

REVIEW

NUMBER
REVIEW



BY:
SEGA

PRICE:
£29.99

RELEASE:
DECEMBER

STYLE:
PUZZLE

PLAYERS:
1-2

CONTROL:
JOYPAD

CONTINUES:
PASSWORD

Hand-held consoles are the best platform for puzzle games, by necessity having to keep things clear and easy to follow, and also allowing the player to pass the time by exercising his or her brain wherever they are. So it's quite surprising that this is one of the first Game Gear puzzle releases in ages.

Obviously, the main body of the game is the same as the Megadrive title. Saving beans is the name of the game, and this task is performed in true Columns/Tetris style. Line up two beans of the same colours in a horizontal or vertical line and they link together. Link four or more beans and they disappear. Should you persistently fail to link like-minded pulses the beans pile up to the top of the screen and it's Game Over.

The main game is the SCENARIO option, which pits you against Robotnik's top twelve bean-catching robots before the final showdown with the good Doctor himself. The object of the game here is to outlast your opponent - once his

beans reach the ceiling you move onto the next opponent. If you manage



LESSON 4



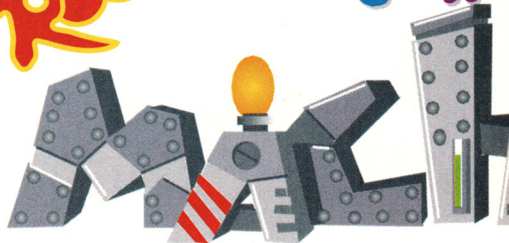
Eliminate 3 waves of beans.

The Puzzle Option, played within the pages of Robotnik's robot instruction book, is a welcome addition to Game Gear Mean Bean Machine. It adds a new challenge to the game and works quite differently to the com-



Whilst Bean Machine seems simple enough, there's actually quite a strategy behind building up the essential multi-wave combinations. It takes a little while to get used to this, but it's very rewarding once you crack it.

Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine



MEGA DRIVE

REVIEW

NUMBER
REVIEW



BY:
SEGA

PRICE:
£44.99

RELEASE:
DECEMBER

STYLE:
PUZZLE

PLAYERS:
1-2

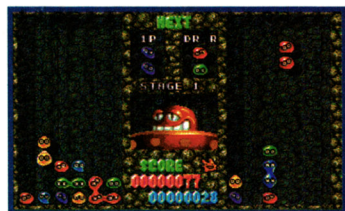
CONTROL:
3-BUTTON

CONTINUES:
PASSWORD

STOP PRESS! DOCTOR SHOCK! Yes indeed, the mad doctor has stopped persecuting Sonic the Hedgehog and his cuddly pals (for the moment at least) and has instead decided on ridding the planet Mobius of... beans.

Robotnik's bean infatuation started when he discovered a strange species of intelligent bean indigenous to Moebius. Intrigued by the prospect of these new life forms, Robotnik created a Mean Bean Machine - a device used to study these new lifeforms and then turn them into robo-beans - the ideal bean feast for the doctor.

The innards of the Machine are displayed on-screen in a familiar Tetris-style pit form. Beans fall down from the top of the pit and it's down to the player to arrange them into rows of four. Create a line or block of four inter-connecting beans and they disappear. Should you allow the beans to reach the



▲ One of Robotnik's cute minions.

very top of the pit, you've lost the round (or the entire game in one-player mode).

Several game variations are on offer. For the one player, the SCENARIO option is the one to check out. This version of the game pits the player against various characters, from Robotnik's most pathetic henchman of all, Arms (so called because of his large, clumsy extremities) right through to the master bean player - the insane doctor himself! If you're no match for Robotnik's minions, a special practice mode is on offer.

The real fun of this game is in the two-player game. Creating chain reaction combination attacks is brilliant and unleashes large amounts of "dud" beans on your opponent's screen. Excellent fun indeed - a phrase that sums up the whole game.

The most satisfying aspect of the game is undoubtedly the combination bean attacks. Get a line or block of four beans and they disappear. Any beans on top fall down. Now, if they fall down into another line or block of beans you get loads of extra points and it really piles on the dud beans on your opponent's screen!





an



to score a combo of waves - having each line disappear trigger off another score when the beans above fall into place - a number of refugee beans land in your opponent's screen. These clear beans don't group together, and only disappear when a bean next to them does the same. Needless to say, the passport to victory is building up clever wave patterns and dumping millions of these dead-weights onto your rival. Once the player has defeated a robot the passcode for the next level is printed on-screen. Whilst this saves lots of faffing about having to take on foes you've thrashed a thousand times, it does shorten the longevity of the title, and with only thirteen opponents Bean Machine can't really afford to do that.

However, the challenge in this game definitely comes from the two-player mode.



COMMENT



RICHARD LEADBETTER

Mean Bean Machine is the perfect title for the Game Gear. The action is simple enough to be handled perfectly, but challenging enough to make it a fascinating game. This is certainly the ideal travelling companion, especially with the addition of the agonising Puzzle Option. There's been a spate of good Game Gear releases recently, but this is one of the best.

COMMENT



JULIAN RIGNALL

Playing a bit like Columns with jellies rather than jewels, Mean Bean Machine is superb. Okay, so it's not a fast action game. Okay, so it hasn't got mega graphics or sound. But it's extremely playable, is incredibly addictive and has kept me at the Game Gear longer than any other game has for ages. Highly recommended.

88

Presentation:

Great title screen, intermissions, password screens and so on. Very well presented indeed.

67

Graphics:

The in-game graphics are small and not very detailed, but they're clear and you can see what's going on, which is the real point.

72

Sound:

There's not particularly any effects to speak of, and the music gets a little grating after a while, but it's not all that bad.

34

Originality:

Hmm, I haven't seen this concept ever before. Except in Tetris. And Columns. And Block Out. And Tetris 2...

92

Playability:

It gets very fast moving and furious, but the controls react speedily enough and it's great fun.

90

Challenge:

Whilst thirteen opponents may not sound many, they do get very hard to beat. The puzzle mode is not very easy.

90

Lastability:

The two-player mode lasts forever - and the one-player mode is very lastable too.

OVERALL:

Not what you could call groundbreaking stuff, but brilliantly executed and great fun to play.

92

MEGA DRIVE REVIEW

COMMENT



JULIAN RIGNALL

This has been the number one selling game in Japan for absolutely months, and it's pretty easy to see why. In the absence of any decent Megadrive Tetris clones since the deletion of the excellent Block Out this is a most welcome release. It's much more reflexes-orientated than Tetris as the action speeds up very rapidly and you really have to think fast. If you think you're quickest on the mental processes draw this is certainly one for you.



COMMENT



RICHARD LEADBETTER

This game has almost become a national institution in Japan and it's easy to see why. Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine is a super-playable puzzler - easy to get into, playable and mega-addictive. As a two-player game, it's second to none. There's nothing better than unleashing a mega mean bean combination on your opponent and watching those tons of dud beans come piling on down! A superb game that is definitely the greatest Megadrive puzzle game available.



▲ Player one is building up a big combination...

90

Presentation:

Superb. Loads of memory has been spared for the presentation. As a result, plenty of charisma is added to the game.

82

Graphics:

The presentation screens are super, whilst the in-game graphics are best described as functional.

81

Sound:

A tribute to Kraftwerk's 'The Robots' is on the title screen. The in-game music is decent and the sound effects and speech are fine.

20

Originality:

Take Columns, add a bit of Tetris and you have Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine. Not very original at all.

94

Playability:

Getting into this game is simplicity itself. The action is smooth and very addictive indeed. It's especially good in two-player mode.

72

Challenge:

The real challenge is in beating your mates in the two-player game mode.

90

Lastability:

As a two-player game there are months of play in there in Mean Bean Machine.

OVERALL:

Quite frankly, Dr Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine is the best puzzle game available for the Megadrive. One of those "must buy" type of games.

91