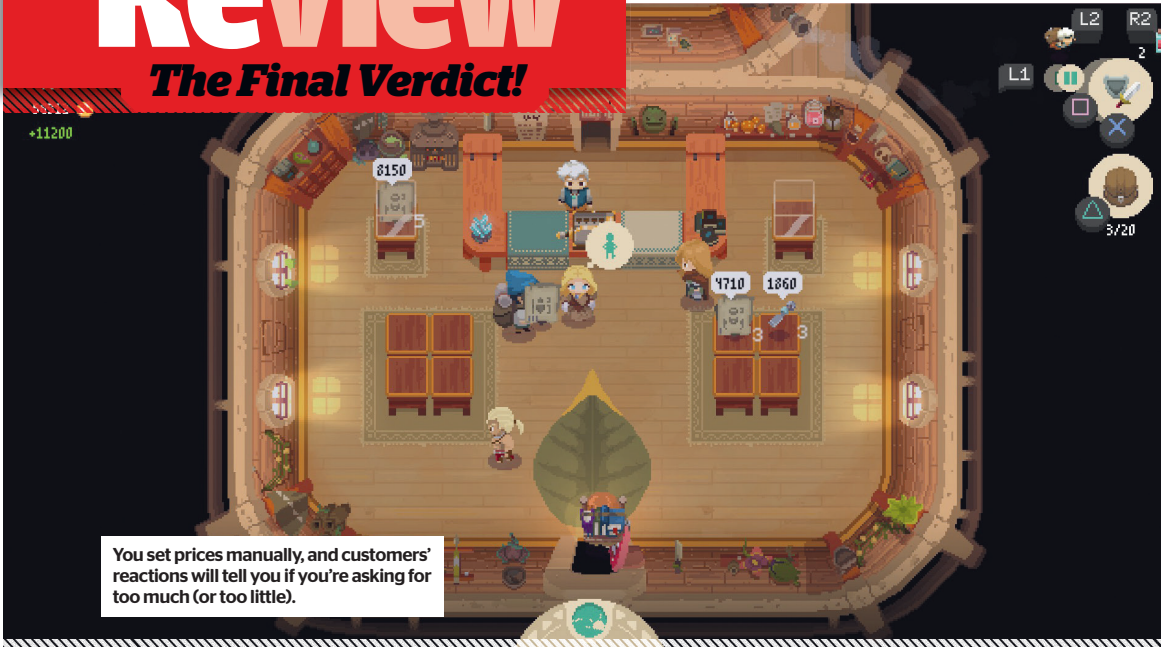
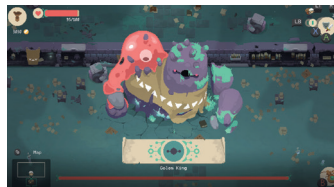


GM Review

The Final Verdict!



You set prices manually, and customers' reactions will tell you if you're asking for too much (or too little).



Format PS4, XO, PC (reviewed) Publisher 11 Bit Studios Developer Digital Sun ETA Out now Players 1

MOONLIGHTER

Trading goods by day, trading blows by night

If you've ever wondered what happens to the wads of cash you hand over to in-game merchants in exchange for fancy swords, then *Moonlighter* is your game. It's half shop management sim, half dungeon crawler: you beat enemies senseless underground, grab their loot, and haul it back to your store to sell. Once you've found a price that the locals like, your goods will fly off the shelves. You then reinvest the money back into your shop or pay other vendors for new weapons, armour, and potions to help you slay more baddies.

It's a satisfying loop. There are only five procedurally-generated dungeons, each with three floors, but working through them will take a solid 15 hours. You're not trying to beat an entire dungeon on every run - the idea is to blast through a floor or two, grab the expensive stuff and get out before you lose it all, then come

back the next day with better equipment to progress a little further.

It's easy to get greedy. When we find a gold chest full of valuables, we know we should fill our boots and warp back to our shop. But the green chest in the next room is too tempting. A fire-spitting boulder flattens us, our loot spilling from our limp body. It's painful, but the fact we immediately start another run is a sign of just how addictive the cycle is.

The price is fight

The hit boxes are a bit wonky, especially when enemies get so close that they pass through your body, but the fast pace of combat keeps us hooked. There are enough weapon options - from long-reaching spears to a sword-and-shield combo - to find your own style of play, and enough enemy types to ensure that no two rooms feel the same.

We like the game's twist on grid-based inventory management, too. Some items are "cursed" - they might destroy the item to their right when you warp home, for example. But some have positive

effects, such as sending the item above straight to the chest in your bedroom. It's easy to spend ten minutes fiddling around to find the perfect configuration.

When you're out of the dungeons *Moonlighter* gives you plenty of options for what to do next. Perhaps you want to save up for a new till that will make customers tip an extra 20%, or maybe you need a particular type of wood for the next sword in the upgrade tree. Once you've set yourself a task, it's easy to settle into a rhythm of dungeon crawling by night and shop keeping by day. Before you know it, three hours have flown by.

We just wish that being in the shop was more fun. Once you've got your prices right - partly guesswork, partly watching shoppers' reactions - sales are automatic. Sitting in the shop watching people browse is boring, and not even the occasional shoplifter can liven it up. It's not helped by a lack of customisation options. We'd love to throw a lick of paint on the walls and move our display cabinets around, but no such luck. You can buy stat-boosting decorations and expand the store, but layout changes are all handled by the computer.

But that's its only major weakness, and we keep making excuses to come back to *Moonlighter* for one more run into its depths. At £15 for 15 hours of breezy dungeon crawling, we're sold. ■

"IT'S EASY TO SETTLE INTO A RHYTHM OF DUNGEON CRAWLING BY NIGHT AND SHOP KEEPING BY DAY"

What's the best-named item in *Moonlighter*? Big sword. It is, remarkably, a big sword.

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The core loot-and-sell loop is wonderfully addictive.
- ✓ Managing your inventory is its own clever minigame.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Hit detection in combat is annoyingly inconsistent.
- ✗ We wish you could customise your shop and make it your own.

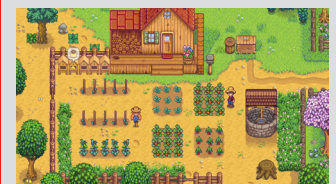
Better than...



Recettear: An Item Shop's Tale

The best known shop sim around. Its store management is more hands-on, but its combat isn't as good.

Worse than...



Stardew Valley

When it comes to rural life, running a local business, and dungeon-crawling on the side, it's hard to beat this sprawling, zen masterpiece.

NEED TO KNOW



As well as rebuilding your own store, you're trying to restore the town of Ryoko to its former glory by ushering in other shops and services. It's co-ordinated from the central square.

GM JUDGEMENT

77%



The mix of dungeon-crawling and shop-keeping is addictive, even if the latter is a bit thin.
Samuel Horti