

Issue 26

SHOOT YOU SIR!

December 2022

A FANZINE FOR SHOOT-EM-UP PLAYERS



Hi there and welcome to the festive season. It's remarkable how quickly it comes around. It's our 26th issue, ending off a decent year for the shooter fan. Bullet Soul has got to be one of the highlights of this last year but I'm sure you will have your favourites. There's a lot to look forward to next year and my most anticipated game is definitely the Valfaris shooter. If it comes close to the awesome platformer, it'll be one special release.

Happy gaming and have a cool Yule.

SHOOTER NEWS

Telenet Shooting Collection. It's time for another collection of games in one, for the Switch. Telenet are porting four games from their originally Japanese released games in late 2023. There is currently a crowd funding campaign in place to raise the amount of yen needed for the project, this is equivalent to just under \$22,000. The four games to be released were originally released in the early nineties on Megadrive/Genesis and PC Engine.

Granada (November 1990, Genesis)



Psychic Storm (1992, PC Engine)



Gaiaras (1990, Genesis)



Avenger (1990, PC Engine)



Game Review

By Slyeessar



So I'm rather late to the Resogun chain, something that released originally when the PS4 was released. Whilst perusing the Playstaion Now library, I came across Resogun and downloaded it instantly, as I have always heard good things. The game itself is a 2D Shoot em up with a twist: the plane is a scrolling circle, scrolling in the direction that the player decides to move

and shoot in. The game also is full screen. Each stage has a number of phases, during which you must fight through waves of enemies whilst saving humans by picking them up and getting them to a rescue point. One you get through enough phases you will face a stage boss, all of which have bullet/laser patterns, and several phases themselves to eventually destroy them. Now, the first boss in every game sets the tone of the game, and Resogun starts with a strong one. The boss is a huge ringed ship, where you need to destroy the outer ring, whilst dodging bullets, and the inner rings by timing movements around timed lasers. Once you get to and destroy the core you have beaten the boss. I found this a really enjoyable experience, and although destroying different parts of a boss and then a main part is not new to SHMUPs, it was a fun as putting together a club sandwich bit by bit and then enjoying the results.

You can use the D-pad or the analog stick, and ship movements are buttery smooth and as tight as a safe hinge. Much like the beloved Death Smiles games, you have one button for shooting left, and a button for shooting right. You can also approach this game as a twin stick shooter by using the right analog stick to fire left or right instead of a button, always a nice touch. The triggers are also utilised in this game, with R2 button being a bomb that explodes out both left and right destroying enemies and bullets in a wave of glorious explosive power. R1 sets off your overdrive, which really is like clicking on a dirt pedal if you were playing guitar, by slowing down 'time' and allowing you to fire a powerful beam to take out enemies. This can be charged by picking up green energy when destroying enemies. L1 will give you a quick and short boost of speed to help you scroll around some of the circle you are currently on, helpful for escaping bullets and enemies, or making sure you are able to get to one of the humans you are



tasked with saving, sooner. If you plot a course through a large amount of enemies.

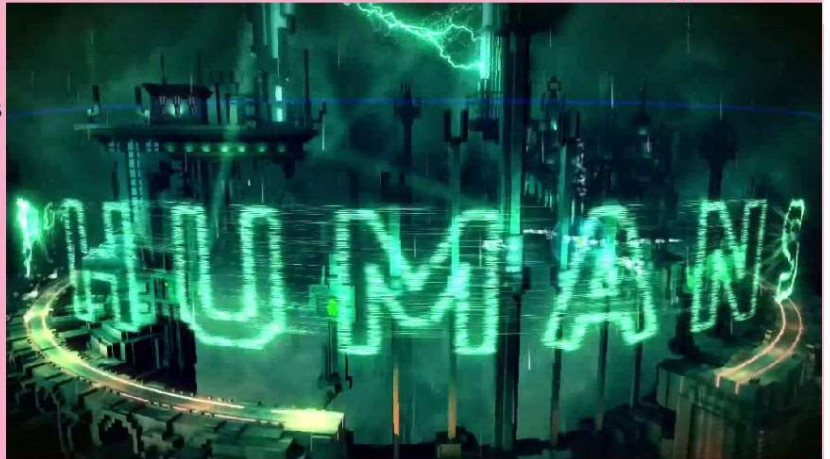
Speaking of those pesky humans you have to save, you have a short period of time in which to swipe them up or they get killed by encroaching enemies. Transporting a human from the ground to the rescue point releases things such as power ups & shields.





which are useful at first, but vital in much later stages of the game. The humans are mostly housed in little square boxes or

buildings, that will at different points of the stage get released. Aside from this, the game has enemies called 'keepers' that have an imprisoned human inside, and if you destroy them in the correct order you save said human. The game screen also provides you with a HUD. At the top left, it shows you how many lives and bombs you have left, in the middle at the top is the number of humans saved and yet to be saved, your score at the top right, and the phase bar at the bottom, indicating how far into the phase you are. The devs have also thrown in a photo mode, which I don't find useful, but seems to be included with more and more games these days. The Sound FX in Resogun are ballsy, making it feel like a big deal, when you blow things up - and I love blowing things up. The music is your standard affair of energy beats and synths, and it really does suit the games sci-fi look and feel. The tracks are really pumping, but I can't say I'd buy the soundtrack. But it adds to what makes the game so great. And that's exactly what makes coming back to play Resogun so enjoyable: the immersion. It does a great job of pulling you in, and making you look just around the bend to see what is coming next but be careful not to get too distracted, or that stray enemy ship will slam into you. At the start of the game you can



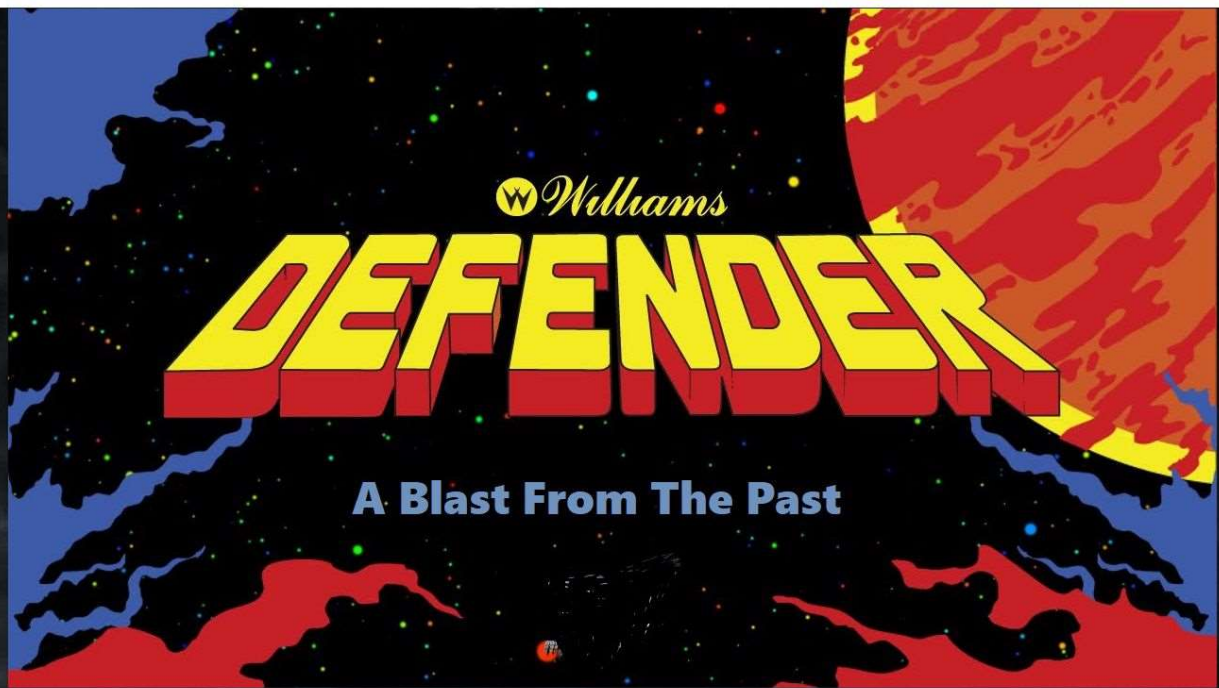
choose from a number of different options: single player, multiplayer, high scores, options, and ship editor/extras. The extras being things like concept arms, and the different animations the humans do whilst playing the game. Jumping into a game itself, the game provides you with the following choices: Arcade, survival, protector, Single level, demolition, and commando. There's also a section for challenges and and feats achieved, which acts like a trophy room and tells you how you can unlock all the different achievements. Protector, survivor, demolition, and commando are DLC options, and are not overly dissimilar to survival modes and the like found in other games. I'm not going to include in depth information in this review, as I do not wish to pay extra for the DLC. But for those that are in love with this game, I'm sure the expansion packs will be viable 'gets'. Arcade mode is the main mode, and single level works similarly to a practice or training mode, allowing you to choose any stages you have unlocked from arcade mode over and over, to your hearts content.

The game starts out with three stock ships: Nemesis (the fast less powerful one), Phobos (the powerful slow one), and Ferox (fits like a glove right in the middle). There are 7 more blank slots when you start the game where you can unlock more ships as you play through the game and its modes. Giving you plenty of eye candy, and a decent challenge, this game also provides you with plenty of things to unlock. The experience provided by the game is more than satisfactory on both the eyes and ears, and if you have a PS, it is a must play shooter. This game offers a great experience and is a bit different form your usual 2D vertical and horizontal scrollers. So why not give it a shot?

SCORES

Graphics: 19 Sound: 16 Control: 18 Fun: 17
Lastability: 17 OVERALL: 87%





Defender was a side scrolling shooter, developed by Williams Electronics in 1980, going into the arcades in 1981. The game was played out on an un-titled planet/city, where you had to destroy waves of belligerent aliens, whilst defending friendly astronauts from being kidnapped and mutated into more aliens. The lead developer was Eugene Jarvis, who was inspired by the games Space Invaders and Asteroids. Defender however, really moved the genre on.

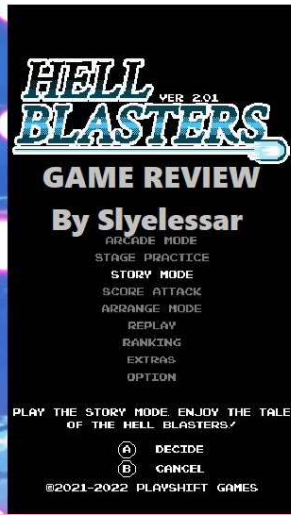


Defender was one of the most important shooters of it's era and became one of the best selling arcade games ever. For it's time it was incredibly detailed, involving and extremely challenging. You got to control a very fast moving and responsive spaceship, that could fly either to the left or the right. It's complex, yet intuitive controls included a joystick for the ship's elevation, and 5 buttons to determine it's horizontal direction and use of weaponry. You started with 3 screen wide effecting bombs, and a last resort, "hyperspace" that teleported your spaceship to a random location.



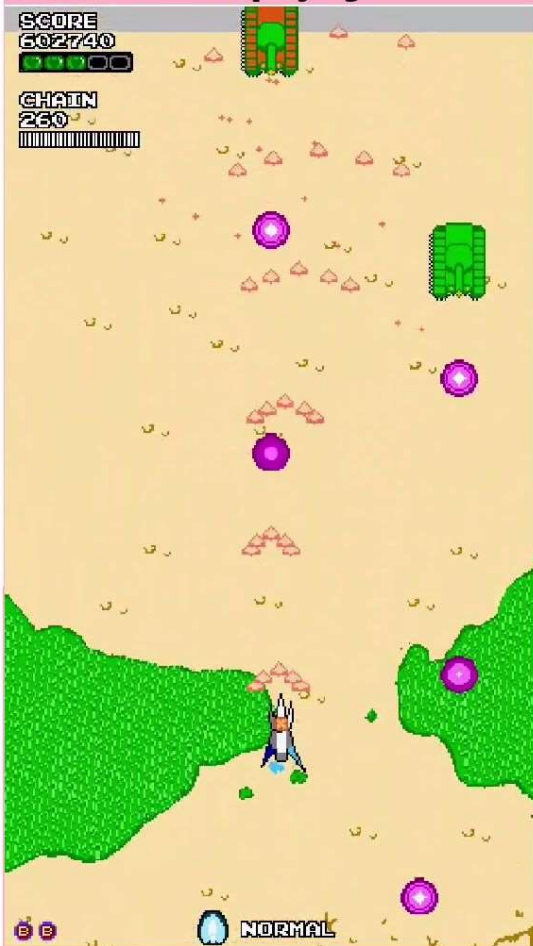
I must admit that back in the day, the early 80s, I found Defender a really hard game. I hadn't even got the arcade game bug yet, let alone become a shoot-em-up fan. Scramble came out a few months after Defender and I found that much more to my taste and skill level. Defender was for the hardcore gamers of the time and I still remember the snooker player Steve Davis being a massive fan of Defender. It wasn't until much later, when it appeared on consoles, that I began to appreciate the quality and trailblazing nature of this amazing, early shooter.



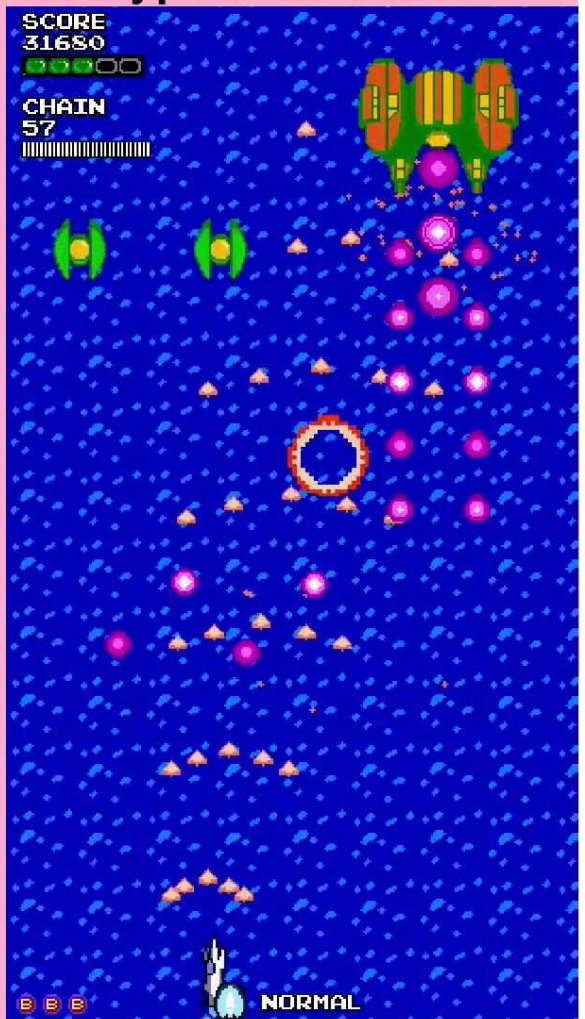


Hell Blasters released on the Nintendo Switch earlier this year, but it took me a while before I picked it up on the digital store, on sale. The main reason was, although I love indie SHMUPS done well, sometimes taking a punt on them can be a waste of cash. In this instance, Hell Blasters stood out to me with it's giant robot-come-mobile-suit on the main image. Anyone familiar with Graham or

myself, knows we love these big robots, and I myself am particularly partial to a Gundam. Now, that aside, what is going on with this game? HB is a vertical shooter with old-bit graphics. In this instance, it does not stand apart from its peers during gameplay, apart from the fact the play screen is really small. Although you can scale it to meet the top and bottom of your screen, you cannot extend either the horizontal or vertical to fit your taste - this was a big miss, as the play screen is far too small for playing along side or inbetween other games. I would ask devs, that if you make vertical shooters - my preference by the way- to make it possible to cover as much as the screen as possible, as not every one wants to squint at a bookmark on a widescreen TV when they SHMUP. I know the developer was going for vintage, and quite possibly pixel shape/ count, etc. plays a part in this, but but by Jove make the game at least easy to look at when playing!



Sticking with the visuals, the sprites are clean looking, and there's a couple of cool designs, but nothing that stands out as unique. I don't feel like I am either flying/ playing as a giant robot, nor do I feel like I'm fighting massively controlled bots. Enemies are a mix of ships, mini fortresses with turrets, and the bosses are quite bland as well. The bullets are nice and clear and move in cool ways, so the fundamentals work well with the game. Controlling the players craft - you have a choice of two at the start: Summer or Winter. Both rather traditional sci-fi like designs with a slight anime twist to them. Both have slightly different shot spread types. One is faster with a smaller bullet spread, the other is slower with a more powerful shot. Pressing the Y button and holding it slows your craft for a stronger shot with both ships, tapping the button fires their spread shot. By pressing X, you can fire a special shot. Each ship has a different special shot, which has





a cool down time.

You can activate a bomb using the A button. This will do damage to anything immediately in front of you and will clear bullets. All of these animate well enough, although look very basic. The most frustrating thing about the game is how slow actions in the menu's and end of stages are. Getting from one screen to another or from game play to main menu feels like a real chore. You have to wait for it to take its sweet time to respond. I like to think this was the developer trying to hark back to consoles like the Genesis and Super Nintendo when you would have to really press in those corroded buttons to activate the actions, but in this day and age it just translates to a sluggish experience navigating everything but gameplay.

The gameplay itself has a fairly slow pace to it, but it feels natural and deliberate, unlike the menus that makes it feel like I work in a factory punching holes in all the doughnuts

going past on a conveyor-belt when hung over. Story mode oddly allows you to just blast through all the text, feeling really out of place with the drowsy menu



navigation, but it is welcome as the story is there but its about as complex as Gareth Southgate's (England manager) tactics. Once in story mode, if you want to exit you can't pause and recall a menu to return back to the main menu, resulting in closing the game. The music, along with the gameplay, are the best things about H.B. A 16-bit affair, there are some interesting. The level environments are really plain. Colours are basic, and I don't mind that they have gone for the Super Nintendo feel, it's just not a very inspired approach. Overall, the game provides a competent experience in terms of gameplay, it's an alright game in the vein of the classics, but it does underwhelm when compared to its contemporaries. I think with all the great pixel art shmups about at the moment, they tried to do something a bit different, and fell short of the mark. At least the wall-papers are lush with cool anime designs.



SCORES

Graphics: 12 Sound: 14

Control: 13 Fun: 12

Lastability: 9

OVERALL: 60%

RAZION EX

GAME REVIEW by Slyeessar

Let me start by saying: despite all of the controversy surrounding the release of this game onto Nintendo Switch, I shall try and focus on the game itself for the overall review and score. At the end of the day, why should opinion of publishing really effect an honest review of the game? These things can be separated. For anyone not aware of the history of the games, here is a brief overview before I get into the review: Razion EX was launched on the website of NG Dev on two very specific dates and times this year. There were tweets and communication suggesting that people buy several copies online, and sell some on ebay. A lot of people struggled to get hold of the game, and it was sold out in minutes. At time of writing, there are now a large number of copies of the game online at several times the original price. I'll withhold typing any personal opinion on this, but as you can imagine the online gaming community were not thrilled.



But, more importantly – what is the game like? Razion EX is a side scrolling horizontal STG, developed by NG Dev for the Neo Geo. It appears to draw influence from games of the era, and there is more than a subtle hint towards things like Blazing Star and the like. You are able to go from 4:3 to more wide screen. The game has three modes: Novice, Normal, and Maniac. Each mode changes the colour of your ship. Here is an overview of what it has

to offer: 6 Stages. 6 End stage bosses.

7 Sub bosses. 3 Game Modes. Rendered 16-bit CGI graphics. 60FPS.

Graphically this game will not wow anyone, as it is not particularly sharp to look at on a big screen. This is rather odd, as we are used to arcade games ported to modern consoles looking sharp and polished. They still remain with their original retro aesthetic, but there is some effort made in order to make the game look as presentable as it

can be. Not so however with Razion EX, and played next to something like Blazing Star or even something more basic, like Aleste Collection by M2, the game does not look as sharp. Now, I appreciate NG Dev are not a triple-A developer, and the other games mentioned have undergone treatment by Hamster and M2 respectively, and they are the gold standard for porting retro arcade and SHMUP titles. Undocked, the game looks decent enough, so it is likely that the focus was on undocked mode and/or 60FPS, rather than making the game look its best when using an HDMI to a TV(?). Okay, so that covers the sharpness – and that is not the be all and end all. The sprites themselves look nice, and they are well animated. They are colourful, and enemies and bullets alike are designed well.





The game offers up some rather cool environments, very much in the sci-fi genre, and did I mention it takes inspiration from Blazing Star? Well this is apparent in the first couple of levels, and is a rather welcome sight. The bosses in the game are a mix of 'seen it before' and 'damn, that's cool', especially the third stage boss. Boss bullet patterns are interesting, and stages have a decent amount of difficulty spike across the different difficulties the game provides. Learning patterns is fairly important for boss fights, but in general stages are playable without resorting to R-Type like cliché. I really like the colour palate the developers went for, and some stage backgrounds, where there is something interesting going on, look much better on a TV than the foreground action does.

The game gives you the option to select various screen overlay effects and you can adjust the intensity of this, but either the first setting or off is usually how I play these games. In this instance I had it on, as I thought it covered up some of the graphical imperfections. As mentioned above, the game can be played in a bigger more wide screen mode, but does not stretch the game to a full TV screen. The graphics on the side panels are decent,



and the game allows you to change to a number of more or less distracting images/patterns. The music and sound effects, aside from the controls – more on this later- are one of the biggest strengths of the game. The tracks scattered throughout the game offer up a treat for the ears, and are of high quality. None of the tracks hit the heights of Stage 5 Blazing Star, but they nonetheless help towards making up for the less than sharp graphics, at least in terms of immersion. Once you are used to the way the game looks, it doesn't matter half as much as how well it plays or how good the sound is. Which brings me onto the sound effects: They are decent indeed. That is to say, they suit the game and have lovely ear-feel. No weedy "pew - pew" here, everything sounds and feels the part. A big thumbs up.



The game mechanics are fairly simple. You have a main fire button that you tap or hold down for a wide spread, and you have a big blast shot that eats up bullets and damages enemies. To build this up, you have to collect little boxes throughout the level when you destroy enemies. Once you have enough, you can fire several large blasts. It's worth saving them for when you are in a tough spot, you do not have a generic bomb attack.



gameplay. I know Graham enjoys a good screen clearer in a difficult position, but I find when games do not provide you with one, I have to concentrate even more on what is going on. The way the ships move to analog stick movements is tight and solid. Even button responses feel immediate. This is probably the biggest strength of a game, I feel that if manoeuvring around is really tight, the controls are responsive, then you are in for a decent ride. Nobody wants flappy and loose controls when playing, unless there is a mechanic that upgrades/ tightens this up as you progress. You will need it in this game as well, as you will need to navigate some environmental obstacles, as well as compete with enemy bullet patters from several directions. My only reason for not quite giving it full marks, is that it would have been nice to map the buttons to different parts of the controller. As button mapping is available for pretty much any game now, it would have been nice to have the option to do it. A small gripe, but a relevant one. I am happy to admit to enjoying playing this game. There are certain sections where the game play, controls, and music all blend into one greatly enjoyable experience. Some of the bosses are bland, but there are some really cool ones, so I think the mix keeps the game interesting during first few play throughs. The game is challenging, and certainly ticks that mid-tier difficulty level. Novice mode is approachable for newcomers, and overcoming the different difficulties is not boring or tedious. I think there is a lot of emphasis on 60FPS for the game, and one can't help but wonder that this lofty goal of 60FPS kept them from making the graphics sharper. I am no developer, and have not tested the game for frame rate drop specifically, but I would have taken a sharper looking game over 60FPS on this occasion. Considering that it is a retro game, not having the full 60 is easily forgivable, and being that it was on Neo Geo, we have all seen how polished and user friendly the Hamster ports are. In this, it feels like the devs may have shot themselves in the foot a little bit trying to commit to the high end of the frame rate war, but I am merely speculating. Having a STG play at 60FPS on a handheld console is a feat all of its own, and for that there is some credit that should be given in this regard. As this game was only a limited run of physical copies, there is not much last ability to the game. Unless NGDev port this to consoles for digital download- yes please. Keeping this game as a limited run physical copy may only feed into the potential bad taste that was left in gamer's mouths, but a digital release would be welcomed with open arms. Opening up the game to a wider audience to experience what this game has to offer. As an overall experience the game offers up tight controls, a decent challenge, but feels like there was a higher ceiling of potential not quite reached. It is however a fun and enjoyable play.

SCORES: Graphics: 14 Sound: 19 Control: 19 Fun: 19
Lastability: 13 OVERALL: 84%