

# SHOOT YOU SIR!

Issue 30

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**A FANZINE FOR SHOOT-EM-UP  
PLAYERS**

Hi there and welcome to Shoot You Sir's 30th issue. A nice little milestone. We manage to cover a number of decades this time and hope there will be something to interest you, the reader. There really is so much, whether classic or contemporary, to get your teeth into, for the fan of the greatest video game genre, the shoot-em-up. Happy gaming.

## SHOOTER NEWS



To celebrate its 10th anniversary, D-Pad studio will be launching Savant: Ascent anniversary edition later in 2023. The game is a platform shooter, where you play as 'The Alchemist'. He has been cast down from his tower by an unknown force. The player ascends the game attempting to get back to the top of the

tower whilst jumping from lifts/ platforms and firing at enemies.

The game has a very gothic aesthetic, which looks great. In the trailer there are a few of the enemies, all of which look uniquely drawn. The music in the game is written by the Norwegian artist You can pick up items and unlock new abilities as the game progresses. D-Pad have included lots of extra goodies from extra items, to stages, for the release. The game will be released on PS4/5, Xbox Series, Xbox One, Switch, and Steam.



GAME  
REVIEW

# DRANIUS

By  
Slyeessar

A modern take on a traditional horizontal SHMUP with some new modern mechanics thrown in, Dranius delivers a fun yet challenging experience in a formula that can be difficult to get right. Let's start this review off in a different place to the norm: The bosses. Usually this is something that would be placed later in the review, but I have found the encounters against the transforming bosses in Dranius some of the best I have seen in a while. Now, boss transformations in a SHMUP are nothing new certainly, but some are far superior to others. The first game that comes to mind, that has epic boss transformations, is Shikhondo: Soul Eater. A game with a special place in the hearts of most STG fans, probably the most memorable thing about the game, aside from the visuals and great gameplay, was the boss transformations.

Unique boss designs that would transform into creatures of nightmares halfway through a boss battle. Dranius does not concern paranormal or creatures of a specific kind. Dranius deals with drones, machines, and what can only be described as very cool boss designs. For instance, there is a stage where you are flying along firing at a futuristic train, whilst dodging the usual SHMUP fodder and bullets along the way. Then every now and then, part of a carriage opens or changes and you have to beat the new little mini boss that comes along. Then the train eventually takes flight and morphs into a serpent dragon - holy shit this is was a really cool moment. The first boss encounter I met with was impressive in a different way. This boss had several transformations. A big round body with arms, that when you destroy the arms one by one, then turns into a circle with a number of guns that spins, firing all kinds of different beams and projectiles. Once you destroy the guns you expect to have to just destroy the remaining circle - well hold on just a minute space cowboy!

It summons two long mechanical platforms stretching across the screen to hold you in and starts sending strips of lasers in between the platforms towards you, whilst firing bullets. You must navigate these whilst firing are the centre to destroy it. The way this boss kept changing and in a way I was not expecting was exciting. Boss designs are something that Dranius does well and in a sea of SHMUPS, manages to float above most of the competition.

The games mechanics are something you need to pickup in order to progress and enjoy the game much more.

For instance, at the bottom left of the screen you have a shield bar. You can activate this shield momentarily by pressing the 'Y' button on the switch controller. This will allow you to fly through enemy bullets, lasers, and certain parts of small enemies to avoid being hit, and will use the energy absorb to fire





mini homing shots into nearby enemies. Be mindful that at first, this only lasts a few seconds, but is integral to being able to play the game. As you play through the game, you are able to upgrade your shot and shields in different and interesting ways. Including a slightly longer shield time or a 5-way bullet shot or a beam shot, etc. You can do this in between

stages, and it can be done quickly without interfering with gameplay too much. As you destroy enemies, you can pick up power up items to increase the number of shots that you have (e.g. one shot to two, three, 5-way, etc.). But you also gather green gems. These green gems increase the meter at the bottom right of the screen, which acts as your powerful, special laser attack. At the start you can charge this over four bars, but this can be increased via upgrading as you go along through the game. You start off with a single powerful but thin, laser blast across the screen. Using this in tandem with your main shot and shield mechanic can lead to some quite tactical set pieces against bosses and stages where you may need to navigate through sections of a fixed environment. In boss fights it is essential to have mastered the shield mechanics, as there will be certain parts of the boss encounters that will involve passing through lasers and fast spinning objects in order to destroy the bosses.

Visually the game is a really nice 2D scrolling horizontal shooter. Although the graphics give off a pixel art design, they are not heavily pixelated, and the designs of sprites and environments look great. The colour palette is nice and not in your face, and does not do that current trend of 3d sprites that are overly large and have a subdued colour tonality to them.



Boss designs are the coolest eye candy in the game and enemy bullets are easy to discern, from both your own and the background environment. Speaking of which, the background environments look lovely. Backgrounds both on planets and in space have



nice textures to them, and suit the overall look of the game. Sound effects suit the futuristic sci-fi look of the game. Shots fired, explosions and the like, all adding, as they should, to the immersion of the game. Nothing feels underwhelming or out of place sonically. The music in the tracks are your standard techno/ drum and bass type affairs. Although I love a rocking



I mentioned function upgrades. This comes from energy gathered in the energy tank in levels. Think of them as a really basic in game currency. It's not that in depth, so don't worry about it. Essentially between levels you can go in and quickly upgrade anything you want. You start with just a single shot forward, the shield mechanic, and the single powerful blast.

Gathering energy tanks means you have more energy to upgrade parts of your ship. This could be adding a front physical shield, 5-way shot forward, a directional shot backwards, a homing missile, and bits (satellite guns), which you can change the formation of. Everything costs a bit of energy so you need to be tactical with what you want. I upgraded the physical shield, had a 5-way shot, diagonal rear shots, and front physical shield to block 3 physical attacks from either terrain or meteors etc., as I went through. Again, this is quicker than it sounds, and makes it more streamlined than a lot of games where you buy and upgrade weapons, slowing down the action. A round of applause here for the developers for making this super quick and easy.

The game does have a storyline, with some interesting Japanese style characters exchanging a couple of words between levels. These are brief and can be skipped, Irina, who is the pilot, and an anthropomorphised frog-like character from the future called Ghenie. Everything adds to drop a bit of flavour in there, and to give an idea of what you might be fighting for.

The menu section is short and sweet - exactly what you want. Language, volume, vibration, collision detections, screen shake on/off, and revert to default. Title menu is just game start, button config, and game setting. It keeps it all tight and simple. All in all Dranius is a game worth having in your collection, be that digital or physical. A good example of a solid game with good mechanics, a small learning curve, and a challenge. Even the bosses will make you want to keep coming back for more until you beat them. As this was released/ ported to Switch around the same time as Wings of Bluestar, I think most players should lean towards Dranius, as it is a competent and interesting game. It is also the reason why I have mentioned WOB several times in this review. Man, those bosses are so cool.

## SCORES

Graphics: 18  
 Sound: 17  
 Control: 17  
 Fun: 17  
 Lastability: 17  
**OVERALL: 86%**



## A BLAST FROM THE PAST



Mad Planets is an arcade, multi-directional shooter from 1983 by publishers Gottlieb. You controlled a triangular shaped, blue spaceship, which you could direct and rotate independently, to shoot and destroy aggressive planets and moons, coming at you from all sides. The designer and programmer was Kan Yabumoto, with the artwork by Jeff Lee and the sound and music by David D. Thiel. The sound and artwork men had previously worked on the action/puzzle game Q\*bert, for Gottlieb.

Fighting off planets and moons while an astronaut floats by, was the order of the day, with Mad Planets. You used a flight-style joystick to move your spaceship around a dark background starfield. Planets appeared on screen and started to grow. Blowing them away before they reached full size and producing moons, was the way to progress most successfully and gain bonus points. As once a planet has moons, it gets shielded until all its moons have been destroyed or shot at the player's ship, and at this point the planet gets really peeved and may try to ram your dinky spaceship.



There are also floating astronauts to be collected, by flying over them. These little fellows also appear in mini-bonus rounds, after every third or fourth level. Also to be contended with are orbiting



comets that get faster and more dangerous, the longer you leave them on screen. So, as you can see, Mad Planets had quite a challenge and variety, for such an early shooter. An although the dark starfield was fairly bland, the sprites in this game were nicely realised, in both colour and detail. It was a game that controlled and played really well and is well worth seeking out, if you love retro arcade shooters, from the early eighties.

# Game Review

By Graham Pike



It is definitely difficult for me to do a fair review of Pulstar. Since it's release in August 1995, I have been a big fan. It always appears in any Top 10 lists I do. Now Pulstar is very much in the R-Type style of shooters and for me, that makes it all the more remarkable, as try as I might, I have never really got on with the R-type series. I have owned pretty much every one of them but have never come to love them. It's very much due to the fact that they are memory games. As they get harder, you really have to remember where to place your ship, or your chance of survival is next to zero. Now, most shooters will require the use of your memory but usually they will balance it more evenly with reactive and other strategic skills.



Having said all that, pretty much from the first minute of play, I got hooked on Pulstar. And a lot of that has to do with it's presentation. The music has some of the best composition I have heard, in any game. Talk about draw you in. On top of that, for the time, razor sharp and inventive visuals, really made you feel part of a world. Pulstar was in fact the first Neo Geo game to incorporate 3D pre-rendered visuals. With sprites that are full of detail, that are shaded and lit beautifully. This is a world you'll wanted to see more of and it was this that made me keep on in there and learn how to overcome the many shooter trials that Pulstar threw at me. And yes, you had to remember a lot to get through.

Another thing that stood out back then, was the anime style cut scenes, used on the intro and between stages. These seemed remarkable on a 5 year old, cartridge based console. This was a big game for the Neo Geo (bit wise) and I was also very impressed by how well they tranferred it onto the Neo Geo CD. This was quite a feat, with it's memory limitations and the loading was kept very unintrusive.



## PULSTAR

ネオンジオSTG史上最大のスケールで放つ超大作シューティングパルスター

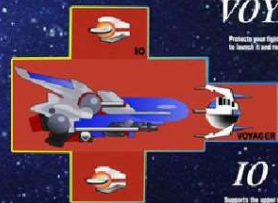
Clamp on the "10" and "VOYAGER"

Snatch items during game play to equip your fighter with powerful backup options like the awesome "VOYAGER." Turn your enemies to stone with the "VOYAGER" models and their various arsenal!

- "POWER UP" Items**
  - 1. Power Up
  - 2. Energy
  - 3. Extra Bomb
  - 4. Power Missile
  - 5. Healing Missile
- "VOYAGER" Models**
  - 1. The Laser
  - 2. Ring Laser
  - 3. Rolling Laser
  - 4. Beam Laser
  - 5. Spread Shot



Attach the "10" with the Beam!



## VOYAGER

Protects your fighter's front. Press the Left button to launch it and really kick some grade 8's!

10

Supports the upper and lower part of your fighter. Shoot or recover with Up & Down.

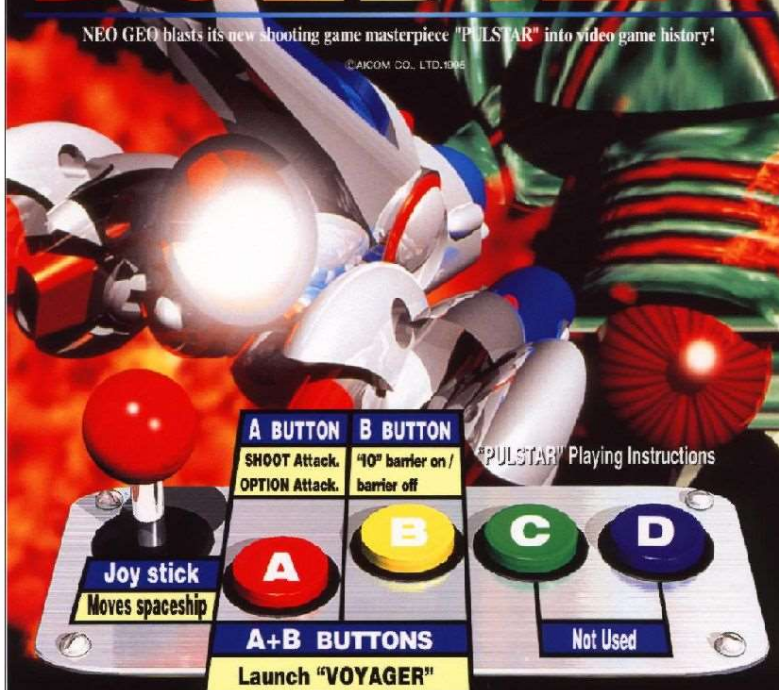


# NEO GEO's Long-awaited, Full-scale Shoot-em Up Is Here!

## PULSTAR

NEO GEO blasts its new shooting game masterpiece "PULSTAR" into video game history!

© AKOM CO., LTD. 1995



Press down the A Button for the "SURGER" Super Shot.

Printed in Japan  
NEO GEO is a trademark  
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# SNK

As I write this review, I have the original soundtrack playing on my PC and it really is still very impressive. It was composed by Harumi Fujita and Yasuaki Fujita, previously known for Capcom's Ghosts'n Goblins series. Harumi Fujita wrote the music for Pulstar with the idea of freedom from sound chip limitations, allowing her to create music that related to the game's environment. It is all so cinematic and atmospheric. It really is some of the best sci-fi music out there. Put simply, this is an eight stage, horizontally scrolling, space opera themed, shoot-em-up. You have the usual 2D, 8-directional movement, a main, forward firing shot. You can also hold down the fire button, to charge up a more powerful attack. The power build up is indicated by a meter at the bottom of the screen; the blue half creates a powerful charge shot, while the red half creates a barrage of rapid blasts. As in the R-Type games you can also acquire a protective

drone that acts as a shield. It can also be used as a battering ram to destroy smaller enemies. The drone can also be detached to create a powerful bomb attack, that can destroy anything in it's destructive radius. There are also power ups to collect that increase your speed and you can gain smaller ships, that follow you and provide additional fire-power. And you'll need all the firepower you can muster, plus all your shooter skills, as a multitude of creatures and mechanisms come at you from all directions. So if you don't move and think very quickly, you are scrap.



# PULSTAR™



Pulstar was released by SNK for arcades in 1995. It was developed by Aicom, a Japanese developer founded by former employees of Irem. Pulstar was known under the codename of **Project Dino** during development, and was designed to be technologically-impressive for the time period. It's pre-rendered graphics, which were 3D models converted into 2D, to create the illusion of a 3D environment. All this lead to a phenomenal game.

It actually had a sequel in the rather excellent **Blazing Star**, a game much loved by Sly, who rates it well above Pulstar. For me, **Blazing Star** was a great shooter that never had that magical effect on me, achieved by **Pulstar**. I guess it is very much a personal thing. Certain great games come out at a certain time in your gaming lifetime, that just hit the spot, where you can really appreciate what was created. There where a few of



those on the mighty Neo Geo, of which Pulstar was one. It still shines out, as a true classic. A very memorable experience and just a great shooter.



## SCORES

Graphics: 19    Sound: 20    Control: 18

Fun: 19    Lastability: 19

**OVERALL: 95%**



# GAME REVIEW

By Slyelessar

# GUNLORD X

PRESS A BUTTON

NG Dev games have been fairly popular amongst the retro gamers, with new additions to older game consoles such as the NeoGeo and Dreamcast. I have previously reviewed Razion EX in issue #26, if you would like to check out our review of the game there. NG Dev have ported a couple of their games to modern consoles, Razion EX being one, and

Gunlord X being the other. The one game that a lot of people really want to play on modern consoles is Krautbuster, a Metal Slug type run & gunner. Come on NG Dev and get this one ported please. Gunlord X boots up and you are greeted with one of the coolest title screens around, and a brilliant title track. This really sets the mood for the game, with the synth and drum track providing a sense of fore-



and rumble intensity. Jumping into game start, you initially start with two lives, but this will increase the more you collect the large pink diamonds, dotted about the game. Loading screens have really cool pixel art enemies on them, really getting you into the mood to kick some monster arse! As the game starts properly, you notice that the environments have some cool hidden art designs of dragon and dinosaur bones, and there's a few little hidden secret places to discover collectables. Visually the game looks good, but you can tell it was programmed to be played on older consoles initially, rather than given a modern pixel art aesthetic - Valfaris this is not (but what is?). With that said, the game does a good job of level design, keeping

boding, before hitting with a really cool synth riff. In the options menu, you are able to make changes to the screen. As default, the gameplay screen takes up 90% of the screen, but you can turn on the full vertical scale option if you want this full screen. Scanline filters can be turned on or off to taste - I'll take mine off in this instance thank you. You can also adjust the usual things like sound fx, music volume,



## Review continued



THE STORY UNFOLDS...

each environment interesting and fairly diverse. Enemy sprite designs are also fairly diverse, which helps to keep the game interesting. Backgrounds to environments look really nice, the first level having some great cloud and rain graphics to admire as you plough through the obstacles and jump over the many gaps in the ground. Your main fire button fires a healthy spread of bullets across the screen, and you can keep this button pressed as needed, adding a modern touch to a retro-style game. You can find items along the way that change the intensity or

type of your shot, such as a much larger single burst blast to shots that ricochet off of the environment and up walls and around corners. Make no mistake - this is a run and gun game. The game feels like it is meant to be played at a bit of speed, but you can take your time if needed. Levels make it feel like there is a sense of urgency, especially when some enemies can be



hidden and jumping and moving forward can necessitate that you have fired in a few directions when jumping to ledges or a platform of any kind. Even some of the enemies are more dynamic in their approach, like when jumping too far down into a hole in the ground and missing platforms, the enemies above will go over the edge of the platform they are on and land on top of you. I

thought this was a cool feature, keeping the game interesting when traversing down into underground sections. The game controls have both a fire button and a jump button as you'd expect, but it also throws in controls for a bomb/wave that fires out from both sides the playable character, and a button that allows you to turn into a ball and roll ala Metroid. In fact, there's a lot of references to fantastic video games, with some of the hidden mini platforms feeling a bit like Mario, and even the spikes in the floors of the first level remind me a lot of the old Adams Family Games on the SNES. An odd reference I know, but I genuinely had flashbacks the instance I saw these things/ was navigating through them. NG Dev got a lot right from harking back to some gaming classics. Speaking of which, the first stage is a run and gun level, with the second level being a SHMUP! A fantasy planet background environment, with a full horizontal shooter you say? Yes please! This level was a lot of fun, and comes right after beating the first stage boss. No bombs, no power ups, just a short simple shoot em up level, but very reminiscent of the fantastic Blazing Star. Now, I have made reference to the masterpiece that is Valfaris, but Gunlord X is much more forgiving. If you happen to lose a life to an enemy (except a boss), when you respawn in the





same place, that enemy is gone. This allows the game to be much more accessible to a wider audience. There is a challenge to be had with the game, but it is not as intensely brutal as Valfaris in terms of difficulty spike. You still need to work out certain tricks and learn bosses moves to be able to beat them, but it won't try and drag your soul to hell. Collecting the big point diamonds increases your continues and you can select to go to a previous level in the game if you have completed it.

Some of the music tracks in the game end abruptly, and then restart again after a period of silence. An odd choice, as I mind this disrupts immersion in a game, especially one that has a good sound track. There would be times in a game where I thought I was approaching a boss, but it was just the track finishing and there being no sound for a short time before



starting up again. This is probably the main flaw of the game, and is most distracting. The music and sound FX in this game are really good though. To conclude, this game is very cheap considering what you get for it: tight controls, detailed levels, interesting enemies, and some cool references to the past. Although a run and gun platformer at heart, the SHMUP

elements thrown in are enjoyable and are a really nice change of pace from the other stages. So, GunlordX will live on, in my Switch, and I will go back to it, probably again and again, which says a lot really. NG Dev have shown that they can make good games. Which only leaves one question: When will we get a port of [Krautbuster?](#)



**SCORES**

**Graphics: 16    Sound: 17**  
**Control: 19    Fun: 18    Lastability: 16**  
**OVERALL: 86%**

