

ISSUE 7



MAY 2021

Hi and welcome to the issue 7 of your favourite shooter e-zine. We have our usual reviews for differing consoles and another Focus on a Developer, where we look at an interesting company who have a limited output, following a successful format. There's also some interesting news this month. So Happy Gaming, from Sly and Graham.

SHOOTER NEWS

Cotton Collection News:

Grab your cloak and broomstick, as we have some rather witchy news for you! So not only did we get Cotton Reboot on Switch in early 2021, which included the original X68000 game, we are set to get 3 more on the 30th September 2021! City Connection will be bringing the collection of 3 games to Switch and PS4. These games include: Cotton 2, Cotton Boomerang, and Guardian Force. Well, that is one game, with three different alternative versions. Cotton 2 was originally released in the arcades in 1997, and was later ported to home consoles. It featured elements and designs similar to the first game, but also added some additional features, such as life bars for characters, and 'command shots', where you could grab enemies and throw them, or seal them in an orb and use them as a shield. Cotton Boomerang is a remixed version of Cotton 2, with altered gameplay layouts, and visuals. It was later ported onto the Sega Saturn. Guardian Force is harder to find information on. Suffice to say that the games are focused around the Saturn releases of the Cotton games. The Cotton 30th anniversary game has not had any footage released yet, but hopefully in the next few months we will see what this has to offer. Success informed everyone that it will go into the arcades. So hopefully it will be ported over to current Gen after this. All three games will have the overall control brought up-to-date, with things like auto fire, rewind, and save and load states. So get ready to have more Cotton in your life!

Cotton Reboot Free update characters:

Speaking of more Cotton in your life- Cotton Reboot is set to get two new playable characters: Appli Ke Pumpkin and her hat companion, Needle. It is rumoured that the original voice actor for Appli has been used for the character, and both characters will play differently from each other. Appli is shown as having a more powerful attack, and dressed in dark red as opposed to Cotton (who is dressed in blue). Needle is rumoured to have a more rapid fire attack. Cotton Reboot is already a bloody good game with two playable characters, adding an additional two characters that play differently, will open up the game even more. Watch this space!

Death Smiles:

So after a few months, we finally are able to bring you news that Death Smiles 1&2 released on Xbox One, PS4/5, and Nintendo Switch on 16th December 2021. A much anticipated port to current gen consoles by the Shoot You Sir! team, Death Smiles originally released in arcades and was later ported to Xbox 360. The release on 16th December has the following: Death Smiles: Arcade, 1.1., Normal. Death Smiles Mega Black Label: Arcade, 1.1., Normal and Death Smiles II: Arcade, Death Smiles IIX and Arrange.



ROLLING GUNNER

Mebius



Turn on this game and you get a background story in text and pictures. A new element called Bustorium has been located under the ocean. This leads to technological advances and an advanced A.I. system, called BAC. And guess what, it turns against humans. Who'd have thought that such a thing could happen. But of course, there's a final hope, in the form of combat jets. So, zero originality on the story front. But watching the intro and demos to this game, you see straight away that this is a rather beautiful looking, horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up. Everything looks very sharp, detailed and colourful. Rolling Gunner's theme is one massive, shmup cliché. But that is OK, if the game is a good one. Go to the main menu and there's a ton of options. You can try a Novice Mode, see Rankings, watch Replays, do Training, adjust the game's configurations or read the game's manual. So fiddle to your heart's content



and then get this game started. There are 3 difficulty modes and 3 jets to choose from, then finally you get to play. This game plays with a variation on the shoot and bomb style. What I like here is that you have a mobile satellite connected to your jet. If you are holding down the shoot button, the satellite stays put, firing in one direction, whilst you move around. When you move but release the shoot button, the satellite circles around your jet, giving you a 360 degree, shooting circle. And so, whilst your jet always fires forward, the satellite can fire simultaneously, in any direction. This ability is fully required during the game and is very quick to get the hang of and a load of fun to perform. From the very start, the game screen fills up with enemies and their firepower. And as I said before, this is a beautiful game, to both play and watch. The vibrant variety of colour and Hi Def visuals are very impressive.



That said, the thing that slightly lets the visuals down, is that the sprites look very flat. A bit like a nicely detailed aircraft, drawn on a flat piece of paper, moving over a highly detailed backdrop. This is also apparent in the game's cut scenes. Somehow all the lovely detail, colour and shading, don't give the sprites that blended look, where sprites and scenery are flowing as one. OK I'm nit-picking here because this game really is quite a beauty. The hero jets control very smoothly and the gameplay is very pleasurable indeed. I wouldn't call this a bullet hell game but it comes very close to it, at times. The music is good but not as good as the visuals. It provides some entertainment but doesn't lift the game or raise the player's pulse. It's the same with the SFX, they do the job but don't quite pack enough punch, to my ears.



Game review cont.....

It is the gameplay that really lifts Rolling Gunner. It's all pleasantly familiar, giving you a shed load of challenge and some real shooting fun. The end of level bosses are large and dangerous, as you might expect but I don't think they are particularly menacing or entertaining, the way they are in some of the best shmups. It's often the simple things in this game though. Like the way the medal points come out of defeated foes. Some go directly to your jet but others just drop down, out the bottom of the screen, getting lost. It's the old ploy, to get your

hero jet to move closer to the enemy and into danger. Simple but very effective. With your ability to shoot in all directions, as you'd expect, enemies and their firepower indeed come at you, from all directions. And all of these gameplay elements, lift Rolling Gunner up there with some of the best, in the genre. Much of the enemy firepower is lovely to behold and always remains highly visible, which is not always the case, even in some of the better games in the shoot-em-up universe. This game is a real challenge, a real toughie but there's is a way to win and it's a lot of fun trying to find that way.

Overall then, this a quite a splendid game. A feast for the eyes, pleasant on the ears and a rollicking challenge. Though for me, it lacks character. There's no originality or sense of menace. But I guess, that's just me. I really would highly recommend Rolling Gunner to any shoot-em-up fan.

It has the feel of a high quality game. It's development was directed by Daisuke Koizumi, an ex Cave employee. And so you can see where that quality comes from. Although I would not rate this up there, with the best of Cave's games. I would say that Rolling Gunner is well worth having in anyone's game collection and really puts on a great show.



SCORES

Graphics: 18

Sound: 16

Control: 19

Fun: 18

Lastability: 19

OVERALL: 90%





- This game was originally on the Dreamcast but without the HD part.
- Beautiful, detailed HD Graphics
 - 5 Stages with HUGE Boss Enemies
 - 3 Player battle ships with 3 gun types
 - Instant Respawn
 - Practice Mode
 - Score Attack
 - Re-balanced difficulty
 - 3 difficulty modes: Easy, Normal and Hard
 - 60 FPS
 - Arcade play & Addictive Scoring System
 - Auto-bomb enabled on Easy mode
 - Time released continues
 - 2-player local co-op mode for addictive fun
 - Incredible Soundtrack composed by Rafael Dyll (Soldner-X2 and Rainbow skies)

Nintendo Switch

The first four or five times I played Ghost Blade HD, I did not think much of it. In fact, I thought it fell short in a lot of areas and I did not enjoy playing it. Fast forward several months and I have been playing it more again, very specifically after playing a hell of a lot of Crimson Clover. All of a sudden I love massive sprites, and big star coins - and what does Ghost Blade have a lot of? Massive sprites and big star coins!

Let me start by stating that, although at first I was not keen, I did think this was one of the best looking SHMUPS I have seen. Modern sprites, very crisp looking, good backgrounds, and everything looks quality. The backgrounds are detailed without being distracting, and compliment the sprites moving over the top. Bullets and shots are bright and clear, and enemy shots fired are easy to differentiate from your own. The menus are clear and precise, and playing this game undocked at 90 degree angle, encompasses the entire screen. I love playing my SHMUPS on my desk during breaks, in this way (and may or may not in less important meetings - allegedly).



The soundtrack boasts a lot of synth goodness, with fast beats playing in the background. The sound effects suit the style of the game, again much in the vein of Crimson Clover. The coin collect sound effect is particularly satisfying.

You take control of one of three ships of varying colour and ability and the story is very basic but it is there. The focus is more on gameplay, as you would come to expect from most SHMUPS.

It is a space based SHMUP, with some battles taking place both in outer space and on planets - I particularly like the Mars level! I have a thing for Mars, the planet rather than the chocolate bar. Now I'm hungry, I wonder if the sweet shop is open.....Anywho, the controls are tight and come with the standard hold or tap to shoot and bomb buttons.





This game is a lot of fun, but I must also mention it is quite difficult. On easy mode, it feels more like a normal mode, from other games and this may put some people off. I also think new comers to the genre will be put off by the fact you have limit lives and continues, as this game will not just let you play through it unless you have become proficient at the game. For this reason, I only recommend it to those with some previous SHMUP experience. It is fun, and I was drawn to this game after over playing Crimson clover (mentioned above). And although it is not as good as C.C., it is still a very good game. Unfortunately there are a few things holding this game back that will keep it out of people's top 10 lists. The gameplay is good, but simple: a modern looking SHMUP in the vein of a classic. There is no wheel re-inventing here but it does the basics well. It is also a tough game and as mentioned above, will not be very welcoming to people looking into get into the genre. The game is also not filled to the brim with modes and extras, like a lot of SHMUPS seem to be released with these days and in some ways that will also put people off. It does however have the option for 2 player co-op, always a plus.



Overall, this game is very aesthetically pleasing, and the soundtrack and SFX are good. If you loved Crimson Clover and are looking for something similar, Ghost Blade HD is it's flashier, more pragmatic cousin. It's a lot of fun for a quick SHMUP affair but you will likely fall back into your ever faithful and more high maintenance shooters, like ESP Ra De or Crimon Clover.



SCORES

Graphics:17 Sound:16
 Control:15 Fun:15
 Lastability:14 OVERALL:77%

FOCUS ON A DEVELOPER

Qute
CORPORATION

Founded in 1999, Qute Corporation are a video game company based in Japan. They are not just a games company though, dealing in tech consultancy for graphic design and health care. This may explain why their games output, over the years, has not been vast, to say the least. Though some may argue that quality is preferable to quantity.

GAMES

In 2004 they produced 2 rather similar vertical shooters, for the the handheld console, the Wonder-Swan Color. **Judgement Silversword**, said to be inspired by the classic, Radiant Silvergun, was a very limited release. The hardware meant it's sound and visuals were fairly limited, also. But it made up for this with clever, intuitive play, using 2 directional pads, you could have spread or focused firepower, as well as a limited duration shield. With it's limited numbers and nifty gameplay, this shmup has become a bit of a legend and became available as a bonus game, in 2011, with the Xbox 360 game Eschatos. **Cardinal Sins** came as a bonus game bundled with all releases of Judgement Silversword. The games are alike but the graphics in C.S. are ramped up and actually look quite decent. The music is marginally better also but not by much and can get a little annoying.



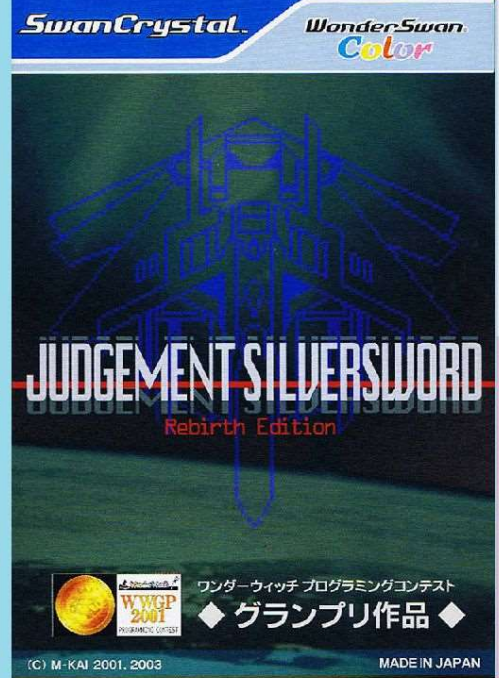
After a rather mighty gap in time to 2011, Qute released the aforementioned **Eschatos**, on the Xbox 360. This could readily be seen as a sequel to Judgement Silversword. Very similar gameplay but with fantastic music and graphics. A top Japanese, vertical scroller, this shooter really goes all out to entertain and impress. The only real difference from it's predecessors and

other's in the genre, is Eschatos has perspective changes, during play. It starts out top down but often, very smoothly, moves to just behind and above your hero space jet. Qute's next release was **Ginga Force**. It came out on the Xbox 360 in 2013 and the PS4 in 2020. And as you may have noticed, this is another sequel in the line of vertical shooters, from Qute. Similar to all it's fore-runners, many folk think it



wasn't as good as Eschatos. Graphically and sonically, it is every bit as good, IMO. In general I like it a little more than it's immediate predecessor. It's a very cool, modern yet traditional, shmup.

In their most recent game, Qute have taken Ginga Force and turned it into a horizontal shooter, called **Natsuki Chronicles**. Which was released in 2019 on the Xbox One and in 2020 on the PlayStation 4. The visuals and sonics are similar to it's older sibling but as a horizontal scroller, it makes a refreshing change and plays rather well. It has to be said that Qute started with a bit of a classic in Judgement Silversword and just kept with the system, with tweaks to most aspects of the game. They know how to keep with a winning formula and how to create a good looking and sounding game, in the last 3 incarnations. I'd recommend any one of their games and I particularly like the last 3, as excellent shmup experiences.



Muchi
Muchi
Pork



Game Review

By Slyeessar



ちんちん
ポーク

XBOX
360

It's cute-em-up time again, and this time it's Muchi Muchi Pork! Originally released in arcades in 2007 and later ported to Xbox 360 in a double pack with Pink Sweets, MMP does a lot of things right. Anyone not au fait with MMP, should know the story is this: A trio of anime women from Batazuka city have been transformed into pig-girls by the main antagonist, General Pork Fillet. They fly metal pig bikes, which are powered by pedalling and face off against an army of food based pun, bad asses. These include: Sergeant Wing, Major Sirloin, Warrant Office Lamb, & off course General Pork Fillet. Graphically the game is not as sharp as other Cave games on the 360, such as Mushihimesama HD or Death Smiles II. But what it lacks is sharpness, it makes up in personality. It's definitely playable and enjoyable and the background environments are of a decent quality. The biggest thing going for this game, is the cute piggy themed graphics. The ridiculous visuals of the game bump it up in terms of points.

The music in this game is surprisingly good, and give it that little extra 'something', that helps to make the overall experience more positive. Some of the sound effects are hilarious (both in a good and bay way), with a lot of whining voices from the player controlled characters.

The game has some interesting features, with pick-

ing up little pig medals being the main way of obtaining points. These appear when you destroy enemies, but you also pick up little pink piggies, which also work towards your point score. Power ups come in the form of 'P' medals, that drop down the screen or when you destroy enemies. If the player sprite gets hit, you explode into lots of P medals and will need to collect these. Your shot, or lard attack, is your main spread shot and gains a bit of a wider spread with more P medals collected. Larger P medals power up your focus attack, which slows your character down to help dodge the onslaught of shells fired in the name of riding the world of pork! The control scheme is basic but effective: A button is your lard attack, B button is your





Game Review continued

: focus shot and the X button is your bomb, which sends an animated pig bot onto the screen and clears it of bullets and enemies. The manoeuvring controls are fairly loose, comparable to some fairly well made indie games I have played on the switch. There is no tight Mushi or DoDonPachi controls here; not that anyone was expecting that.

The charm this game exudes makes me want to play it some more when I notice the case on my shelf. It is enjoyable, and has something a lot of the big SHMUPS on 360 don't have, which is its pure oddball existence. You are basically an anime character on a flying metal pig bike, firing lard at enemy aircraft and vehicles that belong in Ketsui or DoDonPachi, that explode into pigs,

when they are destroyed. And for that, Muchi much Pork takes the bacon! The difficulty level is fairly around the normal side of things, with difficulty spikes in later levels, making some of the bosses real swines!

The sheer ridiculousness of this game, along with the fact that it is bundled in with Pink Sweets, means that this game has more last-ability than one might have originally thought. Two fun SHMUPS for the price of one? Well prepare to get porked in the proverbial, as at the time of writing, MMP & Pink Sweets currently fetch between £150-300 on ebay. Depending on condition. So actually, it's two games for the price of two-to-four games. It's a rare game now, and anyone looking to start a collection should buy now, as the price is



only going to go up. Anyone with a PC has access to emulation and other apps that can play this game for much less, but console gamers are restricted to the physical copy. If you get the chance to play it, you'll certainly enjoy the wackiness from these lard-firing hogs of war.



SCORES

Graphics: 15 Sound: 16

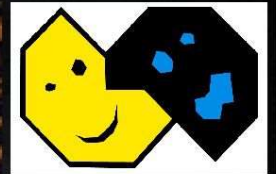
Control: 15 Fun: 17

Lastability: 16 OVERALL: 79%



Game Review

By Graham Pike



This horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up, for the Neo Geo, was developed in 1992, by Visco, who did a lot of games for the system, in the nineties. Visco were mainly known for simple games, with unspectacular visuals, that were usually good fun to play. Come 1992, the Neo Geo was sporting some great games, with some spectacular graphics. Andro Dunos couldn't quite keep up with the

best but it does actually look quite pretty, at times. Press Start and a very basic menu comes up. Well this was for the arcades, remember. There are four game difficulties, a choice of 0 to 3 continues and a background music test. I actually went through these tunes and as you'd expect, they are very dated, boppy synth tunes. It kind of reminds me of the samples you used to get in Yamaha and Casio keyboards. Basic but reasonably atmospheric at times and definitely reminding me of old school, Sci Fi themes. Which for this game, is pretty appropriate.

Watch the very basic How To Play and into the game.



You start with a choice of 4 (A-button) basic shots, that can be rotary selected via the B-button. These vary from single to spread shot and even simultaneous forward and rear firing. You can also hold down the A-button to charge up for a powerful bomb-like attack, that varies depending on what basic shot you are using at the time.

So, into the game and you'll immediately see that this is a very conventional, horizontal shooter, in the style of R-Type and Gradius. The 2D, hero-jet sprite, does actually have a quite cool, cartoony look. Like a stylish Thunderbird 4. The backgrounds are fairly basic but do contain some nice detail and atmosphere, with some parallax scrolling.



In this game you do have to negotiate the terrain, almost as much as the enemy's firepower. It will sometimes, move around on you and if you just concentrate on the enemy sprites, you'll likely crash and lose a jet. There are plenty of power-ups to collect and these are very worthwhile, if you want to progress. Nothing quite like some homing missiles added to your main shot, to destroy those pesky, alien foes.



ANDRO DUNOS™

Game Review continued

I remember, back in the day, I used to pooh-pooh Andro Dunos, thinking it looked and sounded rubbish, especially compared to it's other Neo Geo contemporaries. And especially Last Resort, which seemed a far more serious contender, with it's cool graphics and rock hard gameplay. But looking at it now, I think I was a little unfair to this game.

It's no classic or top 10 contender but I do think it is worth your time, checking it out. It's 2D, 90s arcade visuals aren't jaw dropping but they look fairly decent. Although, as the game passes through it's 7 Stages, there's not a huge amount of background and sprite variety, overall. The SFX are puny though. More Puzzle Bobble than space shooter. But there is some challenge here, especially as you progress to the later stages. It's gameplay is totally unoriginal but it does replicate some pretty decent gaming styles and generates a little bit of it's own atmosphere, here and there. Overall then, a little mediocre but can be some fun.

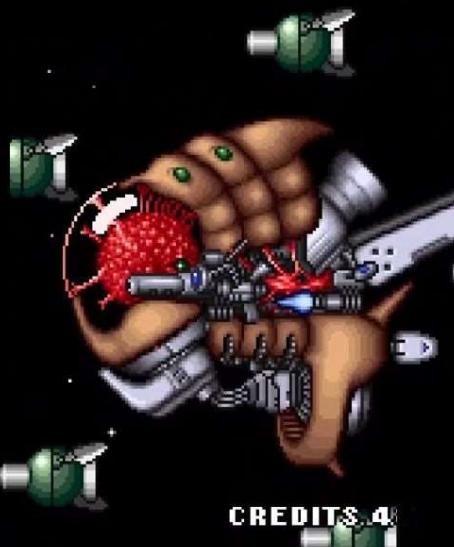


SCORES

Graphics: 14
 Sound: 11
 Control: 18
 Fun: 14
 Lastability: 15

OVERALL: 72%

PRESS 2P BUTTON



VISGO GAMES

VISGO GAMES

Our Top 5 Shooters

That are not of the 2D, traditional shmup type.

SLY

1. Another Century's Episode II - PS2
2. House Of The Dead II - Arcade
3. Gundam Seed Destiny Rengou Vs ZAFT II PLUS - PS2
4. Virtual Cop 2 - Saturn
5. Xeno Crisis - Switch

Graham

1. Earth Defense Force 2025 (PS3)
2. Cannon Spike (Dreamcast)
3. Confidential Mission (Dreamcast)
4. Virtual-On: Oratorio Tangram (Dreamcast)
5. Steamgear Mash (Saturn)

