

Issue 18



April
2022

Hi there fellow shooter fans and welcome to the 18th issue of your favourite shoot-em-up fanzine. As we enter spring, in the northern hemisphere, I start getting those feelings of guilt, as the the sun shines outside and I'm sat inside, with the curtains drawn, blasting away on one of my favourite shooters. I do venture out on occasion, to get my vitamin D fix but my pale complexion is evidence that my shooter obsession probably isn't the healthiest. But hey-ho, we love what we love. Please read and enjoy. Happy gaming.

SHOOTER NEWS

Andro Dunos 2 came out in the latter part of March, on a number of consoles. It was supposed to be reviewed and in this issue but various delays and non fanzine related events conspired to stop it happening. Apologies for that and you can expect to see a full review in issue 19. I am very much looking forward to giving



this very long awaited sequel, my full attention. Shoot You Sir! have an upcoming Podcast with Shmup Ascension author and Shmuptopia host, Dace Anaxyrus. This goes back to issue no.17, and a review of the book 'Shmup Ascension', which ended with an invite to a podcast. Between then and

now, we have arranged to put a podcast together to discuss all things Shmup.





Game Review

By Graham Pike

Release Dates: Arcade-JP: May 14, 2009. Xbox 360-JP: May 27, 2010. USA: May 17, 2011. PlayStation 4, Xbox One & Nintendo Switch-JP: December 16, 2021.

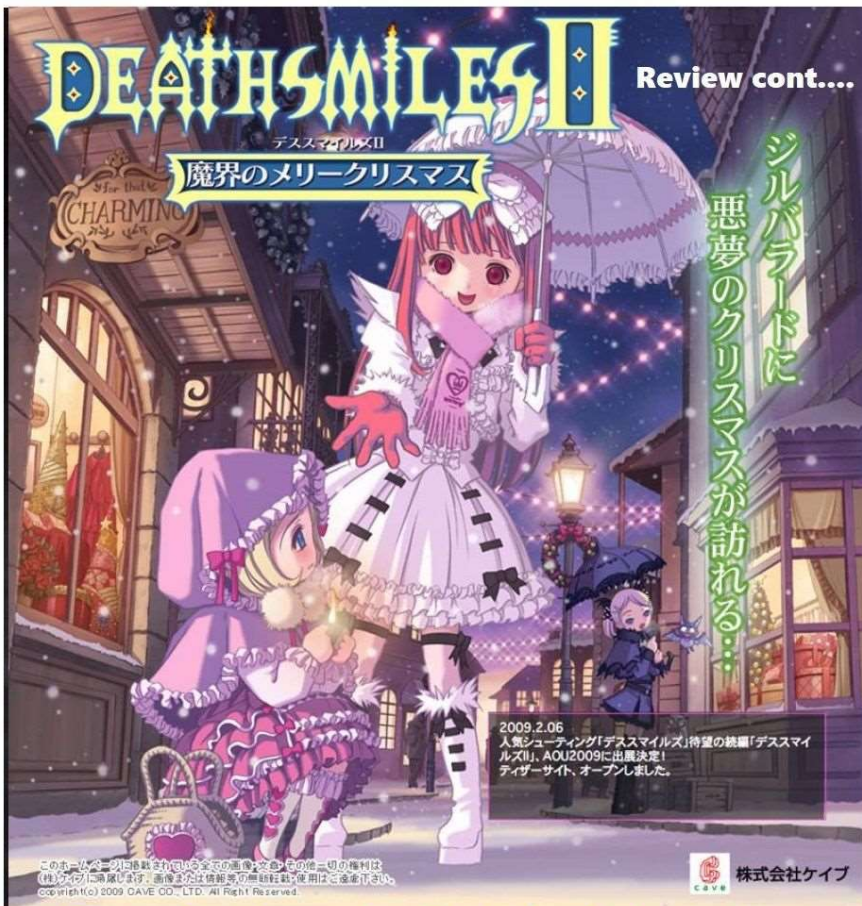
The gothic, fairytale shooter from CAVE returns, with rather a festive feel. It seems that naughty old "Satan Claws", has downed the girls from Death Smiles', grandfather. Yes, they have taken our beloved Santa Claus and turned him into a very wierd, Nipponese, demon Father Christmas. Not only that but the dodgy rotund one, has gone and nicked all the presents. And these presents just happen to be the "Wishing Notes". Magical musical notation, that played in the correct order, can grant any wish. Who'd have thought! I originally had this game on the Xbox 360 but this review is from the PS4 Death Smiles I & II collection, in which D.S.2 has three versions available. DeathSmiles 2X, Arranged and Arcade. I tend to play the first of the three. Rather like the first game, D.S.2 can be adjusted to pretty much any skill level, from breeze through to a real toughie, which is one of the reasons I like this game



So, start the first stage and you'll soon see, that like the prequel, this game fills the screen with enemies and firepower. If you are not tuned in, it can easily seem chaotic. But tune in and you'll love the not quite bullet hell style, of this game, with it's warped, Christmas vibe. Now although there are some beautifully sharp graphics here, in general I do prefer the original game's look. The main reason for this, I suspect, is that Death-smiles II was the first CAVE arcade game to use

polygons, instead of their traditional sprites, for your graphical delight. But if you are old school, like me, please don't be put off. Death Smiles 2 is infact, a shed load of CAVE shooting mayhem and fun. The game continues with the use of huge bosses. The first being an enormous, demon reindeer, ridden by Satan Claws himself. Now, overcome that and all those musical Wishing Notes, that Satan Claws stole, take a blast and are spread throughout this magical land, for you to collect, at the end of each stage. Again, who'd have thought?





Review cont....

So, on you go and fly through magical cities and lands, taking on all sorts of gothic creatures and their wierd and wonderful firepower. Your own firepower can be awesome, with left and right shooting, rapid shot and of course, bomb. And your "familiar", can act like a another satellite style weapon. All your playable sprites are magical and attractive, in the anime/gothic style. There is enough variety in the player sprites to add longevity to the game's replayability. Rather like the difficulty settings, it all adds length to what is a rather short game. But this game is as much about the experience as the challenge. The frenetic gameplay and awesome game-world may really draw you in. It is a game full of sumptuous visuals, great style, solid CAVE gameplay and

terrific music. The music adds to the whole festive atmosphere, corrupted by demonic interference. Like the whole game, the music is a little O.T.T. but it really works and at times, even reminds me of old Prog stalwart, Rick Wakeman. I'll be honest, I do prefer the original Death Smiles but the this sequel is a very welcome addition. More of the same perhaps but done with a nice twist, that makes it a very worthwhile shoot-em-up. Like the original, Death Smiles 2 will have it's lovers and haters. I am definitely the former of those two.



Please Note: If you want to know more about the Death Smiles game and world, please refer to the Death Smiles review in Issue 6.

SCORES

Graphics: 18 Sound: 19
 Control: 18 Fun: 18
 Lastability: 17
OVERALL: 90%





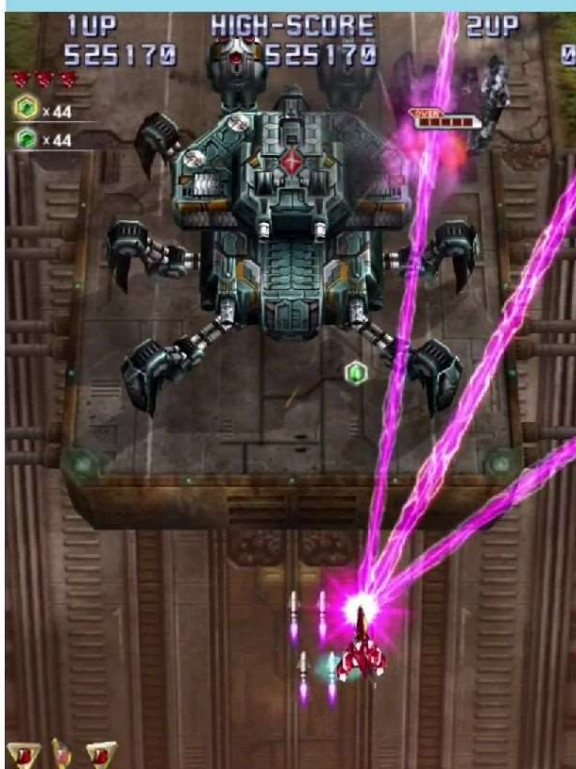
Game Review

By

Slyelessar

Raiden IV X Mikado Remix is a port of the original Raiden IV game that released in arcades in 2007 and Xbox 360 in 2008 and a more current port, to the Nintendo Switch, with a few additional features. Visually the game is presented very well, with crisp, modern looking graphics. They did a good job porting this game over to Switch

and it shows. Both in game graphics and cut scenes are colourful and 'pop' well. The background visuals are truly lovely to behold, are well rounded, and less clunky than some of the backgrounds you encounter on TATE shmups, on modern consoles. Enemy bullets are obvious, and look much different from all the shot types of the playable 'crafts. For the most part, you are able to discern and predict, without feeling cheated. However, the power up items do interfere with this a bit, but more on this later. At the main menu, you are greeted with several gameplay options. These consist of: Overkill mode, Additional Mode, Score Attack Mode, Arcade Mode, and Boss Rush mode. In Overkill mode (a new addition) you play with 2 missions and a new score system. Additional Mode is just an arrange of the arcade mode but with two new stages. The other two modes are exactly what it says on the tin, but with arcade mode featuring two difficulties: Light and original. You are also given options, replay & gallery, world rankings, and a credits option at the main menu screen.



In each of the game modes you are greeted with a very basic mode setup. This bugged me a little bit, as it is something that Raiden V Directors Cut did really well, was that the menus were laid out nicely and you had descriptions and names for the individual 'crafts on screen. Unfortunately, RIVXMR doesn't do this on the 'craft selection screen, it goes the route of just showing you the image of aircraft themselves. It also jumps from the menu into the selection screen in a laggy way, making it feel like it was hastily or sloppily put together. There are little touches within the menu that are missed, and it is noticeable. If you press 'X' whilst in this basic mode setup, it shows you an overview of the game controls and the different scoring system in each modes, which is a nice touch.



Review continued

The types of main weapon will be familiar to those that have played Raiden games in the last decade:
RED - Vulcan (wide spread)
BLUE - Laser (Straight Beam)
PURPLE - Auto curvving, homing laser or a controlled swinging laser
You are also greeted with sub weapons, that you pickup alongside you main attack type:
Nuclear Missiles (explode on impact)

Homing missiles (missiles that auto-target enemies) and Radar Missiles (Chase enemies in front of your ship). You also get a screen clearing bomb, as a standard. You can select up to 7 bombs, that you can use as stock, in the main menu.

As with most Raiden games, this one has top quality sound FX. Nice big explosions, and great shot sounds. The music is also of a decent quality, led by rocky riff-heavy tracks. The first level track in particular is very catchy, bordering on the frustrating and there are less tracks than in RVDC, but it does make you think of the game when it randomly pops into your head, when making a tea or are out doing the shopping.

In regard to how the game plays, it's a Raiden Game. This means you are getting basic controls, with tight manoeuvrability and challenging gameplay. This is something that you can rely on when picking up a Raiden title. In terms of frustrating things during gameplay, the power up drops and changes in this game are really obnoxiously distracting. Not only do they drop and circle around the area you will likely be moving about in most, they also change colour very frequently. Sometimes you have no choice but to avoid



oncoming bullets and slam into a power up of a colour you do not want, or are interested in playing. Now, the different power ups in the game are very cool but I'm one of the players that likes the main spread shot and is not arsed about the other shot types. I don't mind using them once in a blue moon, but it's like the game wants you to change shot type every 20-30 seconds. To top this, you can't reduce the amount of power ups that are dropped, nor change them in the menu, to not drop certain type-colour of power up. This is frankly a bullshit combination and spoils the game somewhat for me. In RVDC, you would get power ups of all colours drop, just less regularly and they would move around the screen a lot better, forcing you to navigate a challenging amount of bullets to get it - achieving this feels great, or you'd just patiently wait until the colour/ shot type you want appears.



Review Continued

This is a much better approach and it is a shame there is not at least an option to remove/add different shot types in the menu.

The biggest knock against this game, is that it is less fun than RVDC. This game is a challenge, but not at any point is it particularly fun. Something that RVDC did really well, was bridge that minefield between challenging and fun. This significantly reduces the likelihood that I will spend a lot of time, coming back to RIVXMR, as it is merely frustrating more often than not.

A few added extras, like the cut scenes, really add to the game, giving you more of a feeling of being within the universe the game is set in. Probably the most fun part of the game, is playing as the fairy character that was originally DLC. All of a sudden, the game looks more like ESPgaluda or the like, rather than the airships we are used to in Raiden games. This adds an extra dimension to the game, and also allows for more playability.

The fairy's spread shot type makes the game a bit easier to play as well, as it is light blue. She also has a bubble attack when you pick up purple power ups, which makes a horrible repetitive noise when fired and a rubbish slowly fired 3-column laser thing. It is fun seeing the army of fairies attack the screen, when you press the bomb button, though!

One of the best and most fun scoring systems was in RVDC, yes another RVDC comparison, Im afraid. but it is the Bar with which to compare Raiden games on Switch. The line graph scoring system was brilliant. Not only did it show your previous best score as you went along, but it also showed average/online best scores for that level. This meant you were very aware, you were trying to beat your best score from moment to moment.



This game has been ported for a reason: It's a good quality game, that was well received with critics and fans. It deserves its place on Switch. Raiden is a name held in high regard in SHMUP communities and ultimately this game does no real bad against that name. My closing statement is this: Bring Raiden Fighters Aces to the Switch, as it would sit nicely just in between RVDC and RIVXMR. however, please just keep the title short, so the abbreviation is short and sweet, nobody needs RFADCR in their life. Thank you, and good night!

SCORES

Graphics:19 Sound:16

Control:17 Fun:15

Lastability:17 OVERALL: 84%

Game Review

By Graham Pike



Angerforce Reloaded has a strong vibe, with it's industrial, steam punk, cartoon look and orchestral music. The start up menu has four game modes: Campaign, Arcade, Practice and Local Co-Op. There are also a comprehensive range of options for Controls and Sound, with an instructive manual. The manual shows that in this game, you get a good choice of firepower, with single shot, rapid fire, bomb and 2 special abilities.

These special attacks use up your energy, that can be replenished by holding down your A button or collecting power-ups. You also get better scores by destroying enemies, with these special abilities. You also have the ability of slowing or speeding up your movement, during play, which can be very useful.

You start with the choice of four, varied characters to play. These range from the usual action/anime male and female, to a robot and what looks like a demonic fox or racoon. If you are new to shooters, there is a handy tutorial at the beginning of the Campaign. The intro has strong artwork and a spoken storyline. All cheesy stuff but OK to get you in the mood. Into the action and the game plays as a vertical shooter, on a TATE style screen, taking up approximately a third of the screen,



leaving the left and right hand sides for game stats.



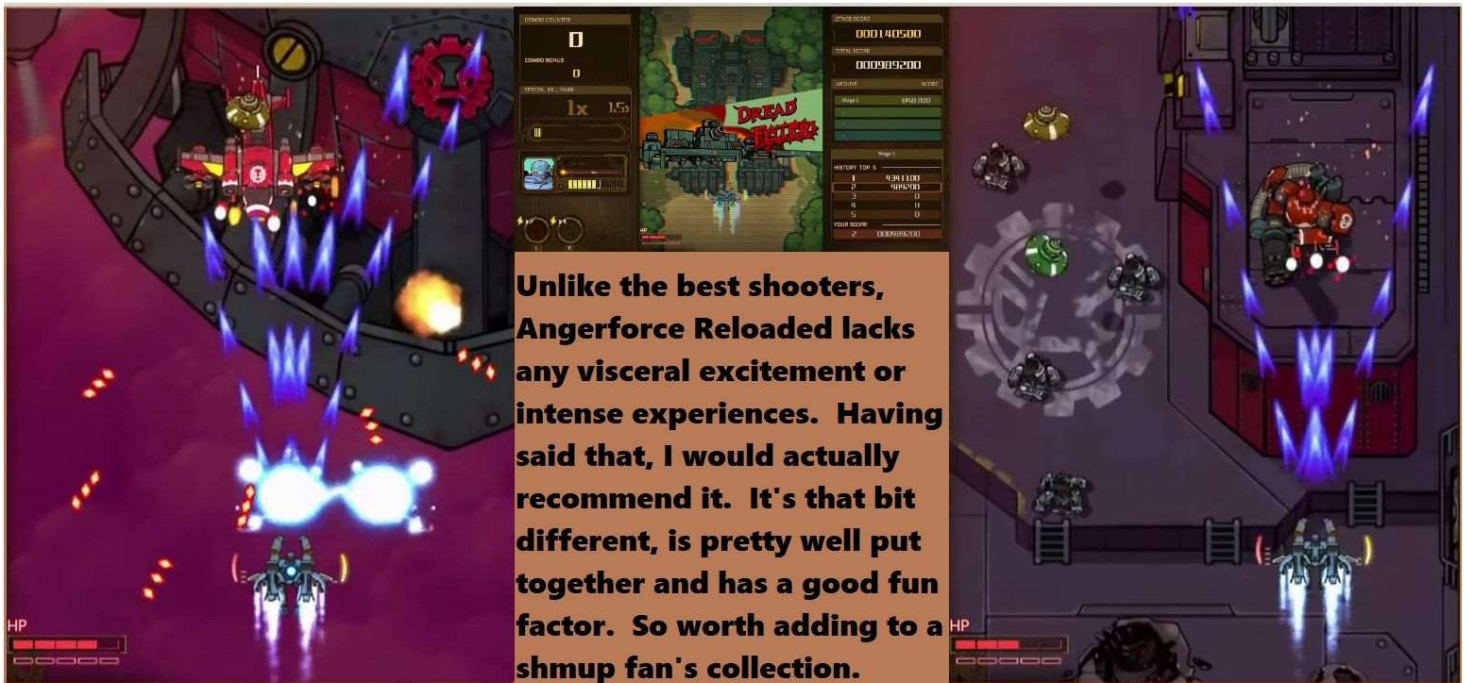
The graphics are flatish, well detailed, 2D, cartoon style. I quite like this style and it reminds me of a number of shooters on the Dreamcast. There is plenty of well defined, enemy firepower to avoid and your own weapons supply a good variety of tactical choices. It's not bullet hell but the screen can get pretty full of bullets and missiles. Overall, though the gameplay is a little over conventional and lacks oomph. The same could be said of the sonics, too.

Both are OK but do not get the pulse racing. I do like the gameworld graphically, though. Although quite unoriginal, it does provide a decent ambience and helps

to draw you in, a little.

It's a game that has challenge and some variety. There are points to be earned, that can be used to buy upgrades. So there is enough here to draw you back, for another try. Angerforce Reloaded mixes the proven and coventional, with a little of it's own character, to become a decent shoot-em-up.





Unlike the best shooters, Angerforce Reloaded lacks any visceral excitement or intense experiences. Having said that, I would actually recommend it. It's that bit different, is pretty well put together and has a good fun factor. So worth adding to a shmup fan's collection.

SCORES

Graphics: 16 Sound: 16

Control: 17 Fun: 16

Lastability: 17

OVERALL: 82%

TOP 5

Top 5 most played games, over the last month.

Slyelessar

1. Sturmfront - The mutant war (Switch)
2. Cruis'n Blast (Switch)
3. Elden Ring (PS5)
4. Void Bastards (Switch)
5. Sol Cresta (Switch)

Graham Pike

1. Death Smiles 2 (PS4)
2. Valfaris (PS4)
3. Andro Dunos (Neo Geo)
4. Angerforce Reloaded (Switch)
5. Blasphemous (PS4)



THUNDER DRAGON

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Game Review

By Slyeessar



©NMK CO., LTD. 1993

Thunder Dragon 2 is an ACA release from Hamster, and it may just be a hidden gem. TD2 is not a game I was familiar with before this review and for that I wholeheartedly apologise! Sometimes when you boot up these old ACA games, you never quite know how tight the controls are going to be, especially when it comes to their SHMUPs. However, this particular game certainly does well in the tight controls department. Buttons are simple: Shoot & Bomb. But the way your biplane moves across the screen feels just right. I always state that this goes a long way to making a game enjoyable, so nice one on the devs, for taking the time to make sure it plays well, in regard to controls. Visually it is a charming game. It won't blow you away with modern graphics, but rather like The Loop Masters, it looks solid visually, and I really like the background environments and the way they are designed. Trees, sea, and sand, all look like they have been given little touches of subtle detail that helps make you feel part of the world that has been created. Touches like having clouds move past in the mid ground, help an extra layer of immersion. Enemy sprites are crisp and well designed, I especially liked the 'mini boss' submarines that move around in formation under the water and rise up and fire at you in one of the levels. The bullet patterns themselves are retro and basic. In regard to the plane you are controlling the shot changes from basic to wider stream with missiles depending on the type of power ups you pick up. Visually it's just a charming and tidy presentation, and I dig that.

The soundtrack is rather basic, but catchy. It does what it needs to do: provides some audio atmosphere to levels in

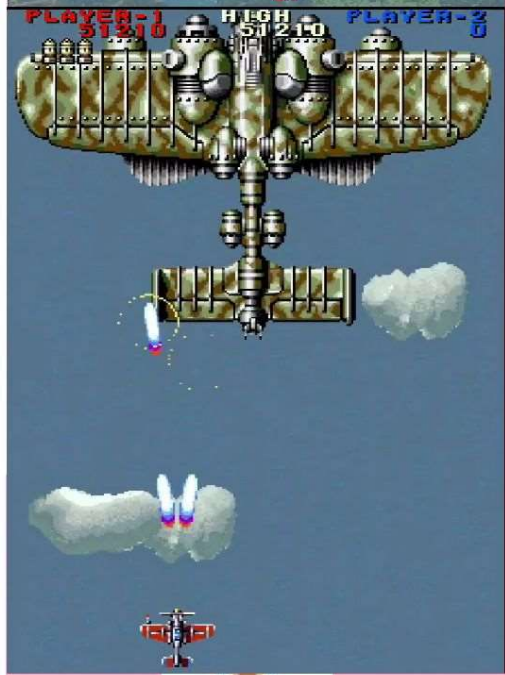
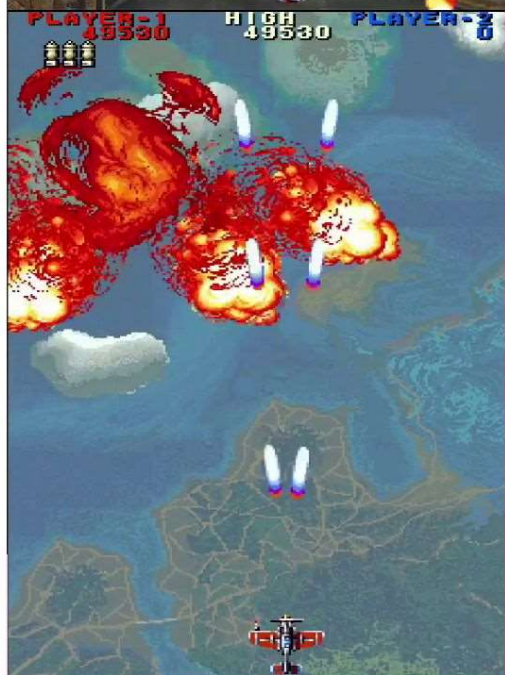


traditional arcade style. Bitty, but not in a bad way, catchy, and not in a bad way either, the music is good enough. Sound FX are also alright and work well with the game. Gameplay is fairly quick once it gets going, and rather challenging. Strangely enough I enjoy the game most on easy, but I think that is because I spend far too much time admiring the background. It's nowhere near as difficult as some of the Raiden games and far more worth the money than M2's recent release of 'Tiger Heli' - but let's not open up that particular wound.

I noticed on Twitter that there were a number of people looking forward to this game being released, so it obviously has a following, and I can see why. Being part of the Archade Archives games means that digitally this game will be available for some time for others to enjoy. I personally feel that although I enjoy it, it's not a game I will be coming back to in say...

5 years time. Some games you can play over and over, and I feel that perhaps you need the nostalgia with this one to get you to that point. I do feel that it is worth playing however, and it will be played on my Switch for a while, which says something at least.





Review continued

Overall this a game that is simple and to the point, looks nice, and provides a good challenge. I compared it to the Loop Masters, which although is a more modern game than Thunder Dragon 2, is certainly in a similar vein of basic, good, and charming. I think my biggest criticism is that a choice of a handful of different planes that play differently would have gone a long way to making the game something to keep coming back to.

However, this is a modern viewpoint, looking back on a game that does exactly what it says on the tin: Remit 1993 STG. I still consider it a hidden gem, as I am not sure a lot of people will be talking about it and it deserves to be in the conversation when we are talking about the Arcade Archive games.

SCORES

Graphics: 15

Sound: 13

Control: 18

Fun: 17

Lastability: 13

OVERALL: 76%

