

Issue 28



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Hi there and welcome to Issue 28 of your favourite shooter fanzine. There are a lot of shooter releases on the horizon, some new titles and many re-workings of classics. Any of you who are long time readers of this 'zine or have watched the Shoot You Sir! podcasts, will know that Sly and I are big fans of the arcade style 3D roaming shooters, in the Earth Defense Force series. Well the original EDF game was an old school 2D scroller and there is a review of it in this issue. Please enjoy all our articles and feel free to email us any ideas or articles you may have. Happy gaming.

SHOOTER NEWS

CAVERNS OF MARS

RECHARGED

Caverns of Mars: Recharged, will be coming out this March on pretty much all formats, including PS5, Xbox Series, PS4, Xbox One, Switch, PC, Steam and of all things, the Atari VCS.



This is a vertically scrolling, 2D shooter, that actually scrolls down the screen. This is because your hero sprite, is descending into the titular Caverns of Mars, to blast it's way down, to destroy villainous reactors.



This vintage Atari game has some lovely upgrades, especially on the sonics and visual side. And there's plenty of additional gameplay too.



There's 30 missions here & a 2P Co-Op mode, where one of you pilots, and the other blasts away. An old school game, wrapped in 21st Century goodness. It looks a real blast and should be available at a low price. Worth keeping an eye out for.





Star Hunter DX is a Cyber looking horizontal SHMUP with some interesting mechanics, and for some, it has been much anticipated. This game has been on my radar prior to release, but has been over shadowed by some giants that have been released around it. But how does the game fare?

Let's start off with the controls and mechanics first this time, as that is where this game shines. Your ship can move in 8 directions and use 3 weapons: rapid shot, laser, and bomb. Bombs can be recharged by grazing enemy bullets. Destroyed enemies drop cubes (this sounds familiar: see Cybxus Heart), when the energy gauge is half full or more you can enter bullet time. Oh yeah, and when you deploy a bomb, nearby bullets turn into energy. Bullet time slows down enemy movement and bullets. You can turn bullet time on and off with the 'B' button. Once you enter bullet time the environment gets a chequered net to it to show it has been activated, without having to look at a different gauge - this is helpful, as the game is fast paced and quite challenging.

Other than the energy cubes, other items appear on the screen, including astronauts in bubbles, which help fill a small amount of bullet time. Another item is the power up button which increases power by 1, a max power item which does exactly what it says on the tin, and a 1-up extra life. You get a choice of 3 characters: Luna (Ship: Hawk DX-7), who as a medium attack

width and power and medium ship movement when changing weapons. Luna is the only playable character when you first play the game, the other two are locked at the start. Cat-99, a Robot cat with homing rapid shots, rather powerful main shot, but less powerful focused shot, but faster movement with this weapon. You have to reach stage 3 to unlock CAT-99. Also, we love robots here at Shoot You Sir, so a shout out to this little robot feline.



STAR HUNTER

V1.66 FULL DX

Last we have Edgar (Ship: Jamma), He has the fastest speed for his rapid shot, but the slowest but most powerful focused laser shot. You have to reach stage 5 to unlock Edgar.

I previously mentioned the game was challenging, but it does have several modes, including an easier one. You will really need to get to grip with the games mechanics here before you can progress through the stages without a hitch. A lot of it relies on timing the 'bullet time' for appropriate times, gathering energy and grazing bullets. This can be no mean feat, as the backgrounds are rather cyberpunk with lots of pinks, reds, and Neo colours, and your main shot is neon, and enemies pink. With pink and gold cubes. Taking your eye off of the game play to check your bullet time gauge may cost you a life, which can be very frustrating.

Gameplay is thick and fast (except in bullet time), so a lot of newbies will really struggle with this game. It poses quite the challenge. Even some SHMUP veterans may have a frustrating time, with so much going on at once, as it is not just bullet hell bullet dodging you are doing here, but a multitude of things. Parts of this game are brilliant, and parts are just boringly frustrating. General stages are



more challenging than some of the boss fights, which almost feel like a respite from the stages. Visually the game is very pretty, with a 16-bit look that has been modernised to help with the gameplay style. Background environments are colourful yet basic, and this is purely down to the fact that there is so much going on on-screen, anything other than this would just not be playable. But don't get me wrong, the backgrounds are pleasing on the eye, and there are some rather cool stages. The shot types of the characters, looks and feels great. Huge spreads and colourful bullets fly at enemies and makes them stand out, and each character looks and plays differently enough to get more time out of the game.

In fact, one of the best things the game has done is make the characters lockable. This means you will strive harder to get the characters unlocked and try them as soon as you can. This allows you to overcome difficulty spikes in the game. If you are Struggling with Luna, I suggest holding out until you can unlock KAT-99, as his max powered main spread homing shot is extremely useful, as you can



focus on dodging bullets and timing bombs, bullet time, and where you want to be on the screen without having to overthink things. From here, you will be able to learn more of the game and the enemy patterns, which should allow you to use the other two characters without any concerns.

STAR HUNTER

V1.66 FULL DX

Sound wise the games sound track goes well with the visuals and cyber world the devs have created, but you won't be rushing out to buy the soundtrack any time soon. It is atmospheric in places, and has some cool synth tracks. But that is the norm for most STGs, so it is the minimum we expect. Sound effects are decent, again they suit what the game is trying to achieve and are not distracting in a bad way - nor are they necessarily empowering in a good way. So middle of the road here, but it works, and that is most important.

Visually sprites are well designed, and in keeping with cyber sci-fi imagery we have seen over the years. There are some cool, unique designs, but mostly you have likely encountered very similar before.

The game has a very basic but cool story, with characters giving a brief one or two liners before a stage or boss fights, which are reminiscent of those in Galaxy fight I.e. usually throwing one's excrement at one another in a comical way. It's very Japanese-like and it's great! It adds a lot of personality to a game that would otherwise look fairly plain for the most part. Enemy bullet patterns look rather sweet, especially further on in full flow. I mention the environments above, but some of the level design with the clever bullet patterns do look rather snazzy. After spending some time with the game, I have come to really like it. However, I must admit it was an acquired taste. At first I thought it was trying to be too clever for its own boots, but keeping with the game to unlock and reach the end stages and push through the challenge of the game made enjoy it a lot more.

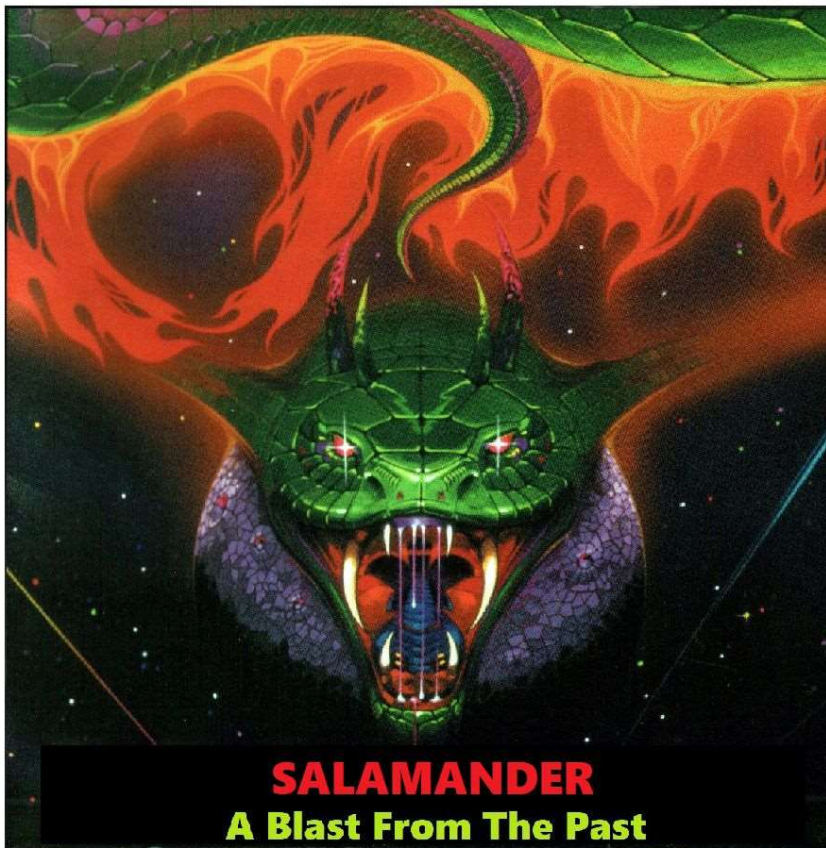
The game brings together some important but simple touches, such as unlockable characters at different stages, all with different looking and feeling attack types, and with some humour to tie it all together, but without smothering the playing with minutes of dialogue. This game requires you to put time into it and learn and strive, rather than being a typical pick up and play SHMUP - like you can get away with Razion EX or Blazing Star. It asks you to patiently learn the mechanics, to try and empower you enjoy the game mid to long term. It is likely one of the better releases last year, in terms of 'new game', so have a think about this STG developed by 1CC games.



SCORES

Graphics: 17 Sound: 16 Control: 18 Fun: 17 Lastability: 16

OVERALL: 84%



SALAMANDER **A Blast From The Past**

Salamander was in fact re-titled **Life Force** in North America and is a scrolling shoot-em-up, arcade game by Konami. It was released in 1986 as an off-shoot of the classic, **Gradius**. **Salamander** had a simplified power-up system, 2P co-operative gameplay and both horizontal and vertically scrolling stages. **Salamander** was followed with a sequel in 1996, imaginatively titled **Salamander 2**. The popularity of this game saw it released on a multitude of formats, including Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum, NES, MSX, PC Engine, PS1, Saturn, mobiles phones, PS4 and the Playstation Portable.



In **Salamander**, the first player controls **Vic Viper** and the second player has the honour of controlling **Lord British**, also known as "Road British", due to the dodgy Japanese-to-English pronunciation and translation. The game has 6 stages which alter between the horizontal and vertically scrolling.



Players continue from their point of destruction, instead of being returned to a pre-defined checkpoint. There are no continues in single player mode, and 2 are available in the two-player mode. The player gains power-ups by picking up capsules left behind by some enemies. Many of the power-ups can be combined. For example, fire a second, or third salvo of missiles or even ripple/plutonic lasers if these are available. Upon your ship's destruction, the power-ups float in space for a brief time before disappearing.

The arcade version of the game was released in Japan, then Europe, and as **Life Force** in North America. The Japanese and European versions were almost identical, but the American version changed the game's storyline with an opening text that describes the game to be set inside a giant alien life-form. Konami then released a suped up version of **Salamander** in Japan in 1987, using the American title. All very confusing then and more so, now.

For it's time, **Salamander** was an ace shooter, with some nifty synthesizer music, ongoing vocal encouragement, some very attractive graphics and tricky but fun gameplay. It's use of across and up the screen gameplay gave some variety and definitely added to the challenge. Play it now and it is a good shooter, that obviously, with **Gradius**, inspired many later shooters, like **R-Type** and **Pulstar**. A definite oldie but goldie.



EARTH DEFENSE FORCE™

Game Review
By Graham Pike

was on the cusp for arcade graphics, between the solid and functional graphics of beforehand and the magnificent 2D artistry to come. When you start EDF, you see that at the beginning of each stage, you get a good choice of weaponry. And this does add some variety and replay value, as each type does play differently enough to need you to adopt some tactical variations. For instance, the Laser attack uses a beam that only lasts for a few seconds, needing a short break before it starts up again. This really does need factoring into your playing style.

You start with 3 shields, shown on the top left



The game controls pretty well. It's not as tight as some of the better shooters. Likewise, the gameplay is simple and fun but doesn't get your juicers flowing. It's the same with the sound effects. The music reminds me of stuff on Sega's Megadrive (Genesis). Competent but not really inspiring or exciting. The graphics are quite primitive but do hint at what is to come. There's not much colour, detail or animation in the backgrounds. The sprites are nicely detailed but lack the sharpness and vivid colouring of later games. A decent game for it's time but for those seeking serious retro cool, maybe look elsewhere.

Earth Defense Force was first released in 1991, it is a horizontally scrolling shmup, from developers Jaleco. It first came out in the arcades, then later, on the Super Nintendo. It also made it onto Nintendo's Wii and Switch and Sony's PS4. The game plays on a 4 x 3 screen and is fairly typical of it's time, with some quite nice visuals, synthetic music and a good choice of weaponry. I would say that 1991



of the screen and every hit you take will destroy one. Get hit with no shields and your spaceship sprite will fall from the screen, in disarray and you'll have to either use a continue, or if you are really hardcore, start the game again. Ouch! However, extra shield points can be earned when a certain game score is reached. Up to 5 shield points can be shown on screen. And it is rumoured that you can, in rare circumstances, earn more than 5 shields, although any above 5 will not be shown on the screen. The game has a conventional level system, where you gain points for killing enemies, to get more powerful weaponry.



SCORES
Graphics: 13 Sound: 12
Control: 15 Fun: 13
Lastability: 13
OVERALL: 66%

GAME REVIEW

By
Slyeessar



SCORES: Graphics:13 Sound:16 Control:13 Fun:17 Last:12 OVERALL:71%

For a game named after the club P3 from Charmed, this game does a great job of doing just that; It's charming. Okay, so it is not really linked to three witches in the prime of their life, fighting evil, chasing guys, and for some reason seemingly to not realise the bra was invented. This game provides fairly addictive gameplay for something so cheap, I picked it up on the US Switch store for free as I had \$1.99 value in credits, from buying games previously.

Visually the game is monochrome, with a vertical scrolling approach, with the playing screen taking up a third of the screen with the digits P & 3 on either side. It is a rather 8bit-inspired experience, so please bear this in mind if you are sick of the constant stream of indie bit games being fired at us left, right, and centre. I do ask that you give this game a chance though, as it does a lot right. Sprites are very basic, but look decent enough to make out what they are, including steroids bosses etc. In fact, as soon as you boot up the main mode, you face a single eye boss, like some kind over evil robotic Suezoo from Monster Rancher. Yes, this review is heavy with late 90's pop culture quotes so far, but I'll try not to milk it too much. The pixel art style is rather easy on the eyes, with nice shading put into the various environments to make a little bit more out of the setting that perhaps I have not eluded to yet. Scan lines are placed over the screen, and it works well with the overall aesthetic. You have two scanline options and the ability to turn this off in the main menu when you boot up the game. Bullets in the game are red, and easily visible over the black & white found in the game. The interesting mechanic in this game is the ship you control is constantly moving left or right, without an option to move up and down. This is actually rather interesting, as you have to be aware of not crashing into the sides, and time moving to avoid enemies, blast shots, asteroids and all manner of space litter.

As you progress through the stages, you level up by destroying enemies, the game will briefly pause and offer you a weapon change or a power up. When you get through certain sections of the game, it will offer up an increase in shot power or HP as well. A nice touch, as if you take a hit you lose a step of power. I quite enjoyed trying different things with each play through, like adding extra pods to help me have a wider shot or a laser that charges. It is a nice little touch that adds a little bit extra to the game.

The best thing about this game is the soundtrack. A simple synth soundtrack, that is pumping and chatchy, in a good way. When the game boots up it offers up an atmospheric space synth sound creating a feeling of imminent danger. This harks back to Alien or the like, and is a nice touch. The game play can be a bit of a challenge and mastering the mechanics is always the key to unlocking the experience you want to get out of a game. P3 offered an experience that made me keep wanting to come back to it, but is mostly a fun play whilst waiting for your next big STG to be released. The devs did a good job with it. It does make me want to see what they come up with next, as they are clearly competent at making shoot em ups, and would love to see what they could do on a bigger scale.

