

## REVIEW ARCHIVE



### NEBULA FIGHTER

PC - Holodream Software

Shareware version reviewed by [Malc](#)

Regular visitors to Shmups will know the PC is not my favourite platform for 2D scrolling shooters. The lack of sprites and no hardware scrolling capability doesn't help. And the people who make the best shooters in the world - the Japanese - largely have ignored the PC. As a result, any shooters we get on our trusty PCs are likely to be western-produced shallow efforts, with little of the basic ingredients required that make up the perfect shmup. However (you knew I was going to say that) times are a-changin' - with games like Tyrian, Baryon, and to a lesser extent, Raptor and Stargunner, we're finally getting shooters at damn-near console quality.



Enter Nebula Fighter, from Italian software house Holodream. (I'll take the shareware version to review just now, and when the final one is available I'll come back to it.) Nebula Fighter is a side scrolling fast paced shooter in the classic style, with the essential graded powerups, fierce bosses and frenetic gameplay. Nothing really unusual there then? Well, let's see... cue Malky's BadBits and

GoodBits review style today, and a summing up later:

BadBits:

While I realise the pleasure some people get from rendered SGI style visuals, I'm not so keen on them. Being a graphic bloke myself, I find in-game rendered images often impersonal, dark-hued and boring - they all tend to look the same. Give me an accomplished bitmap artist anyday, check the likes of Metal Slug and many Capcom games to see what I mean. That said, the animation, quality and imagination is not to be faulted here, it's the method used don't like. Nebula Fighter sports some beautiful but smallish bosses, and the waves of alien ships and asteroids are great too. Backgrounds are plain and a bit rough looking unfortunately though.



From what I've seen so far, there's not too much variety in the levels design. It's a space shooter, and you shoot things in space. None of this Gadius and Salamander style dodging internal organs, sun-flares, firey dragons and deviously constructed alien cities here. I do like a bit of interaction with the scenery, apart from the odd rock body-swerving.

I'm not a fan of the 'euro-techno' sound, but like it or lump it we're getting it in nearly every damn game these days. Anything wrong with the punchy arcadey musical tunes we get in R-Type and Pulstar? Mind you, it's quite

accomplished and suits the game well, but am I alone in my abhorrence of this type of music in games? (Hey, I like Underworld, so I'm not an old fart) At least it's better than bland soft-rock I suppose:)

Well, by now you'll be thinking that I hate this game. Not so. It's fabulous, but I simply can't stand reviews which refuse to point out the bad things about even the very cream of games and award them 10 out of 10 for everything (like Gamefan does). Anyway, here's what I do like about Nebula Fighter:

GoodBits:

Gameplay. Yes, the gameplay is good. That's what really matters at the core of it, 'you can't polish a shite' as the saying goes. Everything I love in a shmup is here. Extremely fast gameplay which draws you in so much you forget to eat. Manic dodging and shooting which makes your thumb bleed. Stupidly large weapons which are an inane amount of fun to use! Hard bosses which make you wipe your forehead after you kill them. Nebula Fighter has all of these, plus a good amount of variety in the types of weapons and addons, which somewhat alleviates the sameyness of the level designs (in the shareware version anyway)

The weapons are upgradeable, catching floating icons powers each weapon up, making for some fun blasting. Be very careful when you finally kill a boss, as it releases a very small icon for you to catch - if you miss it then say bye bye to a new weapon! Fortunately, if you die, you keep any weapons previously accrued, but they revert back to the lowest power. This makes for some scary moments! One second you are scooting along with 8 lives and full power, then BLAM! and you skitter about trying to catch powerups as your lives tick away... and you've only got yourself to blame for becoming complacent!



Enemy waves are fairly random and well designed - unlike some other shooters, they blast onto screen, whirl about and disappear rapidly, many at a time. No lining up slowly to be shot here! It's quite reminiscent of Stavros Fasoulas' Delta on the old C64 in a way, but sped up 300%. Bosses are damned hard though, they fire bloody quickly and you have to have independently controlled eyeballs to



see what they're up to next!

Anyway, that's all I really want to say about it, as hopefully I'll be ordering the full version soon, and I'm told that it's at least twice as good as the shareware one. We'll see:) It's great to see shooters making a comeback since they almost died after the glut of them in the early Megadrive days... and Nebula Fighter advances the cause in style. Highly recommended!

SCORE: 8½/10 (shareware version)

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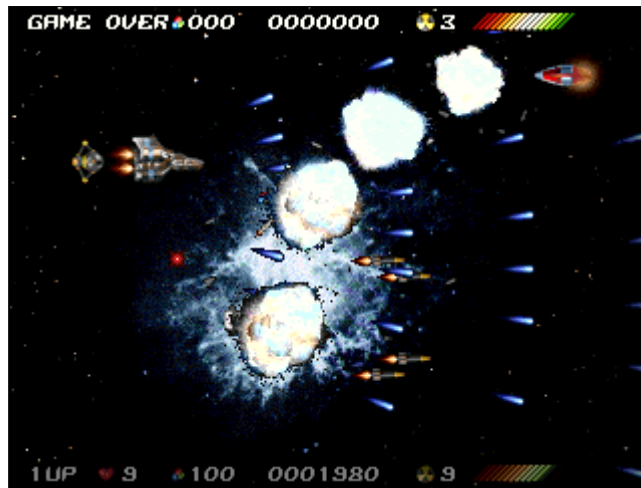
Ok, I'll admit it, the rendered graphics are really nice, ok:) I'll just have to come out of the dark ages and accept in-game rendered stuff as inevitable these days!



See what I mean about the bosses being small? Tiny but nasty. Just like a leech, or a tick, exterminate with extreme prejudice!



Right, you've convinced me guys, this looks fabulous running. Couldn't do this with hand-drawn stuff. Pulstar is a bit like this too, but Pulstar has better backdrops I'm afraid.



Damned lovely explosions eh? Well, I'm looking forward to the final version! I do love shooters... :)

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