

# PC Engine GAMER

ISSUE 7 • JULY 2012 • FREE

**FREE!**

**12 PAGE**

**EXCLUSIVE**

**LEGENDARY AXE**

**COMIC!**

**REVIEWED**

**CUTEY SHOOTIEY**

**スター**

**パロジヤー**

**STAR PARODIER**

**PLUS**

**TITAN • BE-BALL**

**INTERVIEW WITH**

**HUDSON'S**

**TADAYUKI**

**KAWADA**

**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: CCAG 2012 • GAME MUSIC SUCKS**

# PC Engine

**04**

## **HOME COOKIN'**

We sniff around the stew pot for the latest news.

**07**

## **FLASH HUCARD**

A quick look at this exciting new bit of kit.

**08**

## **CCAG 2012**

Arkhan gives us the lowdown on Aetherbyte at this year's show.

**10**

## **REVIEW: TITAN**

Can this be the true evolution of Breakout?

**14**

## **TOP BANANA**

This time, two fearsome bosses lock horns to determine the winner.

**15**

## **DR. BAKUDA'S HAPPY HOUR**

Another round of gushing praise, this time for modern game music.

**16**

## **REVIEW : STAR PARODIER**

Is it just another cute shoot 'em up?

**25**

## **THE LEGENDARY AXE**

An exclusive 12 page comic based on this early PC Engine title.

**38**

## **STAR TREKKIN'**

Sorrel Tilley interviews ex-Hudson employee Tadayuki Kawada.

**42**

## **REVIEW: BE BALL**

Girls and balls, surely it's a winner?

**47**

## **FISH & TIPS**

Increase your enjoyment of Marchen Maze, without taking drugs.

**48**

## **PIXELLENC**

We look at some lovely images from Sol Moonarge.

# gine GAMER

Issue 7  
JULY 2012

[www.pcengine.co.uk/gamer](http://www.pcengine.co.uk/gamer)  
e-mail: [paul@pcengine.co.uk](mailto:paul@pcengine.co.uk)  
twitter: @sunteam

Well it's certainly a bumper issue this time. 50 (count 'em) pages including a great interview by new contributor Sorrel Tilley, a report by Arkhan and a 12 page comic. Don't say I never give you anything.



There's a few shout-outs to do this time, so let's get on to it. Firstly, thanks to The Retro League podcast for giving the last issue a mention on their show. It's a great retro-based podcast and well worth subscribing to. Thanks also to Anna Black for the plug on Slay Radio, one of the best gaming related internet radio stations out there. Some of you may notice that the downloads for the mag are now at Pixel Nation - check out the site and buy some of their stuff. You won't regret it.

One final mention goes to Retro Gamer Forums. Google it, go there. If I had more space I'd elaborate, but I don't, so cheerio!

sunteam\_paul

# Home Cookin'

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



The homebrew pot has been gently bubbling these past few months rather than boiling over, but it takes a slow heat to cook a good stew and who knows what secret ingredients have been dropped in for later? What the hell am I on about? I have no idea.

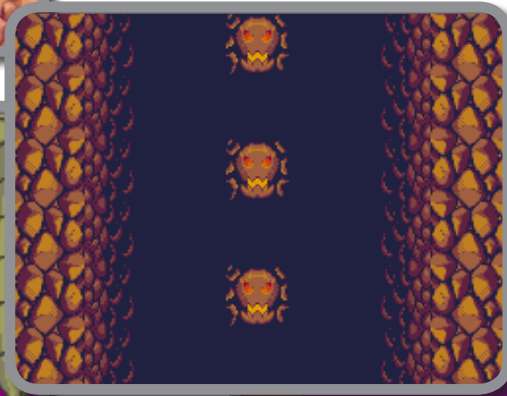
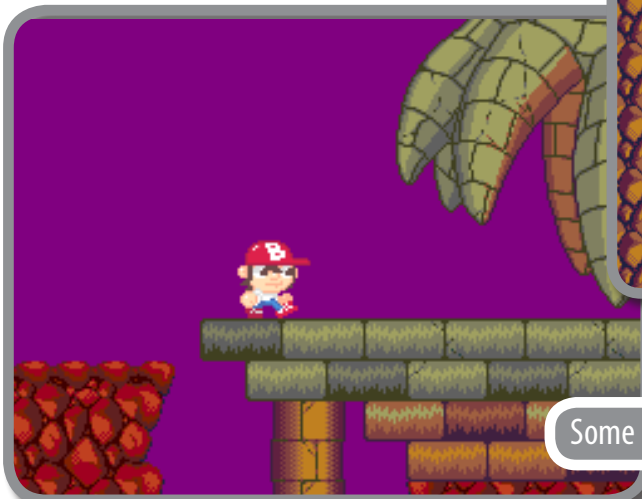


Billyboy is certainly looking pretty, even at this early stage.



As well as working on his *Karate* game, **Touko** has also released some video and mock-up images of *Billyboy*, an action/platform game featuring cutesy graphics. So far it's looking very promising; the intro sequence alone containing more layers of parallax than it has any right to.

**Aetherbyte** released the limited edition *Protocode* on their prototype AbCARDS - containing simple versions of Asteroids, Pong and a Light Cycles game, it's not going to set the world on fire, but



Some mockups of sample graphics.

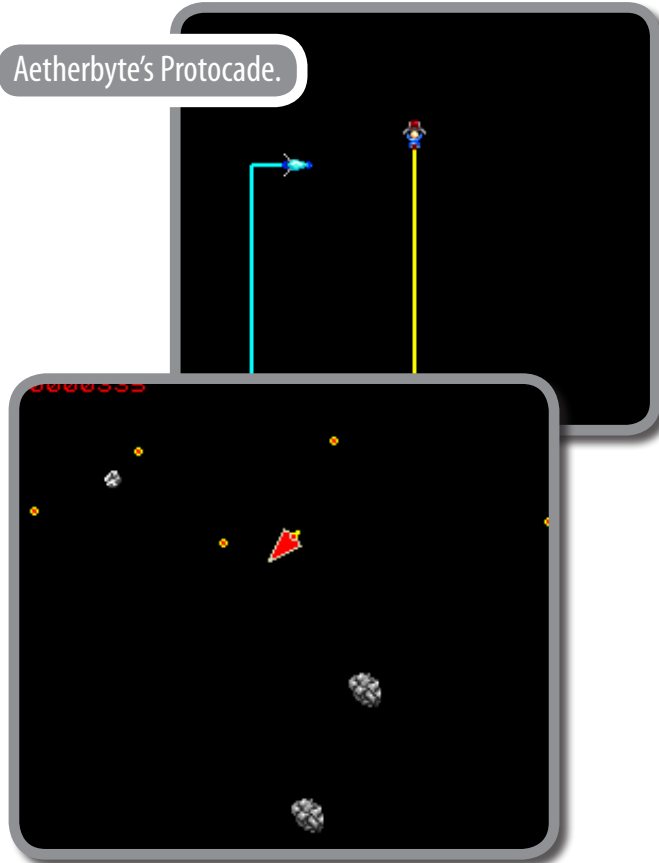
it is a big step in the history of homebrew HuCARDs and will help to fund future development. Check out the feature on the CCAG for more information on this. Or don't. See if I care.

Work on *Atlantean* is still progressing nicely; some scrolling issues have been resolved and enemy movement is currently underway. A recent build allowed the player to pick up the little critters and drop them at the bottom of the screen, which is kinda neat.

To help iron out bugs and get some playtesting feedback, they also decided to release a playable beta of Pac-Man wannabe *Pyramid Plunder*. The game itself is in the final stages of completion, with some maps being redrawn and the presentation improved for release.

If fractals are your thing, then you'll be interested to hear that **Chris Covell** has released version 2 of his *Fractal Engine*. I have to say that I'm about as interested in fractals as I am in the results of the latest Kabaddi tournament, but the software does its thing with style and even takes into account the added power of the SuperGrafx. Chris is a very talented guy and I wish he had time to develop more actual games.

Aetherbyte's Protocade.



More development progress on Atlantean.



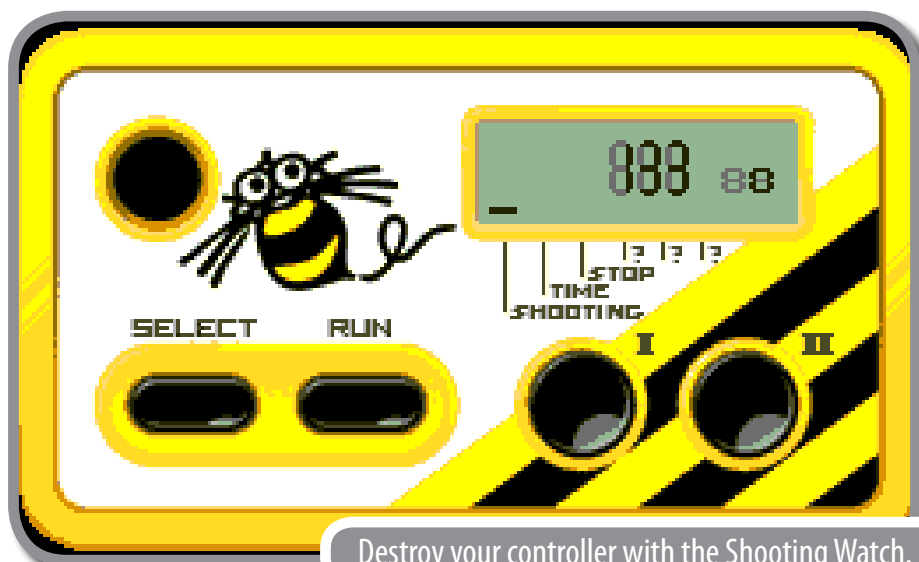
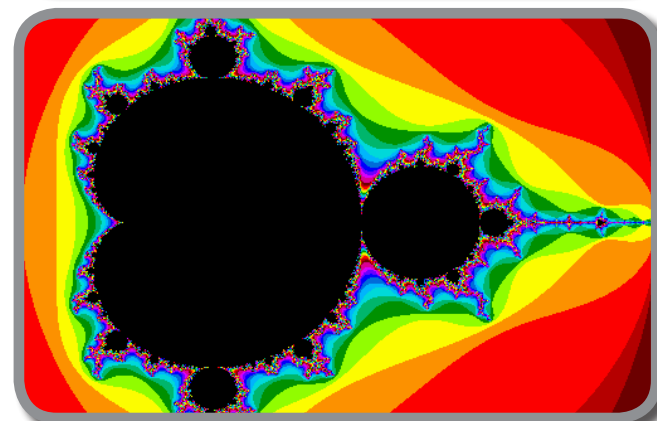
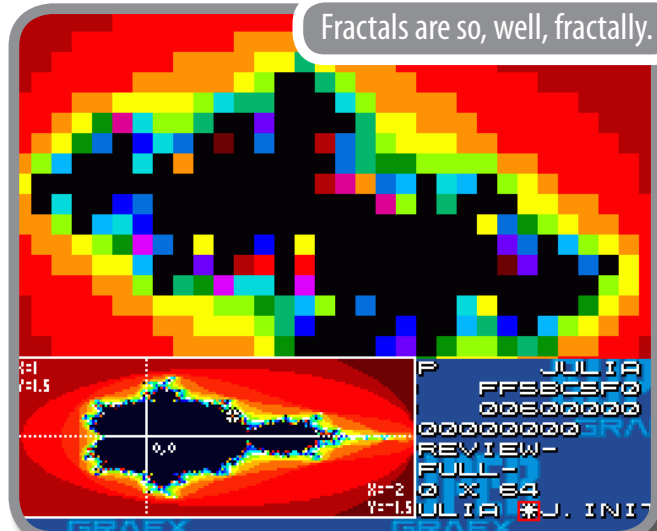
The long running saga of **Frozen Utopia**'s epic RPG *Mysterious Song* shows no sign of abating. Continuing issues (mostly caused by the CD pressing plant being run by a small group of chimpanzees with learning difficulties) mean that the release date is still not clear. Hopefully they can sort all this out sometime before the next ice age, because it might be hard to find time to play, what with the hunting for food and freezing to death and all that.

Someone who chooses to call themselves **Orion** is working on a multi-platform Myst type adventure called *Elansar*. Luckily one of those platforms is the PC Engine, which means I'm not wasting my time typing all this. It's all going to be very pretty pre-rendered 3D scenes and is also coming out on the Jaguar and Atari Falcon.

Finally, **Cabbage** has come up with a fun little item - it's a PCE version of Hudson's *Shooting Watch* - a little device that tests the limits of how fast you can hit a fire button. Fancy yourself as the next Takahashi Meijin? Now you can prove it.



Fractals are so, well, fractally.



Destroy your controller with the Shooting Watch.

# Flash HuCARD



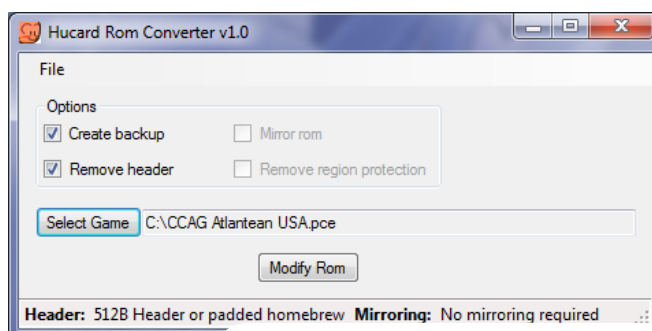
An exciting new product from **Gaming Enterprises** is this low cost flash HuCARD. Supplied as a circuit board with USB cable, it allows you to transfer any .pce game ROM to it, plug it into real hardware and play!

Sounds simple? Well it is...sort of. After installing the relevant software, I tried a couple of tests on existing commercial ROMs, which failed to work. But then, I clicked the little check box to 'Swap Data Bits' and had some success - it seems that this is essential if you are running the card on a Japanese system.

Several ROMs had issues - mostly corruption of graphics and suchlike, but these were caused by the pesky ROM files themselves rather than the hardware. Thankfully, a very talented chap called *ConHuevos* appeared on the scene and

whipped up a neat bit of software that not only checks the region of the ROM, but also removes the problematic 'header' data that causes so many problems.

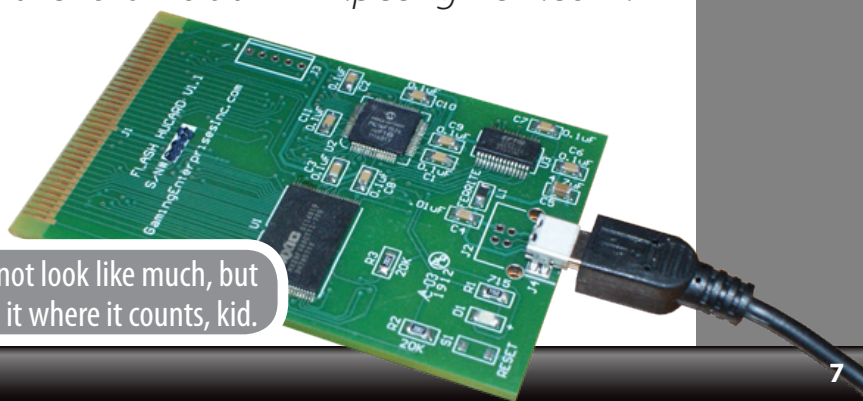
So, with ROM files fixed, the Flash HuCARD works like a charm, not only allowing people to play those hard-to-get games on real hardware, but also opening up a new way to easily test homebrew projects. Now I'm off to play a bit of Atlantean...



The very useful converter software.

*The Flash HuCARD is available from [www.gamingenterprisesinc.com](http://www.gamingenterprisesinc.com) at \$45 plus shipping.*

*Get the ROM converter and keep up with the Flash HuCARD FAQ by visiting the forums at [www.pceenginefx.com](http://www.pceenginefx.com).*



It may not look like much, but it's got it where it counts, kid.



In an effort to do as little work as possible, I sat at home drinking tea and eating biscuits while more adventurous types were out at the Classic Console and Arcade Gaming show. Mind you, I live on a different continent so you can hardly blame me. Anyway, here's an overview of the show from *Aetherbyte's* primary loon, *Arkhan*.

# CCAG 2012

The 2012 Classic Console and Arcade Gaming show ([www.ccagshow.com](http://www.ccagshow.com)) went very well. We were there, front and center(ish) for the entire day, demoing the latest work being done here at Aetherbyte.

The booth featured *Insanity*, our near-done *Pyramid Plunder*, and v0.15 of *Atlantean*!

*Pyramid Plunder* is about done now and we are going through the final playtesting phases. We let people bang away on it all day at the show. No gameplay bugs were found by the players, and no negative feedback was given! All who played it seemed to enjoy it a great deal. We are shooting for a Christmas release of the game, and should have no issues with getting it done by then.



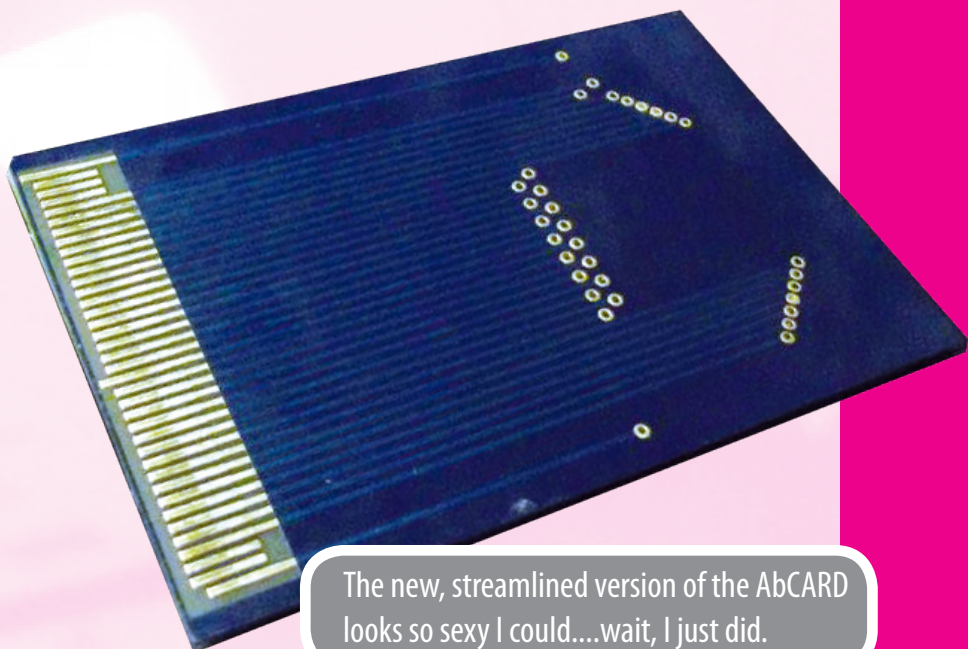


This all seemed pretty ho-hum, and similar to every other year until we revealed that Atlantean was running on the latest iteration of our HuCARD. This one features a slim blue board with plastic backing on it. All who witnessed it were pretty impressed with the slim form factor. We are nearing a perfect HuCARD reproduction!

Once we get the size matched up perfectly, we can get the edges smoothed out, burn Atlantean to it, and distribute it to everyone! We are aiming to keep costs at a minimum.

I also announced that I would be working on a game entitled Inferno for the MSX2. It will be a demonic-themed game with gameplay similar to the flip-screen style adventure games that have fallen by the wayside. I'm talking about games like Draconus, Antiriad, the MSX versions of Legacy of the Wizard and Castlevania (Dragon Slayer IV and Vampire Killer), and even the new C64 game Soulless.

It promises to be a gory, fear inducing action RPG. With FM sound, and amazing artwork done by sunteam\_paul.



The new, streamlined version of the AbCARD looks so sexy I could....wait, I just did.

All in all, everyone that stopped by our booth was impressed with what they saw, and seemed very excited about the future of Aetherbyte and our games. I even imparted some startup PC Engine programming knowledge to a handful of gamers that seemed interested in making games.

This is a good sign for PC Engine homebrew.

To see more about the show, be sure to watch our footage on our YouTube channel, as well as videos from others, including interviews that are out there on the net...and as always, check our site for the latest updates!

## Arkhan

*Aetherbyte can be found at:  
[www.aetherbyte.com](http://www.aetherbyte.com)*

# Titan

It's pretty obvious what the guys were thinking when they came up with the idea for Titan. They had a late night drinking, stumbled home and decided to play some Breakout. Then, after Jimmy fell asleep and Nigel had thrown up on the dog, someone said, "This going left and right is so boring. Wouldn't it be great if you could move anywhere you wanted?" Unfortunately, the next morning, nobody forgot this idea and Titan was born.

In essence, the whole concept makes perfect sense as a way to expand the gameplay of Breakout/Arkanoid in new and exciting



Those little green maggots give you a nasty sting and freeze you for a second.

directions. So here's what we're left with: You control a square that moves around the map. You bump into bouncing balls to make them change direction. If you are feeling adventurous, you can freeze a ball in place with the push of a button, allowing you to take aim and bash it somewhere you'd vaguely like it to go. Once you have cleaned up the area by destroying all the blocks, off you pop to the next one.

Of course, there has to be more to it than that. There's also a time limit and power-ups that, amongst other things, can slow down your ball or make it go all wibbly wobbly like a drunken bee. There's



Those pesky skull-blocks jerk around and mean instant death if your ball touches them.

The opening fools you into thinking there will be some nice graphics in the game.



also nightmarish skull blocks - one hit of those with your ball and it's BOOM - you lose a life and have to restart the level.

At this point, fans of classic arcade games with simple, yet addictive gameplay might be anxious to jump onto eBay and purchase

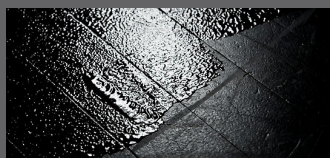
themselves a copy with all haste. But hold your horses, because it would be akin to ordering a hooker and getting someone who installs hooks.

There are many things that are just not right with Titan, one of the main being the lack of skill involved. Most of the time you are merely waiting for the ball to get stuck in an area before moving in to dislodge it, or running after the ball that has decided to bounce its way back to the very beginning of the map. There is little strategy involved in stopping and re-aiming the ball and after a while it feels like you're trying to herd an annoying fly that is buzzing around your head.

## EXACTLY HOW BORING IS TITAN?



2001: A Space Odyssey



Paint Drying



Economics Class



Traffic Jam

Brain melting

**TITAN**

Somewhat dull

**TEDIOMETER**

I decided to conduct a scientific experiment using a random selection of three-toed sloths to determine the absolute drab-factor of Titan.

Surprisingly, it came out rather well, being more interesting than watching paint dry, yet a little less engaging than a class on economics. Unfortunately, the sloths had to be 'put to sleep' after the experiment concluded due to a nasty outbreak of potatoes and veggies in my oven. They taste like chicken you know.

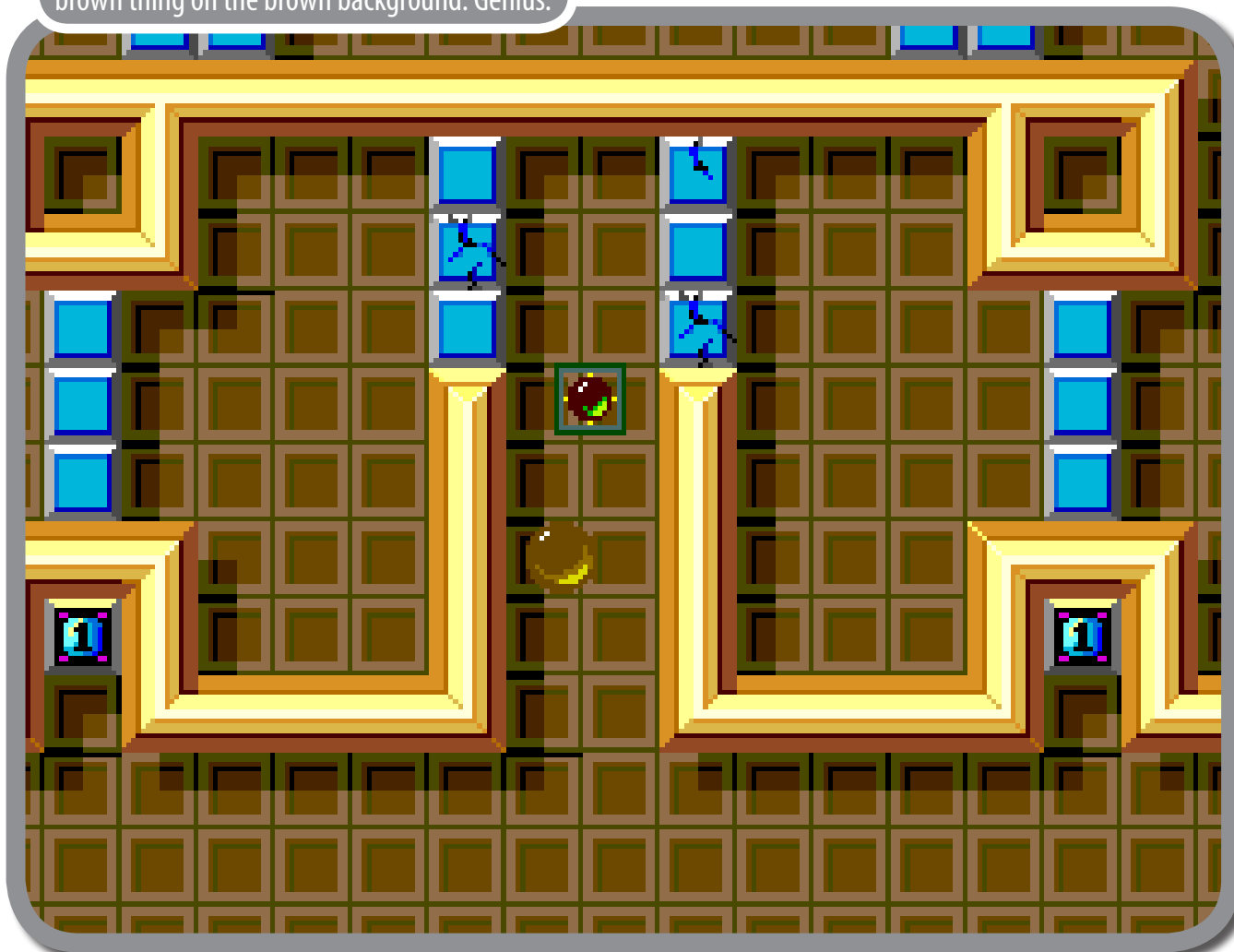
The skull blocks don't help matters much either. They are mostly tucked away in small areas and move around by themselves, but more often than not, you won't even have your ball on screen when it randomly smacks into one, causing you to start the whole level from scratch. Attempts to mix up the gameplay result in some lame power-ups (the slow-ball will put you to sleep) and by the time you hit the Game Over screen, you'll be thoroughly bored with the whole thing. Even the levels with multiple balls completely fail to inspire.



Stage 1 is hardly a challenge, unless the challenge is staying awake.

It wouldn't be so bad if there was some eye or ear candy to help you. Games like Gomola Speed have shown how simple overhead graphics can be quite appealing. Titan comes off looking like an old

You see the ball..no, it's there. Yes it is. It's the brown thing on the brown background. Genius.



Commodore 64 game, with dull backgrounds and uninspiring design. This is somewhat ironic as the C64 version suffered from really garish graphics. The sound is equally disappointing.



If this was the title screen it would save you all the bother of having to play.

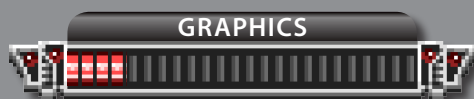
other stuff that seems to have been ripped straight from Altered Beast.

Titan could have been good. With a little more thought to the game design, better aiming,

While I can barely call it music, there is a selection of about 8 notes that just repeat again and again as you play. The sound effects consists of a bing-bing-bing as the ball rebounds, and some

more wandering enemies, less random deaths and so on, it might have actually felt interesting and original. As it stands, it's just a big waste of your time. **SP**

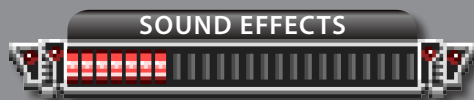
### THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM



**GRAPHICS**  
Basic, but functional design and some dubious colour choices.



**BALANCE**  
The initial levels are fairly easy, but when pot luck comes into play it's just unfair.



**SOUND EFFECTS**  
Initially effective but the repetition starts to grate after a while.



**MUSIC**  
MAKE IT STOP!  
PLEASE, JUST MAKE IT STOP!  
dum, dum, dum, dum, dum, dum...

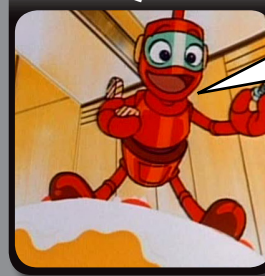


**PLAYABILITY**  
Movement is smooth, but trying to aim the ball can be awkward and frustrating.



**ADDICTIVENESS**  
You get the idea pretty quickly, and any appeal soon fades away. No reason to come back.

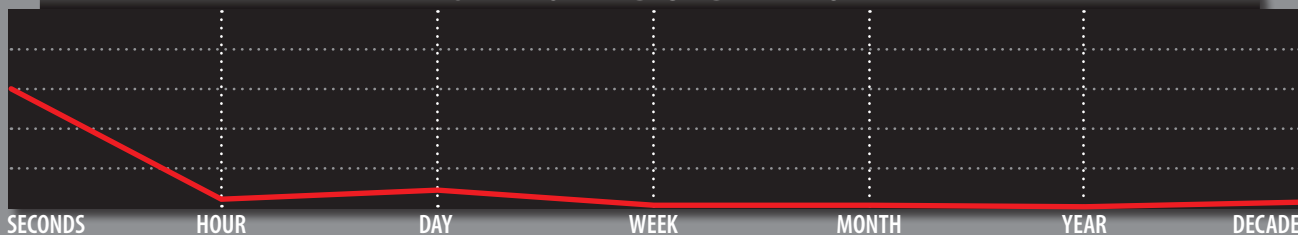
### STAR QUALITY



TOTAL SCORE

**136**  
/1000

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



**MAKER:** NAXAT • **YEAR:** 1991 • **FORMAT:** HUCARD

# Top Banana

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



## DOBKERATOPS

R-TYPE



## SHIELDER

GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS



# VS

### ROUND 1 : WEAPONRY

WIN 🐉

Lacking any real weaponry of his own, "Dobby" has to make do with an alien-style chest burster that vomits Yin-Yang signs at you. About as threatening as a pork pie with a touch of mould.

Again, a lack of giant swords or pointy sticks is a disappointment, but Shielder can shoot fireballs from his mouth. Sounds lame, but after a touch of hotty botty you'll soon change your mind.

WIN 🐉

### ROUND 2 : MENACE

Standing at least 40 men high, Dobby could scare the crap out of a latrine. The fact that he looks like a foetus that got out of the wrong side of the womb for the last 50 years makes it worse.

Any giant green lizard monster is going to be scary, and Shielder just radiates that miasma of evil. But the fact that you can take him out with a few small daggers does diminish the effect.

### ROUND 3 : AGILITY

WIN 🐉

Dobby isn't exactly one to go for an afternoon stroll, and the only way you'll get him roused into action is to shoot him repeatedly with missiles and laser cannons.

Although Shielder hasn't got much room to move around in, he makes up for it by stomping angrily about and chasing after foolish knights who dare to enter his domain (ooh, matron).

### ROUND 4 : DEFENCE

WIN 🐉

When they were giving out lectures on defensive strategies, Dobby was in the loo having a smoke. Sit naked and stick your vulnerable eye-cords in full view of the enemy? What a buffoon.

While Shielder really should have put on a helmet, at least he had the presence of mind to wear a full suit of plate armour. Not a great help, but enough to win him this round.

### ROUND 5 : MOST FUN AT PARTIES

WIN 🐉

Just trying to get Dobby through the front door would probably destroy your house, and his constant teeth gnashing and vomiting gut-buddy would be a real drag at any party.

Shielder not only has the moves to set the dance floor alight (literally), but who can resist someone whose party trick consists of ripping their head off and waving it around?

### OVERALL WINNER



## SHIELDER

Men admire his strength and women admire the girth of his tail; Shielder is a hamburger of charisma, topped off with an awesome 1980s hair cut.



# 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.

The other afternoon while I was quietly ripping up bibles, a thought struck me: What the Frankenstein's Frankfurter has happened to video game music? I mean, years ago, before I even considered that stabbing kittens could be both fun *and* profitable, video game music used to be catchy and memorable, with tunes that would easily bring a Eurovision contestant to his knees.

So what's up with things now? Oh we've got expensive orchestras that cost thousands making everything sound like a movie score, but seriously; when's the last time that you really wanted to buy a game soundtrack? OK, so it might have been recently. So what? The point is that I bet it doesn't happen very often! Come on folks, the three main tunes in *Out Run* are worth more than a hundred 'atmospheric' scores or generic synthy techno junk that has literally no hummable melody to it. If I listed the top 500 game tunes, every single one of them would be from before 1995.

In fact, modern game music is so bad

that people are making it sound old in the hope that they can fool people into thinking they're the new Yuzo Koshiro or something. I don't care if it sounds like an NES. I never had an NES and I couldn't give a badger's wet fart about your attempt to be retro-trendy. Although I have to say that it's great that people are keeping alive the memory of these old machines, and mixing in retro sounds with real instruments gives me a prideful swelling in my belly (or that could be the wind). These modern musicians are vital in keeping alive our heritage and speaking out for the generation who grew up listening to chip music. They should be applauded for their efforts.

But it does beg the question of why there is no free web browser on the Xbox. It's effing Microsoft for buggery's sake! How hard can it be to put Internet Explorer on there, it's not as though you use up *their* bandwidth when you go online.

It crapping well annoys me. Crappity crap crap.



# Star Parodier

I think it's fair to say that the little white PC Engine is a machine with personality, so I'm amazed it took Hudson so long to give it eyes and limbs and a starring role in one of their games. I mean you couldn't do that with another console - think about it: from the NES to Mega Drive, they all lack the visual stylings that make you wish for a cute plushy version that you can cuddle up with in bed, pouring your heart out to as you cry yourself to sleep over...um, I've said too much.

\*Ahem\* anyway, back in the day (awful expression, I know) there was this game thingy by some chaps calling themselves Konami. What



Those afraid of clowns, look away now.



Can't choose between the red or the blue pill? Take both.

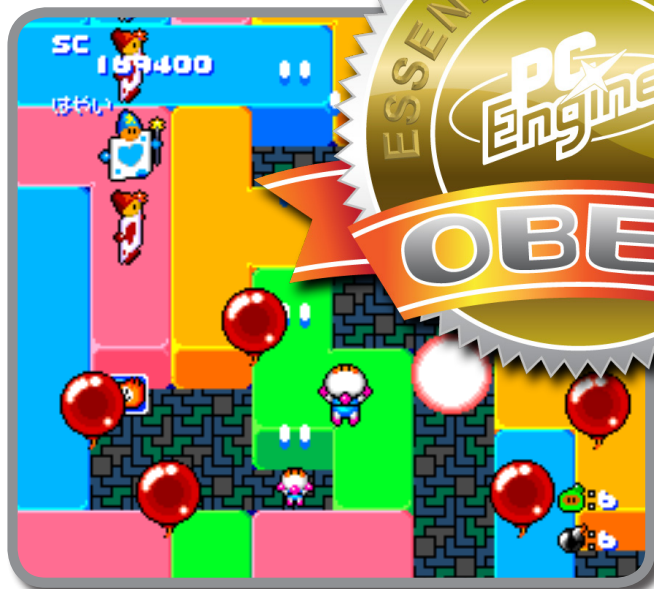
these clever little pixies did was take one of their previously successful, yet very sterile and stony faced (literally) shoot 'em ups and make a complete and utter mockery of it. Call it a 'parody' if you will. They did.

Never one to miss out on a smart business decision, Hudson Soft glanced sideways at an aging copy of Super Star Soldier and began to dream of riches untold. And so was born Star Parodier, a frustratingly awkward Japanese mishmash of words that fails to translate cleanly into English. I've always preferred 'Star Paroja' myself; it's a closer approximation of the pronunciation, even if it misses the



clumsy intent of the original title.

But let's get past all this pre-review padding and knuckle on down to what the game is all about...cuteness, in-jokes and just bonkers blasting action. You start off the game by choosing from one of three cutified characters: The conventional Paro-Ceaser spaceship, a jet-pack enabled Bomber Man and the PC Engine itself. Each has its own specialised weaponry which is varied enough to alter your play experience, yet



handy enough that there is no duffer to avoid. Of course, chances are you'll be playing the PC Engine the most because, well, its a PC Engine and that means cool.

The levels follow the standard Super Star Soldier-esque pattern - each one has a vague theme (ranging from UFOs to Bomber Man Land) and is split in half with a mid-level boss. The weapons system consists of 3 different primary weapons and 2 secondary weapons, that are switched by



The Frozen Super Star Soldier boss is a cool callback to that game.

## Masters of Parody



### Weird Al Yankovic

A genius at musical parody and very clever with his lyrics, and what great hair too!



### Mel Brooks

Clever writing and witty spoofs aplenty, before he lost his touch.



### Pornstar Kim Kardashian

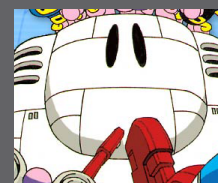
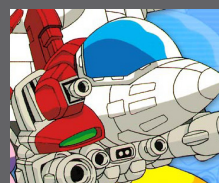
A lifetime spent making fun of talented people by pretending she has none. You'd almost believe it!



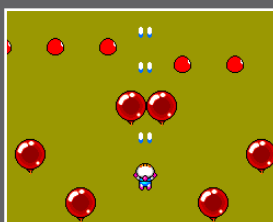
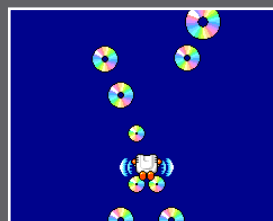
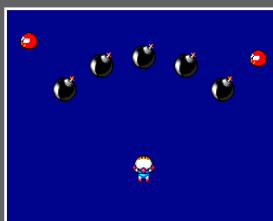
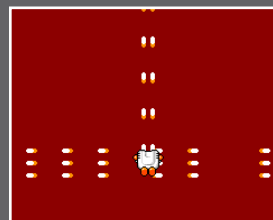
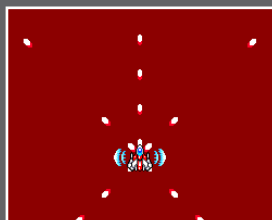
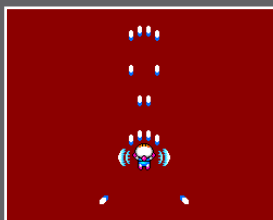
# Shoot or Die

There's a great variety of weapons in the game, made so much better by being a bit fun and silly. Swirling D-Pads? Check. Exploding balloons? Check. Deadly CD-Rom discs? Oh check indeed.

So in an effort to fill a page...err, provide vital game information, here is the essential visual guide to the power-ups of Star Parodier. And below is a piccy of the character select screen. I just love constantly pushing left and right to hear the cutesy sampled speech!



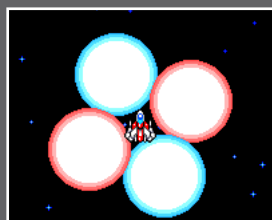
## PRIMARY WEAPONS



## SECONDARY WEAPONS



## SMART BOMBS





Some impressive parallax shows off the later levels.

collecting coloured items or stars. There's also a smart bomb unique to each character, although if you're anything like me, you'll save them up for so long that you die before even hitting the button once. Damn hoarder mentality of mine. Like all good shooters, once you're bored of saving the day, you can slip into either the 2 or 5 minute Battle Stage and go crazy for points.



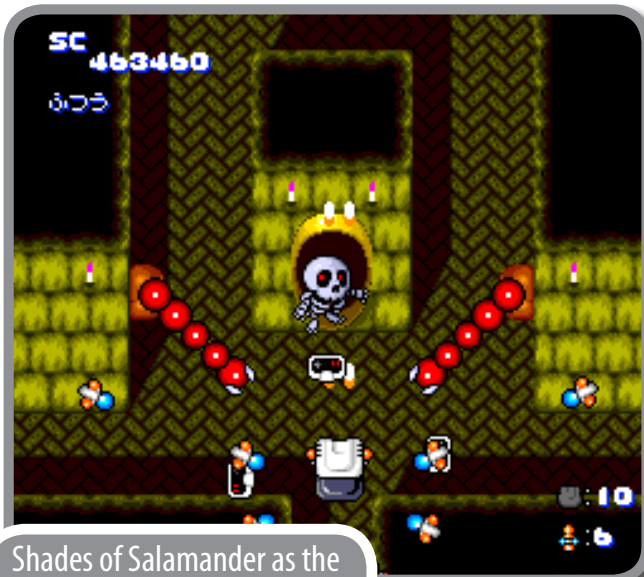
It's just so cute and colourful, you could almost vomit.

It would not be a lie to say that Star Parodier is one of my favourite vertical shoot 'em ups of all time, and while there may be other shooters that are more intense and rewarding, Star Parodier is like a perfect storm of ingredients that make it an essential package. That is, if you don't mind the cuteness of it all.

From the opening scene, you immediately get an idea of the game's quality and it always feels like a high budget and very polished title - it's like the cute vertical brother to Gate of Thunder. Taking full advantage of the Super CD-Rom storage, Star Parodier does its best to give you varied levels that often have a visual shift at the mid-point, as well as a wide range of nicely

If you think these birds are bizarre, that fountain gets up and walks away in a minute.





Shades of Salamander as the grabby arms try to get you.



Some mighty explosions from Bomber Man's arsenal (hyphenation deliberate, fnar).

animated and memorable enemies, even throwing in some software scaling and rotation effects when possible. The screen can get quite packed at times, especially on the bubble level, with only minor sprite clash issues that do nothing to hamper gameplay.

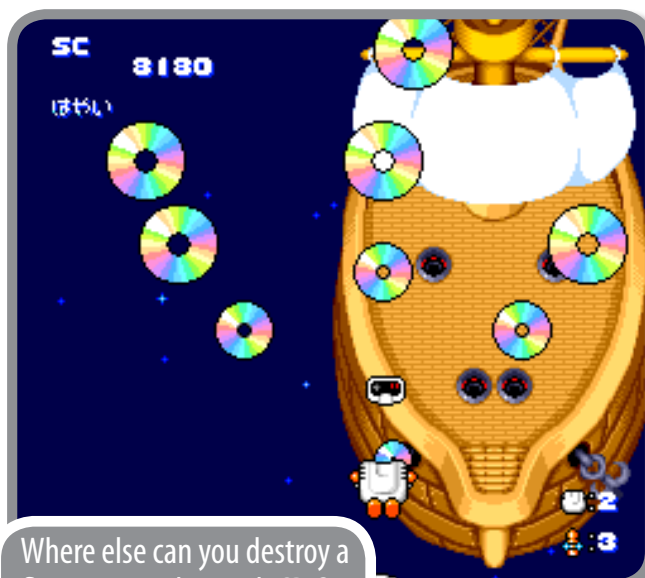
The audio is another stand-out feature of the game. Sound effects are perfectly balanced, being quite soft and unobtrusive where necessary and there is plenty of sampled speech alerting you to

your pickups. The music itself is just superb, with each level having a distinctive and very catchy tune, most of which are expertly composed and fit the action perfectly. The sub-boss and end of level tunes are chip sound and this is a little jarring to the ears, but it is done to prevent CD load times and this is understandable.

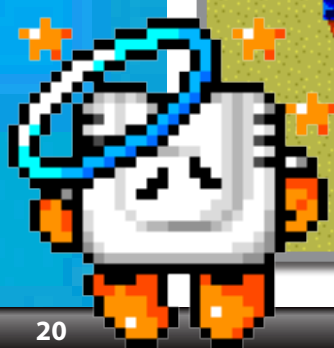
Combining the grade A audio and visual aspects, it's important that the gameplay holds up as well. Thankfully it does. Control is



The trees puke goodies, but also some bitter tasting power-downs.

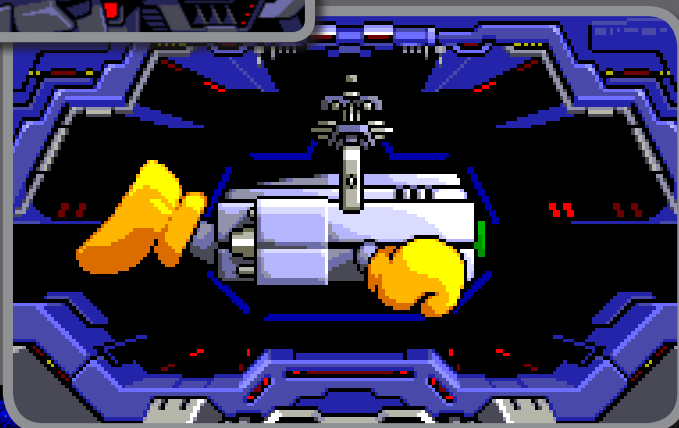
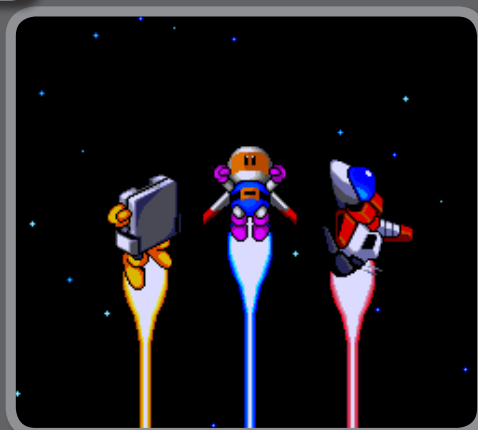
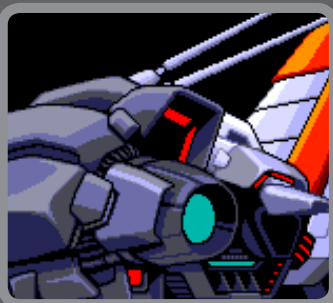
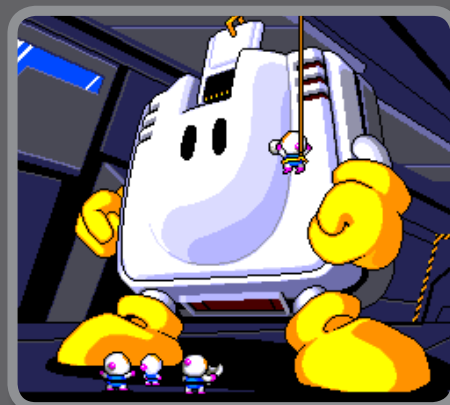
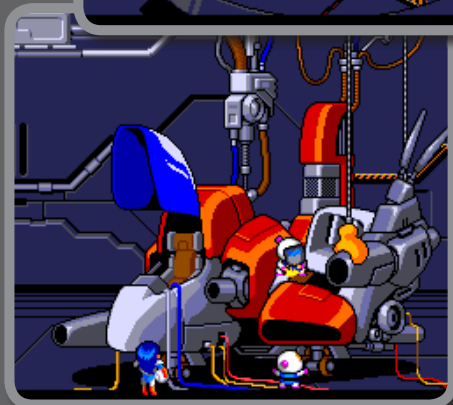


Where else can you destroy a flying pirate ship with CDs?



## You built a giant what...?

I just love the opening sequence to the game. It starts small, with some simple still images, then erupts into a flurry of really neat pre-launch animations, all directed with a slick style and featuring some great visual effects. Forget people sitting around chatting, this kind of upbeat, fast moving visual scene is the kind of thing we want to see.



Even the smart bombs are cute. Remember to use them!



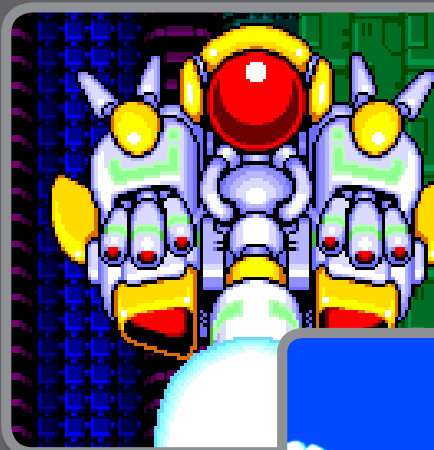
silky smooth, the enemy attack patterns are effective and there is never a cheap death. The game is pretty easy on the default difficulty

setting, which is great for people like me who sometimes want to just experience the game rather than bash my head against a brick wall repeatedly, but you can crank it up for tougher enemies and an all new end sequence. The 2 and 5 minute modes share the same map, which is a slight shame, but it's an awful lot of fun, getting very frantic as you aim to destroy and collect as much as possible.

It's really hard for me to come up with anything negative to say about Star Parodier. It's always fun, never

## Boss Fun

There are plenty of bosses and sub-bosses scattered throughout the game, from a snowball throwing giant snowman to a very flat fish who waves maracas at you. Most of them are fairly easy to beat, so the game doesn't suffer the age old problem of losing all your lives at the end of a really easy level.



The Bomber Man section is very cool, especially the huge Black Bomber Boss at the end.



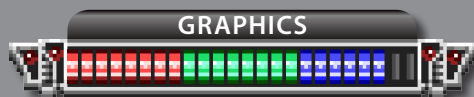
If you could see this moving, you'd be a lot more impressed.

boring, and infinitely replayable. It should be in every PC Engine fan's collection, sitting proudly alongside Gate of Thunder, Dracula X and Ys I & II.

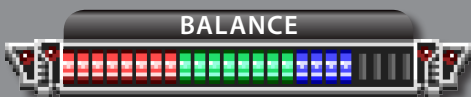
cash in on the Parodius formula, it's only similar in its visual nature and although Parodius is a classic, Star Parodier definitely nudges past it on my list of top shoot 'em ups. So what are you waiting for? Go out and buy it right now. **SP**

While it's easy to dismiss as a blatant

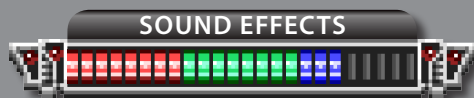
### THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM



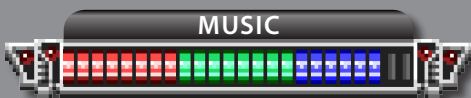
Super cute with some great animation and special effects, and varied to boot.



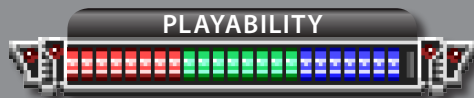
Stages get challenging as you progress, and multiple skill levels mean it suits your ability.



Great effects that aren't overbearing, along with neat sampled speech.



Some of the most catchy shooter music on the PC Engine. It's just so hummable.



Responsive controls and smooth movement mean there's nothing to fault here.



The variety and setting are enough for repeat visits. It's a bonus the game is so good!

### STAR QUALITY

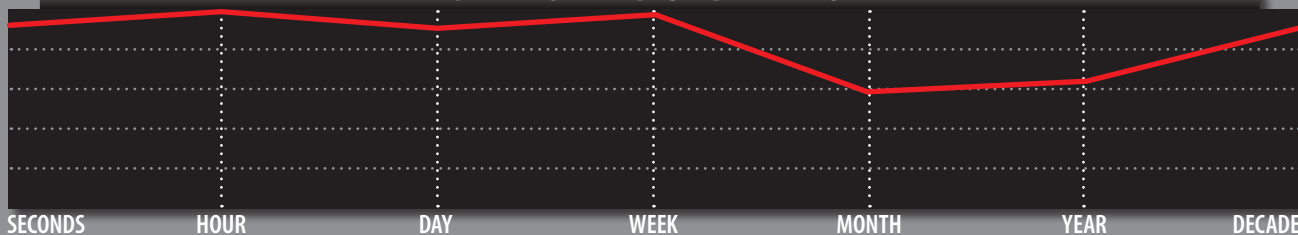


RESPECT THE BEARD

TOTAL SCORE

947 /1000

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



MAKER: HUDSON • YEAR: 1992 • FORMAT: SUPER CD-ROM



# AETHERBYTE



PC ENGINE • MSX • XBOX360

PROFESSIONAL QUALITY

PC ENGINE/TURBOGRAFX-16 HUCARDS

PYRAMID PLUNDER (PCE/TG SUPER CD-ROM<sup>2</sup>)

ATLANTEAN (PCE/TG HUCARD)

INFERNO (MSX CARTRIDGE)

PC ENGINE/TURBOGRAFX-16 CHIPTUNES



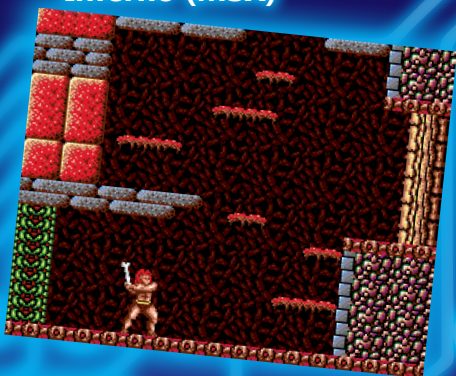
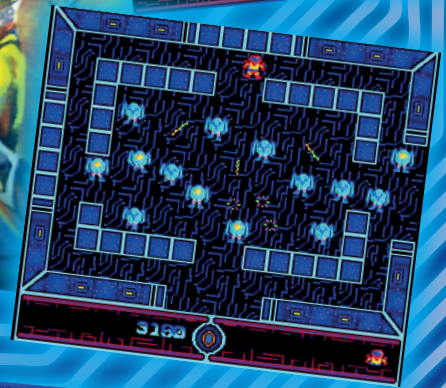
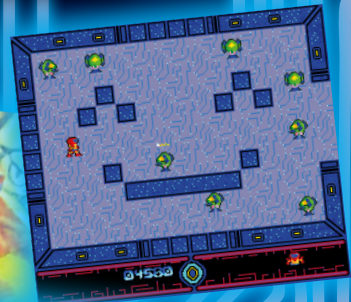
Inferno (MSX)



Pyramid Plunder (PCE CD)



Insanity (PCE CD)  
Insanity X (XBLA)



Atlantean (PCE HuCARD)



[www.aetherbyte.com](http://www.aetherbyte.com)





# THE LEGENDARY AXE

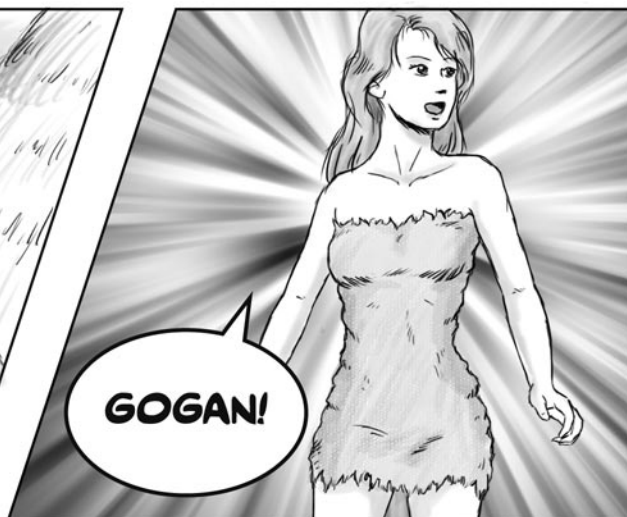
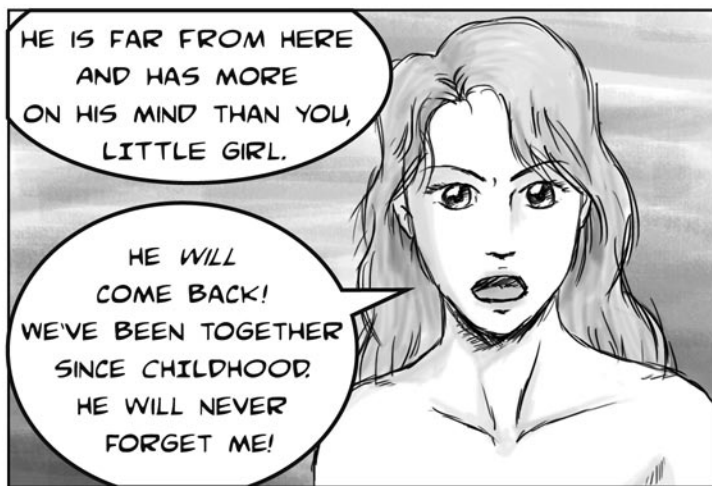
THE ADVENTURES OF GOGAN

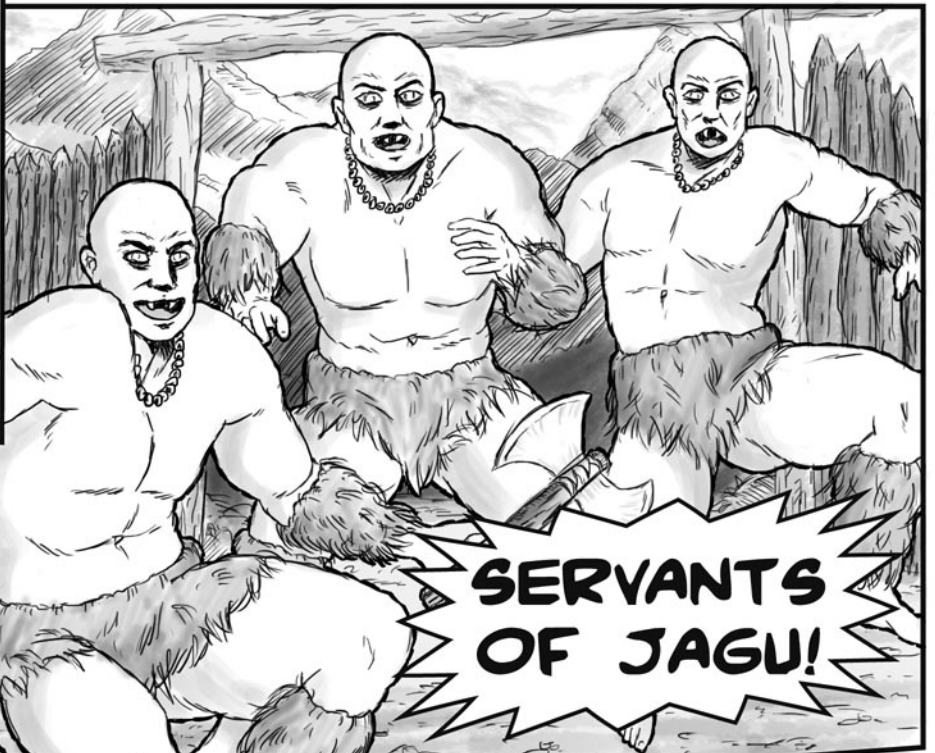


PRESENTED FREE WITH  
**PC Engine**  
GAMER

魔境伝説

MINOFU VILLAGE







IN A SMALL VILLAGE,  
FAR AWAY...



WHAT DOES  
THE FIRE  
TELL YOU,  
MASTER?

THE FIRE TELLS OF MANY THINGS,  
YOUNG GOGAN...I SEE PLACES DISTANT...  
PEOPLE..PEOPLE RUNNING...



I SEE A CAVE..NO A DOORWAY.  
IT HAS A RED RIBBON PINNED  
TO THE SIDE.

RED RIBBON? MASTER,  
THAT'S FLARE'S HOUSE!  
PLEASE, TELL ME WHAT  
ELSE YOU SEE!



I SEE..I..



YOU MUST RETURN  
TO MINOFU!  
IMMEDIATELY!

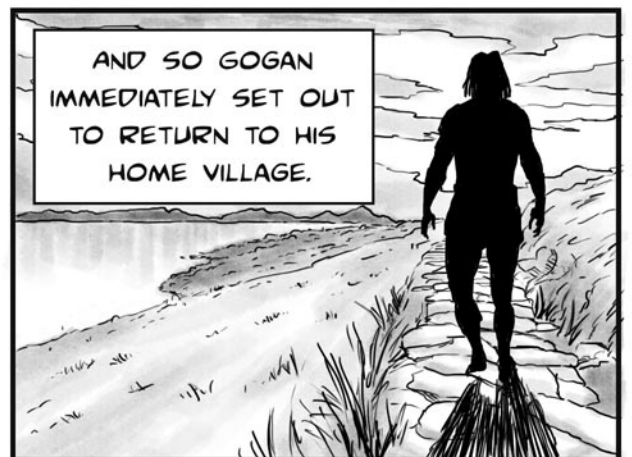


MASTER, WHAT  
IS WRONG?



EVIL HAS BEFALLEN...  
SERVANTS OF JAGU HAVE  
TAKEN THEIR SACRIFICE.

THEY HAVE TAKEN  
YOUR FLARE!



AND SO GOGAN  
IMMEDIATELY SET OUT  
TO RETURN TO HIS  
HOME VILLAGE.

ONE WEEK  
LATER, GOGAN  
ARRIVED IN  
MINOFU.

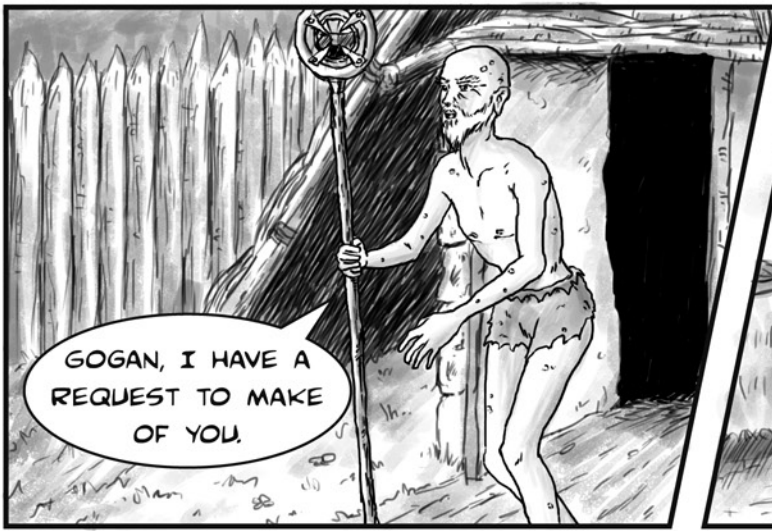
GOGAN!  
BY THE GODS  
YOU HAVE  
RETURNED!

I HAVE MY  
FRIEND, FOR I  
HEARD EVIL  
TIDINGS. I KNOW  
FLARE HAS  
BEEN TAKEN.

OH FLARE...  
THE SWEETEST  
FLOWER IN  
MINOFU.

I'M SO SORRY,  
THEY CAME FOR THE  
SACRIFICE...THERE  
WAS NOTHING WE  
COULD DO.

GOGAN...THE VILLAGE  
ELDER WANTS TO  
SEE YOU. HE  
KNEW YOU WERE  
COMING, SOMEHOW.



GOGAN, I HAVE A REQUEST TO MAKE OF YOU.



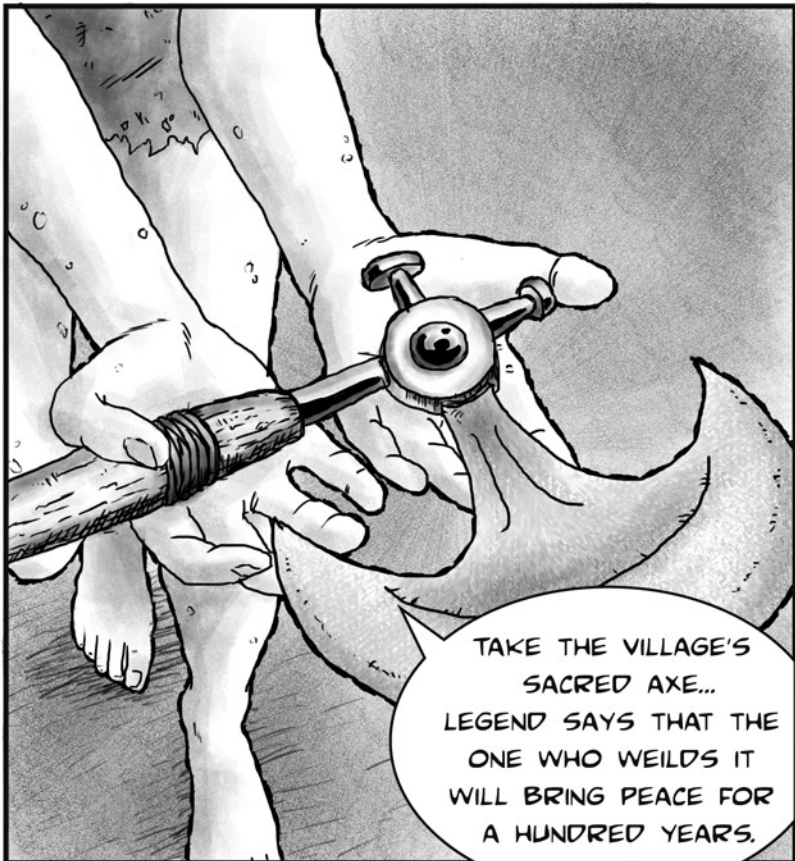
ANYTHING YOU REQUIRE, ELDER.



YOU HAVE BEEN AWAY LEARNING THE ART OF WAR.

YOU MUST PUT AN END TO THIS MISERY. DESTROY JAGU AND RESCUE FLARE!

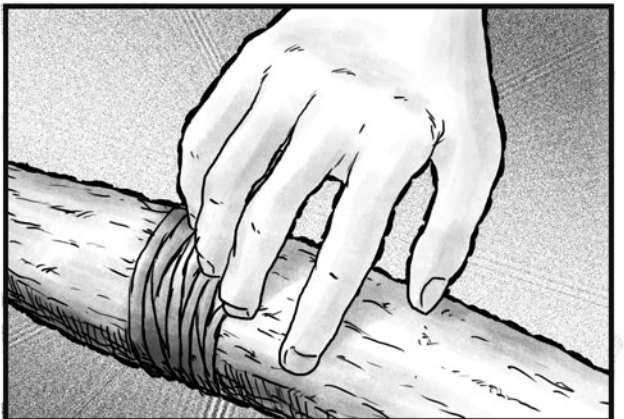
BUT HOW? I AM JUST ONE MAN.



TAKE THE VILLAGE'S SACRED AXE... LEGEND SAYS THAT THE ONE WHO WEILDS IT WILL BRING PEACE FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.



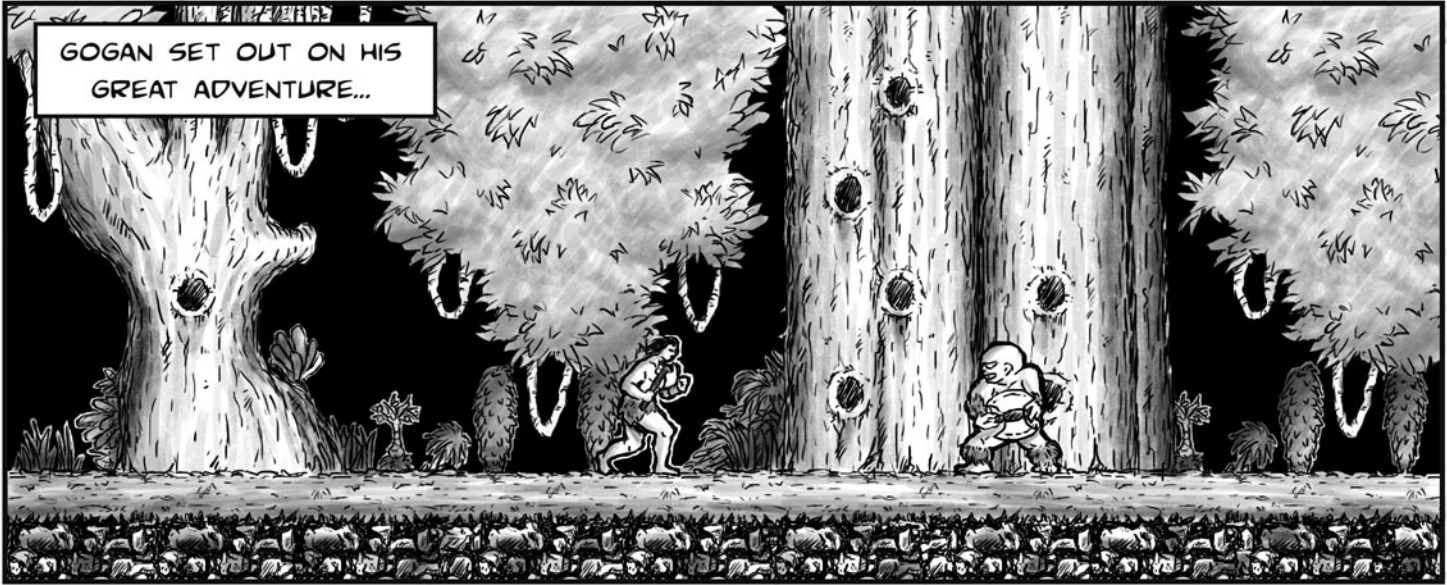
THE LEGENDARY AXE...





GRASPING THE AXE,  
GOGAN FELT A POWER  
RUSHING THROUGH  
HIS VEINS.

HE HELD IT HIGH AND  
KNEW THAT HE COULD  
SAVE THE VILLAGE!  
AND SAVE FLARE!

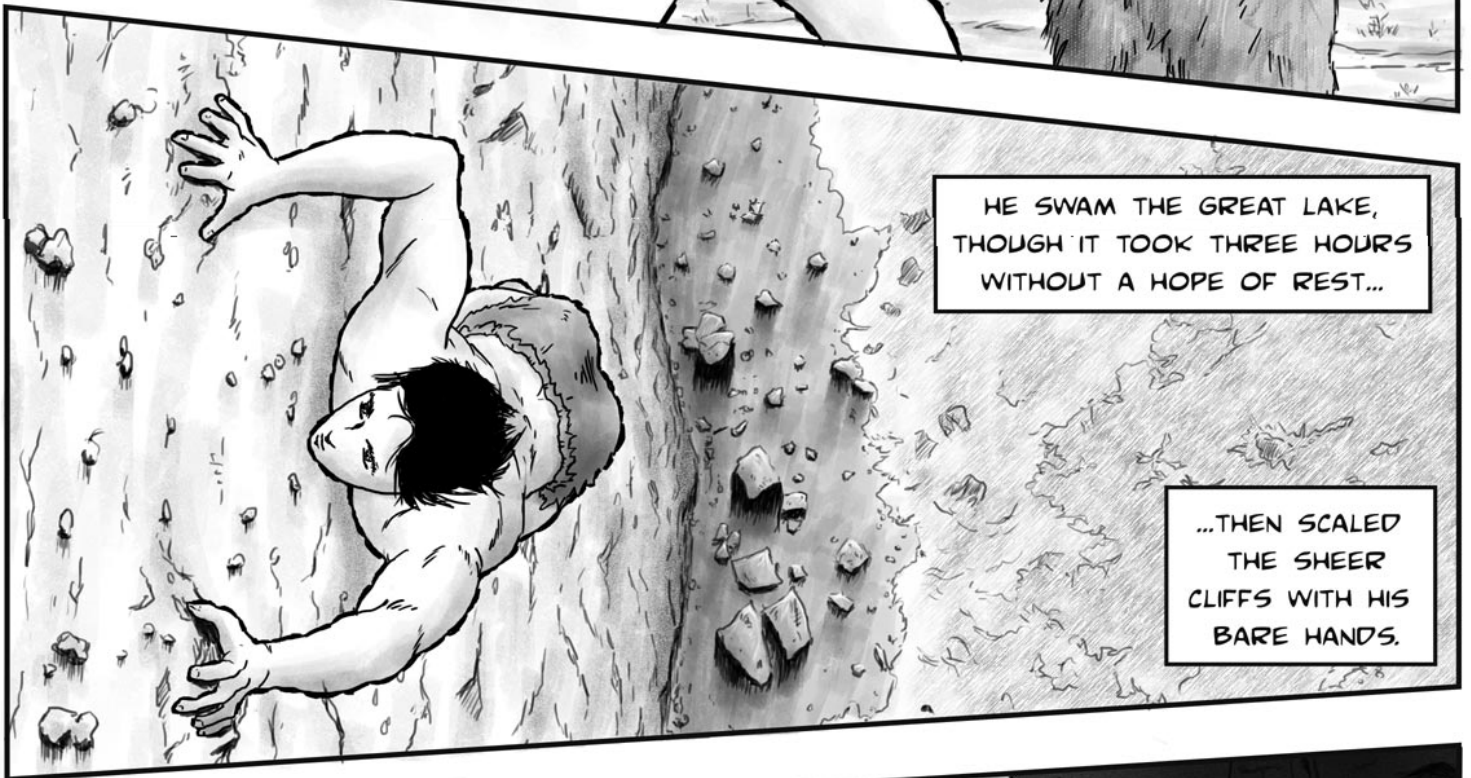


GOGAN SET OUT ON HIS  
GREAT ADVENTURE...

ACROSS THE ARID PLAINS, WHERE  
FERAL BEARS WERE KNOWN TO  
ATTACK TRAVELLERS FOR FOOD.

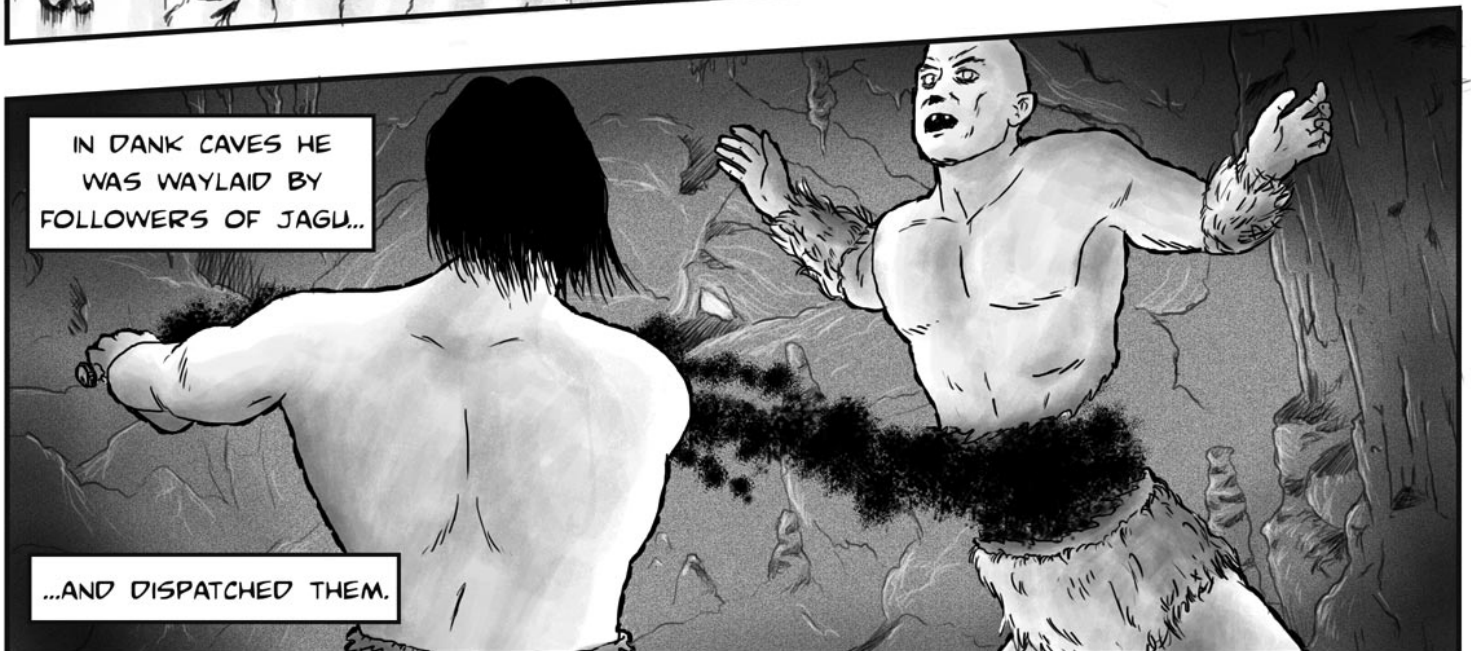


HE SWAM THE GREAT LAKE,  
THOUGH IT TOOK THREE HOURS  
WITHOUT A HOPE OF REST...



...THEN SCALED  
THE SHEER  
CLIFFS WITH HIS  
BARE HANDS.

IN DARK CAVES HE  
WAS WAYLAID BY  
FOLLOWERS OF JAGU...



...AND DISPATCHED THEM.



TIRED AND HUNGRY,  
HE FINALLY REACHED  
THE LAIR OF JAGU.

**JAGU!**

I AM GOGAN OF  
MINOFU VILLAGE!  
I CALL YOU OUT  
TO DEFEND  
YOURSELF!



NO ANSWER...  
...MAYBE I'M TOO LATE  
AND HE HAS ESCAPED  
WITH FLARE.



**PUNY  
HUMAN!**



**YOU DARE  
TO ENTER  
MY DOMAIN!**





BEHOLD  
THE MIGHT  
OF JAGU!



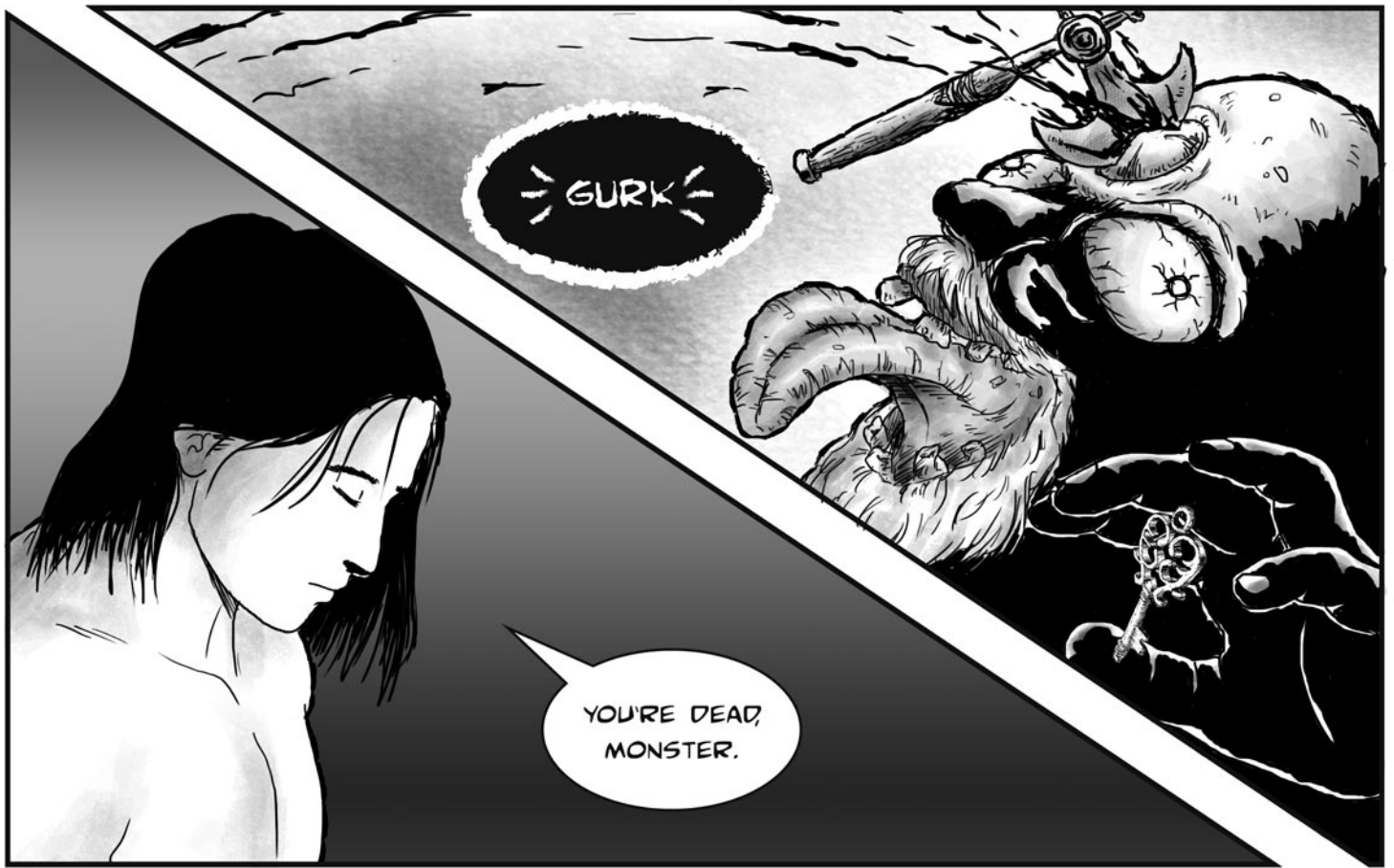
I AM HERE TO RESCUE  
FLARE AND MAKE  
YOU PAY FOR YOUR  
CRIMES!

YOU DO NOT  
SCARE ME!



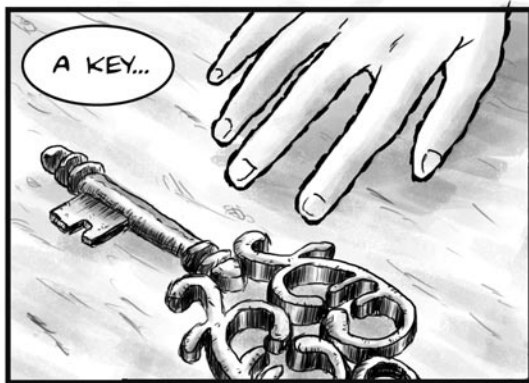
YOUR TINY  
AXE CANNOT  
HARM JAGU!

DIEEEEE!

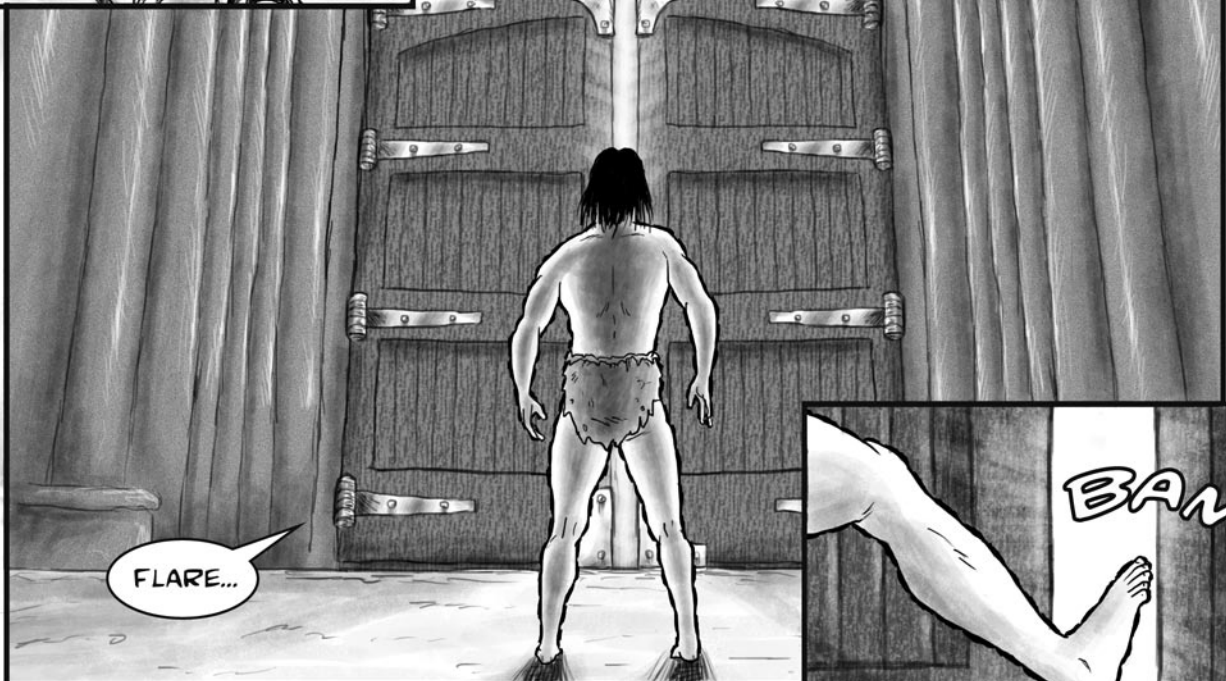


YOU'RE DEAD,  
MONSTER.

AFTER SLAYING THE BEAST WITH A SINGLE BLOW,  
GOGAN TOOK THE KEY THAT WAS DROPPED. TOO SMALL  
FOR A DOOR, THIS SURELY WAS THE KEY TO THE LOCK  
THAT HELD HIS BELOVED IN CHAINS.



A KEY...



FLARE...

BAM!

A LIGHT BEAMED FORTH FROM THE GREAT DOOR,  
THE FAINT SOUND OF A VOICE INSIDE - A FEMALE VOICE.

THERE GOGAN SAW  
THE HAREM OF THE  
EVIL JAGU, AND WAS  
FILLED WITH EMOTION.

GOGAN!

AT LAST, HIS FLARE!  
THE SWEETEST SMELLING  
FLOWER IN THE VILLAGE!

HIS TASK WAS DONE,  
YET HE STOOD IN THOUGHT.

YOU HAVE THE KEY!  
UNLOCK MY CHAINS!



LOB

WHA..?

WHY PICK ONE FLOWER,  
WHEN YOU CAN SMELL  
THE WHOLE FIELD!

AND GOGAN REALISED  
ON THIS DAY...

THE  
END

PC Engine

Coming Soon To  
TurboGrafx-16 and PC Engine systems.

SUPER  
CD-ROM<sup>2</sup> SYSTEM

TURBO  
GRAFX



# Mysterious Song



THE REAL  
PIA

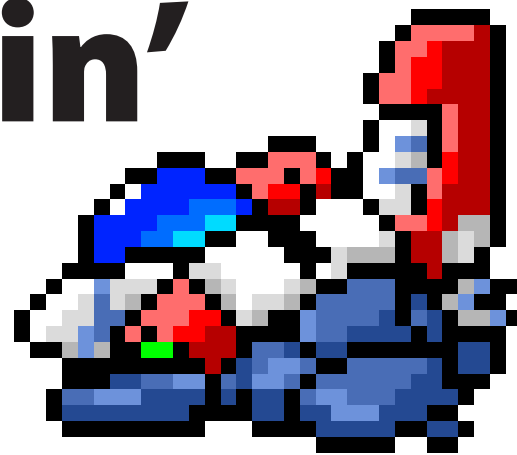
<http://www.frozenutopia.com>

# FROZEN UTOPIA

© 1999 DARKNESS E  
© 2011 FROZEN UTOPIA

# Star Trekkin'

*In an effort to prove himself a better detective than both Sherlock Holmes and Batman combined, journalist, translator and all-round top bloke **Sorrel Tilley** took it upon himself to track down ex-Hudson employee **Tadayuki "Footloose" Kawada** and challenge him with a series of PC Engine related questions.*



**Q: Could you explain what your job was in those days? What roles did it include?**

A: When I worked on Star Parodier, I'd already been at Hudson for six years, so I was in charge of planning and direction and the like. I joined the company in 1986 and for three years I was apprentice to Takahashi Meijin. We would go on nationwide tours throughout the summer holidays, appearing at department stores, game shops, and on TV to give expert demonstrations.

After that I gained experience in direction and coming up with ideas whilst working on Dungeon Explorer and Gunhed (known internationally as Blazing Lazars). Between 1999 and 2009 I spent a decade as Planner, Director, and Producer on the Momotaro Dentetsu board game series, and in 2010 I left Hudson.

As for Star Parodier, I worked on the concept and direction, enemies, and fine tuning the level design, especially the 2 and 5 Minute Modes in Caravan Mode where I aimed to trump all the other caravan shooters at that time.

**Q: Was the decision to make a parody version of Star Soldier anything to do with the popularity of Konami's Parodius?**

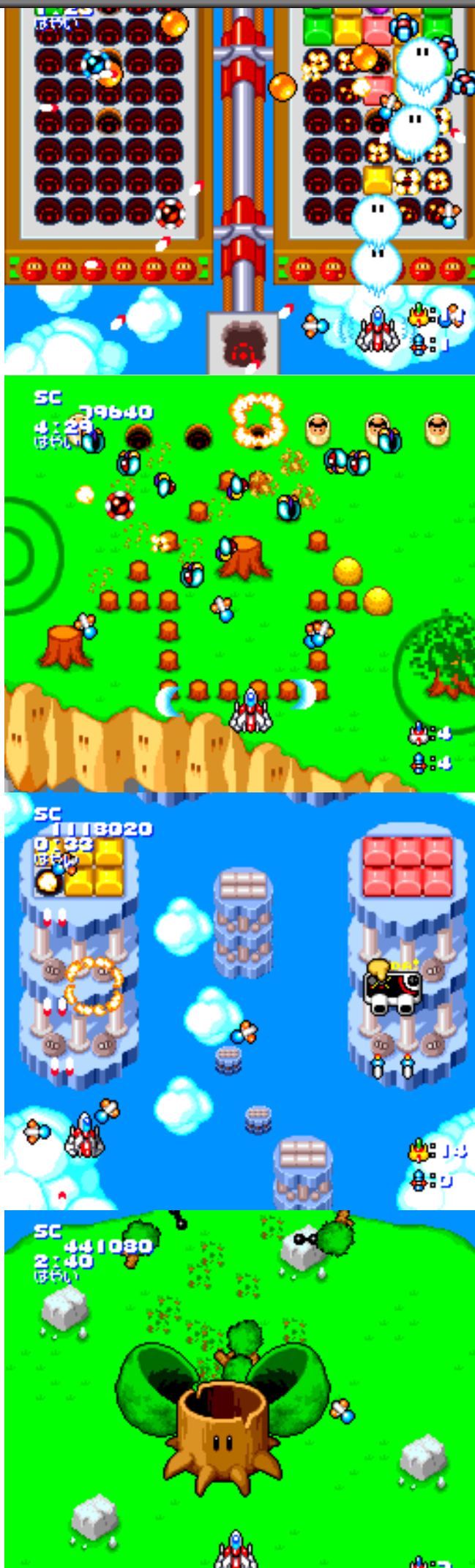
A: It's a fact that at that time, Konami's productions were loved and respected not just by developers but by players too, so looking back on it now, I get the feeling our subconscious was giving us a prod in the back. Even so, back then, Hudson only released relatively serious games, so I thought why not use our expertise in shooters to make a game with a comical gap between the gameplay

and the graphics? I wanted to take the rare opportunity to create something absurd, using Hudson characters and a PC Engine console and peripherals, and I think that was a much stronger factor.

**Q: What was your role on Super Star Soldier, and what's the deal with "Footloose Kawada", your nickname in the credits?**

A: As with Gunhed, I was responsible for the whole development team on Super Star Soldier. In the main, I was involved in creating enemy entrances and movement patterns, as well as level design, which helped when making Star Parodier.

"Footloose Kawada" was my ring name in those days. Ever since I was little I loved pro-wrestling, and once I became an adult, I took up brawling in the ring. Well, to be honest, I'm not some professional earning a living in the entertainment industry; I'm just a member of an amateur organisation that fights to pro-wrestling rules. There was a guy with the same surname as me in a pro-wrestling tag team, Kawada and Fuyuki, and their entrance song was the theme from Footloose, and that's how I ended up with the name!





**Q: Star Parodier was only your second CD game – What were the pros and cons of the CD format?**

A: It was the first and last game I developed for Super CD ROM<sup>2</sup>. Compared to the previous CD ROM system, I was able to do what I wanted with just a single disc read. It was also brilliant to be able to approach the game with both sound and vision in mind because we could store the BGM as Red Book audio. On the other hand, we had to focus on reducing the load times to make sure the game was not interrupted at all before the bosses.

**Q: Was there anything about the game's development that sticks out strongly in your mind?**

A: I remember being astonished that the anime intro was completed in about 2 months by just one staff member, who also had to work on other stuff at the same time.

**Q: Could you tell us something about the game that nobody else knows?**

A: We snuck into the studio where they were doing voice-overs for Dragon Slayer: The Legend of Heroes, and we roped in two of their voice actors to record



narration for Star Parodier. I'm pretty sure the Dragon Slayer guys paid for the whole thing!

**Q: What was the environment like at that time? Was it very professional or did you have a lot of fun?**

A: It was really lively and upbeat. There were a variety of projects on the go, so lots of different games were playtested by anybody who happened to be passing by. Loud voices would echo around the office and we communicated just by shouting over to each other. Hudson was an extremely open and collaborative company, with no secrets between staff members even about revisions to development budgets.

Of course, I made Star Parodier because I wanted to, it's not like I was told to make it. The team got on well too, after we made Super Star Soldier together.

**Q: Which character did you prefer to play in Star Parodier... Paro Caesar, Bomber Man or the PC Engine?**

A: My preference is PC Engine > Paro Ceaser > Bomber Man! PC Engine has the silliness of a flying console, plus the power of homing missiles, while Paro Caesar has the easy 5-directional method, and Bomber Man has his dynamism.

*Many thanks to Tadayuki Kawada for this interview. **ST***



# Be Ball

You know, the first thing you do when approaching a review like this is to try and avoid predictability. I mean, it would be all too easy to make lots of childish ball jokes. Unfortunately, I'm very childish, so in case you miss any I'll number them as we go along. That way, you should have some wonderful mental images by the time we reach the end.

There are some of us who find puzzle games a little too taxing on our overworked brains. We're simple folk and we get bored easily, so the best way to spice things up is to add a little action, and that's what Be Ball is all about. The plot is something very unimportant, but it's all set in China as is apparent from the Chun-Li style heroines. Apparently some evil sorcerer has..\*yawn\* Sorry, can't be bothered explaining it. Let's get on with the innuendo.

You get to play as Rin Rin (or Ran Ran if you're player 2), a cute girl with a passion



Thankfully, not all the levels are this obvious.

for enormous balls.<sup>[1]</sup> Each level consists of a single screen with a varying maze-like pattern of walls and is kind of like an oriental Bomber Man, except without the scrolling. The aim is to get a firm grip on the gonadular spheroids<sup>[2]</sup> that are carelessly strewn around the maze and manoeuvre them onto their corresponding coloured pads. Being somewhat skilled, Rin Rin can not only push, but can also grasp the balls firmly with both hands<sup>[3]</sup> and pull them backwards - even round corners, which is a skill that must be mastered to ensure success. Once all the balls are comfortably positioned<sup>[4]</sup> it's off to the next level.

This all sounds really easy, but there are all manner of creatures out to stop her fiddling with her shiny globes<sup>[5]</sup>. At first they are fairly timid,



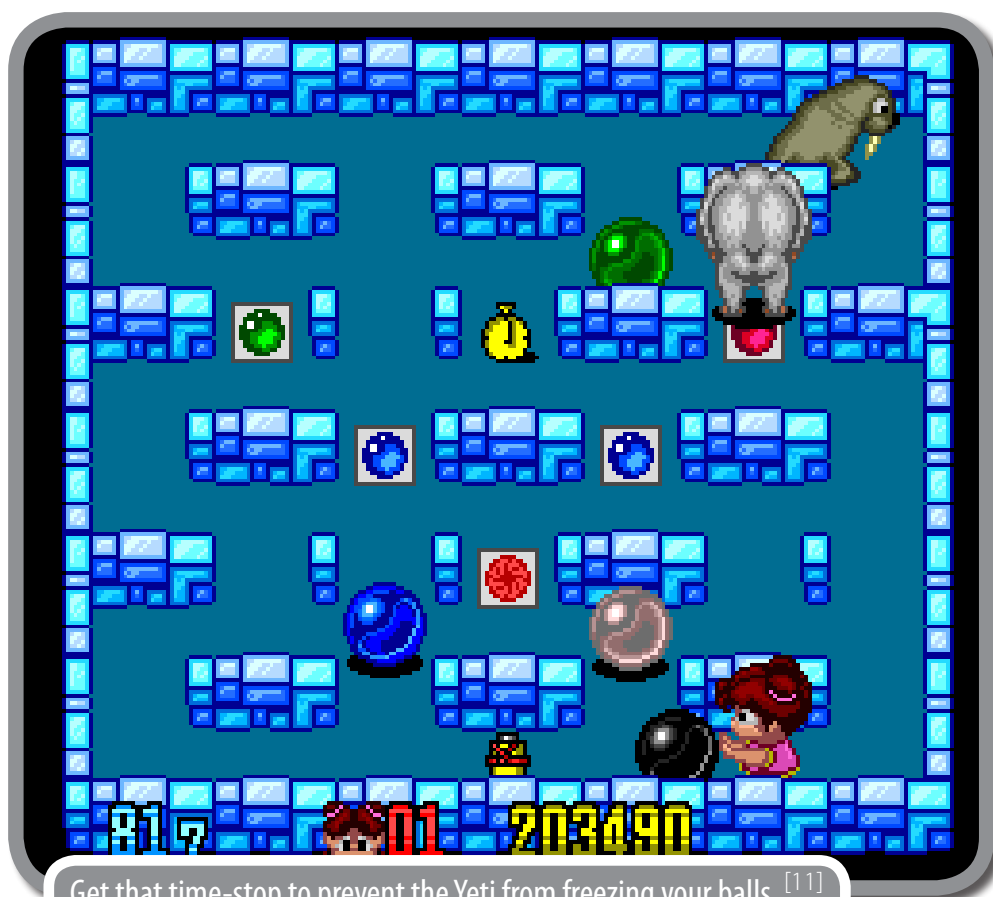
but as you progress, they really start to test your patience, with monkeys that grab your balls and run around with them<sup>[6]</sup>, yetis that blow your balls to the point where they lose their colour<sup>[7]</sup> and kappa that just mock you endlessly by jumping on your balls and dancing<sup>[8]</sup>.

Fortunately, Rin Rin is not entirely defenceless. A swift kick in the balls<sup>[9]</sup> will send them flying; this will not only hurt or destroy enemies, but can also crack walls and eventually break them completely. This can mean new avenues of escape, or open vital passages to push your balls into<sup>[10]</sup> to reach their pads.

Of course, what game is complete without a selection of helpful, and unhelpful items that are scattered around. On the plus side, there are clocks that freeze enemies and odd lasers that shoot across the screen, destroying creatures and walls in their way. On the negative side, there are

often awkwardly placed coloured icons that temporarily turn all the balls the same colour. Some levels even hide the pads until you collect a scroll to reveal them. And to make matters worse, if you take too long, all the creatures turn into flames that chase you around until you die a horrible, crispy death.

A lot of the initial appeal of Be Ball lies in the visual style. The graphics are very cute and colourful, with nice big chunky sprites that are well animated. The walls look pretty enough, although the plain, untextured floor is a bit on



Get that time-stop to prevent the Yeti from freezing your balls. <sup>[11]</sup>

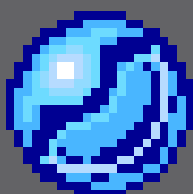
# Powerball

As every geneticist knows, different coloured balls have different powers. So here's how to determine what a boot in the spheroid is going to accomplish.



## Green

Sadly, green balls are the office worker of the ball community. Possessing no special abilities of their own, they are everyday balls and are completely unremarkable.



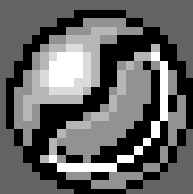
## Blue

Blue balls are quite springy and have a tendency to bounce around corners with sometimes unpredictable results. These can be useful, but be careful they don't bounce back as huge balls flying towards you can be quite frightening.<sup>[12]</sup>



## Red

Red balls are just itching to cause some pain,<sup>[13]</sup> and they do so by rolling violently through multiple enemies at once, destroying everything in their path.



## Black

Black balls are the hardest,<sup>[14]</sup> as is proven by their ability to smash through walls faster than any other colour. Great for finding a quick exit out of a sticky situation.<sup>[15]</sup>



Put the boot in to destroy wall sections.

the bland side. The visuals are accompanied by some pleasant tunes that hum along inoffensively in the background, as well as perfectly adequate sound effects.

The main game itself offers 50 primary levels to clear. These are generally fairly easy, until somewhere in the 30-something



The footie-style minigame is fairly basic stuff.

areas where the challenge creeps up. In fact, it can get a bit annoying at times when you constantly fail over and over, but thanks to a password system, once you clear a level you never have to go back to it. When you have cleared the game, it opens up a new set of levels (there are over 500 in all) which use recoloured graphics and different map layouts.

If there is a problem with Be Ball, it's repetition. If there is a problem with Be Ball, it's repetition. If there is a problem...you get the idea. Each level feels similar to the others, and the restrictive single screen layout does nothing to help this. Would it have been so hard to have some scrolling maps? The main source of variation comes with the monsters and the

Get the scroll to reveal the coloured pads.



way they capture the balls, but it's not enough. However, I think that if you take the game in short bursts, a few levels at a time, and go back to it frequently rather than power through in one sitting, it will make for a more rewarding experience, as it also does when playing with 2 players.

It seems that the developers were somewhat aware of these



A nasty case of blue balls there. [16]



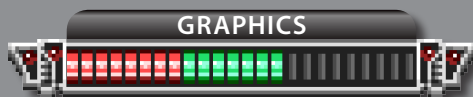
Wait too long and the enemies combust and head straight for you.

is far less interesting that it might sound, as you've probably seen pretty much every variation while playing the game itself.

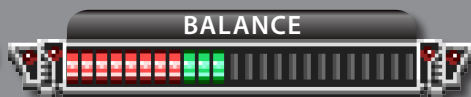
Be Ball isn't exceptional or particularly poor. It's samey and easy to complete, but the large quantity of extra stages will keep you occupied for a time. It does fail to really hook you and there's never a great desire to get to the next stage, probably because the next stage is the same as the last. That said, if you're in the right sort of mood and are limited on time, you might find a quick fiddle with your balls is enough to satisfy.<sup>[17]</sup> **SP**

shortcomings, having added a few extra modes to sweeten the pot. There is a silly little Kick Ball minigame where both players try to boot the ball into the opponent's goal. There's also a mode where you can edit your own maps, but this

### THE OVERLY COMPLICATED SCORING SYSTEM



**GRAPHICS**  
Colourful and appealing; perhaps more variety would have helped though.



**BALANCE**  
Some difficulty spikes on higher levels, but perhaps a little too easy overall.



**SOUND EFFECTS**  
Fairly standard fare, but they serve their purpose well enough and don't annoy.



**MUSIC**  
The tunes are soft and jolly. Not the best music, but it will get you humming it afterwards.



**PLAYABILITY**  
It takes practice to move around quickly, but otherwise there are no issues.



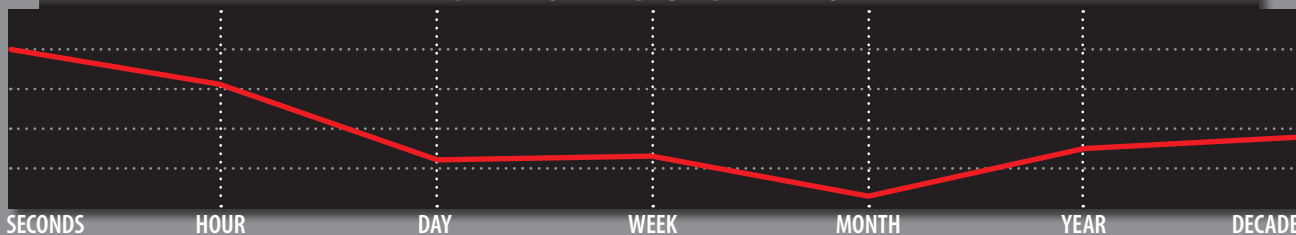
**ADDICTIVENESS**  
Completing the next level is compelling, but do it in bursts or you'll get bored.

### STAR QUALITY



**TOTAL SCORE**  
**693**  
/1000

### GRAPH OF PREDICTED INTEREST



**MAKER:** HUDSON • **YEAR:** 1990 • **FORMAT:** HUCARD

17 in total. That's more balls than the men's doubles at Wimbledon.<sup>[18]</sup>

# Fish & Tips

Hints and cheats to help  
you stay ahead of the pack

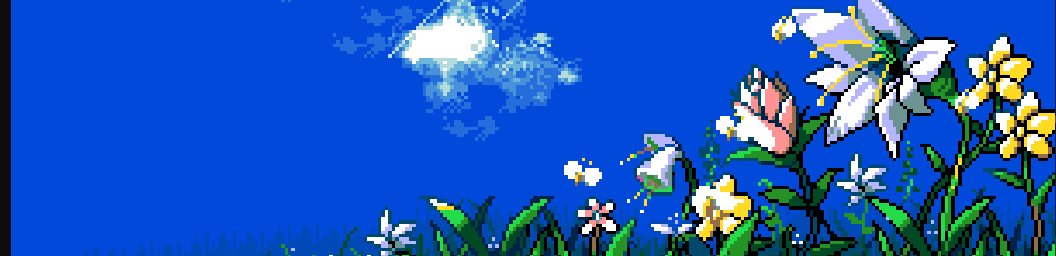
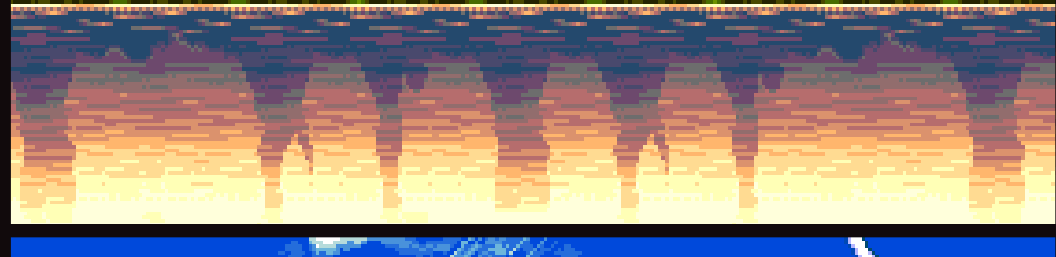
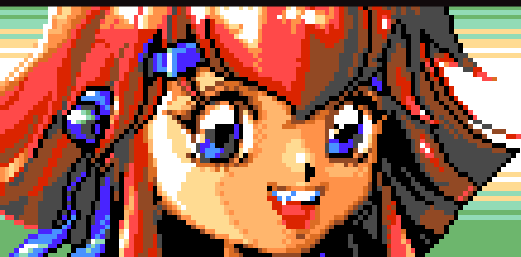
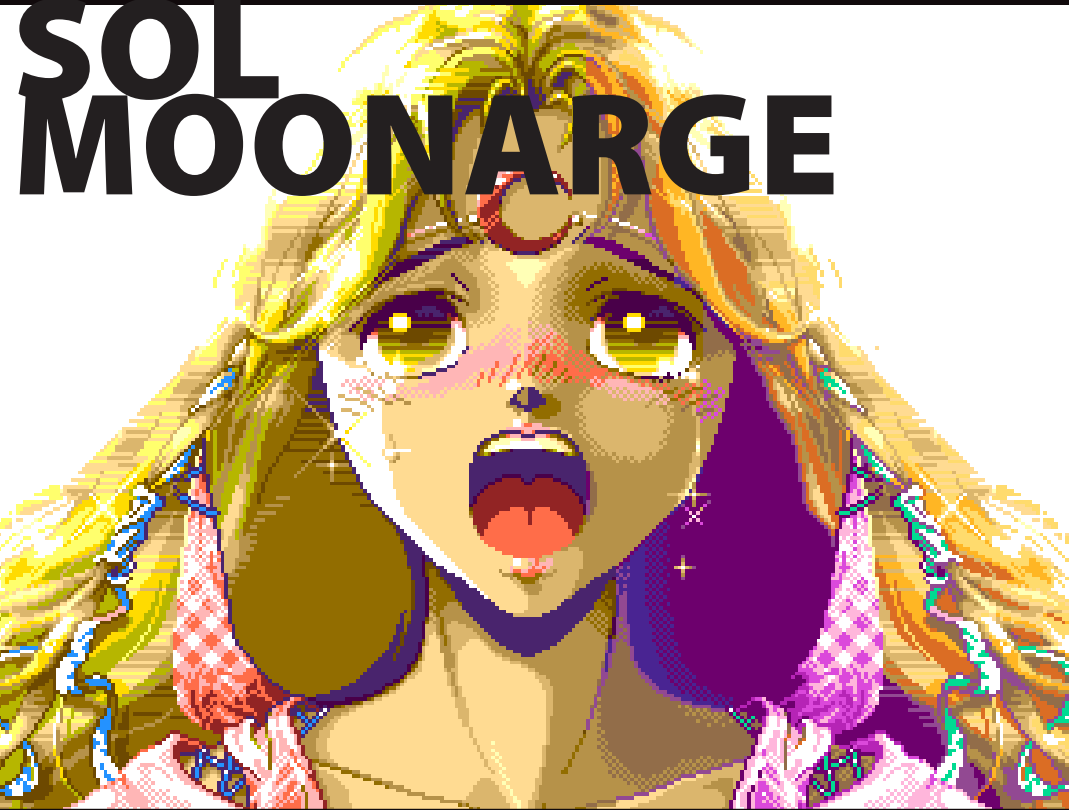
Having trouble conquering the land of dreams, or just want to sit back and listen to some bleepy bloppy music? Then check out these tips for Namco's was-isometric-in-the-arcade-but-not-on-the-pc-engine



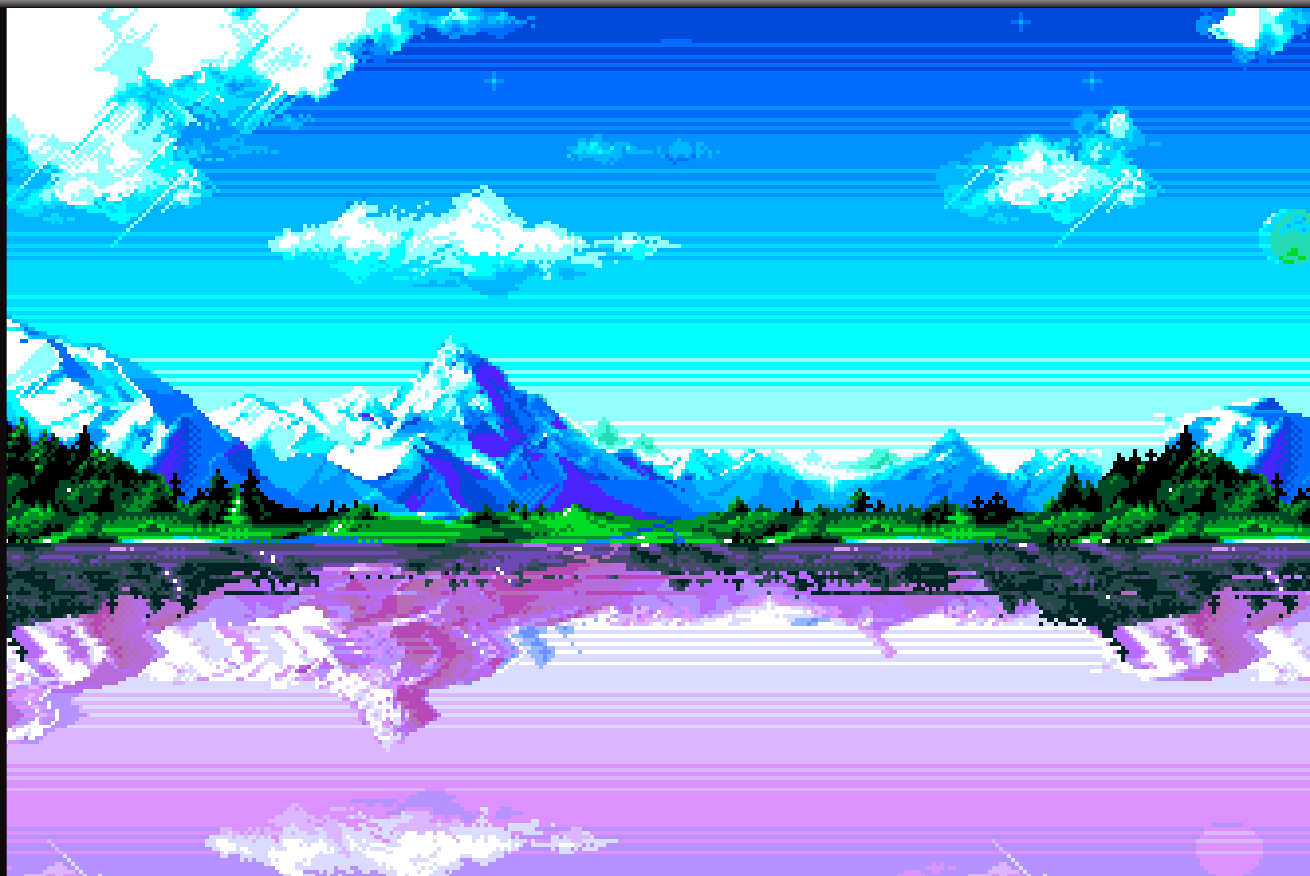
# Pixelence

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

## SOL MOONARGE







# Love the Speccy?

# ZXSpectrum GAMER



Read it now at  
[www.pceengine.co.uk/gamer](http://www.pceengine.co.uk/gamer)



**SUNTEAM** 

making stuff up since 1990

