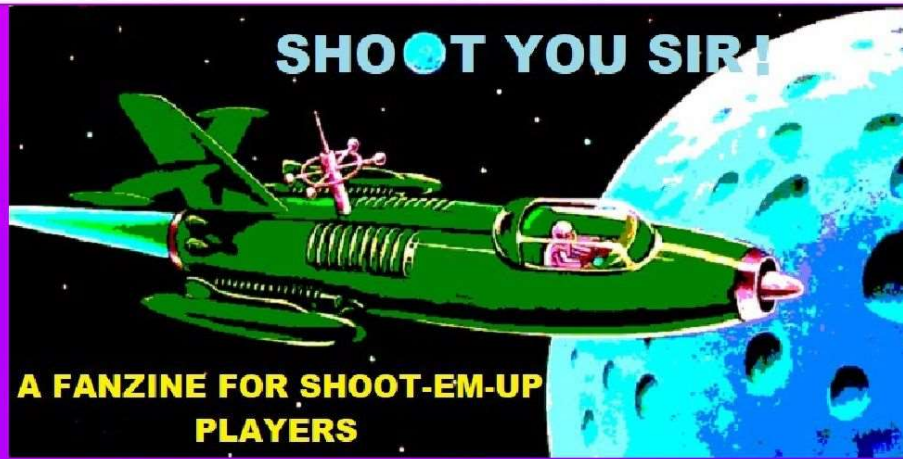


**Issue 29**



**March  
2023**

Hi there and welcome to issue 29 of Shoot You Sir! We have the usual news and reviews, plus a trip back to the dawn of time, as far as video gaming is concerned. Yes, back to the swinging sixties, where some folk missed the permissive age and some of the best music ever created, because they were sitting in darkened rooms, developing and playing one of the first video games of all time. If you want to know more, go to this month's Blast From The Past. Happy gaming.

### SHOOTER NEWS



Those of you that previously watched the Shoot You Sir! podcasts we did during the pandemic, will know both Graham and I are massive fans of the game Valfaris. Created by Andrew Gilmour (@mrawolf on twitter), Valfaris is a visual treat of gothic imagery and brilliant metal music tracks. The game follows Therion, as he traverses the perils, brutal

creatures, and challenges of the planet Valfaris. With some really cool weapons and mechanics, the game is easily one of my favourite games of all time. Mecha Therion is a continuation of the story, but this time as a SHMUP. You heard me correctly: a SHMUP. That is our territory, so it was a wonderful surprise when the news first dropped all those months ago.



Fast forward to now and I have specifically gone and bought a Steam Deck, just to play the Valfaris: Mecha Thereon demo. Yes, I have just spent a few hundred British pounds, to play a demo - don't try this at home kids. It will also open me up to other SHMUPs only available on the platform. But basically I just had to get my hands on the Valfaris: Mecha Thereon demo. Oh Well, when you are obsessed.



## SHOOTER NEWS continued



Booting up the demo, everything feels like home. The title screen, epic pixel art visuals, and metal music that gets you head-banging - and if you have hair left- windmilling. You can make adjustments to things like display resolution and sound in the menu if you like, but keep in mind this is a demo. Jumping into the action, you are asked if you want to take a tutorial? No is the metal answer, but we won't begrudge you taking the tutorial here.

The game visually looks stunning, in Andrew Gilmour's signature style, with the usual Valfaris aesthetic applied. Enemy sprites are both gruesome and unique. Some returning enemy types are instantly recognisable. Control-wise, as you can imagine the game is a tad different to the original, which was more of a platform based formula. This



time around Therion is in a mech suit, and therefore able to fly around the screen. Whoops, I forgot to mention this is a full screen horizontal scroller, which shows off the beautifully layered environments from front to back. Obstacles and parts of environments will need to be navigated. What is similar to the original Valfaris is weapon upgrades. In the demo you get your sword (Bathoryn), Your main gun (Hellwraith), Auxillary (Bunker-buster), and two model weapons. Your main shot starts off with a full bar with a thicker more powerful shot blast, after the bar depletes your bullets are much smaller and weaker. Killing enemies helps to build up the bar to increase shot size.

Just like the original game, you can stop at certain checkpoints and upgrade these with items collected. I will not go too in depth as I do not wish to spoil the game, but suffice to say if the full game is anything like the demo, then it will deliver a great experience.



The music helps blend immersion with a feeling of dark foreboding and riff riding, allowing you to push on through the challenging levels. We can't wait, and I bet you can't either! The game is set to release later on in the year on consoles and Steam. We will keep you up to date when we get a specific release date for Mech Therion.

**M2 has recently announced that Zero Fire will be added to the Toaplan Arcade Garage series. Launching in late 2023 in Japan.**



Currently Kyukyoku Teiger-Heli and Hishou same! same! same! are available. If you have been reading Shoot You Sir, you know that Tiger Heli is one of the weaker releases. Here's hoping that Zero Wing is a better, 2D horizontal SHMUP with a space aesthetic. Toaplan fans will be happy that this will be made available to them.

# Game Review

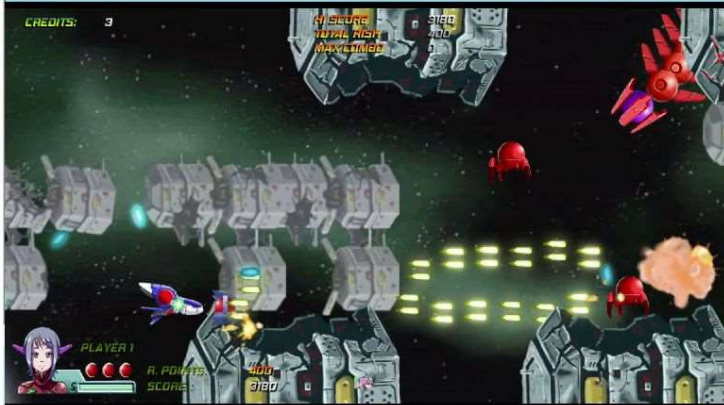
By Slyelessar

## WINGS OF BLUESTAR

START

just like one of the games mentioned above? Check.

There are more 'tip of the hat' moments to Blazing star, including a massive ship in the background of one level, with enemies that look like they are launching, just out of range, then come into range. The water stage in the game uncannily similar to the one in Blazing Star and you even get a stage where there is a long snake type boss that disappears in and out



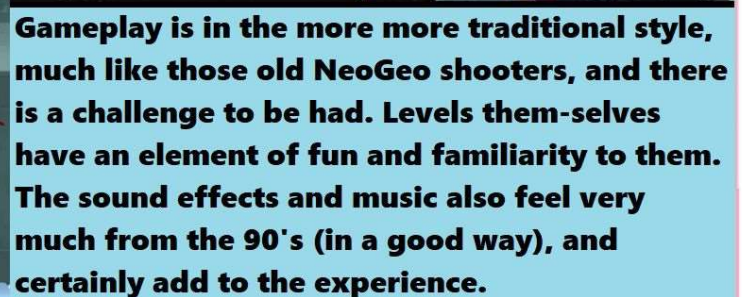
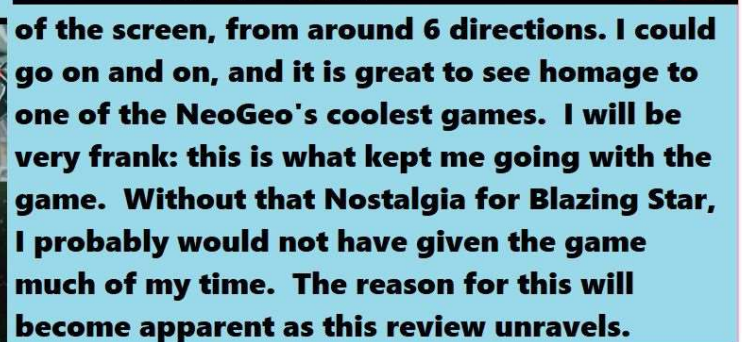
The sprites have the modern trend of being really large and rounded, yet having a less edgy/unique look. The CGI 3d sprites that just look a bit naff a-l-a Cotton Rock N Roll. The designs of enemies and playable ships are cool, but would look even better if they had a different design to these awkward looking sprites.



of the screen, from around 6 directions. I could go on and on, and it is great to see homage to one of the NeoGeo's coolest games. I will be very frank: this is what kept me going with the game. Without that Nostalgia for Blazing Star, I probably would not have given the game much of my time. The reason for this will become apparent as this review unravels.

Gameplay is in the more more traditional style, much like those old NeoGeo shooters, and there is a challenge to be had. Levels them-selves have an element of fun and familiarity to them. The sound effects and music also feel very much from the 90's (in a good way), and certainly add to the experience. Jumping into arcade mode, you start with two ships and playable characters: Blue Wing (pilot: Aya) or Altair (pilot Zarak). Blue wing has the wide spread shot, and Altair has a more straight column shot. You can pick up power-ups that attach gun satellites to your ship, which can be controlled with the triggers to circle-fire in any direction you like. It is possible that more characters can be unlocked. However, I did not get a chance to play through the story mode

With influences heavily rooted in Blazing Star and perhaps even Pulstar, Wings of Bluestar tries to bring what made those games so good into a more modern formula. Anime cut scenes and characters? Check. Beautiful horizontal scrolling backgrounds? Check. Ships that look like they were stolen from the 1990's, by space pirates? Check. Music that sounds





game: a hit box, if you would like one, visual and screen customisation, and audio control. I would suggest adding a hitbox for this game, as the way it 'feels' where it is without it is not where the hitbox appears when turned on, and that can lead to some frustrating deaths. Now that is out of the way, let me get to the concerns I have around the game. During one playthrough, my ship disappeared but the game carried on playing. What do I mean by this?



known bugs, and it may be ironed out in the future with an update. Story mode is really underwhelming. Stick to arcade - this is where the game is at its best. Story mode uses characters talking, to try and build up a story, but it is rather tedious, and the skip button does not skip all the dialogue and you get a message saying a character has left the discussion. Then you have to press a button to skip. But also sometimes there are long pauses where nothing is happening. Once you get into the action and it is split up with elements of the story, it feels like arcade mode would have been a better choice, as it is all action. To summarise; somewhere in there is a good game, best in arcade mode, but I would warn that at the time of writing the game feels broken in places. The tip of the hat to Blazing Star is most certainly welcome, the execution of the game itself leaves a lot to be desired. I think part of this is down to how much has tried to be crammed into the game. Perhaps focusing on the arcade mode, making this tight and fun should always be the most important element of a shoot em up in the old traditional style. The devs tried so hard to make a good SHMUP along the way. That is not to say the game is bad. Far from it, I definitely enjoyed the music, some of the bosses, and every homage to Blazing Star that made my eyes get wider and a smile on my face. And I think that is part of what the developers were trying to achieve with the game - and for this they succeeded.

**Review continued:** several times for reasons that will become clear later in this review. The title menu touts a lot different choices, and shows that a lot has been stuffed into the game: Tutorial mode, story mode, arcade mode, options, two player mode (arcade), and there is even a shop where you can buy boss rush mode with credits won during the game. You also get a gallery mode, which is cool. Options also offers a lot of control over the



It kept scrolling with enemies and bullets flying across the screen. Although this did allow me to appreciate the beautiful background, it pretty much meant that was the end of my run. Considering I was a few stages in, that meant turning it off. This only happened once, but does leave a bad taste in the mouth. Nobody wants to play a SHMUP and have all that effort go out the window because of some sort of game bug. At time of writing there are several

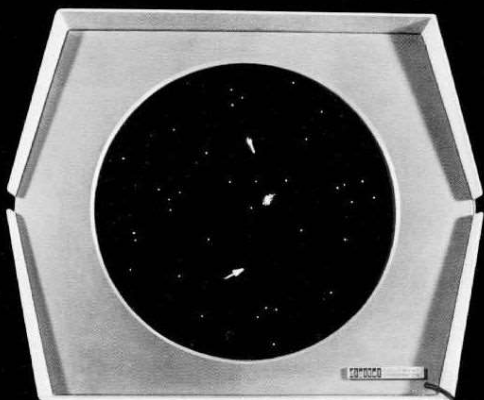


# Spacewar!

## A Blast From The Past

**Spacewar!** was a space combat, come dog-fight game, from 1962. It was developed by Steve Russell, with Martin Graetz, Wayne Wiitanen, Bob Saunders and Steve Piner. It was programmed for an early mini-computer, the DEC PDP-1, that was based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As you might imagine, this game would have initially been played by a very few folk at the Institute and it was these folk who helped the game expand further. In fact **Spacewar!** seems to have been the first computer game to have been played over multiple computer installations.

The game has 2 spaceships, named **The Needle** and **The Wedge**, dogfighting within the gravity well of a star. Both ships are controlled by players. Each one having a limited amount of torpedoes to shoot at each other and fuel for moving about, via thrusters. The ships however, do remain in motion, when not being manouvered, due to the influence of the Star.



In fact, moving a ship near to the star for a gravity assist, can be a helpful strategy. If a ship moves past one edge of the screen, it reappears on the other side in a wraparound effect. Your ship can rotate on it's own axis, to aim torpedoes and your thrusters. Funnily enough the torpedoes are not affected by the Star. They can only be fired one at a time though, with a time gap, before another can be fired. Ships are destroyed when they are hit by a torpedo, or collide with the star, or another ship.

Like in some much later games, the player can engage a hyperspace move, to a new and random location on the screen. This is risky though, as it could result in the destruction of your ship. The game was initially controlled by switches on the mini-computer, though co-creator Bob Saunders, built a very early gamepad to reduce difficulty and increase fun. As you might imagine, **Spacewar!** was one of the most influential games in the early history of video games, let alone shoot-em-ups. Being very popular in that small programming community, in the 1960s, it also spread to many other computer systems, throughout the decade. It was a huge influence on later games, like **Galaxy Game**, **Computer Space** and much later, **Asteroids**.

# Game Review

By Graham Pike

## RADIANT SILVERGUN™

レイディアント シルバーガン

© TREASURE

Rev.153

Development and distribution by Live Wire Inc.

Now here is a truly iconic game. **Radiant Silvergun** is a vertically scrolling shoot-em-up, that was developed by the legendary Treasure. Released in the arcades and then onto Sega's Saturn, in 1998. This is the story of a team of pilots in the future, battling waves of enemies drawn by a mysterious, recently excavated crystal. You get 6 types of shot to use and a sword to wack nearby enemies. The

stages in **Radiant Silvergun** are cleverly set out, to test your skills and make use of all your variety of firepower. The game has a lengthy and impressive anime intro, which shows that Treasure were not going to stint on the game's presentation. And the game's large arsenal of firepower, from the very start, showed that this was a serious shooter, that many consider one of the greatest of all time.



The 3 main weapons are a standard forward shot, a weaker but very useful homing attack and a spread shot, that fires 2 exploding lasers at a wide angle. And to extend your firepower strategy, there are also a rear shooting standard shot, a close range missile targeting system, and a longer range targeting system that electrocutes enemies. Your ship's sword is not only great for very short range (melee) attacks, it can also

be held in front of the ship to inflict damage and absorb special bullets to power up for a really large sword attack.

**Radiant Silvergun's** scoring system revolves around the enemy's color. The blighters come in 3 colours: red, blue, or yellow. Blowing away 3 enemies of the same colour, in a row, gets you a nice bonus. Destroying yet another 3 of same colour, beefs up your bonus, but



if you kill a different colour enemy, it will reset things. These chain attacks will also increase the effectiveness of the weapon used to destroy them, and these weapons will stay powered up for the remainder of the game. Each boss has different segments and limbs. Destroy them before going to that boss's weak spot

# TREASURE

VIDEO GAMES



**Review continued: earn another worthwhile bonus.**

**For it's time, Radiant Silvergun really looked, sounded and played brilliantly. 25 years on, it is still a very impressive game. The visuals are sharp and rather unusually for the time, are far more 2D CGI, than the more usual, at the time, "hand drawn", 2D artwork. The backgrounds may not stagger you with their beauty but they are still impressive and**

**the way the game uses the environment and enemy sprites together, to try and take you out, is challenging and just great gaming craft. The music really did influence the shmup genre and you can hear echoes of it still, in a lot of 21st century shooters. To today's ears, it may sound decent but nothing special but to those of us who remember the days when the Saturn ruled (with the Neo Geo) the shoot-em-**



**up world, one has to tip one's hat to Treasure and the music's composers. Treasure were mostly known for producing action and platform style games. An out and out, scrolling, arcade shooter was something new for them but boy did they revive the genre and got folk talking about shoot-em-ups again, with Radiant Silvergun. Play it, if you haven't and you'll see what the fuss was and is all about. It had a**

**sort of sequel in Ikaruga, which some players thought was even better. Not me though. Ikaruga is a great game but Radiant Silvergun was and is one of the best, of all time. For once, a game that pretty much deserves it's status in the shoot-em-up world.**



## SCORES

**Graphics: 18    Sound: 18    Control: 19    Fun: 19**  
**Lastability: 20    OVERALL: 94%**

## GAME REVIEW

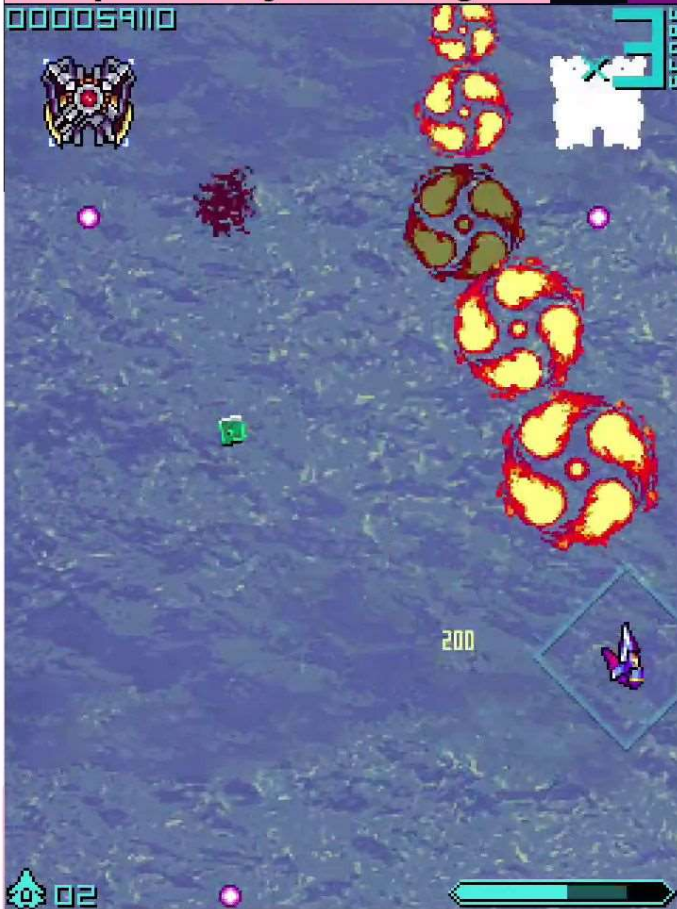
By Slyelessar



Red Art Game's Sophistar is another circa 90's pixel-art clone SHMUP, that offers a lot when it comes to options and modern gaming modes, but visually it fails to obtain uniqueness and stand out from the crowd. But let us dig deeper and see what makes this game tick.

Firstly, the music. This game has great synth-rock music,

with some cool bass lines. The first thing that sticks out about the game, aside from the title screen, that much belies the game's true visuals, is the absolute corker of a soundtrack. The menu music I can happily leave on the screen, tapping my foot and bopping my head to, as I write this review. The different level tracks also land particularly well during



gameplay. Time to get the oversized elephant in the undersized cockpit out of the way: The graphics are naff. Okay, visually, sprites are solid and do exactly what they say on the tin, but as far as enemy and boss designs go this game might as well have punched in the command 'Early 90's generic shooter, things coming at me, into an AI app and it's spat out all the unmemorable crap buried deep within the subconscious of anyone that actually stepped foot in a 90's arcade (or a console port - we're looking at you megadrive). The backgrounds in this game are also naff. I'm sorry, from a game with such modern menus, a rather banging soundtrack, okayish sprites, and it goes an offers up an early 90's screen saver look. Show me the money! On a serious note, the developer obviously wants the player focused in on gameplay rather than the look of the game, and we aren't expecting the beauty of the 2D world of Valfaris here -

Andrew Gilmour we love you please give us

Mecha Therion codes for Switch. Just kidding please don't block me on twitter! Later levels look much nicer, and it makes you wonder why the first level was not used to showcase better background environments or offer more of a 'vertical slice' in general. The game offers up a lot of things that I like to see in a SHMUP: a choice of different ships or weapon types, a dedicated power weapon or specialised bomb system, and a





chance to increase that ever escaping dragon: The High Score. All of characters have slightly different stats from speed demons, defensive crafts, and powerhouses. Eventually most plays fall into one or two favourites, but it's really cool there's a lot of choice here. There's a lot of goodies to be found within the modes: Cadet school contains 60 different trials, and is in no way a tutorial

mode, because there is another mode for that: Tutorial mode. In terms of the actual gameplay, it's another TATE mode game. The size of the gameplay area can be increased via zoom and X/Y adjustments, from the 3rd of the screen you initially get. The more extreme the widening of gameplay area, the more warped sprites, bullet, and the like look. Still, it is nice to be able to increase this a bit. On the right handside you have a bar that slowly depletes during gameplay, but destroying enemies and collecting green tokens keeps the bar filling up, which can be used for a special shot. You can also teleport across the screen, which is pretty cool, especially in later levels. The player ships all control really well, and the faster ones are much more useful for collecting the green tokens much closer to the enemies, which is handy as these green gems shrink and worth less points the smaller they get. The game has a story, but it's rather basic and the character dialogue is not exactly well written. These are easily skipped for players wanting to get back into the action.



In summary, the game is a good entry into the SHMUP genre, but it has to be said I think it is fair to expect more from sprites and environment visuals, even when these games are trying to hark back to 16 & 32 bit games. In terms of modes and re-playability Sophstar offers a lot, but in terms of lack of eye candy it feels like it counteracts this a little bit, and one finds it difficult to keep coming back to this game. The menu music, as I mentioned, is really good, and helped keep my interest alongside the large number of playable characters. Sometimes stuff a game full of content is just not as fun as a game full of refined substance. I would happily have taken less modes and less characters, if more time was spent honing the overall experience of the game. Hopefully the developers build on what they have here with a sequel, but it is certainly a competent attempt. As I mentioned before, this till help keep ticking you over until Mecha Therion \*wink wink\*.

#### SCORES



Graphics: 13  
 Sound: 18  
 Control: 17  
 Fun: 15  
 Lastability: 15  
**OVERALL: 78%**