# PCEngine
## GAMER

## REVIEWED
### OILED UP

# ゴールデン
# アックス

## GOLDEN AXE
### HACK, SLASH, CHOP, VOM

## PLUS

# P-47 THE FREEDOM FIGHTER
# SPIN PAIR • TATSUJIN

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: ALTERNATE REALITY • MAN vs PLANE**

# PCEng

# gine GAMER

It's been a good few months since the last issue and I've been moving the furniture around a little. Some old features have been placed carefully in a coffin and shoved into a furnace to make way for new ones.

'Alternate Reality' takes an existing arcade game and shows you what it would look like if it was ever released on the PC Engine. This isn't just a simple palette change, as it takes into account the 16 colour limitations of the PC Engine hardware (it's all very technical) and sprite limits for status bars. It should prove an interesting experiment. Also, we have 'Pixellence', which is a double page spread to showcase some of the amazing visual scene artwork that is so easy to take for granted. And finally, more reviews - and that can never be a bad thing. Unless I'm reviewing Deep Blue.

sunteam_paul

# Home Cookin'

## We take a look inside the larder and find out about what's happening in Homebrew.

Well it's a busy time in the homebrew kitchen. No actual releases of course, but the chefs (developers) are cooking up such wonders (writing games) to make your mouth water (you might like them).

## AETHERBYTE

### PROTOCADE

Aetherbyte have been busy working on this multi-player mini-compilation for a special release of their prototype HuCARDs. These 'AbCARDs' are looking very exciting (with snazzy printing on them already) and it is hoped that the prototypes will generate enough interest to help fund a proper future release, or a nice holiday somewhere.

Included games will be Gnop - a bat-and-ball style game, Bytecycles - which is not unlike a certain movie set inside a computer world (no, not The Matrix) and Masteroids, which sounds really dirty but isn't.



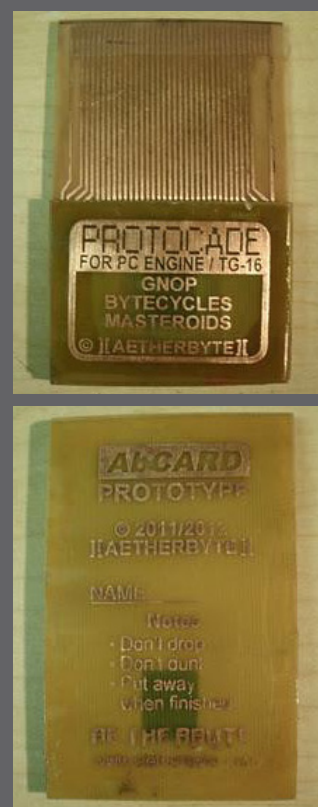Just looking at these AbCARDs makes me all tingly.

### RETROCADE

This CD-based compilation of games still has a fair bit of work to be done, but a little bird tells me that there might be more content than has been so far revealed. Mind you, that bird was a mistle thrush and they're lying bastards.



Rescue naked underwater pink dudes in Defender-esque shooter Atlantean.

# ULTIMA II

Ultima II ( or Ultima ][ if you want to look flashy) is a supremely crusty old RPG which came out in 734BC or something. This project is conceived as a simple remake of the original, and is likely to be released as a free ROM. It's probably going to lack the bells and whistles of an updated remake, as it's not a major release project, but fans should get a kick out of it.

Some very early shots. Graphics will be updated but try to remain true to the original.
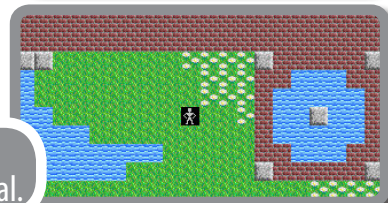
## FROZEN UTOPIA

# MYSTERIOUS SONG

This long delayed epic role-playing game is finally finished. Or is it? I don't think anybody actually knows this, including the people making it. However it will be finished at some point in the past or future, and we can only hope that we haven't evolved beyond the ability to use joypads before it is released.

# JUNGLE BROS.

News had been very quiet on the Jungle Bros. front in recent months. However, just after writing this a new gameplay video was released, which is a pity as it ruined a good joke that I've now had to delete. Sorry.

# NEUTOPIA III

Although any of this project is yet to see the light of day, the thought of a new Neutopia is guaranteed to excite fans of the original and the game engine could open exciting opportunities for more original action RPGs, which has to be a good thing.

# EPONASOFT

## MONOLITH

Although it has nothing to do with large black slabs that find the taste of gas giants irresistible, fantasy RPG Monolith is shaping up to be a solid action experience. Videos that have been released so far show some pretty spiffy parallax scrolling, especially in the village area, so things are looking great.

I have no time for idle chit-chat.

The forest level will be 2 screens high.

## METRO BLASTER

Currently only a simple demo, this horizontal space shooter is already showing promise, with massive asteroids zooming at you in vast numbers. Hopefully development will continue as there is no such thing as too many shoot 'em ups.

Fight off invading boulders in your tastefully painted pink spaceship.

## XYMATI

Speaking of shoot 'em ups, Xymati is a game that has been hanging around in limbo for some time. At one point it looked like MindRec had canned it in favour of an Xbox version, but thankfully Eponasoft is picking up the slack and it should finally get a release on the PC Engine. Don't hold your breath, something tells me it will be a long wait.

# TOUKO

## KARATE

Programmer dude Touko recently released a playable (very) early demo of this potential gem. Aside from having an extremely unimaginative title, this one-on-one fighter is deliberately crafted to bring back memories of such classic computer games like International Karate+ and Way of the Exploding Fist. That immediately makes it more special in my mind than any other random beat 'em up so let's hope we get a proper nostalgia trip from this when it is finished.
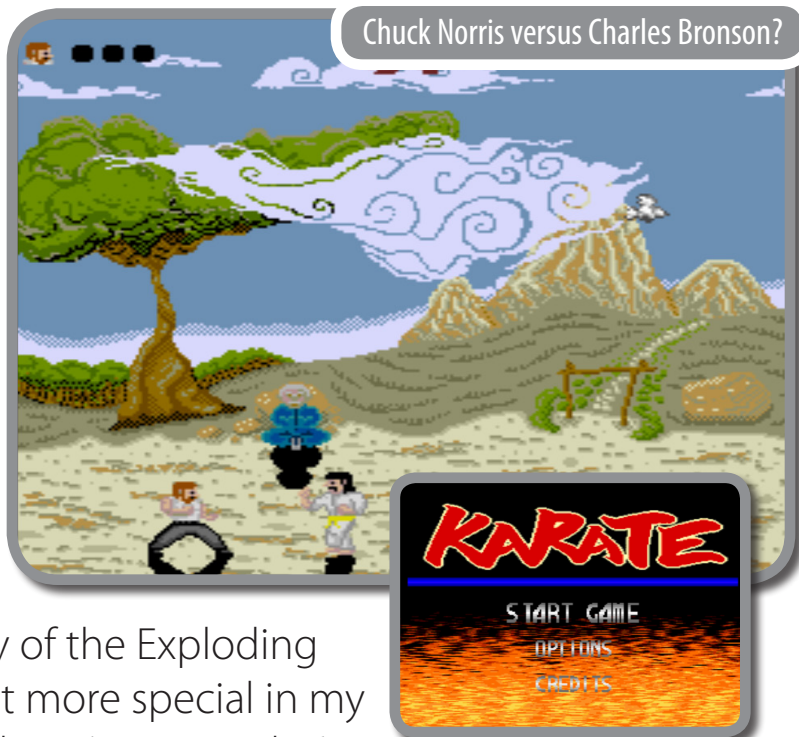


Chuck Norris versus Charles Bronson?

# BFG

## LOCK N' CHASE

French programmer BFG and graphics artist Crapahute, are very busy working on a conversion of Lock n' Chase, a Pac-Man style maze game from the days of the Atari and Intellivision. It's looking quite retro, and it appears that most of the gameplay elements are already in place.
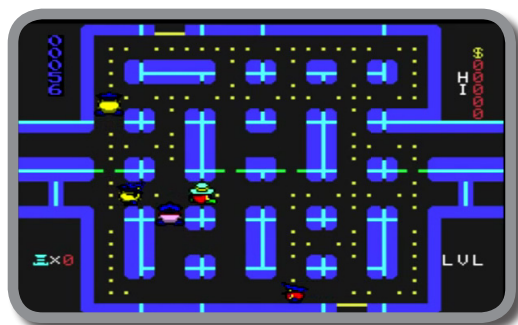
# CABBAGE

Brilliantly named Cabbage has produced a fun little demo of popular internet meme Nyan-cat. It doesn't do a lot, but it's not really supposed to. He's also released an image of something that looks odd but strangely appealing. See for yourself.
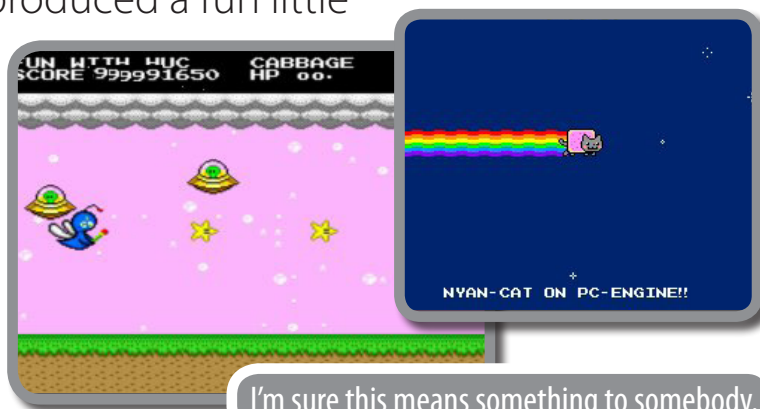


I'm sure this means something to somebody.

# P-47 THE FREEDOM FIGHTER

We all like giving Johnny-Foreigner a good seeing-to, and what better way to do that than in a World War II fighter aircraft. Although I'm not quite sure what the aircraft is (it might be a "P-43" or possibly a "P-44 Rocket" - the game does not make that clear) it's certainly the ideal bit of machinery to dive into, stick two fingers up at rotten old Jerry (and I'm not talking about Seinfeld, that would just be rude), and dive back out again. And better still, it reminds me of Silkworm, so it must be good!

Game mechanics of P-47 are anything other than original. Predictably, you have a selection of familiar weapons such as bombs, missiles, and the token weapons that are so bad you avoid them like leprosy, but designers insist on including them in shoot 'em ups. These are collected on the go, so no switching between them Gradius-style.

Enemies come at you from the sky



Atheist Airlines spots a church, "Take that, zombie worshippers!"

and on the ground, so you really have to be on your toes and have the right weapon to get rid of those pesky tanks and turrets that are sent out to frustrate your efforts.

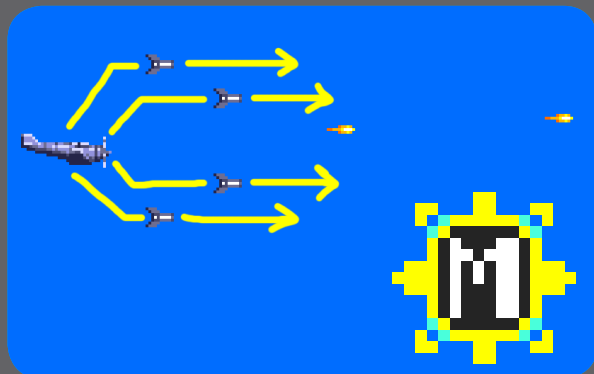Visually, there are things to enjoy about P-47. The background



Pretty sunset or atom bomb? You decide.

# You will never take our freedom

No shooter is complete without a range of power-ups. Professional freedom fighter William Wallace explains what to collect and what to avoid in a convincing Scottish accent.

CRAZY? ME? WIBBLY WOBBLY WIBBLY

"Och aye the noo. These missiles ma'k a lovely spreed of destruction as they fire oot yer plane, doin' massive damage tae the enemy, hoots mon. Fruit? Never heard of it."
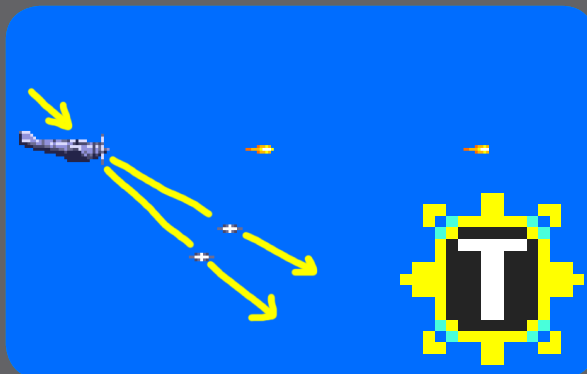
"This weedy bairn of a weepon canna be aimed nae well as it shoots in the direction yer flying, whiskey aye. Yer more likely tae get a stick up yer sporren than hit a baddie."
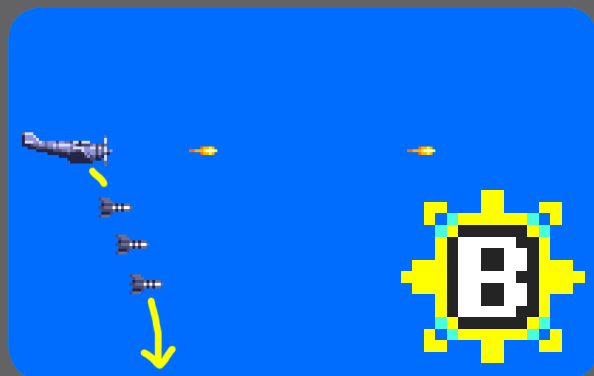
"Heavier than a deep fried Mars bar, you tak the high road while yer enemies tak the low road an these bombs'll put even the Loch Ness monster awa' when ye drop 'em at yer foes. Hogmanay."
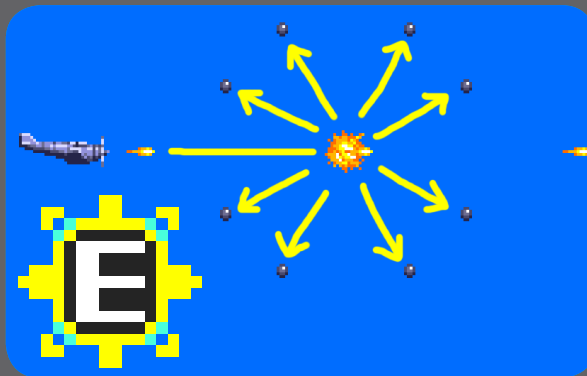
"More feil than a moose loose aboot a hoose, explodin' missiles break up them wee enemy planes akin tae a knife through haggis. Alexander Graham Bell."
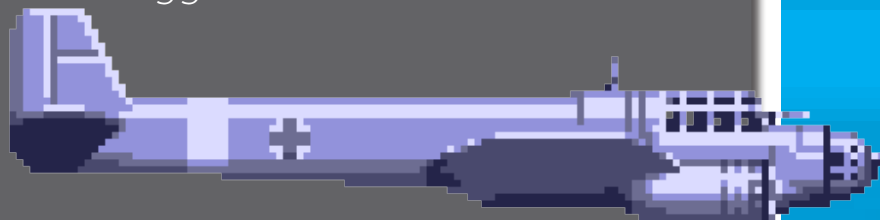
These blighters come at you from behind, which is most unsportsmanlike.

palettes are well chosen and pleasing to the eye and the simple parallax gives a good feeling of depth, although you'll be disappointed if you're expecting much in the way of variety. I remember seeing the game run in the arcade once, and being shocked at how the clouds on the second level jerked along like Stephen Hawking on low battery. Thankfully, the PC Engine has fixed this issue and it looks quite pretty, at least for a little while.

Audio doesn't fare so well however. Some bland music humms along in the background using fairly rudimentary PC Engine sounds. Effects are a series of little bleeps and white noise. They do the job, just not with much style.

But the meat of any game is the gameplay itself, and shoot 'em ups need to be exciting seat-of-your-pants stuff to give you that adrenaline rush as you deal maximum damage while dodging enemy fire. P-47 has a ridiculous amount of bullet dodging (and is one of those games where there can be only one bullet on screen and you still crash into it, despite it being about 4 pixels in size. I swear my brain makes me home in on them sometimes), but there's just something wrong - and that's wrong in the 'making-your-shopping-list-in-your-head-while-playing' kind of way. It's not



Tally-ho chaps, destroy that monument of cultural significance.



The later levels can be unbelievably brutal.

an easy game by any means and does require concentration, but somehow manages to be boring at the same time, and the initial good feelings begin to wear off after your eyes glaze over and you realise that you don't really care if you get hit or not.

It's a shame as all the elements of a decent game are here, but they just don't fit together well enough to be very enjoyable. It just lacks the spark and the thrill of a great shooter in the early levels, and as the game progresses the amount of pixel perfect dodging borders on stupid, switching it from boring to frustrating very quickly.
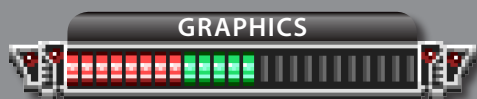
Bombs away! Another Starbucks destroyed!

Even the bosses seem fairly dull and uninteresting so I'm afraid that unless you are really starved for something new to blast, this one is best moved down on your shopping list.

**SP**

## THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM

### GRAPHICS
Lack of variety, but nicely drawn and effective parallax scrolling adds depth.

### BALANCE
Tricky but dull, with later levels raising the bar so high that you're likely to give up.

### SOUND EFFECTS
Simplistic noises and white noise don't really add much to the atmosphere.

### MUSIC
Tunes are bland and unmemorable and don't add to the tension of the game.
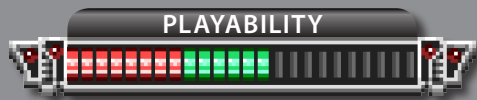
### PLAYABILITY
The controls are responsive enough, but the shape of your plane makes dodging a chore.

### ADDICTIVENESS
It holds up for a few goes until the initial feeling wears off. After that, it's one for the shelf.

### STAR QUALITY

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I'M NOT A 'DEEP' PERSON?

**TOTAL SCORE**

# 432
**/1000**

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST

SECONDS   HOUR   DAY   WEEK   MONTH   YEAR   DECADE

**MAKER:** AICOM • **YEAR:** 1989 • **FORMAT:** HUCARD

# Golden Axe

**Some** things that are golden are great, such as silence, and other things that are not so great, such as showers. But where does an Axe fall into all this? Well, let us avail ourselves with some background before we decide.



Laying down on the job. You just can't get good henchmen these days.

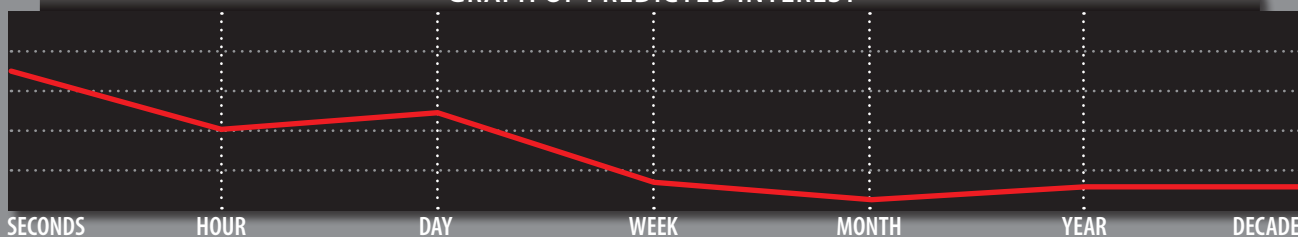Death Adder has been a very naughty boy and kidnapped the king and his daughter. This should hardly come as a surprise, as anyone who names their child 'Death Adder' isn't exactly hoping for the best. Anyway, he also got his grubby mitts on the Golden Axe, a symbol of the land and threatens to destroy it, kill the royals and jolly well stamp his little feet in anger unless everyone agrees that he's the ruler and super-cool and popular and everyone must go to his parties from now on.

But this idea isn't really clicking with some of the local villages, what with him sending the boys round to rape, murder and pillage. That



Ax rushes off to the shops to get some cuttlefish.



Gilius prepares to strike with his axe - the guy was only trying to offer him a bunch of flowers.

kind of thing usually get people's backs up. Unfortunately, most of the villagers are just poor weak saps who probably deserve everything they get, but there are three people who have actually grown a spine and decide to do something more than writing angry letters to the village newsletter.

First up is Ax the Butler. I mean Ax Battler. Who uses a sword, not an ax(e). He's pretty much out for revenge for the death of his mother. He also likes to dress in blue and can use his magical powers to cause earthquakes.

Next is Tyris Flirt. I mean Tyris Flare. She doesn't wear much at all which acts as a good distraction strategy, because while you're staring at her impressive thighs, she's busy raining fire down on you and summoning dragons. Both her parents were killed by Death Adder, which must make her twice as mad as Ax.

Gillius Thunderhead is our final hero. He's a beardy dwarf type and he actually does carry an axe. He's also got a strop on with Death Adder,
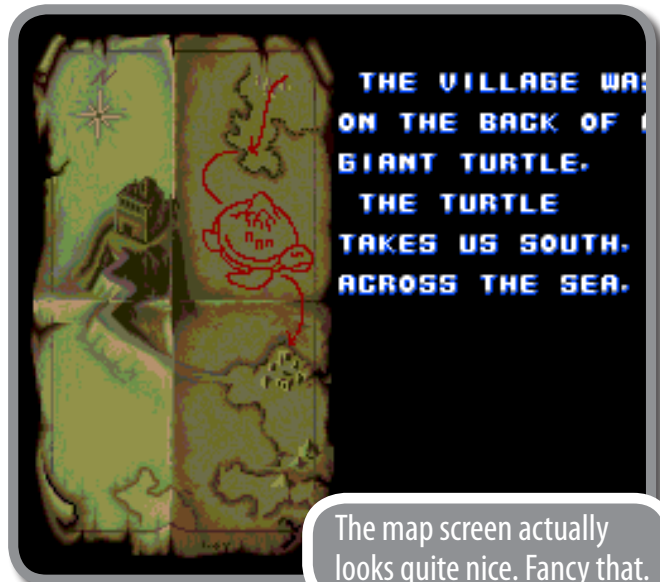


Hardly the most elegant flying kick.



Ax sits down for a bit of a rest and a chat with the local skeleton.



When in doubt, putting the boot in is always a good fallback.

Yes it's that notoriously tricky jump. Bye bye lives.



THE VILLAGE WAS ON THE BACK OF GIANT TURTLE. THE TURTLE TAKES US SOUTH. ACROSS THE SEA.

The map screen actually looks quite nice. Fancy that.

who unsportingly killed his brother. Gilius has less powerful lightning-based magic, but it's a bit more showy that Ax, who mostly just makes the ground fart.

So you get to choose one of these fine, upstanding members of the community, watch a lengthy animated sequence depicting their story so far, then really get into the meat and potatoes of beating people up. This quest takes you through strange lands: a village that sits on the back of a giant turtle (I'm guessing Donatello), a trip on the back of a huge eagle and many devastated settlements that are overrun by hordes of Death Adder's evil minions.



The showdown with Death Adder. If you get this far, I pity you.

The PC Engine isn't exactly flooded with scrolling beat 'em ups and the original arcade version of Golden Axe was an absolute classic. I used to play it a lot and it was one of the few games that I'd pump money into until I completed it. It had great visuals, awesome music and was really addictive and fun to play. With the Mega Drive gaining in popularity (especially with its own quality



Tyris summons a fire breathing dragon from the Land of the Subdued Palette.

conversion), this is just the title to show people what the PC Engine could really do. So you pop in the disc, get through the animated

## Animal Magic

Being a noble warrior on a mission of revenge can be tough work. Thankfully, there are plenty of tamed beasts waiting to be stolen from their riders. Use them well, for if you take too many hits, they'll get uppity and scarper.



This fugly looking thing uses its long tail to whip at enemes and knock them down. Called a Chicken Leg, it's the same cute little booglie that was otherwise known as the Chicken Stinger in Altered Beast.



The blue dragon is a powerful critter that can cleverly, at least judging by the PC Engine version, shoot fire from just under its chin.
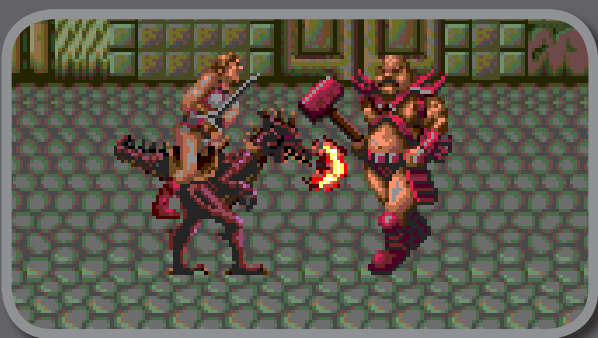


Red dragons are ones to be feared. They shoot fireballs right across the screen so you can roast the bad guys' nads while you laugh from a distance.

# Conversion Connections

Golden Axe was a popular game in its day, so it isn't any wonder that it got converted to many different formats.

The best conversion was the Mega Drive, which wasn't a great shock given the hardware.

One surprise was the Commodore Amiga version which was very faithful in ways that most computer conversions of that era were not i.e. it actually looked like the original (even if they went heavy on the spray tan).

The Master System struggled, but pulled off an impressive attempt, given the massive limitations of the machine. The sprites actually look like the arcade and are not messy and indistinct like the PC Engine version.

Arcade

Mega Drive

Amiga

Master System

PC Engine

opening scenes and finally hit the game itself...

...then you begin to cry. But strangely, then you begin to laugh. Because it's quite obvious that this has to be some kind of huge joke played on the gaming community by Telenet. After all, nobody could *actually* make a conversion this awful, unless it was intentional. Perhaps Sega had paid them extra to make it *so* poor that the Mega Drive would shoot ahead in sales. Yes, that must be it! There can be no other explanation!

This game is more screwed up than Linday Lohan. To understand exactly how faecal it is, I'll split it down into easy sections.
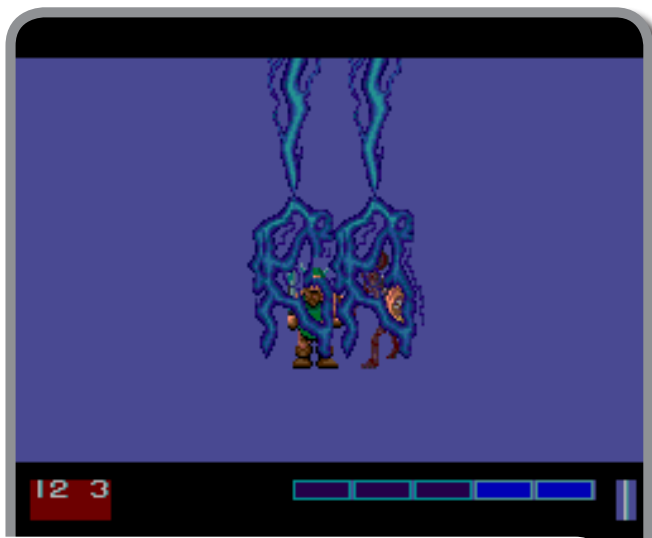
## PRESENTATION
I'm going to be completely fair here and start of with a positive point. The game has an animated

opening, as well as lengthy individual scenes for each character before you play. Sounds great, except these are long, quite talky and get boring so fast that you just want to skip them. What would have been a better choice is to have shorter, more dynamic story based animations in between each level. You know, like most other games do. Also, big points deducted for missing out the classic character select screen. Instead we are given three character portraits in boxes. Not as cool.



This magic may look rubbish, but it is, in fact, rubbish.

## GRAPHICS

Oh my, where do I even begin? They are just damned hideous. The backgrounds understandably suffer a little because of the limited storage of the system card, but the shading is poor and there is no excuse for such a low colour count. The sprites have been shrunk down from the arcade original, and while this is not uncommon in conversions, it looks like these were drawn by the janitor rather than a professional artist. Animation



Gilius performs some bizarre mating dance for the ladies, before showing them why he's called Thunderhead.

is severely cut down, but what is there looks dreadful, and the palette chosen for the sprites is unbelievably poor. As someone who dabbles in PC Engine graphics, I can find no excuse for how messed up this is. Even the Master System sprites are more faithful, and that's just wrong. The magic effects just manage to scrape by as OK.

## SOUND

While considering how to translate the soundtrack, they obviously decided that the best way to go was to use the cheapest sounding trumpet samples on their low end Casio keyboard. Now I have to say that a couple of tracks are not that bad, but I would much rather have had the original arcade BGM than what we ended up with. I hate those synthy-trumpets, they bring down the quality of any arrangement by at least 50%. But the music is not the worst offender,



Tyris decides to take a nap in a campfire. Meanwhile, Oompa Loompas run riot.

as the sound effects truly belong in their own special place in hell. I can only assume that this was the first game they ever programmed and were not only struggling with the sound chip but also situated next to a really loud railway terminal and couldn't hear what they were producing. The sword slash sounds like you are strangling a goose and the rest is either harsh white noise or really annoying high pitched tinkles.

## GAMEPLAY

All these other issues might not matter so much if the gameplay was up to scratch. Unfortunately, it barely manages to get past 'unfun' and sits itself in the category of 'bearable'. While character control is OK, the enemy AI is poorly programmed, and the bad guys love to just stand right on you, or sometimes wobble around above you while you just stand still and



Ax distracts the enemy from his freakishly disproportioned body by setting off stink bombs.

watch. None of the strategies that you can use in other versions will work (like fooling enemies into falling off ledges), and movement is a bit sluggish and sometimes wobbly. You can no longer throw enemies and worst of all, you can't bash them on the head with your sword hilt then boot them in the face - my favourite move in the original. Without these extra touches, the combat lacks variety and is a lot less enjoyable.

While I can understand and accept that corners have to be cut, graphics simplified and gameplay edited to fit on a home system, there's still no pretending that
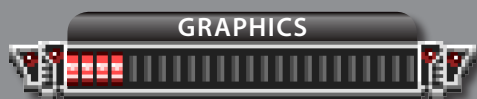


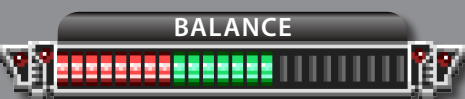Obviously a Nelwyn village, Gilius finally discovers people smaller than himself.

Golden Axe is anything other than an embarrassment and a poor display of the system's abilities.

Telenet never went on to convert any other Sega games. We can only be thankful for that. **SP**

## THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM

### GRAPHICS
Badly drawn, poorly shaded and coloured, there's nothing nice to see here.

### SOUND EFFECTS
Possibly the most annoying and inappropriate effects I've heard for a long time.

### PLAYABILITY
Something just feels very wrong here, all the fun has been sucked from the game.

### BALANCE
Enough continues to get you far, the difficulty isn't too badly balanced out.

### MUSIC
Some points for tunes and a few passable arrangements. But it just sounds cheap.

### ADDICTIVENESS
It's so shameful that it's a struggle to play a single game, let alone come back for more.

### STAR QUALITY



AL, COME AND RUB MY CORNS.

**TOTAL SCORE**

# 309
**/1000**

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



| SECONDS | HOUR | DAY | WEEK | MONTH | YEAR | DECADE |
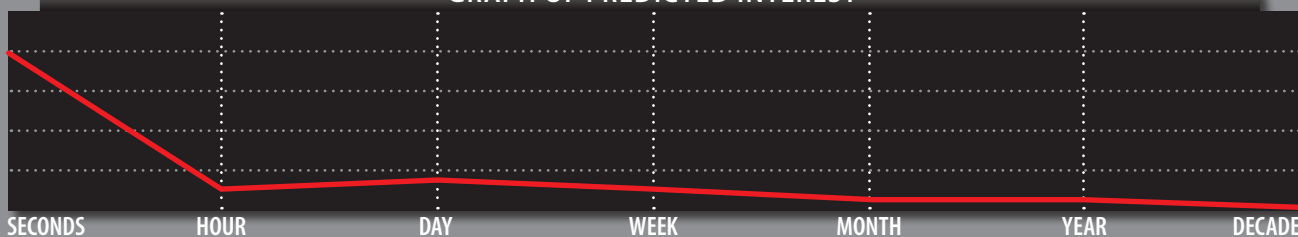
**MAKER: TELENET • YEAR: 1990 • FORMAT: CD-ROM**

# Alternate Reality

Recoloured to match the PC Engine pallete, take a glimpse at what could have been...

**ARCADE**



## RASTAN SAGA

Just think folks, instead of crying tears of sorrow as you rock back and forth on your heels while playing Rastan Saga II, in another world you might have been playing *this*. A world where everyone is rich, unicorns are real, chocolate makes you thin and Taito aren't morons.
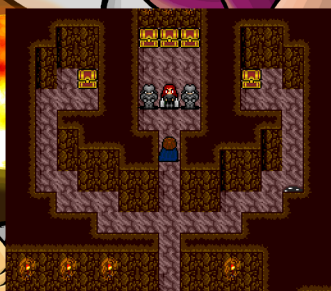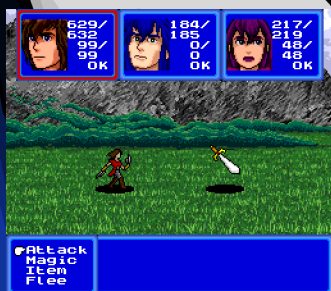
**PC ENGINE**

# Spin Pair

**Before** I begin this review I must clarify two things.

Firstly, Spin Pair is not a topless lap-dancing club simulator. Secondly, I'm not a big fan of puzzle games. I generally find them fun for five minutes, then get bored because they just repeat themselves endlessly without much variation. That said, let's take a look at what Spin Pair is all about.

At its most basic level, you could compare the gameplay to titles such as Tetris, Puyo Puyo or Columns. You are presented with a familiar play area with familiar dropping objects that familiarly build up to the top until you lose. You must match the objects to clear them, therefore preventing your demise. Sounds pretty standard stuff so far.

But Spin Pair decides to shake its head at the simplicity of games like Columns and adds some subtle, but effective tweaks to the gameplay. You see, it's not just a game of matching colours - each shape that drops has a section of it 'filled in' and a section that is 'empty'. It's your task to spin (hence the title) the sections so when two shapes connect you have a solid form. The new shape then vanishes, taking with it any more of its kind on the same horizontal row.

Of course, now and again the whole thing decides to speed up a little. This not only causes

Cute fruit - each level has specifically themed pairs.
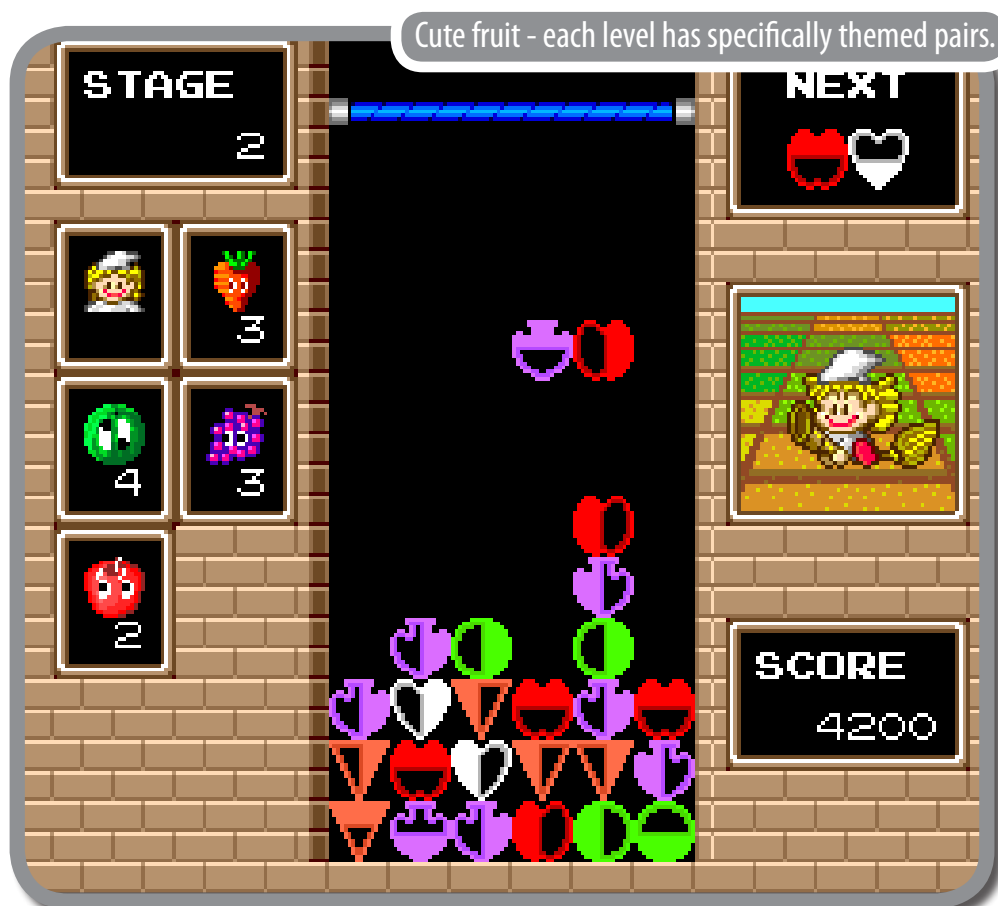
A Bomber Man style map shows your progress in Story Mode.



Battle Mode pits player against player. You can also link up on a GT!

you to fill your pants, but also to really concentrate hard as you try to anticipate the next move while frantically rotating the current pair. As you continue, new shapes are added, and so things go on and on, and on.

But thankfully, that's just normal mode. Players who get bored quickly should head straight for the story mode which is a very slight, but welcome addition to the game. Here, you play a game

in different areas (with the 'pairs' visually changing for each area) and to progress, you have to eliminate a specified number of each symbol. This adds an extra little bit of strategy to the game, as your attention also has to focus on fulfilling your quotas. It also adds variety with the change of imagery.

Additionally, there is a 2 player battle mode if you want to show your friends how good you are at rotating things. And who doesn't?

## You spin me right round, baby right round like a record, baby right round round round

Each shape (themed with the level) has 4 filled positions - top, left, bottom and right. All you have to do it match the opposites to form a complete shape, and all similar shapes in that row will be removed.

# Things that are best in pairs
## (not including boobs, sorry)

### Pants (or underpants if you're American)

Pairs of pants are essential for the modern gentleman of today. Better still, if you 'spin' the 'pair' back to front, you get double the usage before you have to wash them!

### Jay and Silent Bob

This pair of outspoken (apart from the silent one) junkie jokers are guaranteed to offend your parents with their 'wacky' and 'zany' humour. Snoochie boochies.

### Pears

Pears are not only a good source of vitamin C and dietary fibre, you are less likely to be allergic to them than other fruit. A pair of pairs a day will surely keep the doctor away.

### PC Engine & Briefcase CD-Rom Unit

This is the most exquisite pair of electronics ever made, each perfectly matched with the other. No two things deserve to be together more than these, except Justin Bieber and a bullet.

So how does a burned-out-on-Tetris-anti-puzzle-gamer see Spin Pair? Well, I actually found myself enjoying it despite my preconceptions. Presentation is generally pretty good, looking very Hudson (a good thing), and although the symbols are necessarily visually basic, the rest of the graphics are nicely drawn and add to the appeal. A background

The pictures on the left show how many of each pair you need to make.

to the play area would have been nice, but you can't have everything. The music is very pleasant - you have a choice of tunes (although I think if the tunes changed per level that would have been better) and one in particular is very jaunty and reminded me of Momotaro Katsugeki - again, a good thing.

I think that one of the key successes with Spin Pair is that it keeps your mind constantly busy. I hate to bring up Columns yet again, but that's an example of a drop-the-block puzzler that just goes on and on and on until you wish it was over. But Spin Pair has enough to grab you, at least for a little while,
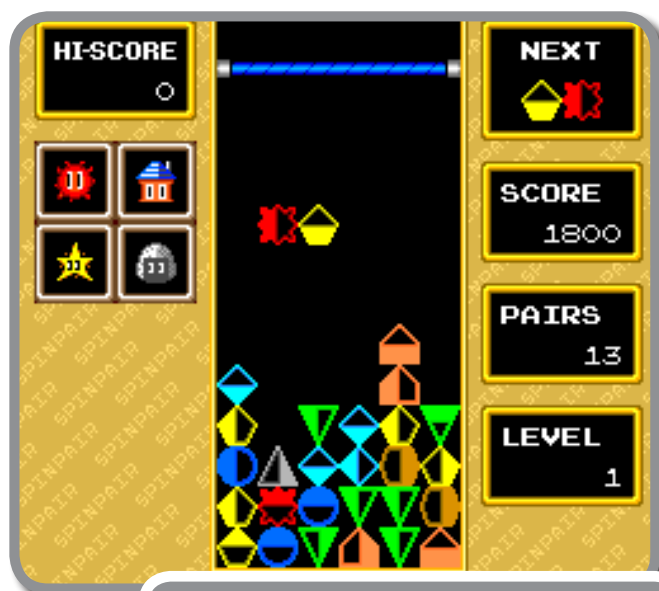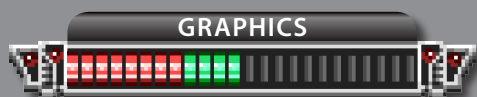


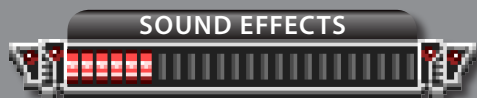Normal Mode adds shapes as you progress.

and hold your attention. If you're a fan of this type of game, it's one of the better examples. But even if you're not, it's worth giving it at least some of your time. You never know, you might just like it.
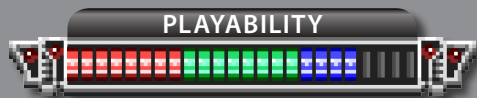
**SP**

## THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM

### GRAPHICS
Mostly very basic, but they are well drawn and appealing when the need shows itself.
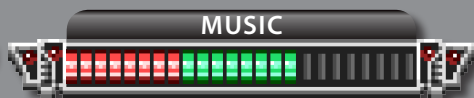
### SOUND EFFECTS
With little scope for impressive sounds, there's not much - but they serve their purpose.

### PLAYABILITY
Responsive gameplay means that any mistakes are the fault of the player rather than the game.

### BALANCE
Levels are graded well, with the difficulty sliding up slightly as you play.

### MUSIC
A choice of nice tunes using a soft and appealing set of instruments. Cute and catchy.

### ADDICTIVENESS
Puzzle fans will come back frequently as it's quick to play and varied to maintain interest.
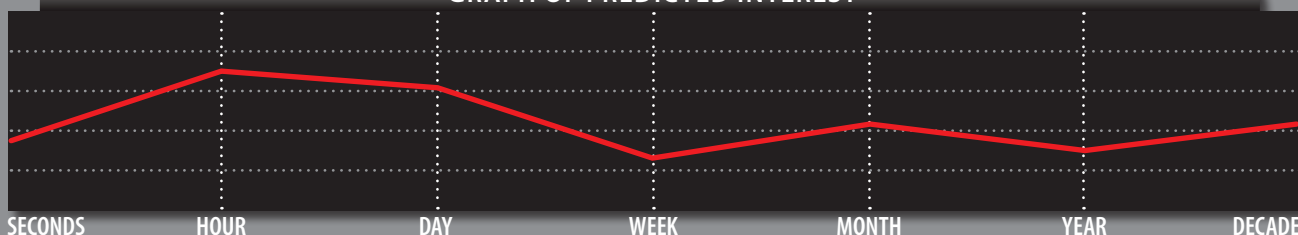
### STAR QUALITY
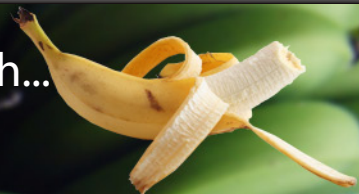


I'M ACTUALLY QUITE SMART FOR A BUNDY

**TOTAL SCORE**

# 724
**/1000**

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST

SECONDS    HOUR    DAY    WEEK    MONTH    YEAR    DECADE

**MAKER:** MEDIA RINGS • **YEAR:** 1990 • **FORMAT:** HUCARD

# Top Banana

A fight to the death...
but who will win?

## F-14 TOMCAT
AFTER BURNER II

## VS

## THE KUNG FU GUY
THE KUNG FU

### ROUND 1 : WEAPONRY — **WIN**

Armed with a massive stock of homing missiles and the vulcan cannon which can rip enemy forces to ribbons in seconds, the F-14 is truly a mobile machine of destruction.

Armed only with fists and feet, he might be skilled, but would end up as pile of stringy blancmange if he went up against the mighty F-14. Even on the ground it could run him over.

### ROUND 2 : COMBAT SKILL — **WIN**

Whole squadrons of fighter planes are sent out to stop this lone pilot, but the flight computer takes care of your course and missile lock. Not much skill is required to look like a hero.

While punching sticks and rocks isn't going to win you many fans, this guy also has to compete with practised martial artists who look like crusty old men or Jackie Chan. Skill is the key here.

### ROUND 3 : AGILITY — **WIN**

While an F-14 is certainly fast, it doesn't exactly turn on a penny, which is quite embarrassing if you drop something out the cockpit and need to go back and pick it up.

Kung Fu guy is fairly agile, pulling off impressive jumping kicks, dodging and weaving around all over the place to confuse his enemy. He can't turn around, but he CAN back up a bit.

### ROUND 4 : COOLNESS FACTOR — **WIN**

It's really not much of a contest. What could be more cool than pretending you're Tom Cruise (before he had his teeth done and went crazy) and ridding the skies of evildoers?

We're not talking super-cool here. His fashion sense is a little on the retro side, and after some fists to the jaw, he starts to look like he's had a few too many and got into a scrap at the local.

### ROUND 5 : MOST FUN AT PARTIES — **WIN**

While it might make an impressive centrepiece, the F-14 doesn't actually DO anything at a party, other than substitute for an expensive table. Once the party is over, that's a different matter...

There's no doubt that a skilled kung fu master is going to be a ton of fun. Not only can he perform impressive feats of strength and physical punishment, but I bet he's also a hell of a dancer.

## OVERALL WINNER
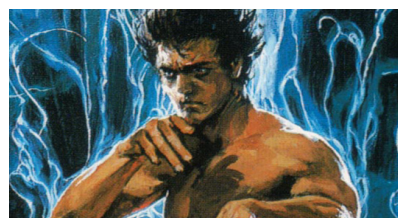
### THE KUNG FU GUY

The Kung Fu guy may not have super speed and firepower, but he takes up a lot less space and is vastly more environmentally friendly. He suffers a bit from gigantism in his hand, but a trip to the doctor will sort that out pronto.

# Dr. Bakuda's Happy Hour

**Shown the error of his ways, Dr. Bakuda has turned his powers to good and wishes to spread joy and cheer to all around him.**

Please note the opinions of Dr. Bakuda may not represent the opinions of the Editorial staff.

I was sitting comfortably in my armchair watching my goldfish drown when an advert came on the telly. "Blah blah now you can save your blah blah in the cloud." Oh, that's the new trendy buzz word is it now? Oh, look at me, I'm storing my data in the cloud, aren't I the modern day version of some toadying little yuppie with his extra large mobile phone and man purse.

Cloud my rectum. It's just another one of those pathetic attempts to market stuff to the ignorant youth with cool sounding words that mean nothing and should be confined to history's dictionary dustbin along with 'synergy' and the like. A cloud is in the sky. It rains on people. END OF.

And speaking of Final Fantasy VII references, what kind of brainless internet morons continue to name themselves 'Sephiroth' or some variation on forums and in games, under the misguided notion that it makes them look like something other than a malodorous pox-throbber with less imagination than a monkey's gonad. Oh, look at him, he's called XxSephirothxX, he must be an amazing guy, I want to be just like him. These people deserve to be all collected up in a field and sewn together like the human centipede.

And that goes for the utter plakton who design DVD covers and put the spines the wrong way up. I mean SERIOUSLY. It's not as though there's not a billion books, CDs and DVDs to reference for the correct way to print a goddamn spine. Jesus H Sinatra, that makes my blood boil! Rotate clockwise. IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE.

It's this point where my contract dictates that I say something at least marginally positive. But I'm so mad I think I'll just go out and spear worms with toothpicks for the rest of the evening. That's positive isn't it? I mean, worms are vile little buggers and deserve everything they get. Like you really.

# Tatsujin

**If** I were to ask you to solve the P versus NP problem while riding a rollercoaster, playing Rachmaninoff's third piano concerto and looking after someone else's kids without slapping them, then it would only give you a tiny insight into how difficult Tatsujin is. Playing Tatsujin is like trying to tape jelly to the ceiling. It's like running barefoot across a room full of mousetraps. It's crazy hard.

Now I suppose I'd better give you an overview of the game first, but I'll make it quick so I can get back to ranting about the difficulty.

You're in a spaceship. You shoot things. You get power ups. Things shoot back. I think that's enough of the gameplay details, let's move on



Homing Lightning Lasers. One of the coolest weapons in any shooter.

to the graphics and sound.

Visually, Tatsujin is a very nice game to look at. The sprites are good and chunky and the graphical style is really appealing. It's pretty close to the arcade, only with a much more vibrant palette. It certainly throws quite a few sprites around the screen and the lightning weapon looks really impressive (even if it's weaker than a cup of milky tea). The audio is a real stand-out feature, and for my money the PC Engine boasts the best sounding



You actually need to dodge power-ups here. Too much speed will kill you.



Explosions like that are quite satisfying.
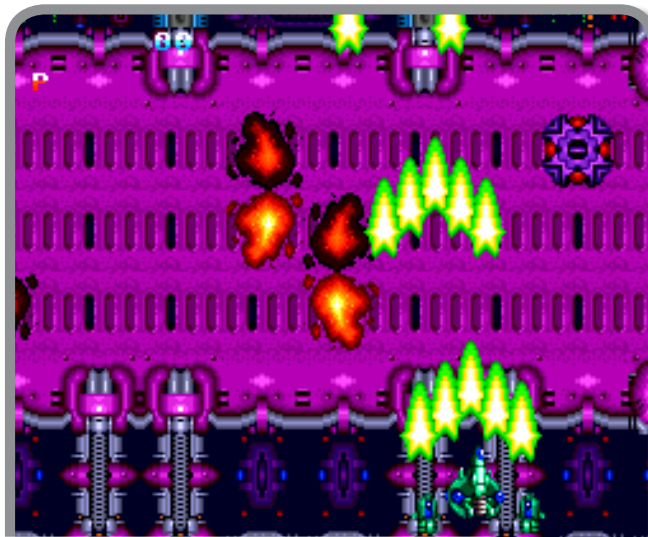
Green lasers sound just like Thunder Force II



It's big, it's pink and it's shooting at you.

interpretations of the music out of all the versions, including the arcade. The instuments are warm and buzzy and the drum sounds pack a punch that really give the soundtrack some power. I'd go as far to say that the music is the one main reasons that makes me come back to the game.

Unfortunately all this greatness is marred by that stupid difficulty. If the enemy bullets were a little slower and your weapons a bit more powerful it would be one of the greatest shoot 'em ups on HuCARD. Of course, there are probably some of you out there that whip this game's bulbous posterior with ease and I freely admit to being more rubbish at games than I once was. But I know cruel when I see it, and the programmers must have been expecting players to be endowed of superhuman reflexes and concentration (i.e. Japanese).

Sadly, a poor ageing westerner like me can no longer keep up with it and frustration, mixed with a mild heart attack, usually sets in every time I play.

So is it fun? Yes, but it's damaged fun, and I haven't the heart to give it the low rating I think it really deserves because there are many hardcore shoot 'em up players out there who will get true enjoyment from it. As for me, I think I'll stick to the Mega Drive version.

Destroying this sucker is such a relief, but there's no time to rest.

And that's where this review *should* have ended.

However, there is this certain little secret; some may call it a cheat mode, others would refer to it as an options screen. Easy mode? Yes please. Five ships? Yes please. Nine credits? Oh, yes indeedy!

Now if you want to access this, you should glance over to the Fish and Tips page (look, it's just over there), but once you have, it transforms the game. No longer am I throwing the joypad down in despair every 13 seconds. It's now at least 4 or 5 minutes before that happens!

Because, dear readers, easy mode takes a game that is unfair and stupidly annoying and makes it merely very tricky - for it is still a difficult game, but now it is a challenge rather than a slaughter.

I have time to form strategies, experiment with weapons, and occasionally I get to stop shooting for a couple of seconds! Tatsujin's easy mode may be every other game's hard mode, but it's exciting stuff and makes the game worth playing.

In fact, bugger this, I'm off to have another go. Hoorah for cheats!
**SP**

## THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM
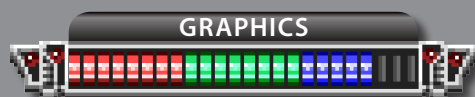
### GRAPHICS
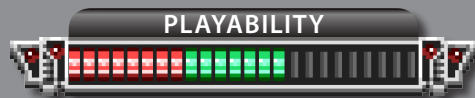Colourful, with excellent design and shading. Great looking weapons and explosions.

### SOUND EFFECTS
Some annoying weapon sounds cut out music channels, but mostly very effective.

### PLAYABILITY
Your ship controls well and goes where you need it, even if it's a bit too big for my liking.

### BALANCE
All messed up. Normal settings are far too hard, but cheaters will just about manage.

### MUSIC
Awesome instrumentation with some thumping great tunes. Proper shooter music.

### ADDICTIVENESS
Offputting difficulty, but easy mode provides a much more addictive game.

### STAR QUALITY

LIFE IS HARD BUT CHEATING IS FUN

**TOTAL SCORE**

**804**

**/1000**

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST

| SECONDS | HOUR | DAY | WEEK | MONTH | YEAR | DECADE |
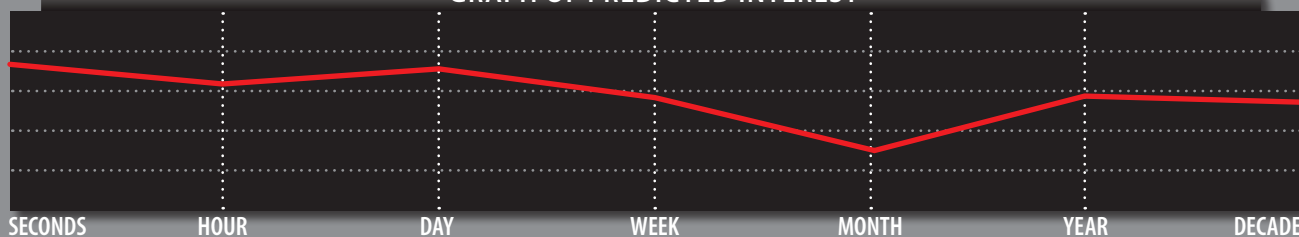
**MAKER: TAITO • YEAR: 1992 • FORMAT: HUCARD**

# Fish & Tips

Hints and cheats to help
you stay ahead of the pack

## Tatsujin

Turn that frown upside-down with these essential cheats for Tatsujin. Use the chart below to make your choice - and unlock the secrets of the universe (well, the options screens anyway).

**MEH**



**HOLD SELECT & PUSH RUN**

**PLAY!**

**JOY!**

**HOLD SELECT & PUSH RUN**

**SCORE EXACTLY 7100**

**RESET**

# Pixellence

A look at some of the great artwork from PC Engine games.

## MYSTIC FORMULA