



REVIEW

SHADOW OF THE BEAST

Life isn't very enjoyable when you're the Beast - the perfect fusion of man and animal. Indeed, life just seems to consist of doing the Beast Lord's foul bidding, using your superior strength and agility for the cause of evil.

One day everything changes. Distant memories of your days as a human child resurface and show Maletoth the Beast Lord as the being responsible for the death of your family. All at once you remember what it was to be human. You realise how your life has become warped by the Beast Lord. Now, armed with the knowledge of the past, you must construct your future - and that future shall begin with the destruction of the Beast Lord. With him dead, his spells should break - turning you back into human form.

What all this boils down to is a quest spread over six scrolling levels. Your objective is to track down Maletoth and make sure he kicks the bucket. However, sensing that he no longer controls your mind, Maletoth has dispatched every beast he still controls in order to bring about your demise. It's your job to defend yourself against these demonic minions. Added in with the basic beat 'em up gameplay are a few puzzle elements. These are hardly brain-busting, but add some variety to the gameplay. For example hitting a lever early on in one level switches off an energy field blocking your route later on.

It's a long and arduous voyage ahead of you, but you're the Beast and you're *hard!*



BEASTS

Your beast is pretty big and 'ard, but he's comparatively small and weedy compared to some of the treats Maletoth the Beast Lord has in store! A big orb-throwing gargoyle is your first target, along with a massive skeleton who attempts to crush the very life out of you. And go right from the game's starting point and you run the gauntlet of massive enemies including, of all things, gargantuan loads!



▲ *These bats arrive at different heights, making them difficult to hit.*



▲ *Inhabiting the underworld, these massive insects are your first worry.*



▲ *This jumping demon inhabits the first level. Beware of his groping arms.*



▲ *These legions of poisonous creatures infest the underworld.*



▲ *This creature lurks inside a stone statue. Break this open and engage in combat!*



▲ *These denizens of the underworld are armed with massive cleaving swords.*



▲ *Another level one meanie that tends to creep up on you and slap you about!*



BEAST COMBAT

The Beast only has two natural forms of offense - a punch and flying kick, both of which dispatch most enemy sprites with just one hit. However, later on, Beast is endowed with different forms of weaponry. First he's granted a special beam weapon. Later on, he's given a rifle and jetpack and the game becomes a horizontally scrolling shoot 'em up!



▲ The Beast reaches the castle at the end of the surface level. However, it's very dark inside so be sure to collect one of the torches located on the outside of the castle. Once inside, more terror awaits...



▲ This Orb Guardian requires several hits. Beat him and laser powers are yours.



▲ Dragons fly overhead on the first level, dropping bombs on you from a great height.



COMMENT



RICH

The Master System version may have had more objects to play around with, but this Megadrive conversion has something going for it that's far more valuable - it's a lot more playable. The action is really simple to get into and the control method is good and responsive. The variety in all of the levels makes the game that much more compulsive to play. Shadow of the Beast has its faults though.

The simple nature of the combat is really off-putting. Just about every foe falls to one punch or flying kick, and the puzzle element is just too simple to be seriously considered. As a game that shows off what your Megadrive can do, Shadow of the Beast is a great example.



THE ORIGINAL BEAST

Psygnosis were certainly on to a winner when they released *Shadow of the Beast* on the Amiga. Utilising just about every graphical trick in the book, they created one of the most spectacular visual feasts yet seen in a home video game. A sequel followed, the disappointing *Beast II*, whose graphics were actually far worse than the original! *Beast I* has been converted to many systems, including the Sega Master System (courtesy of Tecmagik). That version was reviewed last issue and scored 80%.



COMMENT



At first, this seems a bit dull - there are only two combat moves and virtually every baddie dies at the first hit. However, the more you play it, the more you get

JULIAN into it. It's not really a beat 'em up at all - it's an exploration game, and as such works very well indeed. The graphics are superb, and you want to keep playing the game to find out what's around the next corner. Things hot up later on when the beast is endowed with power-ups, and there's plenty of variety as you attempt to defeat the Beast Lord. If you're after a platform game with a difference, take a good look at this.



BY: EA

PRICE: £44.99

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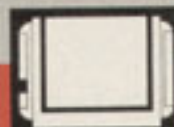
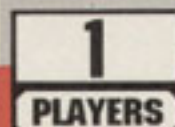
GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

LIVES: 1

CONTINUES: 0

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: GOOD



PRESENTATION 81%

Little in the way of options, but good in-game presentation.

GRAPHICS 89%

Superb, smooth-scrolling parallax backdrops and beautifully drawn end-of-level baddies.

SOUND 81%

A fairly atmospheric tune, although it does grate after a while.

PLAYABILITY 85%

The easy-to-learn control method makes this a doddle to get into...

LASTABILITY 71%

...and there are six huge levels to explore, giving plenty of lasting appeal.

OVERALL 82%

An original and entertaining exploration game with plenty of neat features.