



Dark Castle

The word is that the Black Knight has escaped from jail! For the last couple of months, he's been held in the darkest and dankest dungeon of them all, pending his execution. But now he's free, ready to commit atrocities aplenty. Not surprisingly, the medieval world is very upset by this development and many men are dispatched to seek out the whereabouts of the dark one. After many weeks of searching, the Black Knight is finally located at the eponymous Dark Castle, well known place for non-evil citizens of the kingdom to die hideous and grotesque deaths.

You are the sole adventurer who dares set foot inside the Dark Castle - represented graphically in this game by a side-on platform-based environment. Your immediate aim on each screen is to use your superior agility and jumping prowess to reach the exit, where more challenges await on a fresh screen. Unfortunately, making this task a tad more difficult are the masses of enemy sprites just waiting to cause you some grief. Luckily, your dimension-warping trousers can carry over 50 rocks at once which are used to stone your opponents to death!

Your overall objective is to find the Shield of Protection and as many other mystical items as possible with which to fight the Black Knight. Only then can you tread the perilous path to the Black Knight's lair...



COMMENT



Oh my word! Dark Castle takes me back to the days when no one could program the Amiga properly and instead came out with pathetic platform games with deformed graphics and gratuitous sampled sound. Funnily enough, that's exactly what Dark Castle is. There are no original ideas on offer here. The platform game is fundamentally simple and the graphics are truly bad, with tiny, ill-defined sprites wobbling around

RICH

Spectrum-esque backdrops. The control method is really awful, with very unresponsive action. The method used to change the direction of firing is slow and makes for many a frustrating death. One thing's for sure - the hero in this game is a real weed. Even touching a small rat results in a violent and sudden death. Dark Castle's only redeeming feature is the sound - the sampled effects are pretty good. However, that factor apart, I can't recommend this sad effort at all.

STICKY-OUT POINTY BITS FOR THE MAIN PIC

GUARANTEED TROUBLE: This set of rooms should be your first choice when setting foot in the Dark Castle. Here, you find all sorts of trouble which help hone your skills for the major quest ahead!

QUEST FOR THE BLACK KNIGHT: Follow this path of extreme danger to track down and finally destroy the evil Black Knight!

FIREBALL WAREHOUSE: Complete this mini-quest and the fireball spell is yours, courtesy of Mordamir the wizard. This useful item turns all your rocks into fireballs!



THE LABYRINTH: This a-mazing maze contains many secrets - including the vital Shield of Protection. Collect this to make your quest far safer.

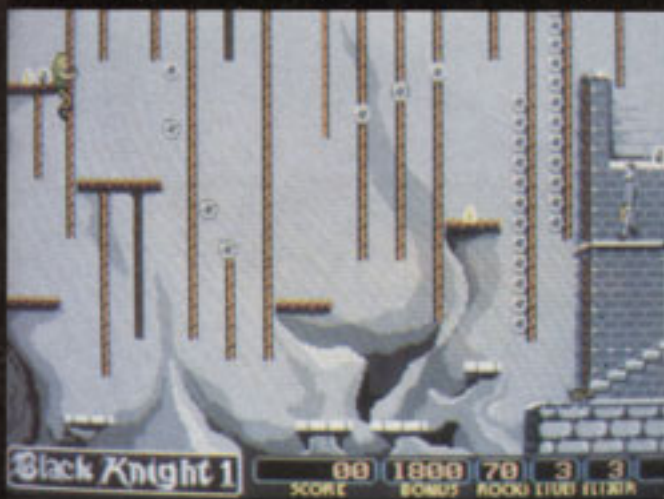


GETTING YOUR ROCKS OFF

Your only form of offense comes from the rocks secreted about your person. Whilst standing still, using UP and DOWN on the joypad changes the angle your adventurer throws these solid objects. Pressing the C button sends them speeding along the chosen trajectory.



Castle



SUPA SOUND

By now you've probably scopped out the ratings bar and discovered that Dark Castle isn't actually very good. However, the sampled sound is great. Our hero grunts, groans and makes other noises depending on his condition. Each of the meanies also make their own noise - our love must be the strange monkey-like creatures that scream "Ni-ni-ni-ni!" for no apparent reason!



COMMENT



JULIAN

This game is so bad, criticising it is like kicking a sad, retarded cripple while he's down. Apart from the laughable sampled sound, everything about it is diabolical. The graphics look like they've been lifted from a particularly crap Master System game - well, look at the screenshots and agree. What you can't see, though, is the movement of the rubbish zombie sprites. These hobbling hunchbacks have very dubious appendages which become erect when you approach. Quite what they are is difficult to ascertain due to the fact that they're so badly drawn, so I'd better not ponder any further. Gameplay? Well, where is it, that's what I want to know. It's challenging, but for all the wrong reasons. You spend most of your time battling the stupid control method, rather than the baddies. The way you throw stones is pathetically slow, and the collision detection is so dodgy it had me yelling with frustration. Within a few hours I'd had enough, and Dark Castle was dumped. If a gameplayer went to hell, this is the game he'd be made to play.



BY: 360

PRICE: £34.99

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER
GAME DIFFICULTY: TOUGH
LIVES: 3

CONTINUES: INFINITE
SKILL LEVELS: 3
RESPONSIVENESS: SAD



PRESENTATION 54%

Little in the way of options or pretty screens to look at.

GRAPHICS 25%

Sad, malformed sprites and backdrops more suited to an aged Master System game.

SOUND 71%

A sad rendition of classical music (which can be turned off), but some pretty fabby samples to liven things up a bit.

PLAYABILITY 29%

A silly control method and unresponsive controls make this very difficult to get into.

LASTABILITY 14%

It doesn't take long for the dodgy controls and awful collision detection to put you off playing this for good.

OVERALL 23%

Apart from the comedy appeal of owning the worst Megadrive game yet, there's no point in buying this awful, unplayable game.