

REVIEW

BY	SEGA
PRICE	£TBA
STYLE	SHOOTING
RELEASE	TBA



Here it is! At last! The sequel to the shoot 'em up that set new standards in the genre. But after all the **fuss and hype** has died down, is this really as good as everyone seems to think it is? **Oh yes. Oh yes indeed!**

I

t feels like it's been a long time in coming, but now at last we can put all our impatience behind us and get on with enjoying this remarkable sequel to what is still a remarkable game. Just as the original

demonstrated the startling capabilities of the Saturn, so Panzer Dragoon 2 (or Zwei) exploits every aspect of 32 bit technology. The 3D action is impeccable and has the effect of genuinely immersing you in the serene forests, lofty clouds and dense tunnels that form parts of this surreal world. The attention to graphical detail and the grace of the animation are truly stunning, and this is not something simply reserved for your dragon and the bosses, but everything. Each design, from the smallest sprite upwards to the interactive backgrounds receives painstaking care in its conception. The meticulous and original way in which enemies conduct their attacks — splitting into smaller forms, darting at you from all directions, screaming over a mountain ridge — leaves you gasping with admiration. You'd almost feel guilty about sending them all up in flames if it wasn't for the epic explosions and dramatic crashes.

But a game, as we know, cannot survive on looks alone. Is it that this sequel is nothing more than a cosmetic update of the original? No, not at all. There are a variety of factors that make this a further step in the Panzer series, not least the fact that the game evolves according to your own skill, developing the defences of the weaker players and the attack skills of the more competent. What's more, to inject a little extra excitement in Panzer Dragoon 2, the game doesn't simply feature enemies attacking from all sides as they did in its predecessor, it sees them approach from above and beneath you as well.

Another new addition to the sequel is the concept of route points. While you could choose from routes in the original, there was neither as many to choose from or the same system whereby you earn a specific amount of points according to the route you take.

In terms of overall playability, Panzer Dragoon 2 is just about faultless. It moves a little faster than the original, yet retains the accessible and addictive qualities that made it such a successful shoot 'em up. In fact, I'm hard pushed to level a criticism against this game, but in the interests of the easily unsatisfied, I will say that I felt the disparity between the difficulty of the bosses and the rest of the enemies within an episode occasionally frustrating. What it meant in practical terms was that moving through an episode was relatively plain sailing until the boss kicked up a storm. But like I say, this criticism is one that's hard pushed, opposing as it is, a game where the attention to every detail makes it a wholly satisfying experience and a testament to the potential of 32 bit gaming technology. And yes — you must buy it.

ROB



This is the boss to Episode 5. As you progress through the levels the bosses get increasingly difficult to get the better of. Make sure you've got some power in your besker special.



Shoot this boulder enough times and it explodes.



Above and left are the bosses to Episodes 3 and 4. And they are dead hard.

