

ISSUE SIX



APRIL 2021

Hi there and welcome to the sixth issue of Shoot You Sir! You'll find that this issue has a fantastical element to it, being full of witches, faeries and all manner of mythological sprites. Read and enjoy and Happy gaming. **SHOOTER NEWS**

Developed by PlatinumGames, and in partnership with none other than Hamster, Sol Cresta is a digital only release coming to PC, Switch, and PSN in 2021. In terms of description, the game is a tip of the hat to Moon Cresta and Terra Cresta. A 2d Vertical strollers, the game boasts some interesting mechanics in the trailer, and has very detailed backgrounds. In the trailer, there appears to be three ships that can merge into one to change attack type. Going from bullets to beams, and even special attacks (hyper beam similar to DoDonPachi games). Little else is shown in the trailer, other than it being a space based shooter, showing a couple of planetary and space environments. The trailer and post first appeared to be some kind of April Fools post, but PlatinumGames have now gone on to state that this is real and happening. The game is currently still in development, so expect a late 2021 release for this one. However, you know it is a going to be rather tasty if Hamster have attached themselves to the project.

So R-TYPE FINAL 2 is finally here to play as a demo, and boy does it look impressive! When you click on 'Start Game', you are taken to the hanger, where you are informed you must registered your ship. The demo gives you access to 3 ships:- 01: R-9A.A.H1 AKA Arrow-Head. 02: R-9D.D.BM AKA Shooting Star. And 03: R09F.D.SB AKA Andromomalius. Each ship specialises in different things, for example Arrow-Head has homing missues, standard W. cannon, Nuclear Catastrophe and Shooting star has Photon-Belt W. Cannon, Depth Bomb, & Hysteric Dawn. All sound rather impressive, with differing levels of badassary. Whilst in the hangar you can customise your chosen ship in regard to body colour, decal image, missile, and 'bit'. There are seven different colours to choose from in the demo, and 9 'canopy' colours. So you can get quite the range of paint jobs. You can buy decals from the shop for your ships, but this option is not available in the demo. Missile choice is indicated by the last two digits in the name (R-9A.A.H1), H1 being a homing missile. There are 12 options, but only two are available to change to in the demo version per ship.

Menu-wise, the game has a number options: Start game, stage & Score attack, Data & Gallery, Options, Shop, R Manual, and Special. Only Start Game, Data & Gallery, Options, and R Manual are available on the demo, and are therefore also limited. Still, it's enough to get a taste of the game. All menus and options are in English, despite the demo being Japanese. Difficulties include: Practice, Kids, Normal, Bydo, and R-Typer. There is also a tick box to skip the demo.

At the start of entering the game you are met with a SGI intro, and you also get an interaction (you can salute or nod, etc.). It then proceeds to show off some of the graphics in the CGI section, which to be frank doesn't look that special. However, things are much improved when you get into the stage-proper, with nicely designed 3-d sprites, and fairly decent 3d backgrounds, with scrolling 2d style game-play. The game at first feels a tad slow, with the controls reminding me very much of a Janky 90's demo, but that is not to say it is not fun to play. Some of the textures appear to wobble or struggle to stay in sharp focus, and the frame rate seems to struggle when there are a lot of things on screen.

However, this could easily be just because the game is a the demo stage and is not finished.

In terms of controls, the A button on the switch controller is your auto fire, Y, when held down, charges your main powerful shot, X sends your drone forward, allowing you to fire at it to deflect in several different directions. You can pick up various power ups in game to add to your fire power, and these are well animated. When I got killed in the first stage I was sent to a loading screen, before being sent back to a checkpoint in the level. This was a bit frustrating and spoiled some of the enjoyment and immersion of the game. Sounds and music are decent enough, and are easily changed to taste in the options or main menu. There is enough here to keep things interesting. I have to say that you can tell this is clearly a demo and not a full game, so don't expect too much here but lovers of the series should have fun.

Game Review

By Graham Pike



Rising Star Games

DEATHSMILES

デスマイルズ



Xbox 360

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Deathsmiles is another great shooter from developers Cave. It got released all around the world, starting in the arcades on October 19th 2007. The Japanese Xbox 360 port came out on April 23rd 2009, with a Platinum Collection version on April 8th 2010. The North American port was released on June 29th 2010 and the European on February 18th 2011. Cave also published the Japanese version, whilst Aksys Games published in America and Rising Star Games in Europe. A heavily modified, Mega Black Label version was released in the arcades on October 10th 2008 and was

included in the Japanese 360 release as a DLC and as part of the game disc in Europe and the USA. The first print of the North American Xbox 360 version was sold in a limited edition package including a Deathsmiles Xbox 360 faceplate and a soundtrack CD with the 15 arranged tracks. The European version was sold as Deathsmiles Deluxe Edition, a package including the original soundtrack and a disc with Windows desktop accessories. The Japanese Limited Edition included the arranged soundtrack and a download card for full voices.

This is a game I have a history with. I bought the Japanese 360 port, pretty much as soon as it was available and have been a big fan, ever since. More recently, in the Feb. 2021 issue of Shoot You Sir!, I put this game as my number one shoot-em-up. I can imagine a lot of hardcore shmup fans rolling their eyes at that one. For although Death Smiles is a Cave game and they are one of the most respected shmup developers, it really is quite unlike most of their other shooters. It's like Cave went all mainstream and tried to

XBOX 360



appeal to a larger, mostly Japanese, audience. For Death Smiles has a bunch of anime, gothic lolitas, as it's heroines. It is one of the most beautiful 2D shooters ever and they gave you options with enough depth to really tweak this game to suit your skills, whether you are a master or just a dabbler. They didn't, like they do in most of their games, give you full bore mayhem or super easy. It's possible here to tweak almost every aspect of the game's challenge, to get it where it's a real test but not teeth grindingly hard. I have criticised games in the past, having just too many options but here, it is all very simple to get the game just where you want it.



Deaths Smiles stars the lovely "Daughters of Dior", as they take on all the wild and wacky creatures, in the alternate world of Gilverado. Each daughter has her own individual attacks, as well as a creature familiar. The game's five playable daughters are Windia, Casper, Follett, Rosa and in Mega Black Label version only, Sakura. All have an anime, gothic, kawaii appearance. Windia was born in a posh family from London. She was abducted aged 13, in a flash of light and transported to the game's

world, Gilverado. She uses wind magic and her spirit familiar is an owl called Hoo. Caspar is from Germany, transporting to Gilverado when she was only 6. This traumatic event caused her amnesia. Casper is the most powerful of the daughters, she can command death magic. She appears selfishly cynical but is actually lonely and in need of affection. Her animal familiar is a bat. Follett is French, aged 10, she fell into a raging river during a storm and was never seen again. Cold and shivering she appeared in Gilverado, with the ability to control elemental fire. Whilst coming to terms with this power, she accidentally burned down a nearby forest.



Fortunately Rosa and Caspar arrived to rescue her and put out the flames. Follet is quiet and bookish. She is powerful but lacks confidence in her use of those powers, often referring to her magical literature. Her a familiar is a tiny dragon. Rosa, from California, was in a car accident aged 8, vanishing through a portal of light, leading to Gilverado. Almost dead, she was found by Dior and nursed to health, becoming his first adopted daughter. Rosa leads the daughters and uses her skills to protect her new sisters. She has a wacky sense of humour, using it to smooth over differences amongst the sisters. She is often playfully flirtatious with Sakura. Her familiar is a fairy.

Londoner, Sakura was also in a car crash, with her parents at 10 years old, which sent them through a door of light, into Gilverado. Landing in the swamp wasteland, each member of the family awakened with magical abilities. Sakura's father was a baddun and trapped in a strange land, with magical powers, made him worse. He obsessed over finding a doorway home. But opened doorways to hell instead, making himself even worse. Sakura looked after her sick mother but the whole family became distrusted by the locals, who thought Sakura was a witch from the swamps. Sakura and Windia were however known to each other, from living in London.



Sakura



Follett



Rosa



When you start up this game there are actually six different modes you can play. These are Arcade, Xbox 360, and Version 1.1. There are also Mega Black Label versions of each of those. I mainly play the Xbox 360 mode. I also adjust the play area to about 90% of the TV screen. The control system gives you quite a lot of attack choices but they are all quick and intuitive to achieve. Your heroine's moves in the usual 8 directions, she also has 2 main attack buttons. One to shoot left, one to shoot right. As seen in many Cave shooters, tapping the "fire" button gets that character's standard attack, whilst holding it down gets a more powerful, focused stream of attack that will however reduce your sprite's speed. Your heroine's satellite familiar or "tsukaima", provides extra firepower and can negate some types of the enemy's firepower. If you hold down both firing buttons you get a "lock shot", which targets enemies in range. And of course there's the screen devastating bomb, with limited availability. As you fly through this game, you are greeted by stylishly drawn, 2D graphics. Very old school but done in such a sharp and lush manner, as to really impress. The music also blends the dramatically orchestral, with driving, instrumental, J-pop-rock. There are large, beautifully detailed and animated, enemy sprites, with equally gorgeous, parallax scrolling backgrounds. This is a world full of magical beings and fairytale creatures. There is just so much colourful variety and all done in an anime-gothic styling.

Yes, there is a lot going on here, with firepower, explosions, power-ups and sprites. The screen is often full up and you'll be grateful for your ability to fire left and right. You will notice, at the bottom left of the screen, are large numerals that increase as you take out foes. When it reaches 1000 you can press both attack buttons simultaneously to get some seriously increased firepower. Also at the top left of the screen are your character's life bars. So it's not one hit and die but when those life bars reach zero, from damage taken, it's Game Over or of course, Continue.



Windia



Casper



The end of stage Bosses do not disappoint, in that they are impressive in every way. Wacky, in a slightly disturbing way, they spew out dangerous missiles. They are all fairly different and some are bordering on the surreal. Some are just masterpieces of the fairytale/gothic style. These are the bosses in Deathsmiles:
 Stage A-1: Deathscythe (an anime Grim Reaper) Stage A-2: Jordan (the buried Baron - mainly seen as a huge, menacing head) Stage B-1: Whroon (like an evil Treebeard) Stage B-2: Sakura (Playable kawaii, witchy, character in Mega Black Label) Stage C-1: Mary (a big cow) Stage C-2: Bavaria (2-headed dino-dragon) EXTRA Stage Mid-Boss: Beastdog (part dog, part something beastlier) EXTRA Stage Bosses: Devaria, Givaria. Crystal Shrine Stage: Ozier (Only in Mega Black Label) Stage 4: Jitterbug (Windia's dishevelled father) Final Boss: Tyrannosatan (a demonic, skeletal beast)

Review continued



The presentation of Death Smiles is just superb and so full of character. It is an integrated whole that makes an unbelievable world, draw you right in. This is all helped by some fantastic music, from composer Manabu Namiki.

There are six main stages, where you get to choose which difficulty to play on, for that specific stage. The game also features a couple of bonus stages, these are Gorge and Ice Palace. So players are not locked into any one difficulty level for the whole of the game. Although, both the final and bonus stages have a set difficulty. The choice of difficulty adds the potential for better scoring and the cause of even

vaster amounts of bullet hell to cope with, of course. There are three difficulty levels normally (1-3) but an even harder difficulty, called "999", was added in the Mega Black Label mode. You can also choose which order you play some stages in. The difficulty and stage selection, means you can re-order your run through the game, to really score big. Deathsmiles features co-op play in both off and online modes. There are online leaderboards as well as the facility to save and view your own cave replays. Players can also download their top scores, online. Leaderboards cover the many game and character variations.



As you progress through the game, there is some banter between the heroines and some of their foes. It's not exactly intellectual stuff but it does help to keep you in this gothic game world, informing you of the whys and wherefors of what is really going on. Like a lot of these games, when things get super hectic on screen, there is some slow down, which some find quite helpful. Also the game's difficulty really ramps up big time, on the last few stages.

Overall then, Death Smiles has outstanding visuals, inspiring music, including a number of songs, in the intro and outros. The gameplay is a lot of fun and challenge, with a way to get

it just to your level. It controls simply and effectively and although it is not the longest game of its type, its charisma, variety and fun factor, will more than likely have you coming back for more, again and again.

SCORES

Graphics: 19 Sound: 19 Control: 18 Fun: 19 Lastability: 18

OVERALL: 93%

Focus on a Developer

彩京
PSIKYO



彩京



Psikyo came into being in 1992 from ex Video System people, who'd previously worked on the Aero Fighters series. They seem to specialise in shoot-em-ups and saucy mahjong games. Whatever you think of Psikyo's games, it can't be denied that throughout the 1990s, they produced some really classic shooters. With the odd exception, most of their games started life in the arcade.

Their first game, in 1993, was Sengoku Ace: Tengai Episode I / Samurai Aces, programmed by Shin Nakamura. Which was a decent, vertical scroller, along the lines of Aero Fighters. You got to fly jets or power birds and for it's vintage, it had decent visuals, dated sonics and OK gameplay.

In 1994 they produced Gunbird, a game with far more character and invention than it's predecessor. This had



another militaristic, vertical shooter. It's music kind of remind s me of Ghost Pilots (Neo Geo). But this is a better game and although a bit dour, it played nicely, with well defined graphics. This also made home consoles.

In 1996, Sengoku Blade / Tengai came along. A sort of sequel to Sengoku Ace, except this one is a horizontal shooter, played in an historic, Japanese setting. I really like this game, it has plenty of wacky visuals and music and although perhaps not a classic, it is a challenging and fun game, that also made it to many consoles.

1997 saw Psikyo up their game and produce three shooters. Sol Divide was set in a medieval / fantasy world, with large and detailed sprites. Your hero sprite is a humanoid character, flying under their own steam. This really has some impressive visuals but I never enjoyed it's gameplay. The mechanics just don't really work and it seems that looks were prioritised in this game. Zero Gunner is a helicopter based shooter. It scrolls vertically but looks and feels like you are shooting into the screen. It's not the greatest in the genre but does have a style, all of it's own. 1997 also saw a sequel, in Strikers 1945 II.

1998 also saw a sequel, in the excellent Gunbird 2. It also saw Space Bomber, a rather infantile, vertical shooter, with nursery rhyme style music and sound effects. This one, although reasonably pretty to look at, seem to hark back to shooters from the 80s. Rather unsurprisingly, it didn't get much in the way of ports to consoles.

In 1999 Psikyo put out 2 more sequels in their Strikers 1945 series and a very obscure arcade shooter on Sega's Naomi arcade system, called Pocket Shooting. I know absolutely nothing about this game, unfortunately.

2000 saw 2 rather cool, yet very different shooters, in Dragon Blaze, a medieval / fantasy, dragon based, vertical shooter, with some nice gameplay and tasty, 2D artwork and Cannon Spike, a sort of 3D, isometric shooter, that I thoroughly enjoyed , on the Dreamcast.

2001 saw only one shooter but it was one of my all time favourites, Zero Gunner 2. A helicopter shooter, where you could swivel your chopper through 360 degrees, making this scroller a fantastically fun game. It also had good music and some tasty CGI graphics.

With nothing in 2002, 2003 saw Psikyo's last shooter, Cho Aniki: Legend of Holy Protein. A game that takes place in the homo-erotic world of fantasy body building. TBH, this game is just a bit crap and not a great swan song for Psikyo. They were bought out by X-Nauts in 2002, which may or may not explain Cho Aniki?



our hero sprites flying along under their own power or in bizarre vehicles, like Tetsu and his pedal driven helicopter. This was a bit of a classic and got ported onto a number of home consoles.

1995 saw the release of Strikers 1945,



Originally released in 1991, and now remade (in an arrange) for modern day audiences, Cotton Reboot is finally here. Cotton and her fairy sidekick 'Silk', team up to save the world. More importantly, to get that special candy fix. That's right, at its heart, Cotton is a social review of what can happen when you get hooked on addictive substances. Only kidding, it's about murdering creatures, destroying anthropomorphic trees, rocks and the like, in order to

get a high score. All in one colourful and fun package.

For those of you not aware of this game, it is a horizontal scrolling shooter, with the majority of enemies coming from the right hand side of the screen or from above or below. Visually the game takes on witchy theme, in the vein of anime styles found in the late 80's and early 90's. Cotton sports a magician like cloak and broom found in European fiction and mythology, and is accompanied by her fairy companion Silk, who appears an overly sexualised anime waifu with wings.

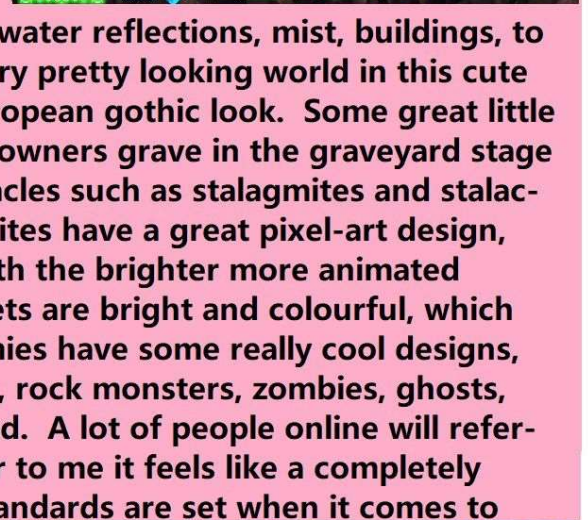
In terms of the game graphics, the backgrounds are really well designed from water reflections, mist, buildings, to other environmental touches, the devs have created a very pretty looking world in this cute em up. Each stage has been lovingly designed with a European gothic look. Some great little touches have been thrown in, like the dog waiting by its owners grave in the graveyard stage end boss section. Later stages have environmental obstacles such as stalagmites and stalactites, etc., which you must navigate or be destroyed. Sprites have a great pixel-art design, and both the sprites and the environments blend well with the brighter more animated '3d-looking' bullets and shots. All shots, Gems, and bullets are bright and colourful, which contrast well over the darker-toned environments. Enemies have some really cool designs, from cute flying creatures, such as gryphons, to dwarves, rock monsters, zombies, ghosts, and all manor of mythical creatures both alive and undead. A lot of people online will reference Death smiles when speaking about Cotton, however to me it feels like a completely different game. I guess Death Smiles is the bar where standards are set when it comes to

Witchy-come-gothic SHUMPS, and that is no bad thing. Sound-wise, the game cannot compete with the likes of Death Smiles. At least, when it comes to music. The music found in Cotton is that of music you do find in cute em ups. It works really well with the game, with some interesting melodies, but a lot of the tracks are very happy-go-lucky sounding. A couple of more rocky stand out tracks really give you goosebumps in later levels, where the challenge is steep, adding to the overall immersion of the game. The sound effects are great, and will rival any decent SHMUP for it's 'bangs' 'ka-booms' and tongue

rolling bullets sounds I just can't emphasise or put down in words. Suffice to say, Cotton Reboot does well in this department, and as Graham has previously mentioned in our Podcasts: Nobody wants weak sound effects in a game.



There are quite a few interesting mechanics in the game. The player (or rather Cotton) shoots across the screen in one direction(right), but drops ground shots regularly, with the





main fire button (Y). The screen tends to scroll right or down for the majority of stages, but there are times when it scrolls up or left. As this ties into the environment you are in or the boss you are facing, it adds an extra layer of immersion. Killing enemies and picking up the gem items they drop increases your experience and shot power, indicated by the shot bar, placed bottom-and-centre of the screen. Different colour gems work as power ups, granting a slightly different 'magical' power when collected. Shooting these gems when

they appear, will cause their colour to change, allowing the player to manually change the colour to which attack they would like to collect. But bear in mind you will be shooting at enemies and avoiding enemy fire whilst doing so, making it a bit of a balancing act. Just as with your main shot, you level up these individual attack with each gem collected. The level is indicated for each individual attack at the bottom right of the main screen. Here is a break down of the coloured Gems and what attack they produce:

Red - Fire Dragon Blast (quick left to right fired from Cotton's finger)

Blue - Lightning Beam Magic (A longer sustained attack left to right)

Purple - Dropped Powder Bomb attack (Just in front and below Cotton)

Green - Thunder Avalanche attack (The entire Screen)



Firing at the gems not only changes their colour, but splits your attack shot into a couple of wider shots from wherever the gem is currently placed - very cool indeed, and can be very useful when taking on multiple enemies, and helpful when facing certain bosses. You also collect fairies as you play through the game, which add to your main attack.

The developers have not only provided hours of fun with the reboot but have also provided a port of

the original X6800 game, which the Reboot appears to be modelled on, which is a nice touch. In Cotton Reboot itself, you can even unlock Silk as a playable character, adding even more playability to the game. You can choose to play as Silk in the main menu after playing through the entire game as Cotton and beating the end boss on Stage 7. Playing as Silk, Cotton accompanies you this time, as you blast your way through enemies. She moves faster and has a much wider shot spread (ooer). Ultimately, it allows you to play a bit differently. Although Silk's shot differs from Cotton's, they both share the same magical bomb attacks previously mentioned. At the end of each level, you are greeted with 'Tea Time', and this is a fun silly bonus collection at the end of a stage. Mostly used for point boosts - but we all know we are feeding Cottons candy addiction, and man does she need to be off her head to take on the hordes of monsters and undead featured in this game! This is followed by a brief update in the story, which is dubbed in Japanese with Japanese subtitles, which is skippable.

The passing of the stages is well done, especially in keeping with the environment you are in. For example, stage 4 scrolls much faster, and has a lot of environmental obstacles like caves and passageways to navigate. Meaning you have to change your tactics and time bursts of blasting through enemies to make it through certain level obstacles or to hold back in order not to get blown away by a section full of enemies on the left hand side of the screen. It's things like this that add an extra layer of challenge to the game. The bosses are fairly fun to fight, except fo the Dragon Boss in the lava level - what a bastard! Very frustrating, but do-able after a few tries. Bosses remain fairly basic, and are not anything to write home about in terms of visuals, which is strange given how great all the other enemies look. There is a cyclops frog boss that looks rather cool, and a couple of decent Dragons, otherwise the boss visuals feel a tad weak. Their attacks and bullet patterns are decent though, so watch your back! There are 7 stages in all. 6 stages have a mid boss and an end level boss, with the 7th and final stage being specifically a boss fight against Wool. Yes you heard me correctly: Cotton Vs. Wool. CottonWool. Fabric jokes: We don't need them. Wool is a devil-fairy, like the kind your mum warned you about. She wears Thigh high boots, a corset, with red dragon wings, and anime style hair (it feels like she is about to turn Super Saiyan!). During stagel 7, you fight Wool whilst avoiding falling debris. Wool can use a shield to block attacks and summon magic dragon blasts rather like Cottons fight dragon attack. You must navigate the falling debris and Wool's attacks, whilst the odd onslaught of monsters come and attack you. It's a rather difficult level, but doable. At first it can feel unforgiving after that sodding lava dragon boss, but it shows the game requires you to fight with skill and tactics, as it provides quite the challenge, and is not just a dismiss-able cute em up. In general I prefer a Vertical TATE Shooter but this Horizontal cute em up has drawn me in and stolen my heart.





Game Review
By **Graham Pike**

XBOX360

Published by SNK PLAYMORE CORPORATION
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Even though this game was published by SNK Playmore and has Neo in the title, it is not connected with the sainted Neo Geo game system. "Trouble Witches", was the predecessor to this game, which got an arcade release in 2009 by Taito. Trouble Witches Neo was released as a download, for the Xbox Live Arcade, on April 27th, 2011. I downloaded it years ago, as it was a 2D shooter, with a witchy theme. Which of course, brought thoughts of games like Cotton and Death Smiles, to mind.

The Start Game screen is festooned with pentagrams and lovely, bold, arcade lettering. So it's a promising start. Into the main menu and there are a lot of internet related possibilities, like Replay, Leaderboards, Achievements and download content. All of which are available in modern games but were being pioneered by consoles like the 360. So there is a lot to do with this shooter. For the actual game itself, there is Original and the 360 Arrange mode. The latter being the one I was/am most interested in. There is a long and seriously cliched,



kiddy fantasy story, behind this game, that seems to use Germanic names a lot. As this story plays out (textually) you can here that this game has some very nice, adventure themed music, in a pop orchestra style. Press Start and you have another menu of Single Play, Story Plus and Challenge modes, like Score Attack. You can also do online multi-play, using Xbox Live. There are also a good array of Options. The Lives per continue, range from 1 to 9 and you can fully adjust the size of the screenplay area. Into the game and there are

initially, six cute, anime witches to choose from. These are not the sexualised, female characters you see in a game like Death Smiles, which is appropriate, given the youthful theme of Trouble Witches Neo.





In the Arrange Mode, there are 3 difficulties: "No Problem", "Heart Pounding", and "High Anxiety", which are pretty, self explanatory. As soon as you start Stage One, your chosen witch speaks and you realise that the voices have been westernised and to be honest, the voice acting is crap. I'd have much preferred the more melodramatic, Japanese style, with subtitles. But hey ho, this is a shooter, so

let's get killing stuff.

The first thing you'll probably notice, with this 2D, horizontally scrolling shooter, is that the graphics are very colourful and well detailed. They are also quite flat looking and more nursery rhyme than surreal or wacky. Yes it does have some odd-ball characters and designs but they lack the darkness or mystery, often seen in anime, 2D style shooters. Another thing you'll soon come across, is a flying balloon shop. Which you can enter during play and buy power-ups. I have to say, after initial reservations, I really like this feature.



It makes a nice change from just picking up randomly generated power-ups. And it adds an incentive to collect the coins that fall out of foes, when you blast them. These coins quickly drop out of screen but if you stop shooting briefly, you automatically collect them. So don't forget that, as the power-up bombs in T.W.N. are great fun to use and watch, having a devastating effect on your enemies. The visuals in this game may be a little too cutsey and childlike for my taste but they are done extremely well, with great definition and detail. A little more parallax scrolling would have

helped though. The music too, may be a little infantile but is very nicely done and at times, atmospheric. There is a tune that plays after you have defeated the end stage boss and are going into your scores for that stage, that really reminds me of the Neo Geo game, Neo Turfmasters. Not relevant but I enjoy that sort of thing. I forgot to mention that whilst playing, your hero witch has a satellite creature, that helps with extra firepower. I tend to play as the witch "Symphony", and her creature is a cool, blue, mini-elephant. The sprites in T.W.N. are well detailed and animated. The controls are nice and simple. They are: The main, straight ahead shot; Bombs, which come in a good variety (from the shop) and a very useful Shield. You can activate and deactivate the shield at will, as long as the MP guage has some juice in it. It stays in one place,

Trouble Witches Neo!

Episodic Daughters of Amalgam

Studio Siesta
スタジオシエスタ

Review continued again

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compare? Well, I've only played Cotton 2, on the Saturn. It is closer to T.W.N. than Death Smiles but I much prefer Cotton 2. Not really sure why. It just seemed more classic and fun. Death Smiles is my all time favourite shooter but why is it better than this game? Well it may share some themes and the characters are similar, in places but Death Smiles does everything so much better and has that dark, yet quirky fun style of anime. I guess you could say that Trouble Witches Neo is a kids version of Death Smiles, in many

whilst you can move within and without it. As the shield will freeze in place, most enemy firepower. A good tactic is to activate it, move into a less dangerous position and then deactivate. Like the Shop, the Shield really adds to the game's fun and individuality.

As I said earlier, this game has similarities to the Cotton and Death Smiles games. So how does it



ways. The SFX are more novelty than oomph. And that pretty much says it all, here. More novelty than oomph! But having said all that, I would recommend Trouble Witches Neo to you. Basically it has some very sound gameplay and challenge. If you can get over the limp characters and flat, childish style, there is a good shoot-em-up in here. So I say, give it a try.

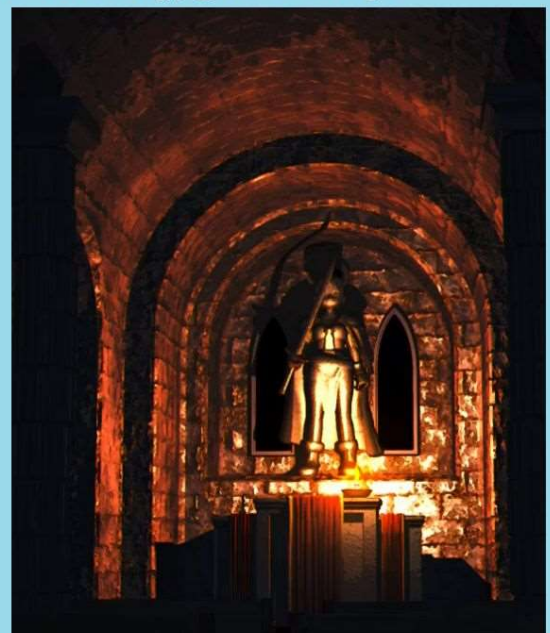
SCORES

Graphics: 16 Sound: 14

Control: 18

Fun: 16 Lastability: 16

OVERALL: 80%



AZURE REFLECTIONS

Nintendo Switch

GAME REVIEW

By Slyellessar



A horizontal shooter with a supernatural, 'witchy' theme, Azure Reflections on the Switch, knows exactly what it is about. It looks fantastic, plays well, but has one or two frustrating elements. Graphically this game is solid. It looks lovely, the sprites look good, the characters have clear a personality and play slightly differently than usual and the backgrounds are gorgeous. The anime style look to this game, makes it stand out from all of the aircraft based shooters, you can find on the Switch and it is polished off very nicely. Enemy bullet patterns are nice, but boss patterns look truly fantastic, and it can be a really fun game to witness.

The dub for the characters sounds good, the sound for collecting all the points cards sounds just right, but there is a seriously lack of 'OMPH!' when destroying enemies. The soundtrack is good, and suits the game, nothing to bland and yet nothing to write home about. Overall, the sound suits the pretty aesthetics of the game.

The controls are where Azure Reflections is a bit different, it may be a horizontal SHMUP, but the button configuration is different to your standard, across the screen shooter. You press the Y button to shoot left and the A button to shoot right.

This configuration means on some of the levels, you are in the middle of the screen dodging bullets, and firing in different directions. The analog stick moves you around, the X button is your bomb, and the B button is your Danmaku rush. The Danmaku rush allows you to absorb enemy bullets, whilst flying around the screen, eventually smashing into your enemy. Beware, you have a limit to how long you can do this, shown by a circle bar around your character.



This game is fun, but the more I play it the more frustrated I get with it. Originally I kept playing to unlock new characters but when you use a continue, you are unable to unlock the next character. But after you have unlocked three characters, you have probably covered pretty much everything you can in the game. It is a pretty watch though, as all the bullet patterns look fantastic and the game makes use of the full screen.

Overall, Azure Reflections is a fun game, especially on your first few attempts at playing. The graphics

and gameplay are enough to make you want to play through more than once and unlocking the characters gives you a bit of a challenge. This game would get a higher mark but the large character sprite versus the small belt as a hit area, can get really frustrating on the harder difficulty levels. Who is this game for? Anyone that wants to pickup a pretty, horizontal SHMUP, with a witch-anime aesthetic but doesn't mind if they only get a few play throughs, before moving onto the next game.



SCORES

Graphics: 17 Sound: 16 Control: 15
 Fun: 16 Lastability: 14 OVERALL: 78%



Our Top 5 Run 'N' Gun Games

SLYELESSAR

1. Shock Troopers - Neo Geo
2. Metal Slug - Neo Geo
3. Guns, Gore, & Canoli - PS3
4. Earth Worm Jim - Super NES
5. Metal Slug X - Neo Geo

GRAHAM PIKE

1. Metal Slug - Neo Geo
2. Metal Slug 3 - Neo Geo
3. Shock Troopers - Neo Geo
4. Gunstar Heroes - Megadrive
5. Ninja Commando - Neo Geo



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RUN 'N' GUN

