



That nasty vampire-type Count Dracula himself has risen anew and embarked upon a campaign of death, destruction and double-parking. Having dealt with Drac on three other occasions, the task of putting him to rest one more time has fallen on your shoulders.

All the other vampire-hunters in the area have told you to go to his castle in broad daylight, open all the windows and stake him in the heart while he slumbers. But the problem is that even though you went out nice and early to catch the train, because of leaves on the line you've arrived at the dead of night. And now you have to take the most difficult route Count-wards, a route on which you can expect to encounter many of his thralls and zombies before you reach the fully awake 'n' functioning Drac himself!

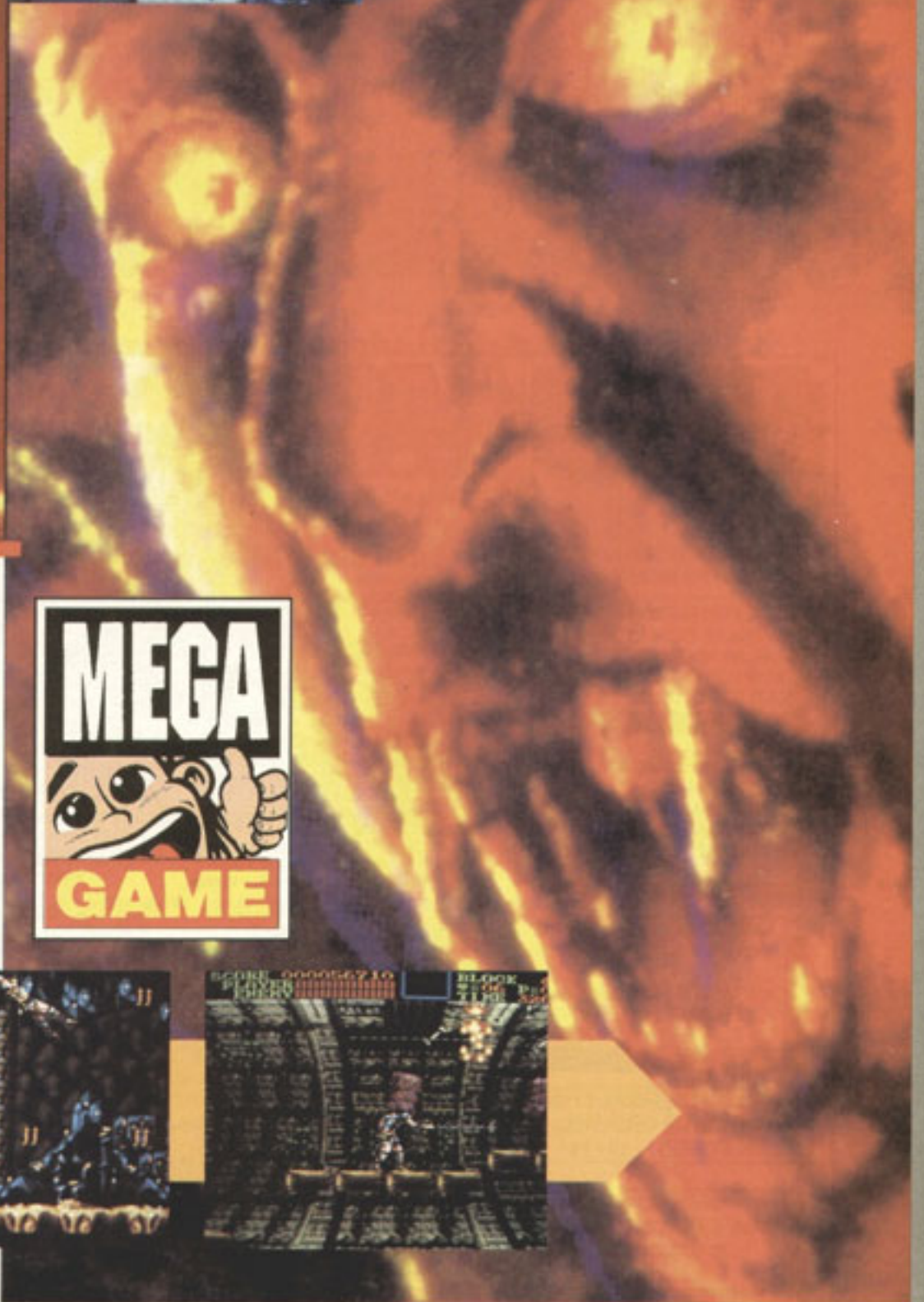
As everyone should know by now, Castlevania is a platform-based whip 'em up full of ghouls 'n' ghos... er... other such evil-doers. These are disposed of with your whip which is powered up by collecting the relevant icons hidden in candles dotted around the landscape.

The action is spread over a number of long levels, with an awesome minion of Drac at the end of each of these. Can you repeat the success of Van Helsing and put the fanged one away forever?



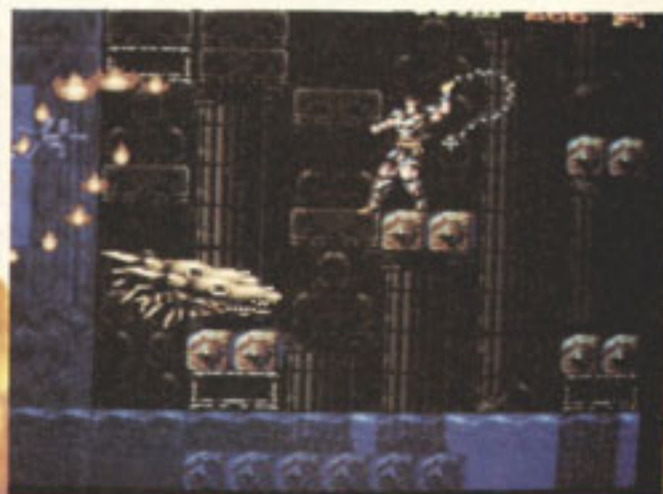
WHIP CRACK-AWAY

The hero's primary form of armament is a whip. This starts life as a relatively feeble leather affair that has little effect on most baddies. Whip a couple of candles, however, and the first power-up makes itself known. This little beauty transforms the flailing weapon into one made of steel chain! The next step up from this is an extended length attachment, allowing you to flagellate from greater distances!





DRACULA



TRICKS WITH LEATHER

In your line of work, it pays to be handy with your specialist tool. This means you've learnt some pretty fancy tricks with your long floppy weapon. By keeping the attack button pressed down, your weapon can be flailed in any direction by the use of some handy wrist action. This allows you block enemy fire, or repeatedly whip them to death with little effort.



SECRET PLATFORMS

The stairway towards the final confrontation with the Vlad harbours a deadly secret - deadly to Dracula that is! By jumping through the centre of the first flight of stairs, a secret invisible platform is discovered! Walk to the far left of these, and goodies aplenty are dropped on you from a great height, restoring all your energy, granting ninety-nine special weapon hearts, and a treble boomerang cross package with which to seal Dracula's fate.





BONUS AXE-TION

There's more than one way to skin a cat, and similarly, there's more than one way to slaughter a horde of Dracula's meanies. Whipping them is the easiest, but concealed behind candelabras are three different special weapons; throwing knives, axes and boomerang crosses! One of these can be used for every heart collected, although only one item can be thrown at a time unless a double or triple icon is collected, leading to multi-weapon on screen potential!



CUDDLY CANDELABRA

Dracula's penchant for artificial lighting may be his undoing. The score of candelabras he has left hanging around the path to his lair hold many secrets in the form of goodies. These scrummy gifts, such as whip power-ups, special weapons, hearts (used to power special weapons) and even energy-restoring food, are obtained with a simple flick of the whip.

Thanks to Shekhana Consoles for loaning us the Castlevania IV cartridge. If you require more information about the game, give them a bell on 081-340 8565.

COMMENT



RAD

For the first few levels, Castlevania crips its way along like a sad excuse for a game and the whole thing seems a huge disappointment. Get through them, though and this view changes quickly! Some of Castlevania's backgrounds and enemy sprites are fabulous, with lots of scenery rotation and other tricks the Famicom is now famous for, but what really saves Castlevania is the difficulty packed into the later levels. Suddenly things get a lot harder, but not frustratingly so, and it all becomes very addictive. Castlevania IV would never make it as an arcade game, it just doesn't have that instant grab factor, but if you're willing to persevere Castlevania is a must.

COMMENT



JULIAN

When I first sat down and played this, I thought it was a bit dull. On the first few screens there's nothing much threatening you, and it's just a case of trolling around the platform landscape disposing of the odd slow-moving baddie who pops up. However, once you get past the first guardian things start to warm up with hordes of aggressors and some devilishly tricky screen layouts to test your platform skills to their limits. The graphics are superb, with heaps of neat touches, and the music is astounding - heaps of truly stunning creepy tunes which work perfectly with the visuals to create an incredibly spooky atmosphere. It's a big game with loads of levels, and it takes a lot of skill to get all the way through it, even with the continues and password system! If you're after one of the finest platform games around, look no further than Castlevania IV!



BY: KONAMI
 PRICE: £45.00
 RELEASE DATE: NOW
 GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
 LIVES: 1
 CONTINUES: INFINITE
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: VERY FAST



PRESENTATION 89%

Brilliant options and set up screens.

GRAPHICS 90%

Some wondrous sprites, animation and backdrops make Castlevania a visual treat.

SOUND 95%

Stunning, atmospheric tunes and some very interesting effects.

PLAYABILITY 95%

Slow to start with, but once you get into the swing of things, it's great!

LASTABILITY 92%

Lots of levels await your whip-swinging presence, and they're pretty difficult to master!

OVERALL 93%

Get past the disappointing early levels and you find a superb platform game which mustn't be missed.