



SWORD

VERMILION

King Tsarkon never gets invited to parties. He's laughed at by the girls and even his own mother pretends she's never met him when they see each other on the street. He's so angry at all this, he's conquered the world and killed the rightful King of Excalabria. He's quite sensitive, you see.

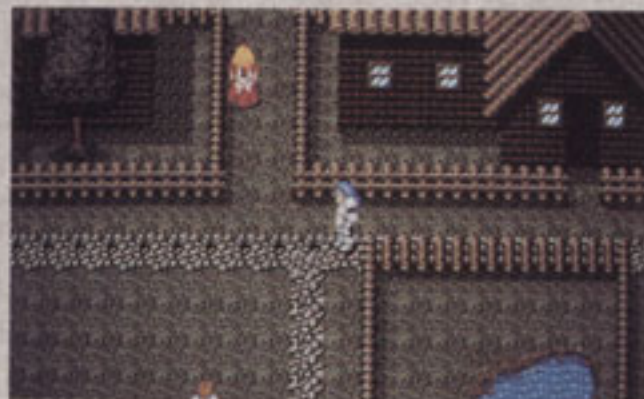
Years later, our hero, who's been raised by the King's trusted friend Blade, finds out that the latter isn't really his father - he is the heir to the throne and the person charged with the responsibility of overthrowing Tsarkon's evil domain. Preferably before teatime.

Our hero (who isn't given a name, but let's call him Thomas) has 200 Kims, the local unit of currency with which to outfit himself and guard against the slimy denizens of the local forests and caverns, not to mention the Poll Tax Bailiff. Killing monsters gives Thomas more money, which he spends on armour, weapons, healing herbs and magic spells. Each town or village has a quest of one form or another to complete before he reaches the final challenge of defeating Tsarkon; by then he'll need to be a cross between Jackie Chan and Paul Daniels to stand a chance of gaining victory.

Extra equipment lies around the world of Excalabria, including the fabled Sword of Vermilion, the best weapon around. Things are never what they seem, for example the king of one of the towns has a nasty habit of turning into a huge dragon. The doctors can't help him, so it's up to the hero to perform some surgery with a sharp sword. If he's got the power, that is....



▲ Water way to start the game!



▲ Talk to everyone in the towns for extra info.

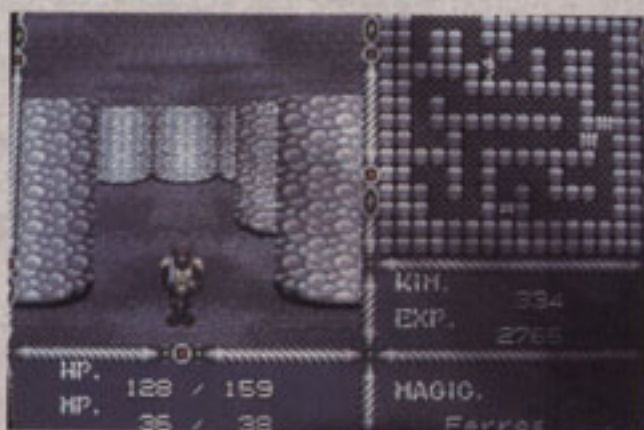


COMMENT

Sword of Vermilion is easily the best RPG yet released on the Megadrive; its graphics are excellent, and the playability is of a high standard. I especially like the way that every character in the game can be talked to: this adds a great deal of interaction. The hint book helps to let players get into the game quickly, but I can't see why it has to give ALL the answers; surely the player should have to discover some things for himself. The main problem is, of course, the massive price tag. It's hard to recommend a game that costs half a ton, when there are so many other good Megadrive games. Still, I have to say this is an excellent product!

MATT

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▲ The entrance to the next village.



THE VILLAGE PEOPLE

Every town and village is populated with a large number of citizens, all of whom are willing to chat. Often the talk is just gossip, but sometimes vital information is blurred out. The buildings have individual uses, and here's a quick rundown on the most important:



BIG ONES ARE MORE JUICY

The bosses that Prince faces are usually on the large side. For example the Dark Demon in the Ivory Cave is a huge blue creature that flaps around on wings, attacking viciously. The first monster in the game is the Ice Dragon in the castle at Parma (a rather hammy hamlet). Defeat him to gain the Ring of Heaven; now there's only six more Rings of Good to find!



ION



▲ Grab some grub!

▼ Resurrection timer!



▲ Big blobs of doom!

CHURCH

This is where the lad recovers from beatings. When he's lost all his hit points, he awakes in the nearest house of God. Unfortunately the thieving priests take half his cash for "charity".



ARMOURY

Time to stock up on some better weapons, shields and armour. The prices are steep, but at least the shopkeeper is willing to buy back any redundant goodies - at a lot less than they cost in the first place, of course.



EQUIPMENT SHOP

Oddly enough, this is where our groovy hunk buys equipment. Herbs help to heal horrific haccidents, and candles and lanterns provide light in those deep dark and slightly smelly underground places.



INN

Staying overnight here fully rests Tommy, giving him maximum hit points and magic. He also gets the chance to hang around the bar, sing rude songs, and meet interesting people.



COMMENT



JULIAN

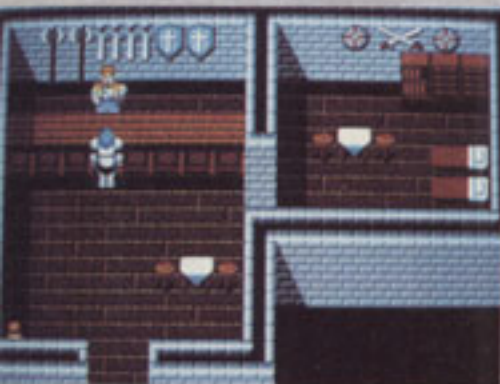
I don't like RPGs much; there's far too much brainwork involved for my liking - give me something to blow up any day. However, I can see that Sword of Vermilion is a stunning example of how good a game of this sort can be. Excellent menu control systems, superb graphics, truly stunning sound and massive depth of gameplay make this a game that'll keep you occupied for months (unless you use the hint book, which gives away far too many clues and lets you complete the game rather too easily). The only problem is the massive price tag - Sword of Vermilion certainly has tons of lasting appeal, but £50.00 is a hell of a lot to splash out in one go. Take a good look before breaking your piggy bank.



BY: SEGA

PRICE: £49.99

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
 GAME DIFFICULTY: TRICKY
 LIVES: N/A
 CONTINUES: INFINITE
 SKILL LEVELS: 1
 RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD



More creatures leap to the attack.



Getting help from the natives.



FUN WITH CHOPPERS

While moving between locations the screen shifts to a 3D perspective; but when the hero's journey is interrupted by some monsters, the view is of the battle area. Tom's often surrounded by creatures, and only fast swordplay will save his proverbial bacon. The enemies increase in speed, number and strength as the game progresses. Slimes, scorpions and sorcerers litter the woods and other areas. Spells like Ferros help to protect the main man, but nothing takes the place of a good sword!

PRESENTATION 94%

Incredible intro screens combine with the wonderful music to great effect.

GRAPHICS 86%

The main baddies are brilliant, and the standard of graphics is high throughout.

SOUND 93%

The music is some of the best heard on the Megadrive. Prepare to be amazed!

PLAYABILITY 82%

Building up enough cash for the next purchase can be a little dull, but otherwise it's strong in this category.

LASTABILITY 80%

For the price this has to be a huge game; and it is. There's months of gaming here (as long as you don't use the hint book).

OVERALL 82%

A great game - by far the best RPG on the Megadrive - but it sports a very hefty price tag. Think carefully before spending the £50.00.