

Issue 24



October 2022

Hi there folks and welcome to issue 24 of your favourite shoot-em-up fanzine. Yes, this will make it 2 years since we started. It's been a lot of fun and long may it be so. This month has surprisingly little traditional shoot-em-up contents. leaning more toward the run-and-gun and versus style of things, Don't worry, this is not a trend, just the way in turned out, this month. Happy Gaming.

SHOOTER NEWS



Dranius is a game developed by Team Ladybuy and published by Playism and is making it's way to Switch 'this winter'. Hopefully that means before Christmas, as we all want to get a good SHMUP or two in and around that time! It previously was released to PC/Team earlier in the year. The game itself is a side scrolling STG, in which the player takes control of the ship Dranius, a ship that can absorb energy bullets.

The energy absorbed can later be used to enhance ship functions, including weapon upgrades. This is done via the 'reflector', which for a short period of time, will allow Dranius to counter attack. Absorbed energy is stored within onboard tanks.

The story revolves around the main character Irina, taking on the forces of the Kharlal Empire, in order to seek a cure for her ill father. The game features a number of non playable characters that Irina interacts with. Showing that the game was developed with some lore in mind. The trailer shows gameplay in action and graphics looking nice and modern, with a decent blend of retro and modern mechanics.



Enemies control huge robots that morph during boss fights and showcases that some level environments have to be traversed. Needless to say, it looks like this game has the potential to be one of the better SHMUPs on Switch, so keep your eyes peeled.



Angelian Trigger is set for release on Switch in 2023, A.T. is a 2d shooter with 3D designed sprites and backgrounds. It has been noted that the game will support both English and Japanese language options, leading one to presume it will see a western release. The music within the game is credited to Akari Kaida, who is also noted for work on Darkstalkers, Resident Evil, Breath of fire III and

アングリアントリガー

2023年 発売予定 価格未定

P I X E L



PLANET SARIUS
EPISODE 1

Okami). With those type of accolades, you know that the music will be of a high quality. The trailer itself Shows off an RPG-esque anime like intro, which reminds one a lot of Cowboy Bebop, and gives is that 'space detective' type vibe. The game is a fixed, third person shooter, in the vein of Space Harrier, but is presented in a beautiful

modern-anime design. It brings this type of shoot-em-up into current times, and some of the levels showcased remind me a bit of Neo Tokyo scenes, in the movie Akira. We are also shown that there are a couple of characters with different kinds of weaponry and shots. Enemy designs range from huge creatures to



PLANET SARIUS
EPISODE 1

mechanical enemies. Near the start of the trailer, you are shown an image set in space with a number of planets – are these the stages on which you are to travel to? In one of Graham & I's Shoot you sir podcasts, we briefly discussed what it would be like to have Galaxy fight as a beat em up, utilising the different planets. Although

this is a not a Sunsoft game, full of the brilliant roster of charismatic Galaxy Fight characters, but it certainly does look like you will enjoy travelling to different planet environments with the characters this game does have. This is definitely one game to watch, especially if you enjoyed Space Harrier and shooters of that ilk. Again, keep your eyes peeled.



GUNSTAR HEROES™

GAME REVIEW By Graham Pike

I remember back in the 90s and Treasure were one of the golden developers of that decade. Games like Guardian Heroes, Alien Soldier, Radiant Silvergun, Silhouette Mirage and Mischief Makers, were a bit special, to say the least. Well the game that got them going and first of all, impressed the game playing public, was Gunstar Heroes, a very special run-and-gun, 16bit shooter. It was published in 1993 by Sega, for their Megadrive (Genesis) console.

The game was based around two characters; the Gun Stars. Who, in an effort to stop an evil empire from getting their hands on four powerful jewels, had to perform some very acrobatic manouvers, whilst shooting in all directions. There were four weapons types, that could be put together to create even more shot types. The game was produced by Masato Maegawa, programmed by Mitsuru Yaida and Hideyuki Suganami, with the main artists being Tetsuhiko Kikuchi and



Hiroshi Iuchi. The music was composed by Norio Hanzawa and within the limited scope of the Megadrive's sound capabilities, he does an amazing job.

Gunstar Heroes went down very well, particularly with serious gamers, who loved it's fast paced, imaginative gameplay and, for the time, advanced graphics. It may have lacked some of the power and glamour of arcade shooters but made up for it with a more sophisticated game style and wacky, Japanese humour and fun styling.



The graphics were seriously good for the Megadrive, with some great colour and detail and very inventive sprites.

This is a side-scrolling, run & jump-along shooter, with some similarities to the Contra series. It can be played as a single player or with 2 players, competing co-operatively. There are seven stages in total and you get to choose the order in which you complete the first four of these. This adds replayability, as does the fact that the stages vary quite a lot in how you have to play them. Some have the usual run left to right approach, while others have you in control of vehicles, like a mining cart and a helicopter. In fact one stage is very much like a good quality, conventional, horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up. There are even sections, where you seem to be part of a board game.





sprite still, when shooting, whilst Free has the hero sprite move in the direction it is shooting. I play Free every time. But you could have fun trying out both.

You also get to start with one of the four types of shot available. It is your choice and they come as a homing shot, lightning blaster, flamethrower, and machine gun. Each has it's pros and cons and as power-ups are dropped, you get the chance to swap between the different types. And best of all, you can combine shot types, to



shooter. But where it does rise above so many other shooters, is the way it balances fast and furious play, with the need to think up strategies and implement them at double speed, to overcome the excellent and fun challenges, in all their various manifestations. Gunstar heroes has been released on very many consoles, so you should be able to access this classic and very good, run-and-gun shooter. It deserves it's reputation and although it does look old school, Mega-drive 16bit nowadays, it still has the gameplay and style to charm you.

SEGA



Completing each stage is challenging, in a variety of ways and not only do you get the satisfaction of overcoming each stage and seeing what comes next, by doing so you also extend your maximum life (health) points. And you will be very grateful that this is not a one hit and you're dead game. In addition to the large variety of enemies and techniques needed to complete stages, you get a choice, at the start of the game, whether to have either Free or Fixed firing play. Fixed keeps your character



make them more powerful and useful. For instance, you could combine the machine gun with the homing shot, for a homing machine gun. Or indeed, double up with two lightning shots, for extra blasting power. Shocking!

On top of all that, your little Gun Stars can do some clever moves, including sliding, jumping and best of all, grabbing hold of your enemies and throwing them to their deaths. OK, Gunstar Heroes is no arcade game or even anything like a traditional



SCORES

Graphics: 15 Sound: 15 Control: 18
Fun: 18 Lastability: 19 OVERALL: 85%

Galaxian

A BLAST FROM THE PAST

Galaxian was developed and published by Namco, right back in 1979. It was a fixed shooter arcade game, in that the "Galaxip" starfighter you control, stays at the bottom of the screen and you can only move it left and right. Your mission is to protect Earth from incessant waves of aliens. This game was Namco's answer to the extremely successful Space Invaders. Developed by Kazunori Sawano, Galaxian initially looks like a colourful version of it's predecessor, but infact Galaxian is an even simpler game. There are no buildings for your starfighter to hide behind and the lines of aliens above, do not descend on mass. A small number of alien ships peel off from the main bunch and fly down toward you, dropping missiles. Now this is where, in my opinion, Galaxian becomes the better game, resembling in some ways, the vertically scrolling shooters to come.

Galaxian I believe, was one of the very first arcade games to have RGB colour visuals. It also used a revolutionary, tile-based hardware system, that made animated, multi-coloured sprites a possibility, as well as a very limited amount of background scrolling. This may not sound like much, but it made the game incredibly successful in both Japan and the United States. And that was inspite of the fact that your little starfighter could only fire one missile at a time and could not fire again until that missile had hit a foe or the top of the screen. I guess the 1979 hardware could only go so far.

And those limitations meant the game had little variety. It was basically one wave of aliens after another, with each wave getting faster and firing more missiles. Basic, but for the time, quite a lot of shooting fun and definitely quite a challenge as the game progressed and ramped up it's difficulty level.

To gain extra points, when an enemy "Flagship", makes a divebomb attack, with two red escort ships, if you can manage to shoot all three (not easy) you will be rewarded with extra bonus points.

Like many things from the past (43 years), Galaxian looks and plays very basically, from a modern perspective. But historically it moved gaming on, in a very entertaining fashion. Heading toward those classic shoot-em-ups we love so much. And even now, it can provide some challenge and fun, if you just give it a try.





"We Must Stop D.I.C!", is how the arcade intro rolls for Shock Troopers Second Squad, but more on that later. For those of you who are not aware, ST: Second Squad is the sequel to Shock Troopers (1997), and is a run and gun shooter. It was developed by Saurus, and published by SNK on the Neo Geo in 1998. The plot and story are completely unrelated to the first game. S.T.2 was ported by Hamster to PSN, the Switch store and the Xbox store.

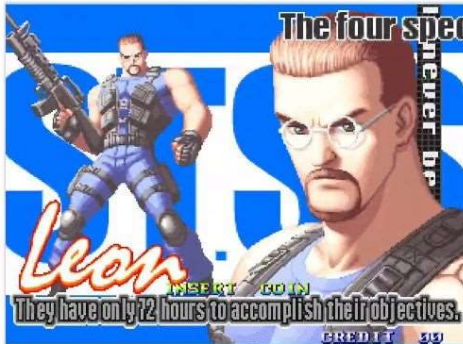
Graphically, the game showcases what the Neo Geo was able to do during its peak, offering up rich and detailed sprites and environments that are not only charming, but rather lush. In fact, the game very much has that 'Neo Geo' look, of big sprites and great animations. By this time, developers really took the software and were able to mould it into some really interesting things. Not only are characters individually animated well when they move and walk, but have shadows underneath them

giving an almost '3-D' affect. Explosions, fire and bullets, all have quality looking textures. There's even an animated horse drinking on one of the levels! Second Squad also makes use of lots of pre-rendered sprites and added vehicles you can jump into mid level, very reminiscent of Metal Slug. Personally, although I think this game looks fantastic, I still prefer the look of the first Shock Troopers game, which differs a fair bit. The original also has the Neo Geo video game look you'd expect, but nails that certain "something", that makes it stand out from other Neo Geo games from that time. It feels that with Second Squad, Saurus really wanted to make a bright and colourful game and focused more on how the game looked, rather than the overall quality of the game. And for this reason, it moves further away from what made the original so special.

When looking online a few months back for Shock Troopers collectables and memorabilia, it mostly brought up Second Squad promo materials, showing that there was a bigger promo push for this game. One of the stand out features of the first game was the sheer number of characters that all looked and played slightly differently and



Saurus clearly saw the benefits of this, and decided to put a lot of effort into the characters for Second Squad. Unfortunately, the roster is reduced to 4 characters, which, although they do not follow the same stereotypes of the characters in the first game, are also much less diverse. A really cool touch put into this game, is that Saurus decided to give each character their own stats and attacks. Each of the four characters also have a code name, showing that more planning was put into the character 'lore', and further

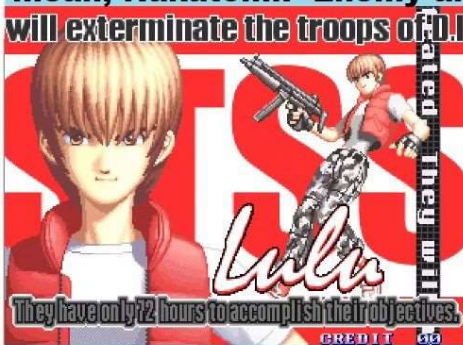


The four spec

emphasising that Saurus wished to make the characters more marketable. Plot-wise: The player must stop the evil mega corporation D.I.C., which is an abbreviation of Dio International Corporation. The game is based in a fictional



four specialists will exterminate



will exterminate the troops of D.I.C.

variety. The parachuting troopers look even cooler than in the original and the extra animations do add to the immersion. The game controls are basic, but hold true to the original game. You have a fire button, which when held down



e troops of D.I.C.

allows you to strafe and fire in one direction. As eluded to previously, each character has a different kind of shot, ranging from spread shot to a very cool purple lazer. You also have a button for bomb, with each character having a different bomb type. These range from fire grenade, to a detonated circle explosion, expanding outwards from the controlled character. You also have a button for rolling, which allows you to dodge bullets from enemies and makes you feel like a total badass when you pull it off, and lay waste to your foes. There are only a possible 7 stages in second squad, compared to the possible 17 in the original game. This not only makes the game feel smaller and more linear, but also limits the amount of playability the game has. This is a shame, as one of the best things about the original was the fact it felt big, with lots to explore and see. Very much making you feel part of a world created by the devs. Second Squad is more limited to city scapes, a harbour and the tower itself, all of which lend it to feeling exactly the same every time you boot it up.

Sound-wise, the game soundtrack is good but nothing to write home about. It suits the game, which is important, but feels like it lacks the impact of the first game. Tracks are drum driven, with lighthearted synth playing over the top, lacking atmosphere and tension, something which the first game soundtrack did well. Sound effects are decent within Second Squad, explosions are impactful, and the characters voicing is much better than the first game.



Shock Troopers
2nd Squad



Shock Troopers
2nd Squad





The game itself is a lot of fun on the first play through, but with limited amount of stage options and only four characters, the game gets pretty boring very quickly. Getting through the security at the tower, and facing the final boss are a real chore, with a massive difficulty spike. Saurus ramped up the amount of bullets and difficult spikes in some frustrating places, making the game feel less like a challenge and more like a slog. With that said, I've enjoyed this game and have played it a large amount over the last few months.

As Hamster have kindly ported this game, making it available to Current Gen console players, this game will hopefully live on to be played by many. It is priced so cheaply, it is worth picking up a digital copy to experience it. If you are looking for the game on Neo Geo expect to pay steep prices, even for an MVS or MVS to AES conversion. As a stand alone game, Second Squad is rather good and a visual 2D feast. Standing next to the original Shock Troopers, it feels like a missed opportunity to tap into the potential that the franchise had, and ultimately led to the fact that there would not be a third installment. But man, that lazer is cool. And who doesn't want to climb the tower of D.I.C. and blow off its head? Phallic jokes, we have them.



SCORES
Graphics: 18 Sound: 14
Control: 16 Fun: 15
Lastability: 16
OVERALL: 79%



Game Review

By Graham Pike



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Rival Megagun is from 2018 and is a two sided, split-screen, vertical shooter. It is quite reminiscent of the classy Neo Geo shooter, Twinkle Star Sprites, in it's gameplay. But whereas the Neo Geo game has a cute anime style, Rival Megagun has a psuedo anime, space opera feel to it. This game has plenty of options and is available in arcade, versus and on-

line versions. There is a very comprehensive tutorial, that is definitely worth a quick look at, on your first try with this game. There are 6 pilots/characters to choose from here and each has their own storyline and missile firing patterns. The playscreen is split up the middle and your hero jet is positioned on the left side of that screen. It is fairly classic shoot-em-up play, with



the exception being that you can attack and be attacked by your opponent, on the right hand side of the playscreen. There are the usual type of power-ups, including a repair, that will restore any damage your sprite may have taken. The graphics are OK but lack a little detail, depth and colour and let the game down somewhat. The music, although

nothing classic, actually works well with the game, adding some atmosphere and dynamics. Rival Megagun is really sold as an arcade game but it's overall feel and presentation do not live up to those arcade pretensions. Having said that, it has some good shmup fun gameplay and attempts a progression story. It controls pretty well and sprite move-



Game Review continued

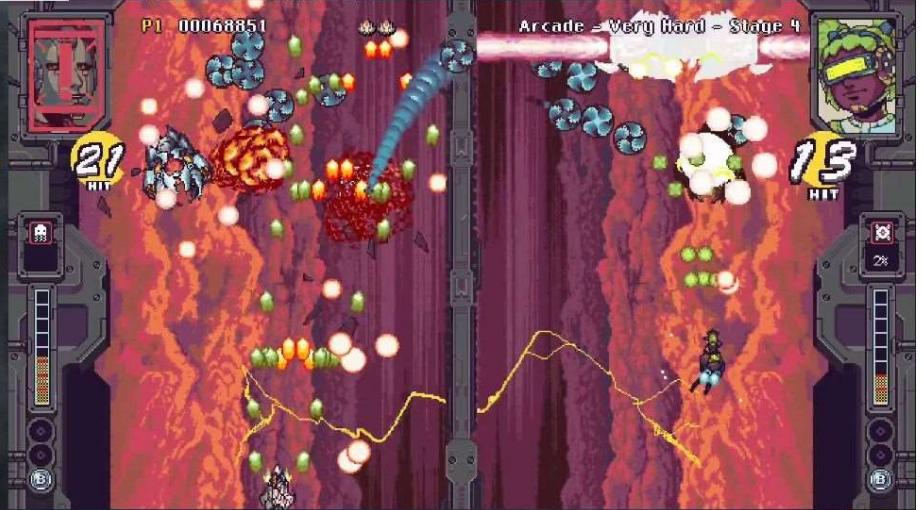


THE HOST



-ment is nippy enough. But somehow the gameplay doesn't fully gel, the tightness of play you should expect really isn't quite there and it just lacks drama, too. And although it can be enjoyable, it doesn't give you the satisfaction that comes with a classic shooter. There is however some good ideas and variety here. And there's no doubt that sending drone

attacks and missiles over to your opponent is fun. As is charging up your ship to transform into a super Megagun, that can fly over to your opponents side and pulverise them. An experienced shoot-em-up player will probably need to start this game one level higher than they normally would, as this is not the most difficult of shooters.



There are eight stages to complete but only the first six are split screen, one side versus the other. Stages seven and eight are straightforward, fullscreen vertical shoot-em-ups, against a boss sized Megagun. So it's like you have to revert to type, to finish this game off. There is some fun to be had here but this is no classic.

SCORES:

Graphics: 14 Sound: 16 Control: 17 Fun: 16

OVERALL: 76%