



DARIUS

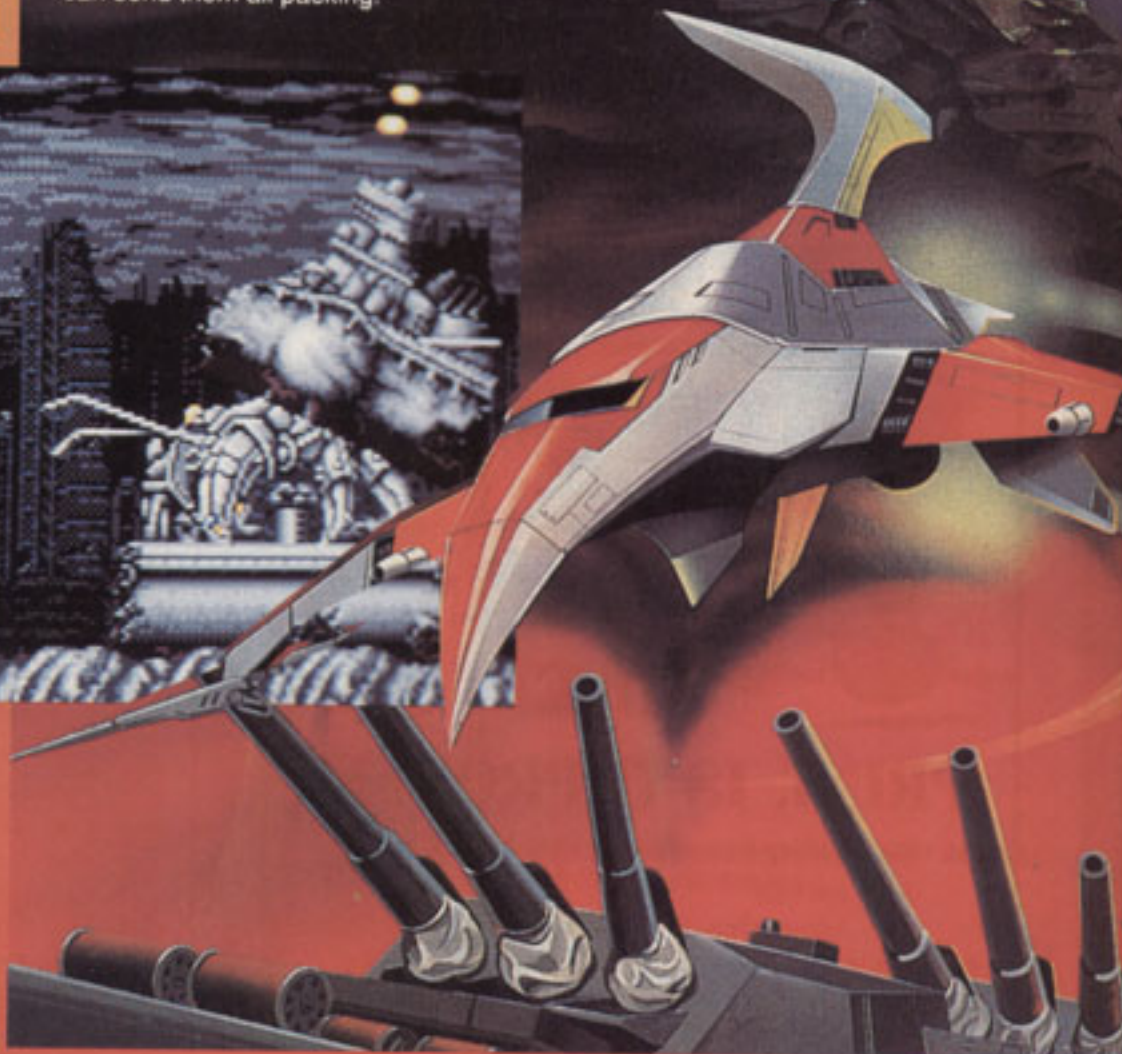
The alien hordes have once again risen from the murky depths of their galactic hideaways and taken to the stars in order to conquer some more planets. This time they've arrived at our solar system, and using their advanced weaponry and cunning tactics, they've conquered every single planet - including Earth!

As the owner of a fine, Darius-class attack space vehicle, you decide to take on the might of this hostile alien empire, using all your laser-powered weapons to blast the xenomorphs into oblivion. This involves traversing a number of horizontally scrolling worlds blasting all-and-sundry with your guns and bombs, collecting power-ups on the way (sounds familiar?).

You'll need all your shoot 'em up skills to survive the epic confrontations with each level's end-of-level boss. Their zap guns and missiles have been fully primed for maximum destruction - and only a real hero can send them all packing!



▲ A fully powered-up Darius in action.



A MEGA MAP

There are a massive twenty-six levels in this game - but you only have to complete seven to finish it! As the map pictured here shows, as you complete each level, you choose the next round you wish to conquer (a bit like the coin-op version of Out Run) - but be warned as some are a lot more difficult to beat than others!

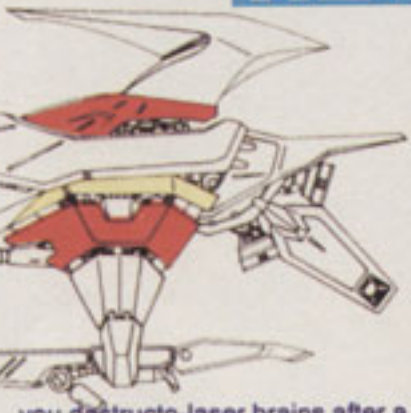




DOUBLE DARIUS

At the start of each game of Darius 2, there's the opportunity to choose the type of ship you want to fly into enemy territory. There's

not much difference between the two, apart from the fact that one ship comes equipped with a lot more power-ups than the other. So, shoot 'em up novices should go for this easy option, whilst all



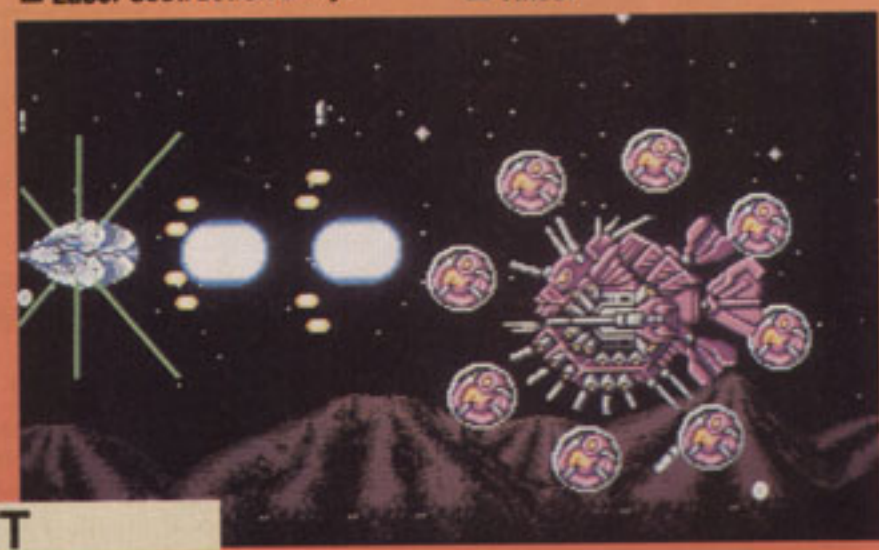
you destructo-laser brains after a challenge should choose the other!



▲ Laser destruction ahoy!



▲ Yikes!



▲ An evil end-of-level boss.



▲ This killer-fish looks very deadly...



POWER-UP

The destruction of some aliens results in a rather nifty power-up pod being left behind. Collection of this usually results in one of your craft's weapons systems being substantially upgraded. Here's a run-down of some of the most common icons.



LASER



The Darius craft is equipped with lasers that blast everything above and below the ship. Later power-ups change this to front-firing diagonal lasers and finally four-way diagonal beams.



MISSILE



Pretty obvious really. This pod maximises the destructive potential of your front-firing photons.



DEFENCE



A powerful shield covers the Darius, and protects it from several direct hits. The colour of the shield shows how healthy it is.



BOMB



The Darius is endowed with powerful bombs that blitz anything stupid enough to stay below. Collect another pod to double your bombing potential.



COMMENT



MATT

Argghhhhhh! ANOTHER Megadrive shoot 'em up arrives in the MEAN MACHINES office - obviously someone in Sega likes playing shoot 'em ups a lot. Personally, I'm getting rather bored with them, but there's no denying that Darius 2 is quite a decent offering. Although the blasting action isn't as good as Gynoug or Hellfire, this game is designed for stability. With a massive 26 levels to wade through

and all the different endings, it'll be a long time before you get bored with this game. It's only really this aspect that makes the game worth a look, because the graphics and sound are nowhere near as good as Gynoug, and some of the levels are quite samey. Also, some better power-ups would've made Darius a more appealing game. The best thing about it is that it offers a challenge - something definitely lacking in the majority of Megadrive games out at the moment.



ENDLESS ENDINGS

The game can finish on any one of seven levels and each has its own graphical ending waiting at the end! With a plot lifted straight from Dallas, one ending shows our hero waking up from a hideous nightmare - the whole game was just a dream! As for the other six possible endings... well you'll just have to buy the game and get blasting, won't you?

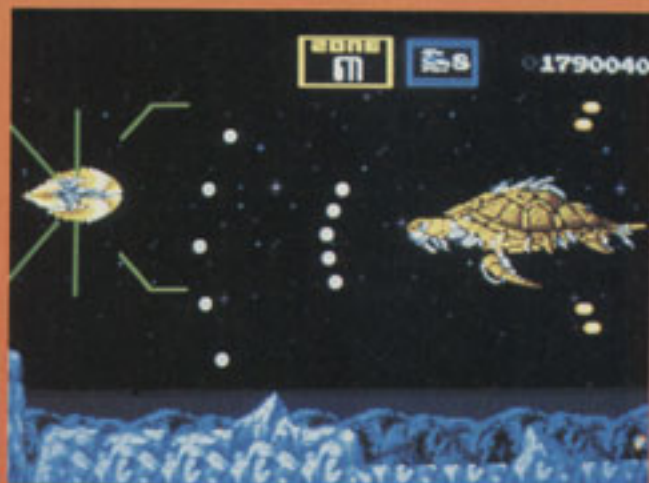


COMMENT

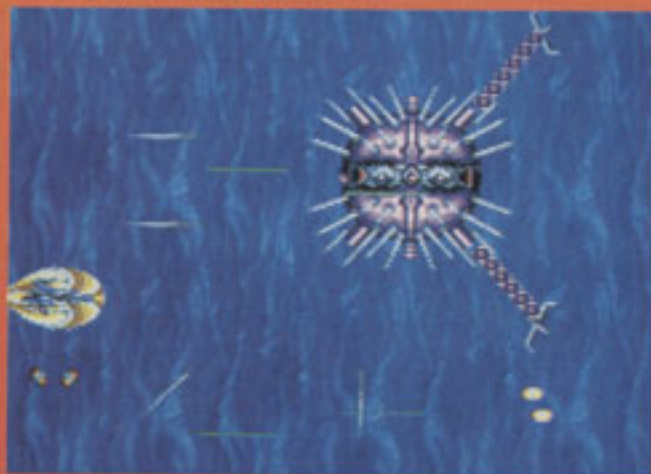


JULIAN

I can't believe how many horizontally scrolling shoot 'em ups are being released on the Megadrive at the moment - it's getting a bit much. Still, if you haven't already tired of them, Darius 2 will get your trigger finger twitching with excitement. The action is fast and furious from the outset, with a myriad of small, but perfectly formed sprites to blast into oblivion. It's a pretty challenging game, and its lastability is boosted considerably thanks to the fact that there are 26 levels to fight through and seven different endings to see. Darius 2 isn't exactly heavy on the originality, but if you're after a slick and playable blaster which won't lose its appeal overnight, have a crack at this.



▲ Arrghhhh! Not more turtles



▲ Yikes!



TAITO

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BY: TAITO

PRICE: £37.00

RELEASE DATE: IMPORT

GAME DIFFICULTY: EASY

LIVES: 3

CONTINUES: 3

SKILL LEVELS: 1

RESPONSIVENESS: GREAT



PRESENTATION 69%

Plenty of options, but the attract sequences are very underwhelming.

GRAPHICS 77%

Small, but detailed sprites with pretty decent scrolling backdrops.

SOUND 81%

Forgettable tunes are overshadowed by the raucous blasting effects.

PLAYABILITY 89%

Easy to get into from the outset, with instantly addictive arcade action.

LASTABILITY 84%

Loads of endings and 26 levels combine to produce a long-lasting game.

OVERALL 83%

An excellent shoot 'em up with plenty of lasting appeal - check it out if you haven't already had your fill of blasting games.