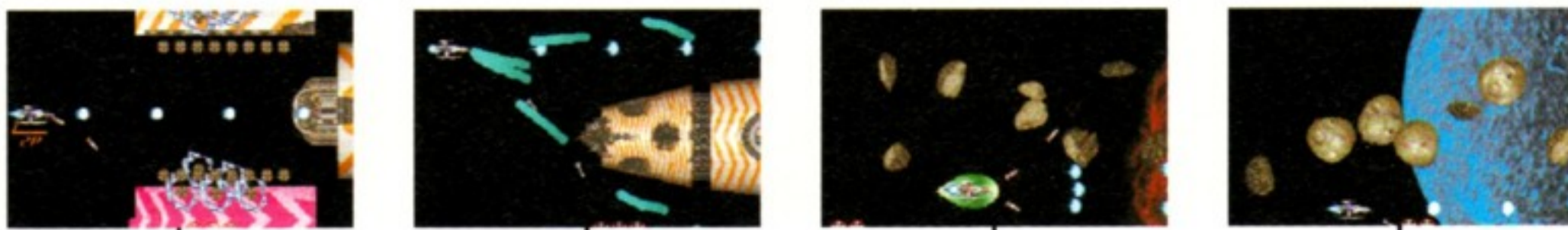


BY	TAITO
PRICE	£34.99
STYLE	SHOOT 'EM UP
RELEASE	FEBRUARY

So it might be **one dimension** short of a full **geometric** perspective, but does **Darius** deliver the required **kill-count**?



**D**arius sounds like the kind of name an unfortunate Surrey nouveau riche kid would get lumbered with by his double glazing magnate parents. But it is in fact the name of a distant and fictional star. As anyone who read last month's Darius Showcase would immediately have known. So that's got you hasn't it, you fair-weather fans? Thought you could get away with missing an issue, didn't you? But instead you've gone and missed all the in-depth information on a game we're about to praise right in front of you. Well there's a subscriptions ad in every issue you fools, so you can't say we didn't give you the opportunity to keep ahead.

Right, so Darius, for those of you too slack to know, is a fish-blasting shoot 'em up set in the depths of space. Not real fish, obviously, but giant robot fish. Not many real fish would be much of a match for a fully-equipped space fighter. But they look like fish nonetheless. And they act like fish. Apart from firing lasers and missiles from every part of their bodies.

Although that's pretty standard piscine behaviour up the Humber Estuary.

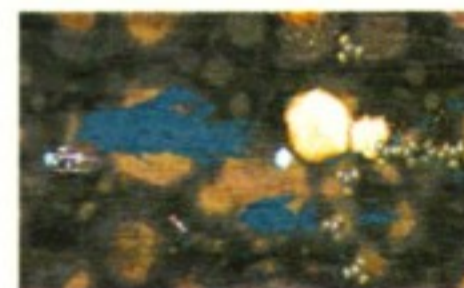
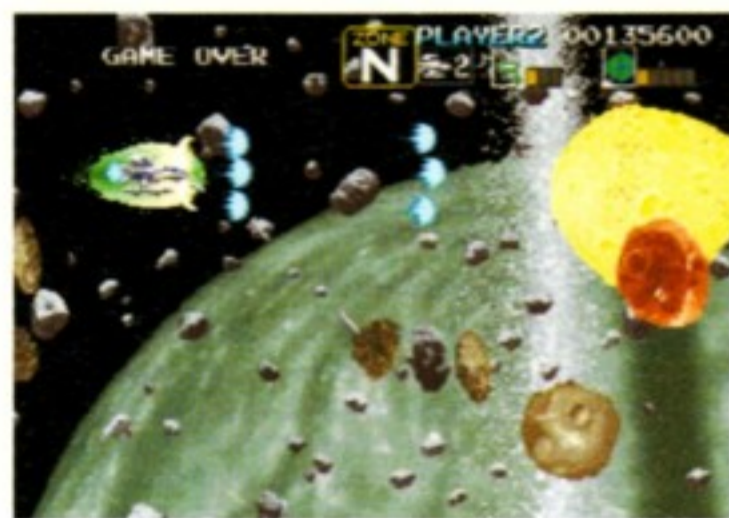
It's not like Panzer Dragoon or any of those clever modern games at all – all these fishies are in glorious technicolour 2D and the background scrolls constantly from right to left. It's an old school, kicking with the class flavour (as it were) shoot 'em up where power-ups and RSI-inducing joystick movements make the difference between life and death. That and great stamina in enduring mock-opera

soundtracks. For indeed, much of Darius is plagued by some fat bint warbling away like an Old Spice advert. But don't worry too much, because the sounds of your own mass destruction do a lot to drown her out. And if it bothers you that much, there's always the volume switch (tip – use this to turn it down).

Now there's an obvious argument against Darius' existence. It's 1996, fer gosh sakes, and we demand polygons, multiple perspectives and tri-dimensionality in all things. Well if you want to think like that, go ahead you pedantic bores, but you'll be denying yourself a pretty slice of the enjoyment cake. For Darius is actually ace. Everything might be 2D, but don't let that distract you from the general beauty of it. The game features some huge bosses, billions of sprites on screen and riots of colour all over the shop (especially in the gorgeous backgrounds). Plus, it's one of the toughest shoot 'em ups I've played in a long time. It's reasonably challenging (two days worth) on Easy mode, and a considerably more testing feat on Very Hard. Plus the option to choose your route through the twenty-six levels (you need only complete seven to finish the game) adds further longevity mileage. Even once you've beaten Darius there'll still be plenty of stages you haven't seen, and each one has its own personality and hazards.

Darius doesn't match up to Virtua Fighter 2 as a showpiece for the Saturn, but it's still game enough for most players to get a kick out of. There's more going on at once than you'll find in most any other title at this time, and you're guaranteed freneticism. Forget your 32-BIT preconceptions and try it.

R A D



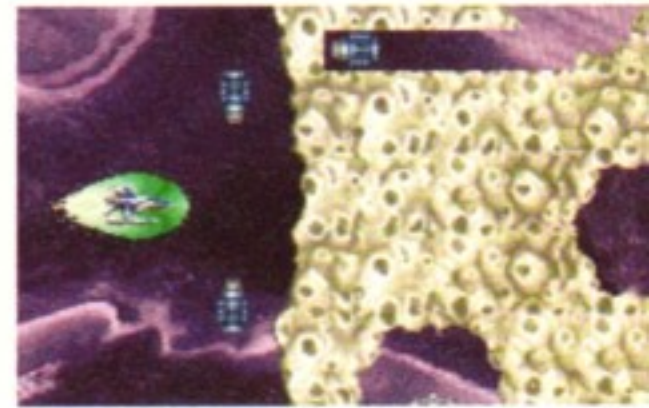
Hey colour fascists! Check that pink asteroid! Woo!



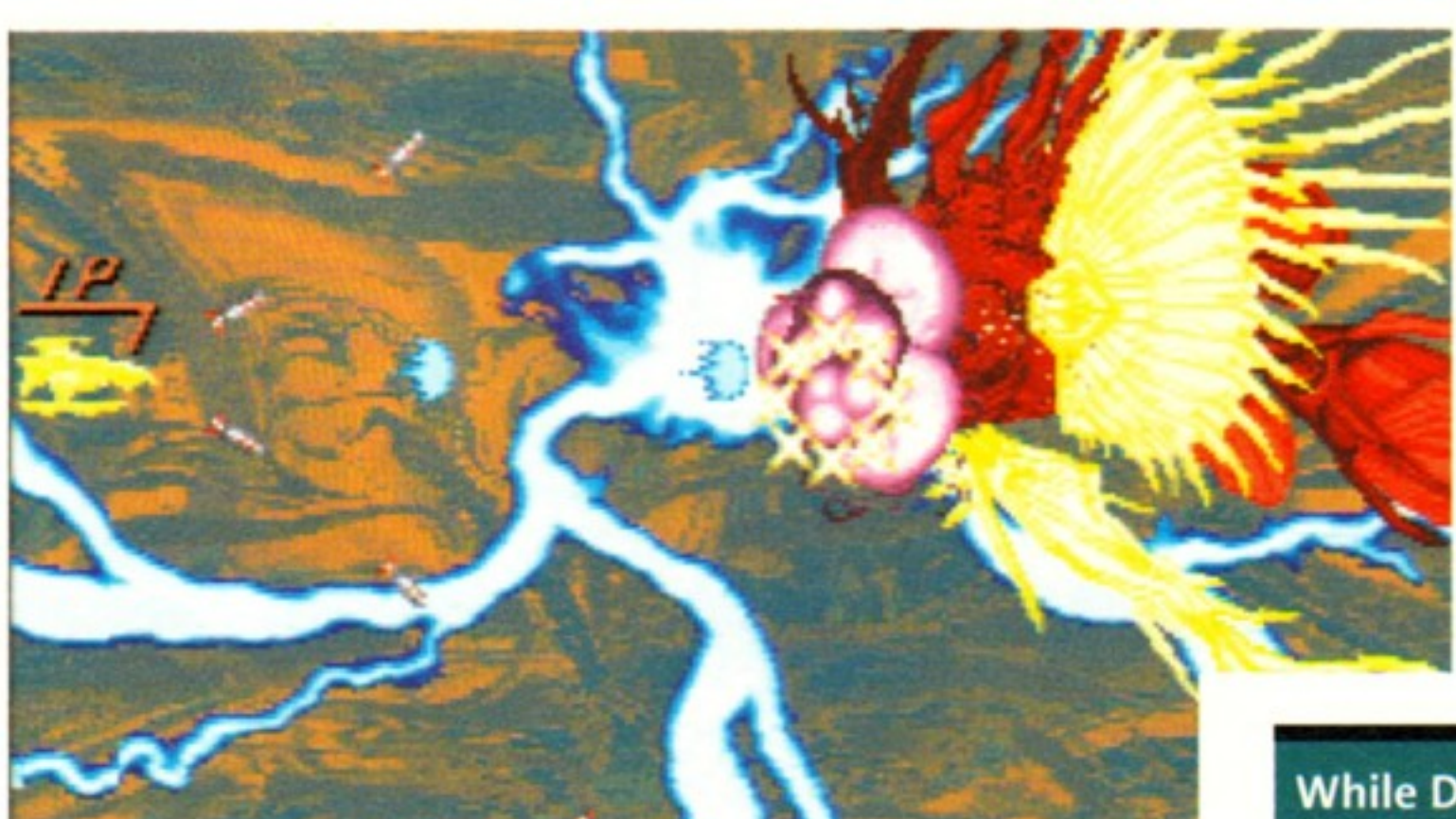
# Darius



You want bosses? Well, Darius has more evil mutant fish than a Chernobyl chippie! Each boss must be defeated in stages with its defences gradually withering. Now is the time to use your extra special weapons!



Did you here about the fight down at the chip shop last night? Apparently six fish got battered! Hahahahahahah! Ahhhh, priceless!



Here's a demonstration of the mighty power your small and seemingly insignificant ship is capable of producing. Down with the cod! Death to the Turbot King!

Lots of psychedelic swirls ensure that you're continually disoriented. Hippie wigs optional.



While Darius doesn't grab you by the 32-bit scruff of the neck, it remains a very entertaining shoot 'em up, full of action, thrills and fish! A welcome change from all that confusing 3D stuff.



graphics	80	overall
sound	81	
playability	83	
lastability	84	

80%