," which turns healthy humans into zombies. As the outbreak reaches across the world, Takashi and the others attempt to find their families while fending off zombies and uninfected survivors with mental trauma during the outbreak's conquest of Japan.

HOTD is a far cry from the typical school and horror anime genres. In the first half, Takashi started out as a usual teenager caring about himself but begins to grow into a leader of zombie survivors.

He saves Rei Miyamoto and their friend Hisashi, who is gravely wounded by zombies, forcing Takashi to kill him with a blow to the head. Takashi and Rei meet other classmates, Saya Takagi, Kohta Hirano, Saeko Busujima and their school nurse Shizuka Marikawa who advises using the school's club bus to leave the campus.

Despite finding other survivors and escaping the school, the group is briefly separated by the actions of their surviving teacher Koichi Shido and a bus carrying zombies crashing while on the streets of Tokonosu City. After reuniting and battling zombies on Onbesu Bridge, Shizuka suggests staying at her friend's home briefly to recover and replenish supplies.

The second half introduces two new members of Takashi's group: Alice Marsato, whose father was killed by crazed survivors trying to find shelter; and, Zeke, a small puppy who protected Alice from zombies before Takashi arrived. The group continues their quest to find their families, agreeing to go to Saya's

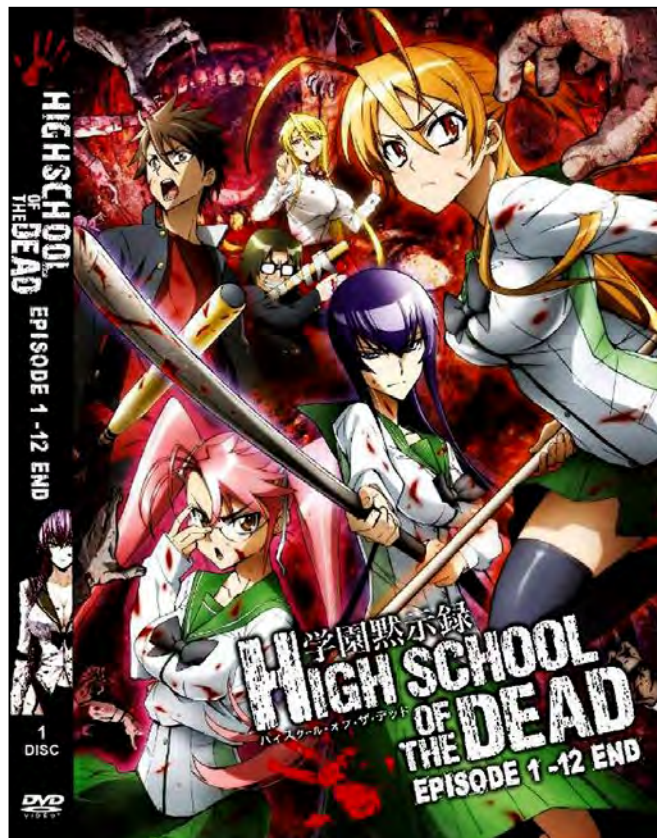
home first. While en route, they come under attack by zombies and are saved by firefighters led by Saya's mother. However, Takashi and Saeko are forced to lure the other zombies from their comrades. A day later, the group is reunited at Saya's heavily fortified mansion where they rest and get repairs for their equipment and vehicle, but soon the debate of staying with adults versus continuing their journey begins.

At this juncture, Shido and his students arrive at Saya's home, forcing Rei to use her rifle to kill Shido for injustice to her father. After Takashi's encouragement of Rei to remember her honor, she backs down, resulting in Saya's father banishing Shido students. At the end of the series, the succeeding U.S. president ordered use of nuclear weapons to end the zombie outbreak and deter

America's adversaries. The final episode starts as the U.S. and Japanese militaries shoot down nuclear missiles from China. However, a missile got through the defenses, resulting in an electro-magnetic pulse that renders all unprotected electronics useless. During this event, zombies attack the Takagi mansion, killing various survivors. Learning of another safe area, Saya's parents instruct their employees and remaining survivors to fight to gain access to it. The group, with Saya's parents' blessing, take Saya and heads out of the

mansion with their vehicle. After battling with a zombie mob that left their vehicle seriously damaged, the group makes its way to a local mall by foot, optimistic for their future.

I can honestly say that this series is one that I've heavily invested my time in watching. HOTD is well written and has the usual selling points of a good anime series and also touched on issues such as mental health and societal pressure on affluent individuals like Saya. Saito-san showcased each character with various issues and, at certain times, allowed them to have moments of happiness while the world was crumbling apart. I'm also applauding Saito-san for doing research on



various weapons, vehicles, and groups such as Japan's special assault team of officers who are battling the zombies.

The music in HOTD is spectacular, as the opening theme by Kishida Kyoudan and the Akeboshi Rockets is upbeat, making you feel as if you, too, are fighting the zombies. The animation is polished in high definition and directed by the well-known Tetsuro Araki (Death Note, Attack on Titan). Sentai Filmworks did an awesome job on the English dub with Steven Foster and Kaoru Bertand handling English adaption, direction and translation duties. The voice cast, led by Monica Rial as Shizuka and Leraldo Anzaldúa as Takashi, performed excellently in each episode, which enhances the appeal of the anime adaptation.

The only downside I had was the overreach of the near hentai-level fan service with close ups on the female characters' breasts and panty shots. It was almost too much and nearly caused the series to be a Dumpster fire. Thankfully, HOTD sticks to the horror/school life anime genre and nothing else.

High School of the Dead is indisputably a new classic. Although I wanted to watch Takashi and company continue their quest in a new normal, I cannot because of the death of Saito-san. However, I offer some advice to prevent a similar event: Wash your hands and practice good hygiene, wear a mask, and stay home from work, school and cons if you're sick. Your fellow geeks will thank you.

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Series: Afro Samurai Resurrection

Episodes: 1

Premise: The Afro Samurai is revealed as the wielder of the No. 1 Headband and has retired, not having fought for years. He encounters his old friend Jinno, who was turned into an emotionless cyborg; and Jinno's sister, Lady Sio, who intends to resurrect Afro's father as a servant. Sio succeeds and Afro deals with the onslaught from the three that follows.



Is it worth watching?: If you loved the original Afro Samurai, watch the follow-up. It's not nearly as good as the original, but it's serviceable because of the all-star voice cast and the RZA's soundtrack. Just be forewarned that it isn't on the level of the original in terms of story.

Breakout character: Jinno. Though he was in the original, he shines in Resurrection. You understand why he'd go to the lengths he goes to fight Afro and seek his revenge, and you can sympathize with his plight. Sometimes, there are fates worse than death.

Where it's going?: This is the end, though it was hinted that there could be more to come with the reappearance of Afro's old foe Justice. However, nothing else has come to fruition since it aired in 2009.



Brandon Beatty
OTAKU CORNER

MARVEL CHARACTER HIGHLIGHT

Name: Johnathan Blaze

Alias: Johnny, Bonehead, Matchstick, Skullhead, Brimstone Avenger, Brother Blaze, The Burning Man, Spirit of Vengeance, Brimstone Biker

Affiliation: Midnight Sons, Quentin Carnival, Thunderbolts, The Nine, Defenders, The Champions, Avengers of the Supernatural, Savage Avengers, Legion of Monsters, Savage Avengers

Special abilities: Ghost Rider transformation, superhuman strength, stamina, durability and agility, regenerative healing factor, supernatural awareness, hellfire manipulation, soul manipulation, sin manipulation, ride symbiosis, dimensional travel, demon magic manipulation, mystical chain projection, Penance Stare, self-size alteration, exorcism, expert stunt riding skills, skilled hand-to-hand combatant, knowledge of the occult

Background: Johnny Blaze is the son of Barton Blaze, a stunt performer who died during a stunt; and, Naomi Kale, a woman whose maternal line was cursed to be bound to the demon Zarathos. The curse affected the first-born child of the line to become the Spirit of Vengeance. The curse made its way to Johnny through his mother and after his father died, Johnny was adopted by family friend Crash Simpson. Kale and Simpson made separate deals with the demon Mephisto to save Johnny from the life of a Ghost Rider and to cure Simpson of cancer, respectively, but each deal turned out to be a fool's bargain. Johnny then made a deal with Mephisto to save Simpson from cancer, but Simpson was cured and then immediately died in a crash while attempting to set a world record. It was after the death of Simpson that Blaze transformed into the Ghost Rider for the first time.

Relationships: Roxanne Simpson, foster sister/wife; Craig Blaze, son; Emma Blaze, daughter

First Versus appearance: Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3

Appearances in other media:

Television: Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D, Hulk and the Agents of S.M.A.S.H.

Film: Ghost Rider, Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance

Video games: Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, Ghost Rider, LittleBigPlanet (costume), Marvel vs. Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds (cameo), Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3, LEGO Marvel Super Heroes, Marvel Heroes, Marvel: Future Fight, Marvel Puzzle Quest, Marvel: Contest of Champions, Marvel vs. Capcom: Infinite, Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order, Marvel Strike Force, Marvel's Midnight Suns



TOP 5 ON THE STRIP — X-MEN VILLAINS EDITION



Magneto: Professor Xavier's best friend-turned-arch nemesis is the quintessential arch villain. Magneto is always a threat, no matter where he is on Earth or in the universe. You can count on him to oppose the X-Men on general principle, even when he has to team up with them. And yet, there are arcs where he is the leader of the mutants, and others where he and Charles combine to become the malevolent near-omnipotent Onslaught.



Mr. Sinister: Sinister wreaks havoc solely because he's obsessed with the Summers-Grey bloodline. He's a weirdo, but he's powerful and generally involved when he is least needed. His involvement has led to the creation of Cable, the Legacy Virus, and the death of Madelyne Pryor among other things. Never underestimate the power of weird when Mr. Sinister is involved.



Cassandra Nova: A mummudrai who is the twin sister of Charles Xavier, Cassandra Nova is behind a lot of the foolishness seen in later X-Men arcs where Xavier dies. She has a hatred of Charles because he won their battle in the womb. She's gained sentience and a body and generally means to wipe out humanity at large, starting with the massacre of mutants on Genosha.



Stryfe: The time-traveling terrorist clone of Cable is terrifying for several reasons, starting with the Legacy Virus. In X-ecutioner's Song, Stryfe created the Legacy Virus which started out affecting only mutants and then moved on to regular humans, too. The fact that he looks like Cable and that no one can tell them apart is a problem. Having the same processes as the Omega-level mutant is an even bigger problem.



Apocalypse: No list featuring X-Men baddies would be complete without mention of the greatest and first mutant, En Sabah Nur. Apocalypse has destroyed entire realities and been one of the most, if not the most, oppressive threats the X-Men has ever faced. Apocalypse's intellect and capacity for creation and destruction is beyond comprehension, and he is the gold standard for most X-Men villains to look up to.