

New *Gauntlet* not a ‘mindless masher’

by **Jared Delmar**
 Editorials Editor

Since the days of *Dungeons & Dragons*, 8-bit Atari, fingerless gloves and *The Cosby Show*, there has been Atari's *Gauntlet*. Since the first installment of the game series was released in 1985, there have been many enhancements to the original version, as evidenced in *Gauntlet II* and *Gauntlet III: The Final Quest*, followed by *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* and, most recently, *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*.

When Atari made its first announcements about the upcoming *Seven Sorrows*, the only leak about the sequel's game play was that it would be “refined.” Based on a cursory glance, a casual gamer might misake *Seven Sorrows*’ for another mindless button-masher, unfortunately akin to every previous game in the *Gauntlet* series (i.e. A-A-A “mashed” in endless sequence). However, the phrase “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” more than accurately describes the strategy in this game. A casual player of the series will enjoy the fast-paced combat animations, as well as the handsome graphics, but the real strategy lies in the revamped combat system.

Unlike any *Gauntlet* before it, *Seven Sorrows* employs a primitive *Mortal Kombat*-like combat system, and yes, that includes combos and special moves. In previous *Gauntlets*, the game would allow a considerable amount of personal space between the hero and his or her enemies; maintaining such distance isn't a very sound strategy in *Seven Sorrows*. Besides the ability to stun, confuse, blind and completely destroy the game's enemies, combos allow the hero to quickly recover from blocking an opponent's blow, which will happen often. The left trigger and “Y” button, when pressed in combination after a block, for instance, send one's character into a backflip which launches opponents across the screen. In this way, *Seven Sorrows* isn't exactly the average *Gauntlet* sequel.

The story line is completely different from all previous versions of the game, the exception being the inclusion of the game's staple characters: the Valkyrie, the Warrior, the Elf and the Wizard. Centered around a previously-corrupt king that is trying to repent for his corrupt actions, the plot is relatively inconsistent. It gives little to no background for the transition between levels, not that anything more should be expected from any game under the title of *Gauntlet*. The “Seven Sorrows” refer to the king's to-do list, seven things that he wishes hadn't happened, including the brutal torture and subsequent chaining of Seven Sorrows' heroes to a tree at the center of the earth; a perfectly feasible plot as far as *Gauntlet* is concerned.

While solo play is available, it isn't advised until the basics of the game are learned, including other buttons on the controller besides the “A.” New players to the series may not appreciate the finer points of the game, as its prequels' game plays are significant steps down from *Seven Sorrows*, but to a fan that has access to a friend and a comfortable couch, there's a lot of beauty to be found in the latest installment to the *Gauntlet* series.

