

Issue 25

SHOOT YOU SIR!



A FANZINE FOR SHOOT-EM-UP PLAYERS

November 2022

Hi folks and welcome to issue 25 of your favourite shooter 'zine. There is definitely a bias toward the duet of Bullet Soul games, that originally appeared on the Xbox 360 and have recently been released on Nintendo's Switch. We took one each for review and you may be interested to see what we thought of these classic shooters. As the nights draw in, it's reassuring to have our favourite genre of video game on our screens. Happy gaming.

### SHOOTER NEWS



An official web page has been launched for R-Type Final 3 - Evolved, which will be released on PS5 in the near future - Circa March 2023. The game itself has enhanced graphics from R-Type Final 2, but it does include stages from the previous game, plus 20 additional ones. Apparently a virtual reality launch scene has been included - always nice to see some CGI launch stuff prior to game play.

There is an online multiplayer mode which will be interesting to see how they do it. Evolved Enhancements - Experience the explosive adventure of R-Type on PlayStation 5, where the frenetic action of the original games meets updated 3D visuals and modern gameplay features. Universal Challenge - The performance based difficulty system adjusts to each player's individual experience, making this game accessible to new



and veteran pilots alike. Customized Loadout - Choose from a fleet of fighters from previous installments and personalize every element of your ship, including its color, weapon layout and decals. You can even customize your pilot to your liking in the hangar! New Content includes PS 5-exclusive stages created by Kazuma Kujo, and a new multiplayer mode.



**PROJECT: FZ**

A cool robot run 'n gun / side scrolling Shoot-em-up. Yes you read that correctly - Project FZ is coming to PS4 and potentially other consoles at some point in 2023. The trailer, available to view on youtube,

youtube, showcases lovely 3d back grounds with 3D sprites. It appears to be set in the future, with the trailer only giving away a city in ruins, with what appears to be an invasion force in the sky. The playable character appears to



have the ability to switch between robot for run 'n gun sections, and an aircraft. A rather cool mechanic, let's hope the transition is smooth, and the gameplay tight and fluid.

As both Graham and I love robots

& SHMUPS, this is one we will both likely be keeping an eye out for.



## SHOOTER NEWS



**Raiden III X MiKado Maniax. That's right, another Raiden re-master coming to modern consoles - PS4/5, Xbox, and Switch to be specific. The initial release date in February 23rd 2023 in Japan, and likely this will be available in UK, EU, and US and worldwide later in the year. The series, if you don't already know by now, is a 2D TATE shooter in the classical vein. Modern Raiden games, including Raiden 3, had 3D sprites,**

**and a mix of different power ups you can pick up throughout gameplay that change the attacks. The games are tough, but fun. R3XM will be including loads of extras and given a polish to help bring it to modern day consoles. New Elements Exclusive to MIKADO MANIAX – There are over 20 enhanced background music tracks! A new sound mode has also been implemented that lets you freely**



**set the background music for each stage, allowing you to experience the world of Raiden III to your liking. There is also a wallpaper customisation function and vertical screen mode for rotated displays, offering an even greater sense of immersion. A newly implemented hit detection display can be switched ON or OFF for more beginner-friendly play.**

**Easier to Play Game Modes – The game comes fully equipped with various game modes, including “Gameplay” mode, which is a complete port of the arcade game; “Score Attack Mode,” in which players compete for the high score in each stage; “Boss Rush Mode,” in which you encounter boss weapons one after the next; and more. Online Rankings and Replay Uploads – The newly implemented “World Ranking Mode” features online rankings as well as a “Replay Publish” function that allows you to share your gameplay online. Share your personally recorded gameplay with players across the country, or study your rivals’ gameplay. Utilize the game’s online functionality to compete against players worldwide. I have mixed feelings on this one, as I loved the ported version of Raiden V, but I thought Raiden IV X Mikado was a bit naff in comparison. Hopefully R3XM will be a better example. That is just my opinion though, as loads of people seemed to really enjoy R4XM. It can’t be refuted that the series is a staple in the shoot em up pantheon, and anyone that loves vertical SHMUPs, R3XM will be on their radar.**



# BULLET SOUL

Game Review  
by Graham Pike

Back when the Xbox 360 was the console for Japanese shooters, there was a wonderful flood of releases, many by Cave. Very much part of that special time, was Bullet Soul from Tachyon. Switch the game on and you start with a typical, for the time, gorgeous intro, full of anime style characters and J-Pop vocals. I love these intros. It is all part of that feel, that only Japanese games can give you. It's a kind of child like wonder, with dramatic dynamics.

Bullet Soul is essentially a vertically scrolling, 2D, arcade shooter, with a TATE style screen and playing area. If you are playing this game on the Nintendo Switch, you get the option to widen your playing area, which will still look and play great.

The Switch version has all sorts of visual adjustments, that really let the game and your TV give you your best version of this game. Start up the game and you'll soon notice that the enemy's missiles and bullets, when they or the enemy sprite firing them, have been destroyed, turn into misty versions of themselves. And this small misty clouds carry on, travelling down screen. Do not be alarmed, as these are in fact the bullet souls of the game's title, and you can gain extra points by passing through them and soaking up their spiritual energy.



That is the unusual aspect of this game. The rest of it is pure, classic,

90s style, arcade shooter. Lovely sharp visuals and gorgeously coloured, 2D sprites. Many of the backgrounds have 3D elements, that we have seen in many a more recent 2D shmup. I remember this game very fondly from when it first came out, on the 360 and firing it up today confirms that this type of fast paced arcade shooter, that mixes traditional shooter style with aspects of bullet hell games can work so well and provide hours and hours of blasting fun.

All your favourites are in there. Cartoon style power-ups, limited quantities of spectacular bombs, huge bosses, rapidly increasing difficulty etc etc. And talking of difficulty, Bullet Soul has a good curve of increase. It is fast

paced from the start but anyone with some shmup experience will enjoy overcoming the early levels and again, enjoy struggling against the relentless pressure that this game builds up to.

**BULLET SOUL**





**BULLET SOUL**

There are a ton of mystery and secret bonuses to earn and even though there is little here that is new, for the experienced shooter, there is a lot of challenge and fun, with a shed load of visual and sonic splendour. The music is mostly J-pop/rock, with some mean lead guitar work and dramatic synth play.



Bullet Soul was and is a quality shooter. it's bordering on being a classic. Perhaps not quite up there with the masters of the genre but it is close and will give any fan of the genre, a run for their money. And it is all done with shed load of Japanese gaming style. Yes, this is definitely my kind of shooter. A definite for my collection and probably yours too.

I slightly prefer the 360 version of Bullet Soul but there's not a lot in it and you can expect to pay a fair bit more for it. Either way, worth taking a good look at.



## SCORES

Graphics: 18    Sound: 18

Control: 18    Fun: 19

Lastability: 18

**OVERALL: 91%**





The first thing that probably comes to mind when the name Bullet Soul comes up is: Collecting souls!. Well, take that premise but replace the unique idea of souls and replace it with coins! Yes, another coin collecting SHMUP is just what the world needed when the devs put pen to paper for this game. As cynical as that sounds, the bottom line is that this game is

tight and plays well. Allow me to elaborate. For this review, I decided to review the recently release of BSI that has been ported to the Nintendo Switch, rather than pay hundreds of pound for the 360 version. Graham has reviewed Bullet Soul, the predecessor to this game - so go and check it out!

Firstly, let's list the changes and additions that have been included for this port release of the game: This title includes a new mode called Burst Mode, as well as Normal Mode with the conventional system and the well-known Caravan mode. In all modes, enemy placement and enemy attacks have been readjusted, allowing even players who have played through the previous title to play with a fresh mindset. In addition, the game also includes background music arranged by Jake "virt" Kaufman. The BGM can also be switched to the previous title's BGM in the settings. So anyone revisiting this game will benefit from the small alterations that have been made. Now, I have not played

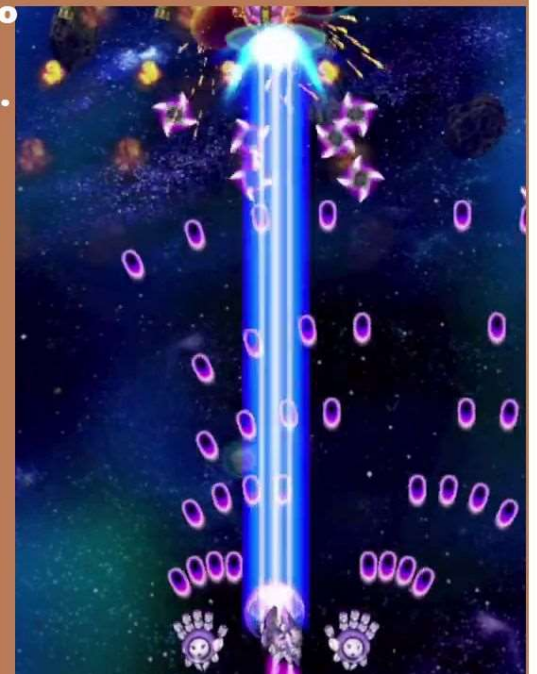


the original, so I cannot comment on an experience of the original Xbox 360 version, but I highly doubt anyone is going to poo-poo a port of a game of this standard.



Defeating enemies clears their bullets from the screen, turning some of these into coins, which can be collected for additional points. Gone are the ghosting bullets from the first game. Make of this what you will. I can only presume that this was originally seen as a potential distraction, but having played the first

part of gameplay. This gives the game a more DoDon-Pachi-like feel to the game, making it feel more like a DDP clone than an original IP. But with that said, you still have characters from the original game, plus an additional character.





Burst mode is a lot of fun, giving you an arrange mode for the game, enemy kills with close proximity chaining and coin collection being important, when burst mode is activated this increases dramatically. Destruction bonuses and mystery bonuses exist within the game. A treasure chest appears throughout the game that can be shot that gives you increased bonuses as well. So this mode is built for hi score chasers. Caravan mode is also available, but I find that I tend to prefer arrange modes to caravan modes, but anyone that feels like they have mastered the other modes may just want to take on scores and scores of enemies in the the caravan mode.

I forgot to mention, in case you are not already aware, the game is a vertical TATE shooter. In the options mode you can increase the

X and Y axis to increase the play screen size - always a plus. You can change wallpaper on the side of the gameplay area, most of which give you 2D images of the characters. This allows me to segue into the characters. In Bullet Soul infinite you start off with 4 characters available, all of which provide different types of main shot. As these are fairly large sprites with big/ wide shot styles, this Danmaku title feels at home next to Crimson Clover & DoDonPachi Resurrection on your Switch.

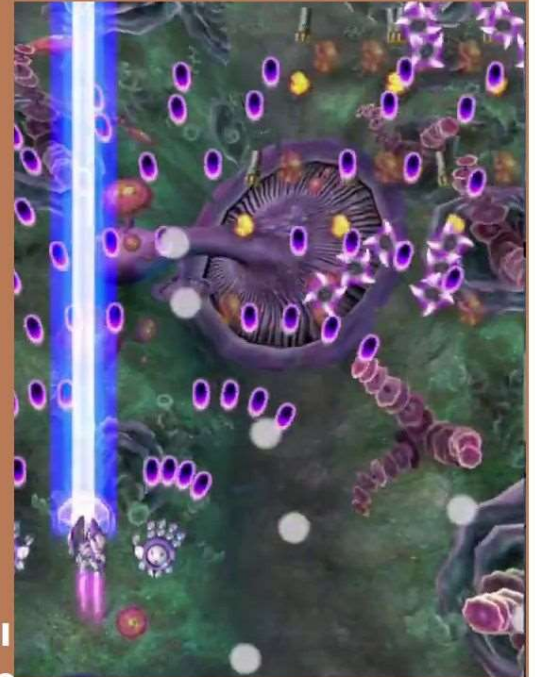


The game has five main modes: Burst mode, normal mode, Musou Mode, Bancho mode, and caravan mode.

Such a large offering means a lot of potential play time, and a worth investment for the price of the game. All the modes differ from one another in terms of scoring and enemy/pattern placements. I highly recommend burst mode or the original normal mode to begin with, and

then going on from there. Gameplay and controls are tight. This has been well developed to bring you quality gameplay. It really encourages you to play high up the screen to get those high scores, but beware when those bosses

come, as those patterns can be a right bastard. Anyone training themselves on thick vertical bullet hell games, I recommend this game next to another similar game, to allow you to help hone your skills. I think the gameplay may be a bit tighter on this sequel when compared to the first game, however I feel that the first game offers you a more original experience, and edges towards being a bit more fun overall. Visually the game is lovely. Bright sprites and bullet patterns, with great shading in environments. Enemy designs range from brilliant to so-so. I have to say, it feels less unique in the enemy department, but to be fair, there is a lot going on during gameplay, and most of the time





you will be focusing on routing and blasting enemies to smithereens. Player controlled characters feel unique from one another, all of which have bright bullet spreads, accompanied by some cool bullet animations. Some have slightly wider, more powerful main bullet spreads, and some are faster. You have a main wider spread and a slower, more beam-like attack. Stages scroll over space, ship, and interplanetary environments. These keep it simple but look good. Again, the screen will be busy most of the time, with your main opportunity to see them probably being at the start of stages.

I previously mentioned in this review that enemy sprites range from brilliant to so-so, and this probably isn't doing justice to the more impressive enemies. The developers have deliberately gone out of their way to make a range of enemy ships and more organic-looking creature enemies.

I think I've personally been spoiled by Mushihimesama and Shikondo Soul Eater, that now all other enemies feel like the orc fodder, found marauding about during the battle of Pelennor fields (Circa The Third Age). Obscure Tolkien references aside, this game not only provides the meat and potatoes needed for a fun challenge, it has done a good job providing the gravy in the form of enemy sprites.



There we go, I feel I've worked harder to portray my thoughts on the enemies found in the game, thanks for humouring me! At the start of this review I stated the bottom line is that this game is tight and plays well. I feel that this holds true even at the end of this review journey. Both ports of the Bullet Soul games are good ports with some cool additional extras thrown in, and if you haven't already got these games in your digital collection, I am sure you will in the near future. There is a limited run physical release being done for the game- I think- but at this time I do not have the full details to hand. You will need to keep an eye out, I suggest following the developer on twitter, limited run games, and your favourite friendly SHMUP reviewer, for any and all updates on physical releases.

This game in one of many classics being ported forward to modern consoles, and both Graham and I are big fans of this happening, and look forward to more classics from the Xbox 360 era being ported forward in the future!

## SCORES

Graphics: 18    Sound: 17    Control: 17

Fun: 16    Lastability: 17

**OVERALL: 85%**