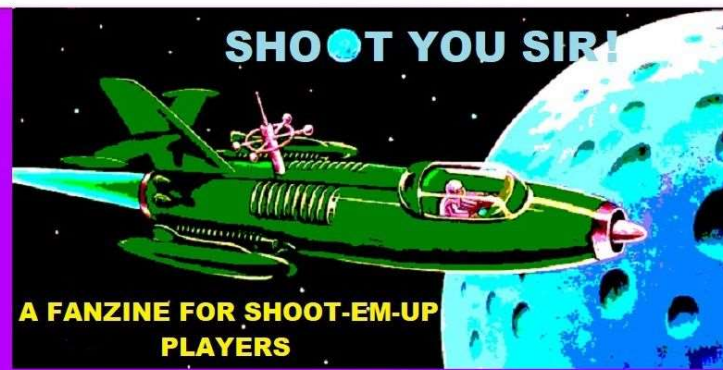


Issue 9



July 2021

Hi there and welcome to Issue 9 of your favourite shooting e-zine. Packed with the usual news, reviews and articles. I'll keep it short, as there's a lot of news this month. **COMPETITION WINNER:** The write a review and win a hard copy of Shikhondo competition, was won by Alex Rushdy. His review appears in this issue. Congrats Alex.

SHOOTER NEWS

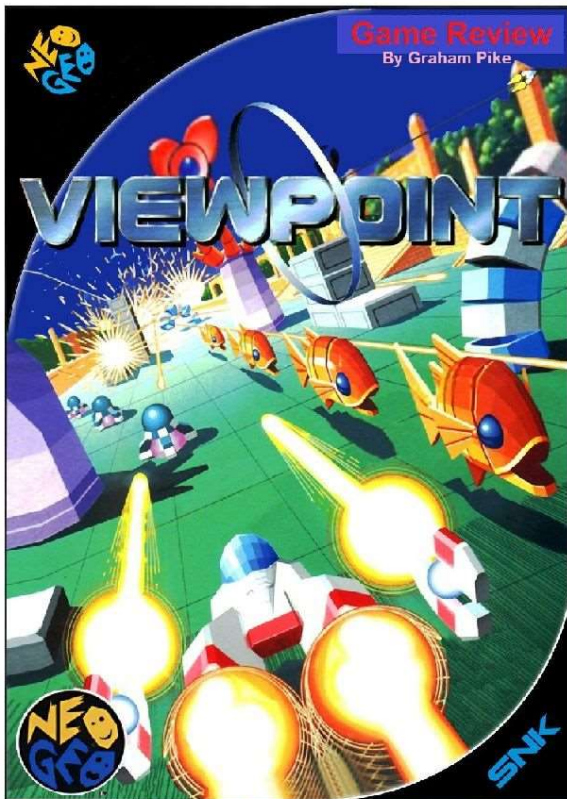
So **Graze Counter GM** was originally released on STEAM and PC in 2017, and will be making its way onto current Gen and previous Gen (PS4/ Xbox One) soon. It's a pixel art looking game with an anime aesthetic. Don't let that put you off though! It's got rather modern mechanics, and some interesting influences. You are able to select from a small number of characters, their special ability, and game difficulty. As the name suggests, you can graze up against bullets, which builds up a counter gauge. When full, you can fire a counter beam. There's a lot of information about the game online, suggesting that it borrows some ideas from a lot of bigger named titles, previously released back in the 90's and 00's. Whether it manages to pull this off is another thing altogether, but it does look like it plays well from footage I have seen. I plan on getting this game and will do a full review on it for a future Shoot You Sir issue.

A smaller bit of news for readers here: **Dariusburst Another Chronicle EX+** release has been delayed in the west to July 27th. This game is already available for those with Japanese accounts, and will be released in the west with G Darius later in 2021. The game itself remains true to the multiple screen, arcade Darius games, with lush graphics. The game play area takes up just over a half the screen horizontally - with black borders on the top and bottom of the screen. Sprites are detailed and well animated, but small, with the ratio and format used. You can zoom in with a trigger button which is handy. Darius mechanics are to be had, as one might expect.



Cave Games Coming to Switch. For anyone that hasn't seen me post this information all over twitter like there's no tomorrow: Cave have released Mushihimesama on Nintendo Switch stores! This will include the UK/EU, Japan, and US. Cave also announced that DoDonPachi Daifukkatsu (known as resurrection in the EU) and Espgaluda II will also be released on Nintendo Switch later in the year. This is a game changer from Nintendo, who seem to have struck such an impressive deal. The beautifully brilliant underdog are managing to provide for a SHMUP niche, an area where Sony and Microsoft are only offering crumbs. As of time of writing, these releases are exclusively Nintendo only, but we will keep you informed of any information of these Cave games being ported over to PSN & Xbox stores.

I have reviewed Mushihimesama for PS2 in a previous issue of Shoot You Sir, but it is my pleasure to say that the version that has been ported to Switch is the HD Xbox 360 version of the game - what a treat! I may do a comparison of the ports for a later issue. Make sure you head over to Nintendo Switch for all the Cave goodies yet to come! This could potentially spark a great relationship between Cave and Nintendo, and that is only a good thing.



Game Review
By Graham Pike

I remember getting my first sight of Viewpoint. I was in a rough, old, pool hall, that had six or seven arcade machines, at the back. I'd been playing some Neo Geo fighting game, when I spotted an unusual looking game, in the corner. It was a Neo Geo game but it looked nothing like any Neo game I'd seen before. So I fed some coins in and something special started. This was a gorgeous, diagonal (iso-metric) scrolling shoot-em-up. It not only looked different from every other Neo Geo game, it sounded different, too.

I had to wait for the home cartridge version and when it appeared, it was the priciest game ever. £220 and this is back in 1992. So I waited for another month, for a second batch to appear and forked out £180.



Still a lot of cash, for me anyway. But yes, it was well worth it. Viewpoint has somehow, never lost it's appeal and glamour, in my view. It is one tough S.O.A.B. but that just makes you love it more. Because you are desperate to see the next stage and all the wonders that lay within it.

Developed by Aicom and put out by Sammy, this 1992 classic, made it onto a number of other gaming platforms. Neo Geo CD, PSOne, Megadrive, FM Towns Marty, and Sega's Saturn. Yet in my view, none of them quite equalled the Neo Geo cartridge (MVS/AES) version.



For a change, let's start with the music. Composer Sizlla Okamura created a soundtrack that did just what music for a video game should do. And that is to completely enhance the gamer's experience and at the same time, get the perfect balance between being entertaining but never distracting. Where most Neo Geo games at the time, used synthetic rock soundtracks, Viewpoint confidently sequenced between lounge jazz and hip-hop stylings.

The gameplay was definitely inspired by the Sega game, Zaxxon. Viewpoint however, took it to an almost perfect state of affairs. Some of you may not know, that although Viewpoint is essentially a one player game, on the arcade version, there was a Service Mode, where two player co-op was available. Either way, this isometrically viewed, scrolling shooter, blends the dodge and shoot style, with memorized strategy play, pretty much perfectly.

The graphics were and still are simply stunning. A 3Desque, isometric world, where your enemies can be mechanized fish, turtles, crabs, springs, hornets, dragons, gun turrets, spinning cogs, serpents etc etc.





Game review cont.....

The play is simple. Rapid fire, hold down for a poweredup blast or three types of bomb. The bombs are a screen filling wall of fire, a multitude of homing missiles or a radiating, destructive force field.

As I've said, this is a hard game. From the word go, you have to be moving and thinking fast. And sometimes you just have to learn the enemy's strategies, the hard way. But hard as it may be, I have never come across a shoot-em-up that makes you want to have just

one more try, like Viewpoint. There can be frustration but you keep on playing and there's such elation, when you make it to the end of a section or stage. Because when your space ship gets destroyed, you have to start from the beginning of the section you are on. There's no quarter for the slow witted, here. So yes, I do highly recommend Viewpoint. It's definitely in my top five shoot-em-ups of all time.



SCORES

Graphics: 19

Sound: 19

Control: 18

Fun: 20

Lastability: 20

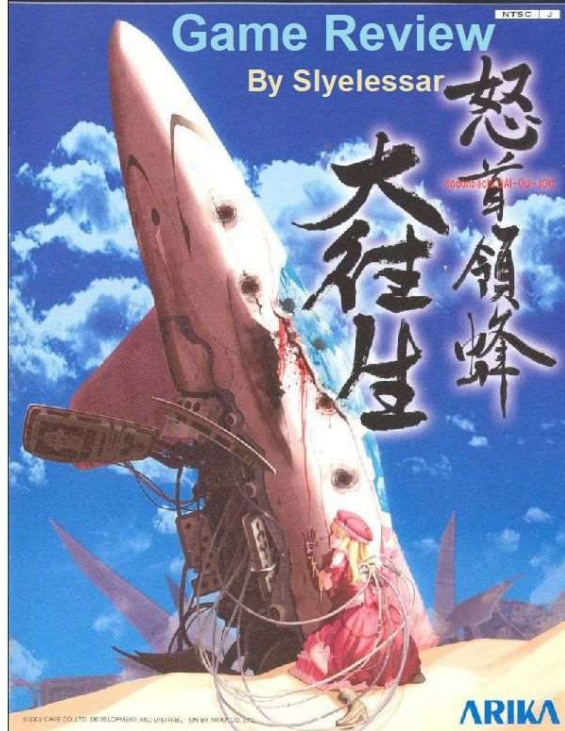
OVERALL: 96%



In every genre there is a series with legendary status and the SHMUP genre is littered with games from series that not only have lasted the the passing of time but also have continued to be a main stay on the next generation of consoles, that have been released. However, there are few SHMUP series, that have had the far reaching influence and notoriety, that the DonPachi or DoDonpachi series has. Being notorious as Cave's peak for hardcore SHMUP's, the series has it's origins deep rooted in arcades, that all started with the game DonPachi. I will do a more focused in-depth overview of the series in a future issue but it is important to touch on the history of such a special series. DoDonPachi DOJ is the fourth game in the series and a lot of people consider it to be one of the toughest and best made SHMUPS ever.

With that said, how does the game actually play? Well, I was not joking when I mentioned the series being notoriously hardcore, this thing is a Titan of Cave development and a bitch of a challenge. This is not a game for people new to SHMUPS, it will not ease you in and it will not let you sit along for the ride.

Visually the the game looks brilliant. In fact, you may recognise a lot of similarities to other series, that have been



influenced by the very look and gameplay style, the game has to offer. This is a 2D arcade Yoko shooter, that has the classic Cave look and feel to it. Backgrounds are detailed and look great. Sprites are well designed and are well animated. Bosses are big bastards and throw insane bullet sweeps and patterns at you. The player has a choice of two aircraft, with different looks and bullet styles and 3 'dolls' or characters. Your shot fire and focus beam look great and are well animated. The game is fairly colourful and you will find you are fighting all manor of army based enemies. Once again, there have been so many clones of the visuals of these games, you will be more than familiar with the look, even if you have never heard of any of the DonPachi series of games. I have scored this game a 17 out of 20 for graphics as it is the PS2 version of the game. The Xbox Black Label version of this game (don't bother with the white label version) would score higher, as the graphics are more enhanced and closer to the arcade machines.

The music in this game is very tasty, with a lot of synth and rock riff heavy tracks, that have now become synonymous with Cave games. The sound effects are



ballsy and really add to the immersion. The announcer for the game really reminds me of 90's and early 90's arcade ports, with slightly modulated voice, saying things like 'watch out! watch out!' when a boss approaches, or 'good luck!' at the start of a level. This is quite endearing and still gets a chuckle every time I face a boss (until they wipe the happy smile off of my face!).

Joking aside, this game does have an easy mode, which as you expect is closer to normal mode for most other games. This game continues with the controls from the previous games.



GAME REVIEW CONT..... One main shot, a focus shot and a bomb. Movement is really tight, and going from your main shot to the focus shot allows you to really quickly force your aircraft to slow down, stopping you from slamming into one of the bomb patterns that just whirled past. It shows that the controls have been honed throughout the series and you won't get any arguments from most people in regard to controls, since they are well done. This game has a new addition to the onscreen HUD, compared to the previous title: A hyper bar. This bar is built up by chaining, collecting golden bee coins

and... dying. Once this bar is filled, a hyper item drops down the screen for you to collect (unless in boss battle). You can hold up to 5 items at a time. Activating the hyper uses all the items up, allows you to be invulnerable for a short period of time, depending on how many items you picked up. This shows as golden shot fire and golden beams from your aircraft. The downside to activating the hyper is enemy bullets become faster (putting the game up a difficulty mode) until you die or use a bomb attack. It will start like this even when you hyper runs out. Whilst in hyper mode any uncollected hyper items become big stars, for extra points.

The biggest mark against this game, some people may mark it as a plus, is that it is bloody hard. It's also not as fun as other challenging games like Mushihimesama (PS2/360) or Viewpoint (Neo Geo). If you get good at this game, it is probably the most satisfying feeling you could have with a SHMUP. Now, I'm not bad at SHMUPS, but I'm no world champion either. I can hold my own for the first couple of levels of DOJ and then I'm always chewed up, spat out, trod on. Lit on fire, pissed on, and then detonated with C4. I love the challenge this game provides though, I think that if I spent weeks playing this game alone, locked in a room, I would feel the progression made in skill level. Whenever I play this game for an hour or two and then go to another SHMUP, I ace the other SHMUP and feel like a total badass. With all the joking aside, this game has its moments and the spike in difficulty allows you to feel very good when you get through a level without using a continue. This game is not built for new comers and for that reason alone I have scored it lower than a lot of people would for the 'Fun' score. My apologies to any big fans of this game, I really like it but it's rare that I have a lot of fun playing it. There are moments though and I feel like a king when they happen.



This particular game in the series, along with a couple of the others, are so big for their boots that they will continue to be sort out by SHMUP enthusiasts. I would love a port of the entire series onto switch or PS5. If the M2 Shock Triggers could get their hands on the rights to even DDPDOJ, I think the internet and SHMUP fans would all jump for joy at the same time! There is a deeper story to the DonPachi series than you see on the surface level, with the game hinting at certain things and hiding certain endings behind large skill walls that will take a lot of practice to beat. No spoilers, but it's a very dark series in regard to the story. It is worth trying several games from this series, as one will likely stick and there are less difficult (and potentially more difficult) games within the series. I am aiming to get one or two for the 360 and one or two for the PS1, so keep your eyes peeled over the coming months!

Just as an aside, if you are a massive DoDonPachi fan and are wondering why I have scored this less than the Ketsui Deathtiny review by Graham on a previous issue, please bear in mind the PS4 version of Ketsui Deathtiny by the M2 Shot Triggers Team carries with it a whole host of extras, as well as enhanced graphics, more modes and can be played on PS4 AND on a PS5. This review is specifically of the DDPDOJ Back Label release on PS2 and requires either a Japanese PS2, slide tool/ disc, or some sort of modification to your PAL or US NTSC PS2 to play. Making this game rather more obscure and dated. With that said, give it a go!

SCORES

GRA:17 SND:18 CON:19 FUN:15 LAST:20 OVERALL:89%

SUCCESS

株式会社サクセス

Let's Focus On A Developer

Success are a Japanese games company, and were formed on the 7th June 1978. They are based in Shinagawa, Tokyo and are mostly known for their Cotton series of shooters. Success have produced many games, in a number of genres but they deservedly earn a place in many shooter fans' hearts.

Success's first shooter and indeed first Cotton game was Cotton: Fantastic Night Dreams. It appeared in Japanese arcades in 1991 and featured the shooting witch Cotton and her sidekick, Silk. This was the start of a rather special series of games, that embraced good shooting action and colourful, fairytale graphics; combining them to excellent effect. Second in the Cotton series was Cotton 100%, which was originally programmed for the Super Famicom, coming out in 1994. It also made it onto Sony's Playstation.

Also in 1994, came the third in the series, Panorama Cotton, on Sega's Megadrive. And Success took a real side step, making a 3Desque "Space Harrier" style shooter.



Not really what you may want or expect, it was a reasonable effort, nevertheless. Not quite so cool, was another into the screen, 3Desque effort, called 3D-Shooting Tsukuru, that appeared in 1996.

Coming to their senses, Success returned to the 2D world and released the fourth Cotton game, Cotton 2: Magical Night Dreams, a real arcade sequel to the original game. Where you could play the young witch Cotton or her rival Appli who had her own sidekick, called Needle. And here the shooting/fighting/RPG influences continued in style.

Success brought out 2 shooters in 1998. Guardian Force saw them go for a vertical shooter. And although it

was very dated graphically and sonically, it played pretty well and maybe be considered a cult classic. Cotton Boomerang: Magical Night Dreams, seemed to to be just a rehash of Cotton 2: Magical Night Dreams.

2000 saw the release of Psyvariar - Medium Unit, a rather tasty looking, vertical shooter, that used the Buzz system, where each time an enemy unit or bullet got close to the player's fighter without destroying it, a "buzz" occurs. For each buzz, the fighter gains experience. When the fighter gains sufficient experience, it's level increases and it becomes temporarily invulnerable. During that period, the fighter can inflict damage to enemies. by colliding. Players can use this short period to risk buzzing more bullets to quickly reach the next level or avoid difficult bullet patterns.



2000 also saw Rainbow Cotton, another into-the-screen 3Dish shooter, like Panorama Cotton, developed for Sega's Dreamcast. And Sanvein, a rather less impressive, top-down, multi-directional shooter; developed for the Playstation.

Psyvariar 2: The Will to Fabricate was released in 2003 by Success but was actually developed by SKONEC, who also developed an Extended Edition and Ultimate Final version of the game, in 2004.

In 2008, on the Xbox 360, Success produced Raiden Fighter Aces, a compilation of the 3 Raiden Fighter shooting games.

Success have produced a vast range of other games and are still going, but in my view have given the shoot-em-up world, two really good shooter series; Cotton and Psyvariar.



SUCCESS

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Game Review



By
Alex
Rushdy

Originally released in 1994 to arcades, Darius Gaiden is the third mainline entry in the esteemed Darius series. While previous Darius games were famous for their horizontal scrolling across multiple television screens (2 or 3 screens depending on the arcade cabinet), Gaiden opts for a single screen. While this might seem like a downgrade compared to its brethren, Gaiden is anything but a downgrade and is arguably the peak of the entire Darius series and one of the greatest horizontal shmups of all time.

You take control of the Silver Hawk and must navigate your way through 7 stages in order to fend off the evil Belsar army. The catch is that, like previous Darius games, there are a total of 26 stages and you can choose your route as you go. The game has 7 different final bosses with 7 different endings, and a number of different routes to get there. This keeps the replayability high despite



the overall length of a single play being around 30 minutes. The Silver Hawk can shoot enemies with both a forward shot and a bomb that comes out of the ship at an angle to dispatch ground-based enemies. As you collect red power-ups you can upgrade your shot from "missile" to "laser" to "wave" to "wave lv2" to wave lv3"- each upgrade having multiple tiers and adding new features like piercing through enemies, piercing through levels, homing shots, and the like. The challenge though, is that different levels of shots have varying levels of power and the higher level does not always mean better. There is a trade off between raw damage and the ability to pierce through

objects, leading to a delicate and calculated dance of grabbing and avoiding power-ups at key points in the game to optimize damage against bosses and captains (more on those later). Dying will set you back one entire shot level, so even death isn't the end of your run and it always feels like you can recover. You can also upgrade your bomb level, culminating in four bombs coming from all angles



of your ship with homing properties. In addition you can use the "black hole bomber" to clear the screen of bullets and enemies. One of the power-ups available is the blue "shield" powerup that allows you to take a few extra hits before you would die. This takes what might be an inaccessible genre to some and makes the challenge much more reasonable. Coupled with black hole bombs, this makes a 1cc much more reasonable for even new players. It should also be noted that most editions of Darius Gaiden include a 30hz turbofire option in addition to the standard autofire rate. The inclusion of this rate of fire is somewhat controversial as it was not included natively in the original arcade and Saturn releases, but Taito officially offered it through modified arcade cabinets and cheats. Now it has become standard in all releases of the game and in arcade cabinets as well as being the standard for scoring.



DARIUS GAIDEN - GAME REVIEW CONTINUED

Captains are another new feature of Darius Gaiden. Midway through most levels you will encounter a very powerful enemy with a glowing orb on their head. If you damage the orb enough, without killing the enemy you can capture them and they will temporarily join you in battle, offering extra fire power and a juicy score bonus. This mechanic would be greatly expanded in the sequel, G-Darius.

The depth of Gaiden's mechanics is something that cannot simply be encapsulated in a reasonably-sized review of the game but the aforementioned mechanics offer a significant amount of replayability and variability, to keep every run of the game fresh and exciting. You could theoretically play this game for hundreds of hours and still discover new tricks, secrets, routes, and scoring opportunities.

Or you could stick to one tried and true route and keep refining it for hours on end. That's the beauty of the game. Speaking of beauty, the visuals are among the finest 2D pixel work of their time. Lavishly detailed and exquisitely animated, the game is basically a showcase for Taito's pixel pushing at their 2D peak. The hardware used to run Gaiden is also capable of outputting some incredibly impressive "pseudo-3D" effects and multiple layers of parallax.



Complimenting the visuals is Zuntata's haunting soundtrack, with the vocal track "VISIONNERZ" playing over the first two stages, being a real standout. You won't find rock, drum and bass, or techno like you would expect with a typical shmup, instead opting for an experimental, almost jazz-like soundtrack that escapes description. It works in tandem with the visuals to create an

eerie, otherworldly feel, totally unlike other shmups. All in all, it's hard to find much fault with Darius Gaiden. The only major issue I can think of is that the score pickups are entirely random, meaning running the game for score at a competitive level can be a tad frustrating. Given their limited impact on the overall score and the level of play required for this to have an effect, it's hardly an issue (though I do wish there was an arrange mode that fixed this).

If you love 2D shmups, especially horizontal, you owe it to yourself to pick up this title. I highly recommend you grab the Cosmic Collection version available on Nintendo Switch and PS4. Input lag is minimal, emulation is flawless, and it features gadgets, training mode, and leaderboards.



SCORES

Graphics: 19 Sound: 18
Controls: 19 Fun: 19
Last-ability: 20 OVERALL: 95%

Originally released in arcades, in 1996, Battle Garegga later found it's console home on the Sega Saturn. Ahhhh, the Saturn - fond memories! In 2016 Battle Garegga was ported by M2's Shot Triggers Team, the wonderful people that also ported ESP.Ra.De and Ketsui to modern consoles. B.G. is a lot different to a Cave game however, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. So what do I mean by this? Well, Cave type games tend to route out a lot of their bullet hell patterns where you have to take them on a particular way and requires you to get skilful at it quickly without dying. That is not to say Cave games are all the same but rather that this is a positive attribute, you can see across their games. Battle Garegga allows you to take on the game slightly differently each time, without punishing you for taking a more obscure route through or around the bullets. But don't get me wrong, this is a very challenging game at higher difficulties but offers something quite different to those beloved Cave cannon of games.

Graphically, the game is somewhat more basic looking compared to a contemporary, such as DoDonPachi.



In fact, it is a lot closer aesthetically to Aero Fighters 2 on Neo Geo. It has a 1940s type look early on and then this evolves into a more space fighting/ futuristic looking game, the further you go on, with more colour found throughout. The graphics work well with the theme of the game but sometimes there are small brown bullets that move across a grey spaceship background, that take you by surprise. It's things like this that sometimes make you feel cheated, however if you keep your eye on the middle of the screen, these are a lot easier to avoid. Sprites look decent enough, and there is a lot of different designs to be found from the different enemies. You get a choice of 4 planes/ ships, but what is really cool is that you can unlock further characters hidden in the game, thanks to the M2 Shock Triggers menu system. If you press the right side of the touch pad on the PS4 or PS5 controller, you bring up the pause menu. From here select 'Option Settings'. From there, go into 'Other Settings', and turn the first English option currently showing "off" and change it to 'on'. You will now access four other characters from the sorcer striker series, including a dragon. Yes, a dragon! I find that this opens the game up more, and adds a bit more colour and depth. I personally did not do this until later on, giving the game some lastability.



Sound-wise the game is limited by the technology of the time but that does not stop the game from having a decent soundtrack. A lot of atmospheric synth sounds and driving, digital drum sounds throughout. The sound effects are great, and help keep you focused and enjoying the game. It's not a game I would personally buy a soundtrack of but then I don't generally buy soundtracks anyway.

At first I was unsure, coming out of DoDonPachi and rolling Gunner, it took a short while for me to get used to the controls of the game. The players ship(s) are responsive and agile and speed at which

the bullets fire out of your ship is rather satisfying.



Review cont.....

You have the solid, basic, control scheme: Shoot & bomb. Each ship has a slightly different bullet output and bomb combination and one of them even has a flame thrower bomb attack! Weaving around the enemy becomes second nature, as even with the analog stick, you are able to glide in and out of patterns and up and down the screen very well. The M2 gadget also allows a lot of control over how the game looks and plays but more about that later.

After playing the game a few times, I realise why this game is so popular: It's a lot of fun. There's a challenge but it is also welcoming to newcomers on easier modes. Fear not, harder modes will test your abilities to their limits. Normal feels just right in terms of balance and that is important, as some games can be fairly brutal on normal and others fairly lame on hard. The further you play the game, the more power-ups you pick up and you get extra drones, that do different things depending on which ship you chose - a nice add-age. Did I mention this game has a line graph for ranking? I didn't but you can't go wrong with a line graph in a SHMUP. The PS4 version also comes with trophies and there is something about one of these pinging off, when you are totally owning the storm of bullets being thrown at you, from all sides.

This is one SHMUP that is likely to be around for as long as there are consoles to port it on. The challenge and fun alone have seen this game been brought forward from the arcade, to 90's consoles, and now modern consoles thank's to M2's Shot Triggers team. M2 have added a lot more to the game than the previous ports had going for them: save states, screen rotation, different borders and the M2 gadget that allows you to add or remove all sorts of information. There's a lot of replay value here and you can even unlock 4 extra characters, which are quite different to the ships your start with. I would love M2 Shot Triggers Team to start porting more SHMUPs to the Switch and PS4/5, as they are doing a fantastic job bringing these to a new generation of SHMUP players.

SCORES

Graphics: 14 Sound: 15 Control: 18
Fun: 19 Lastability: 19 OVERALL: 85%

