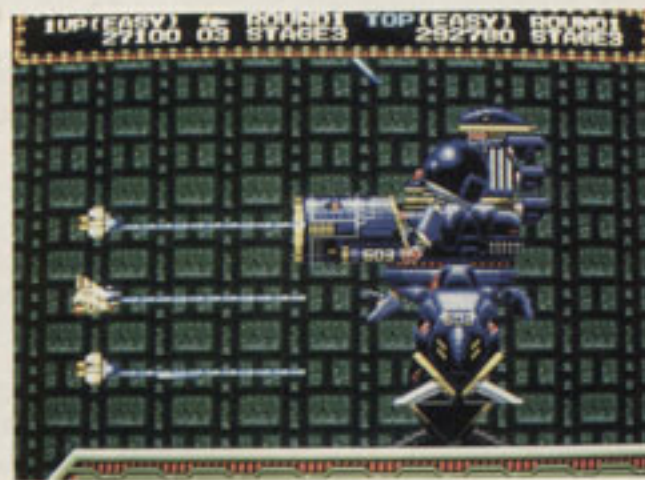
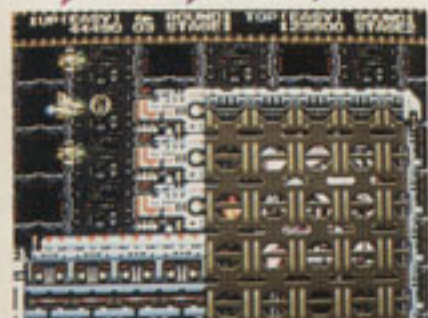
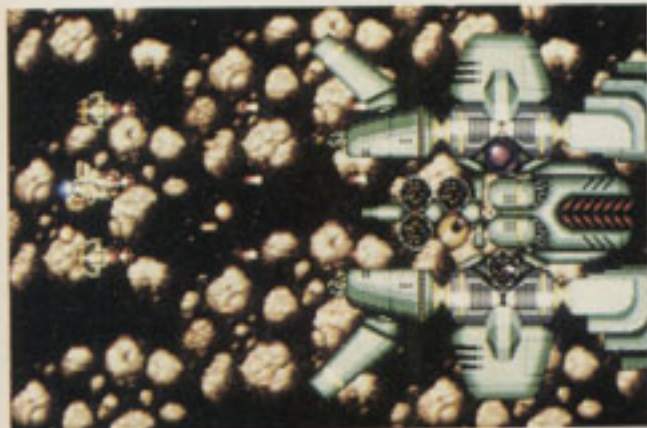


STORY:

Betrayed! After signing a peace treaty with the CATS star pirates, the Alliance of Pleasant Worlds set about building eight space stations with the help of their new-found confederates. But as the eighth station reached its orbit, a bomb secretly placed aboard by CATS exploded destroying it utterly!

Moments before the station exploded, its captain managed to reach his Zero Wing starfighter and launch it. His mission is now to avenge his betrayed comrades, and bring CATS to justice - dead or alive!



COMMENT



PAUL

Toaplan have produced some really class stuff on the Megadrive, and though I don't think Zero Wing plays as well as Hellfire, it's probably their most polished game to date. The opening sequences which set the scene are ace, and the graphics throughout the game are really detailed - the Zero Wing ship itself is a masterpiece of sprite design.

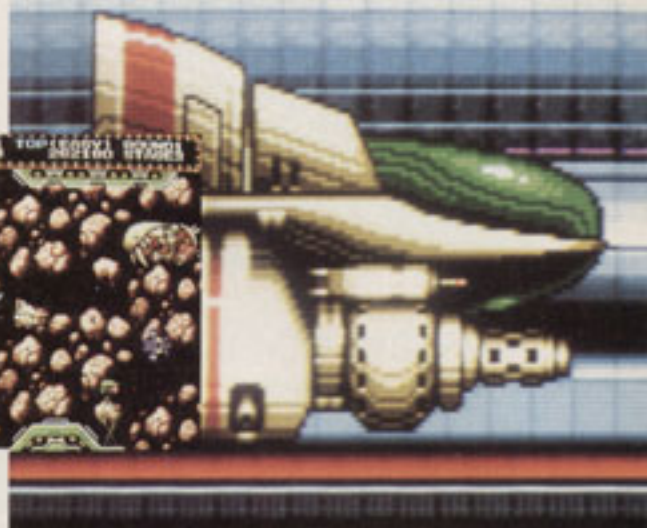
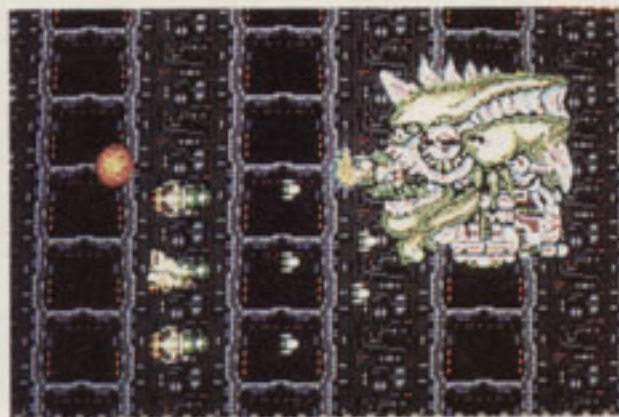
One of Zero Wing's best features is that, unlike a lot of Megadrive games, it demands a lot of skill to play well. Fancy flying is essential because there are some tight passages to negotiate, and bullets are constantly flying everywhere. Definitely one of the best Megadrive blasts of recent months!



SUCK AND BLOW

Mounted below the Zero Wing's cockpit is a tractor beam projector which, when activated, grabs any small enemy nearby and neutralises it. It is then locked on to the front of the Zero Wing in a stasis field, where it acts as a make-shift forward shield. By reversing the power of the beam, the "shield" can be propelled forwards to destroy another enemy!





CHOOSE WEAPONS

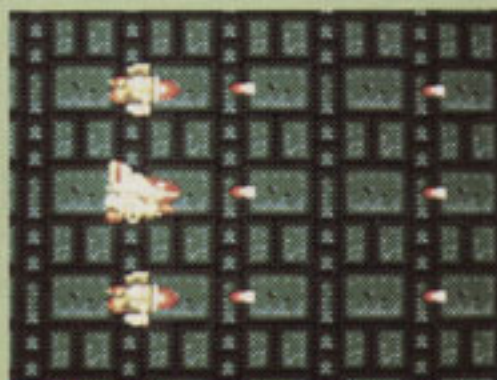


Supply transporters chug past at regular intervals, and when they're destroyed they leave behind one of three weapon pods (which appear in the order below). Collecting further pods of the same colour powers-up the weapon up to three times. Alternatively, the transporters may drop a thrust unit which provides extra manoeuvring speed or an annihilator bomb which creates a sphere of destruction when detonated. Also, watch out for 1-UPs and 10-UPs(!), and the secret super power-up which appears sometimes after you've been through all eight levels and start again at the beginning!



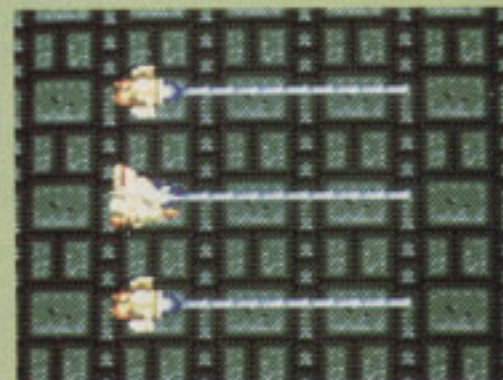
HOMING

Even in its most basic form this shoots up to five streams of rockets which lock on to any nearby enemy and blow it to smithereens. Power-ups make each shot more effective and at full strength this is extremely dangerous to CATS.



VULCAN

The first weapon is a forward-firing particle cannon, and this pod also equips your ship with the two outrigger drones which treble your firepower and act as shields. Full strength is ten-way forward firepower!



LASER

This weapon fires powerful blue beams of laser energy straight ahead. Powers-up to devastating lances of pure plasma which would make even end-of-level bosses quake in their boots if they were wearing any.



TOAPLAN'S TRIUMPHS

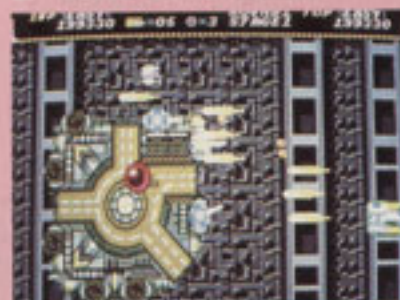
At first Zero Wing looks like a cross between Truxton and Hellfire, but then that's hardly surprising as all three games were programmed by Japanese gamesmiths. Toaplan. Toaplan's Megadrive stuff has so far been limited to shoot 'em ups, almost all of which have been very good indeed - Hellfire is regarded by some as the best space blast on the Megadrive. Their least successful game to date has been Sema! Sema! Sema!, but that may well have been because it was an aircraft shoot 'em up which was released at the same time as a load of other, similar games. Coming soon is a conversion of one of their arcade games, Outzone, an up-the-screen blast which should be available within the next two months.



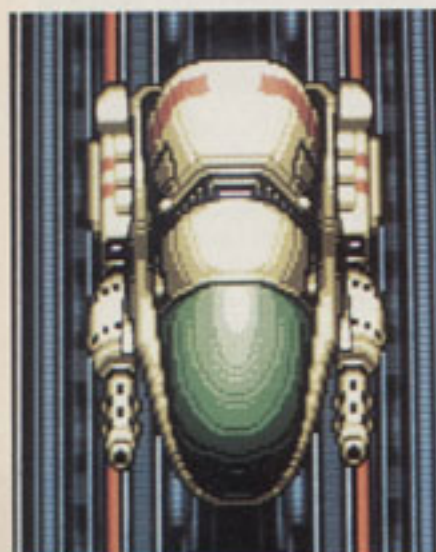
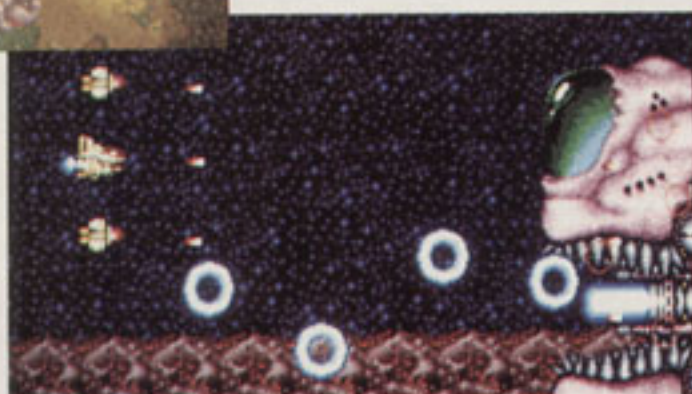
▲ Truxton



▲ Sema! Sema! Sema!



▲ Toaplan's best yet - Hellfire.



COMMENT



RICH

Hellfire was a pretty brilliant blast by all accounts, combining brilliant graphics and sound with awesome playability. Now Toaplan have returned with Zero Wing, another conversion of a horizontally scrolling coin-op blast - and it's pretty damn good! Considering the (very) tired genre, Toaplan have come up trumps with a game that has a very original graphic style, along with some pretty original weaponry too. The sound (as usual for a Toaplan game) is great, with some pretty decent effects and brilliant tunes. But it's usually the difficulty level of a game that either makes or breaks it, and just like Hellfire, Zero Wing is something of a tough mutha - even on the lowest difficulty setting. So if it's thrills, spills and a high death count you're after, look no further!



BY: TOAPLAN

PRICE: £31.00

RELEASE DATE: NOW

GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM/HARD

LIVES: 4

CONTINUES: VARIES WITH LEVEL

SKILL LEVELS: THREE

RESPONSIVENESS: FAST



PRESENTATION 92%

Plenty of options and some great introduction screens, which are unfortunately plastered with Japanese text.

GRAPHICS 92%

As well as the terrific intro screens, Zero Wing sports some great-looking sprites and backgrounds!

SOUND 88%

The sound effects are fine, and the background tunes vary from "good" to "real good"!

PLAYABILITY 90%

Plays much like a lot of other shoot 'em ups, it has sufficient innovative touches, and the urge to see the next level keeps you playing.

LASTABILITY 89%

Not as easy to complete as other Megadrive blasts, but even when you do there are still secrets to discover the second time around.

OVERALL 91%

One of the best Megadrive blasts in ages. Well worth saving up for!