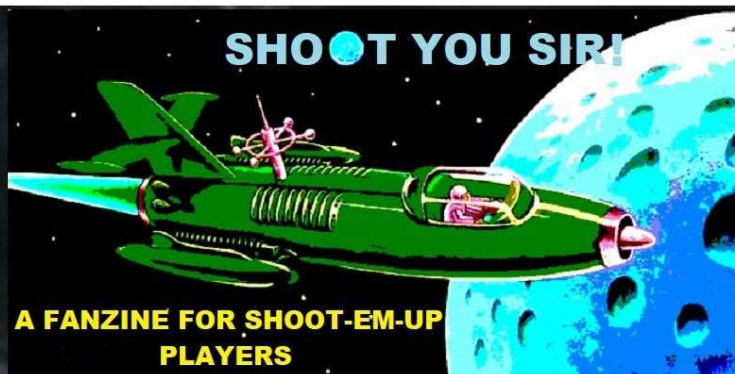


Issue 11



September
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Hello there and welcome the the eleventh issue of Shoot You Sir! Nearly been going for a year now. Through fair weather and foul and a dastardly pandemic, we continue to rant on about our favourite type of video game, the blessed shoot-em-up. I am very glad to say that one of the fanzine's subscribers has sent in a rather good review of the pretty rare, arcade shooter, **Nostradamus**. You'll find it a couple of pages in. So cheers Paul, for that. There is also a rather lengthy article that covers the entire **DoDonPachi** series of games. Whether you are a DDP fanatic, or have never played one of the series, it's worth a peruse, to get the flavour of this awesome, shmup series from Cave. So please read on and enjoy. And don't forget, we'd be very grateful for any 'zine input from you, the readers. Happy gaming.

SHOOTER NEWS

Espgaluda II for Switch will be releasing on September 9th, as announced by the publishers, Live Wire and the Developer, Cave. This is one of five Cave games being released this year on the Switch; the first was **Mushihimesama** and **ESPG2** is next. **Death Smiles 1 & 2** have been announced for a December release. Unfortunately, **DoDonPachi Resurrection**, has not yet received a release date, so it could be any time between October and December or even into 2022. You can watch Graham and I play **Espgaluda II** on the Sunaru Gaming youtube channel. We have also discussed this game in the Shoot You Sir Podcast on the same channel – and Podbean in MP3 form!



Death Smiles 1 & 2 can now be pre-ordered via physical copy from **City Connections** official Japanese site – you can put an order in from the UK & Europe, so do not fret! I have tweeted **City Connection's** tweet with both trailer and link to this, on my twitter page: [@slyel-essar](#). You should be able to have a gander from there!

If you do not know much about **Death Smiles** then you have been living under a rock for some time. **DS1&2** are horizontal gothic-come-anime looking SHMUPS. Graham has covered the first game in a previous S.Y.S! **Death Smiles 1 & 2** are due for release on Switch, PS4/5, and Xbox Live on December 16th 2021 – so make sure this is on your calendar (or Christmas List!).

Planned for a 2022 release, **Valfaris: Mecha Therion** is a scrolling shoot em up sequel to a platform action game. The main character **Therion**, returns piloting a metal colossus as he is contiuing to pursue lord **Vroll**. The game features multiple levels, a range of melee, ballistic, and destroyer class weapons. Visuals and sprites look brilliant, with a very gothic-come-metal look to them.





This is a horizontal shooter from developers Saurus, for the Neo Geo CD console, that came out in 1996. It never got officially released on SNK's AES or MVS systems. However there was an unreleased prototype for the MVS arcade system and of course, hardcore Neo Geo fans got their hands on it. So, start the game up and some flickering, sepia photos come up, of trashed mechs. This intro has mournful music and you definitely get the impression that something destructively tragic has gone on.

Then the game demo follows and you see that this game's graphics are quite different from almost all other Neo Geo shooters. This is a traditional, 2D scroller, yet the visuals have a more CGI look to them, rather than the 90's, hand drawn look, you may have expected. Yet the sprites are very nicely done. Sharp and quite stylishly designed. The semi "realistic" backgrounds are quite nicely detailed and occasionally animated but they mostly, don't really gel with the sprites as well as you'd expect from a Neo Geo game. At times, the fore and backgrounds seem totally unrelated. Having said all that, some of the backgrounds are beautifully lit, with atmospheric colouring. So, press Start and choose from 4 difficulty levels, then you get a nicely presented Controls demo, which shows you how to control your hero sprite's front satellite, which can be used to defend your jet, when attached or sent off to shoot at foes, from a variety of positions. You then see that there are choices of route, as you progress through the stages, which bodes well



for the game's longevity. Finally you start play and the 1st stage is a destroyed town, in flames. As you may have guessed from the game's intro. And it has to be said that this flaming environment looks good. Gameplay is fairly basic. Bash your A button for the traditional, forward shot. Hold the A down, then release, for a powerful, forward shot, that sends your satellite out before you. The B button drags the satellite back onto the front of your jet. The C button release a screen wide bomb. There are plenty of power-ups to release and collect and I have to say that straight away, I am liking Brikinger. It may not be the toughest shooter but it creates a nice vibe and is good fun, from the outset. It's look is not quite steam punk, but it does have a slightly retro look and feel, to it's futuristic design. Your enemies are both air and ground based and the earth based foes are of the heavily armoured type. This includes a vintage style, war train. Things obviously get tougher, as you progress and the hugemid and end of stage bosses are wierd and wonderful, mechanical marvels.

The firepower gets quite hectic but never overwhelming. And the trick, as is so often, is to learn the boss's attack patterns. Because at times their attacks will be unavoidably rapid, so you really need to think ahead. Most enemies fire directly at you but some have targeted missile or mortar attacks. So watch out for when those targets appear and be elsewhere. As I've said, the graphics don't always integrate that well and perspective can look a little odd, at times. But overall the sprites are inventive, as are the enemy's attack patterns.

The music is decent enough, if a little dated, even for 1996 but it's nothing special and the SFX again do the job but don't lift the game, Could do with more oomph. Your hero jet controls pretty well, although it is not super speedy. This is not an elite level shoot-em-up but it is a little bit different and fun.



Your hero jet has a good variety of firepower, which will need you to adapt your play to it. For instance, there's a shot that creates a large, very slow moving, fire circle. It's destructive but requires you to move in a lot closer to your foes. Also, clever use of satellite attacks are very satisfying.





Overall Ironclad is a bit of a mixed bag. At times it seems like a cool, wacky, arcade shooter. At other times it's more like a poorly programmed, PC shooter. It's stages aren't overly long or super tough but they are no push over either. Having choices of routes through the 6 stages,



definitely helps with the games longevity. As does the game's oddball, fun factor. It's no classic and I couldn't say I'd highly recommend it either. But I do think it's worth getting hold of, as you'll keep returning to play it, though not as often as some perhaps. I remember buying the import Neo Geo CD of Brikinger when it was first released, back in 1996. It seemed quite cool, mainly as it looked very



different from most other Neo Geo games. But to be honest, in some ways, it didn't seem like a Neo Geo game at all. The thing was though, that it became, quite quickly, a bit of a rarity and it's value seemed to go up and up.



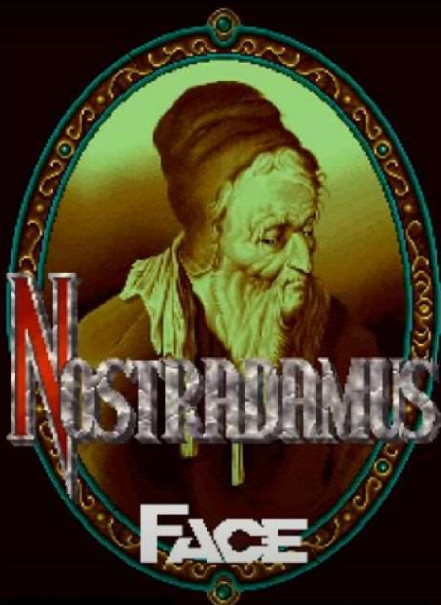
Looking at the game today, it still seems a bit out there, on it's own. A slightly quirky oddity, from the mid 90s. But it's all that, that kind of makes it worth taking a look at. So why don't you?

SCORES

Graphics: 16
Sound: 14
Control: 17



Fun: 15
Lastability: 14
Overall: 76%



Nostradamus was a French astrologer, who is best known for predicting future events. He apparently predicted events such as The Great Fire of London, the French Revolution, the rise of Hitler and also, the end of the world! "In the year 1999 and seven months, The Great King of Terror shall Come from the sky." The developers at **Face** thought this made a great concept for a game and so decided to run with it!

Face are a Japanese developer mainly famous for developing games for the PC Engine. They also made Money Money Puzzle Exchanger for the Neo Geo and two arcade shmups. The first was **Sand Scorpion**, a pretty shameless Raiden clone, released in 1992 and **Nostradamus** released just a year later in 1993. Nostradamus was only released in the arcades and remains a very obscure game, even amongst shmup fans. The PCBs are

Game Review By **Paul Dobson** very hard to come by and the Japanese version fetches a very steep price so **Mame** is the best option for trying it out.

Lets have a look at what makes it so interesting: A choice of 2 ships is available by



Nostradamus review cont....

playing as either player 1 or player 2. Player one: Dallas: Dallas has both offensive and defensive capabilities with homing shots when it's fully powered up. Player 2 Joanna: Joanna has by far the most powerful ship and is attack focussed. Once its fully powered up is pretty much unstoppable. Simply hammering the fire button is enough to decimate bosses. The game has a unique weapons system called the E.B.A (Energy Boost Activator) that is powered from a single button. When the shot button is held down, 2 options at either side of your ship move outwards and create an energy column. Releasing the charged EBA causes large damage to enemies. It can also be released half way through charging for a less powerful shot. The EBA also has a couple of extra uses: The beam can be

used to absorb enemy shots and you can use it to cause physical damage to enemies by ramming it into them. There is a choice of 2 types of EBA that can be collected depending on if you grab a red or blue pod. 1. Plasmic Wave (blue). The Plasmic wave creates a huge vertical column of plasma energy that stretches in front and behind the ship so is good for attack and defence. 2. Phoenix Wave (red). The Phoenix Wave creates a Phoenix like wing that attacks enemies directly in front of the ship for large damage. The game features no smart bomb, so allowing plenty of time to charge the EBA is a strategic necessity. You have one last trick up your sleeve: when you get shot down its possible to steer your ship kamikaze style into enemies, to inflict extra damage. The music in Nostradamus is one of the only bad points. It features an orchestral soundtrack that drowns out the great SFX and brings the mood down. The game boasts some amazing background graphics and effects, especially in the later stages. Notable set pieces include battling a mid-boss through a high speed chase in a star field, on stage 4. A graphically impressive undulating desert canyon on stage 7, and some huge biomechanical worms and dragonflies that need to be carefully navigated through right at the end of the game on stage 9. Annoyingly some of the earlier stages such as 2 and 3 are a bit lack lustre and given the steep difficulty curve will be the most players will get to see, before their credit runs out! Nostradamus has a staggering 9 stages and given the high difficulty, it poses a massive challenge to complete. The later stages in particular are pretty unfair. Quite a few of the boss bullet patterns are recycled throughout, so once you have the hang of dodging them, life is made easier.

If you enjoy discovering unique and obscure arcade games, I'd highly recommend firing Nostradamus up on Mame.

SCORES

Graphics: 17

Sound: 12

Control: 17

Fun: 16

Lastability: 18

Overall: 80%



The DonPachi or DoDonPachi series of games have a very high level status amongst SHMUP players. In fact, it is Cave's flagship series of games. In this article I will be going over all the games individually, noting important differences between the console versions, doing a mini review and an overall score for each game. A small caveat before we begin: this will cover arcade information and ports to consoles only. There will be no info on PC emulation or the like mentioned, as you will be able to find that sort of thing elsewhere. All the games mentioned in this article are vertical TATE SHMUPS, of the Cave bullet hell variety. The developer Cave Interactive Co., LTD formed in 1994 in Japan by former members of the developers Toaplan. I did a Focus on Developer article on Cave in Shoot You Sir Issue 5, so go and check that out if you are interested to learn more about Cave. Now, let's Rock'n'Roll.

DonPachi: G16 - S17 - C19 - F15 - L15 - Score: 82%

It all started here in 1995, when Cave decided to release their first Shoot Em Up game (publish by Atlus). It was later ported onto Sega Saturn in April 1996 and the original Playstation in October '96. There was some controversy around the publisher Atlus wanting the game to be a more Toaplan-type shooter, but with the newly formed members of Cave deciding the game should have different elements to the previous Toaplan titles. This is the start of what would eventually evolve into what the series and CAVE became renown for: Hard-core bullet hell titles.



Mini Review:

Now, Donpachi itself is a rather tough as nails game, but less so than later titles in the series. You get big bright sprites, mostly with a military based theme. Bosses are big military machines, with a lot of artillery, and fire quick bullet patterns across the screen. The environments you find yourself in within the stages are colourful, simple, and interesting – but lets face it you will be focusing on the onslaught of bullets most of the time. Earlier levels are approachable, but later levels will require practice to navigate enemy waves and patterns. The scoring system (known as 'get point system' or GPS), allows players to destroy large numbers of enemies or chains of enemies to build up a 'combo', much like a fighting game. This is something that would later become a fairly regular thing in both STG's and the sequels alike. The game has 5 areas or stages, with the game allowing for an extra loop. The game features good sound effects that suit the visuals of the game, especially the big types of shot available. Players can use main shot (Power ups boost the look and damage dealt), sustained beam (slows down movement for a powerful beam blast straight up the screen), and bomb attack, which will clear the screen of bullets and damages enemies. This cemented the controls for pretty much the entire series, and for other future Cave titles such as Mushihemisama. As well as a large number of SHMUP clones and games that borrow this feature from this series. DonPachi is an enjoyable well programmed game, and a good way to experience what the early days of Cave were like, but it can fetch a pretty penny on the used market for both Saturn & Playstation respectively. Overall, it plays a lot more like a classic SHMUP hinting at bullet hell, rather than being a full Danmaku type. This comes down to the speed of the bullets and the way the bullets move, with much less slower relentless need-to-find-a-route patterns, which you find in the sequel DoDonPachi onwards.



Story (with spoilers):

Players assume the role of a pilot whose mission is to survive an eight-year-long training mission, where he/she proves his worth as a fighter and gain entry to the future elite "DonPachi Squadron". Spoiler: The twist lies in the fact that the enemies are, in truth, the players' very own comrades posing as enemies and sacrificing their lives for the sake of allowing only the most skilled pilots to pass the test and survive. After completing the first loop, it is revealed that the commander tells the pilot to continue the missions of fighting against fellow troop members until one side is completely destroyed, with the second loop taking place seven years later. After defeating Hachi, the story reveals the commander's "mission" was to turn the existing army into a race of super soldiers. However, since the missions are aerial attacks, many soldiers have taken battles into air and performed sacrifices, with the many lives lost in the process turning the mission into a success and the "DonPachi Squadron" is formed as a result.

DoDonPachi: G17 - S18 - C17 - F18 - L17 - Score: 87%

Released by Cave and published by Atlas for arcades in 1997, DDP is the sequel to DonPachi. In September '97 it was ported to the Sega Saturn, and in September '98, a version of the game was ported over to the Playstation.

Mini Review:

DoDonPachi takes a few steps forward from DonPachi, both graphically and in gameplay. Aesthetically the sprites are large and pleasing on the eye, keeping to the military based look from DonPachi. There's a mix of military grade colours, and more colourful looking bullet patterns and environments.



Backgrounds are interesting and retain a fair amount of detail, even at this 32-bit stage of the series evolution. They are also separated well from the sprites that are moving or flying above them. Bosses are big, with fairly complicated bullet patterns. The player gets a choice of 3 ships differing in spread from compact to wide. They come in a range of 3 colours: Red (Aircraft), Green (Helicopter), Blue (Aircraft). The controls are simple, as to be expected: Main shot, Bomb, & Beam Laser. Using the laser slows movement to the player-controlled sprite, but is more powerful, and useful against bigger enemies. This is sometimes, as mentioned above, something that becomes integrated into the series as a whole. The animation of the shots/ bullets from player controlled sprites look fantastic, and are surprisingly detailed, something the 32-bit power belies, upon first thought. The game can be rather brutal on harder difficult settings, as is the wont of the series. Do not feel ashamed if you have to play the game in easy mode to enjoy it more, as this allows for more 'casual' gameplay (if there is such a thing) This is where the soundtrack of the series starts to really show off what it can do, and each individual stage has some great tracks, several with great guitar solos and riffs, all of which stick in ones head. In regard to the sound FX, explosions are big and impactful, with everything sounding quality: No weedy shot sounds to be found here. The announcer in this game is female, whereas most of the games in the series have male announcers. The best way to play this game is with an arcade stick or with either the 3D Saturn controller or the PS controller with analog stick, as the D-Pads on both consoles are not as responsive or intuitive. Power-ups are plentiful, and when you die at full power, a max power item will move around the screen, allowing you to jump straight back into the action, with little frustration about being underpowered further into the game. Bombs also seem readily available quite often, which is a surprise. In regard to bombs, they clear the screen of bullets and give added power to your beam or shot.

New to *DoDonPachi* is the addition of "MAXIMUM mode". This mode is triggered whenever a bomb is collected when all bomb slots are full. During MAXIMUM mode, the player's score increases by at least 220 points per 1/60th second, except during boss fights. The score multiplier begins with 2, and increases by 1 for every successive bomb collected in MAXIMUM mode. Whenever a bomb is used or the player loses a life, MAXIMUM mode ends until bomb overstocking occurs again, which will cause the multiplier to resume at the last multiplier value. The game has 6 main stages, and a 7th being playable during the second loop. Overall DDP is the start of many mainstays in the series, and lays the groundwork for a lot of troupes, mechanics, and elements in later games. This is a classic, and should very much be in anyone's SHMUP collection, and on the list of 'play before you die' games. Some consider this the pinnacle of the series.

Story (With spoilers):

Dodonpachi takes place many years after the founding of the Donpachi Squadron in the original game. Communication with the 7th Starship Corps has suddenly ceased while they were circulating the outside of the star cluster system. Soon after, an unknown army comprised of "Mechanized Aliens" launched an attack upon earth forces. When earth armada had arrived to intercept this new threat, they found that the attackers had completely vanished from the radar. Colonel Schwarlitz Longhena came up with a plan to eliminate the Mechanical Alien army, and called upon one of his "worker bees" to prepare to sortie. The plan was for this elite pilot to go in alone, and single-handedly destroy the entire army. Thus is the fate of the worker bee, surely it was merciless beyond reason. As the last enemy fell, the pilot received an incoming call from the Colonel. Spoiler: "That was a good fight, you should be commended...Psych! You're dead meat!"

The Colonel goes on to reveal that the army the pilot had destroyed was actually the pilot's fellow comrades of the missing 7th Starship Corps; and that the "Mechanized Alien army" had been fabricated by none other than the Colonel himself. The Colonel then informs the pilot that their death would be a fitting end to his plot, and that he is sending the entire Donpachi Squadron to welcome the pilot home with fierce firepower. Mwahaha.

DoDonPachi DaiOuJou

G18 - S19 - C20 - F18 - L19 - Score: 94%

Also referred to as DOJ, this is the fourth game in the series. DOJ released in arcades in 2002, and was later ported several times to the PS2 and eventually the Xbox 360. It will also be available on PC via MAME. Many view DOJ as the 'best game' in the franchise - This of course being a very subjective thing.



Mini Review:

Graphically, DOJ looks great, with detailed 2D environments and sharp sprites. You have access to two types of aircraft (Red/Green), and three Dolls or playable Characters: Spread, Column, & mixture of both. If you choose the latter, the game automatically goes into expert mode, even if you choose an easier difficulty. Enemy and boss designs look great, with DOJ keeping to the military style aesthetics true to the series. The music in this game is some of the best you will find in the series, with even later games featuring remixes of tracks found in this game. The music is tasty with a lot of synth and rock driven tracks. Sound effects are 'just right', and really help with immersion.

DoDonPachi article cont....

The game has tight 'craft manoeuvrability and controls, with a main auto shot, beam spread, and 'boost' mode. During gameplay you collect gold medals, which allow you to enter a 'Hyper' mode. This allows you to be invulnerable for a short amount of time; depending on how many medals you have collected (max of 5). It also provides you with a more powerful attack, shown as a yellow or gold shot & Beam. This game, like the rest of the series, is pretty hardcore. There is however an easy mode, and you can select the amount of lives per credit, and the amount of bombs (both max to 5). In the PS2 black label port of the game, you can keep continuing to play through the game if you like, however the Xbox 360 Black Label version of the game will not let you do this from the start. You have 1 credit to begin with, and get an additional credit for every 30 minutes that the game is played. Other notable BL differences between PS2 and X360 are:

- Xbox 360 Black Label+ version: Arcade Mode (old version, New version), X mode (arrange of sorts), Config, and EX Congif mode, and bonus soundtracks. X360 version also includes xbox achievements.
- PS2 Black label version: Death Label Arcade Mode, No bullets mode, Training Mode, Gallery, High Score DVD extras, Death Label Mode (Boss Rush)

There are also normal or 'white label' versions of the games available, but these do not cover patches or extras that the black label versions have. There was also a G Mode version of this game made for older style mobile phones, but as you can imagine it does not bear comparing, and will not count towards the scoring of this game. I recommend this game as a good starting point for entering the series if you have a Japanese PS2 or Xbox 360, as it covers all the main aspects important to the series, and is a brilliant, if not tough, game. It should be noted that the Xbox 360 Black Label+ version has some issues around not having slow down for ship B, and some different scoring bugs compared to the PS2 Black Label version, but to be frank: unless you are trying are really anal about this sort of thing- who cares. It plays really well, and personally, I never really noticed.

Story:

Daioujou's story begins one thousand years after the events of *Dodonpachi* (The IGS developed and Capcom published *Dodonpachi II Bee Storm's* events are non-canon and as such are not part of this article). After being betrayed by the leader of the Donpachi Squadron, a lone pilot managed to defeat Colonel Schwarlitz Longhena's mechanized army, and prevent his plan to annihilate the human race from succeeding. Humanity would slowly begin to rebuild and after one thousand years, civilization was at last used for peace. In this age, humans colonized the moon itself, using advanced robotics that were capable of completing tasks that proved too challenging for human comprehension. Suddenly, a disturbance on the moon was reported. The exiled machines had reawakened, quickly overtaking the defenceless Lunapoils, and creating an automated production facility for their army. Intercepting information that the awakened machine army was currently rebuilding in preparation to attack Earth, the United Nations ordered the reactivation of the Donpachi Corps. However, what time mankind had was short, with only enough time to produce two types of ships to combat an army, let alone produce pilots of equal calibre to those of the legendary Donpachi Corps. To make up for this shortcoming, the ships were equipped with an "Element Doll": artificial life forms who have been specially modified to optimize a ship's destructive power, allowing the craft to operate at an enhanced level. However, here a contradiction emerged. Once more humanity was committing the same mistake: a war of machine against machine... Knowing that the mission is suicidal, the ships are deployed on the surface of the moon, alone against the mechanized army. They have but one objective: Kill





DoDonPachi Article cont....

DoDonPachi Daifukkatsu: G19 - S19 - C18 - F16 - L19

Score: 91%

AKA Angry Bee Leader Resurrection, this game is also available in a UK PAL version as DodonPachi Resurrection. This game released in 2008 in arcades, and a 1.5 version later in 2010 on Xbox 360. The Black Label version came to X360 in 2011.

Mini Review

With more futuristic military based sprites, bordering on the cyber style, this game has the most impressive graphics after DDP SDOJ (see below). Visuals are bright and sharp, with enemy bosses transforming between robotic humanoid forms and more traditional airship based forms. There appears to be more variety of enemies in this game than the rest in the series, but keeping within the series overall aesthetic. It truly is a joy to look at, and is one of the most visually striking SHMUPS available on the X360. In terms of aircraft you have three different types: red, green, and blue. This game also possesses a great soundtrack, and the SFX are of the quality expected by this flagship series. Like many Cave games, there was a soundtrack released for this game, and tracks are playable within the game.

Controls are once again similar to the series: Main shot, Focus shot, boost mode, and a hyper mode. Normal mode is basically series standard controls, with boost mode providing stronger attacks, but it really slows your aircraft down. The black label version (or PAL Deluxe version), also has an arrange mode where the mechanics and score system change to those found in Ketsui. That's Right, you get the little boxes with numbers when you shoot, and your focus shot looks exactly like the one from Ketsui. In fact, the Deluxe/BL version of the game has so many extras; it makes the game extremely re-playable. As the graphics and visual are notably better than Ketsui, I personally find this mode in Daifukkatsu much more enjoyable than the entire Ketsui Destiny game released on PS4. A cool edition to this game, is the fact that your main beam can negate enemy beams. This is used in a clever way, as there are sections in the game where you must use your beam to pass through enemy beams whilst dodging bullets, turning this into a more environmental type of routing section, rather than just a rain of bullets.

Differences between the releases:

- White Label/ 1.5 version:**
- Black Label: Black Label Mode, Black Label Novice mode, Black Label Arrange Mode (Ketsui style/ scoring), training option.**

Story overview:

After the turmoil caused by the assault on Lunapolis, which sparked the "Blissful Death Wars" (as depicted in DOJ), peace seems to have been restored, with the legendary DonPachi Corps retreating to its HQ in a space-time fold. Six years later, anomalies are detected in the fabric of space-time, yet tests reveal nothing out of order. Nevertheless, a technician delves deeper into the anomaly, discovering that something has infiltrated the HQ computer systems and is using the portals to send large quantities of materials and data to the past, spreading out like a virus and quickly evolving. In an ironic twist, the virus is discovered to be the program originally installed in the Element Dolls six years ago, **Now reaching beyond the DonPachi Corps programming and seeking to annihilate the human race in retaliation for their "enslavement". The Colonel authorizes the last transport ship to time jump in order to fight back the invasion before future changes. However, he states: "Start over from the past.....I never thought of that", echoing the idea of mankind's imperfection, that has always been a recurring theme, in his series.**

DoDonPachi Article cont....

And once again, the three pilots jump back in time to 2008 and enter the fray, the transport ship being targeted as soon as it exits the portal: the Element Daughters, gigantic evolutions of the Dolls, are awaiting...

DoDonPachi SaidDaiOuJou: G20 - S18 - C17 - F13 - L16 - Score: 84%

This is Cave's Swan Song to the SHMUP community, released in arcades in 2012, and later coming to Xbox 360 in May 2013. This game features an Anime style introduction, and many additional extras not seen in previous games, such as points for playing through the modes, which can be used to unlock things such as wallpapers, sounds/music, and gameplay mods for modes.

Mini review:

In a series with quality graphics per generation, this game takes the biscuit for the best graphics. As this game is set in the future, the developers decided to go full cyber graphics on this one, and it really paid off. Heavily detailed sprites and stage environments are within this game. A great cyber-modern take on things such as tanks; helicopters; and bosses. I particular love the Bee boss at the end, and the way it's head follows you as you move around the play area – great touch! The only downside to this look is, that it's all neon and predominately fixed to urban/ ground areas, which is not overly bad, but it would have been nice to see more air based stages. Some people have previously commented on the bullets being to similar to the overall colour design, but to be frank: not once have I had any problems with it. Both enemy and player bullets are easily separated, but at times there is a lot of 'congestion' on the screen.

The soundtrack in this game is another win. Featuring not just remixes and hints to tracks in previous games, this game supplies it's own synth and dub elements into the mix as well. It really adds to this game feeling like it is set in a different time period, and along with the cyber graphics, it helps separate it from the other games. The SFX are good, but not as great as in the previous few entries in the series, but far from the worst you will have heard: for eg. the awful G mode mobile versions of the Cave titles. The controls are back to basics with this game, and manoeuvring feels fluid and tight. This is a bitch of a game in terms of difficulty though, and some of the bullet patterns are immensely frustrating to route through. There is a novice mode available, which makes the game play at a more realistic level when you first put the game in: I.E. most games normal mode.

I found playing this game fun, as I really enjoyed the music and graphics. But it really won't be for everyone because of the aesthetic choices made. Some people expect DoDonPachi games to have a very traditional militant SHMUP look, and this game drifts away to a more saturated colour palette, in search of a different experience.

I also found this game the most frustrating at times, as it is just built to be replayed, jumping back into this game for a quick session is not really a thing. After several sessions, you will learn to enjoy this game, making it a rather acquired taste!

Modes:

This game provides more incentive for replay-ability than other games on this list, not just simply by providing a large amount of modes, but by also encouraging multiple play-through to gain points for unlockables. There are a vast array of wallpapers, sounds/music, and extra play functions for modes to be unlocked in this manner. So, by the time you have gone through the modes, you will likely want to play through some more, to unlock things.



DoDonPachi Article cont....



This also bumps up the lastability score of the game, as not only is it Cave's last SHMUP (for now), but they made sure it could be played several times at least. I must admit though, it is probably the most frustrating game to play on the list, even for veterans.

Story (With spoilers):

Many years have passed since the events depicted in previous DoDonPachi games. In the past the Element Doll Electronics Laboratory was designing the ultimate Element Doll to assist the human species, dubbed "Project Haruura." The first units produced were Extra Z-001 "Hina" and Extra Z-002 "Saya." Though they lived as sisters and were taught the importance of being close with humans, they were trained as enemies in combat. When Hina decided that the ultimate answer to humanity's problems was to eliminate the human person, the project was immediately shut down and the Element Dolls were frozen. Prior to the beginning of the game, Hina, now known as Hibachi, was mysteriously reactivated and destroyed the laboratory, and the incident was covered up. Hibachi now controls a computer system governing from deep within the technologically advanced City of Ideal, a paradise where humans live in harmony with nature. Believing that the only way to save humankind is to have them adopt a better form, she begins a war to force all humans on Earth to become machines. Hastily, the remaining humans of Earth revive the ancient DonPachi Corps to fight Hibachi's army of mechanized people. The new DonPachi's mission is to destroy Hibachi and her powerful computer system. Spoiler: If the requirements are met to face Hibachi at the end, with her last words she expresses a realization that non-mechanized humans are the ultimate form.

Conclusion:

So there you have it, an overview of all the DonPachi/DoDonPachi games available on consoles. Hopefully it was an enjoyable read! It really is a series of games where you should try a couple of the titles within it before you die. Not only is the series very tough and challenging, but it gives a feeling large of accomplishment when you are able to play the game well. It is a series littered with Cave troupes, and inspired many games and clones over the years. The question is, which one are you going to play first?

