



MEGADRIVE REVIEW



PRICE £49.99

BY SEGA

RELEASE JUNE

OPTIONS

CONTROL: JOY PAD
CONTINUES: UNLIMITED
SKILL LEVELS: 3
RESPONSIVENESS: VERY GOOD
GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

1ST DAY SCORE

COMPLETE THE FIRST CHAPTER

ORIGIN

Shining Force is the second instalment of Sega's 'Shining and the Darkness' saga, the forthcoming Landskaper is the third.

HOW TO CONTROL

The joypad directions enable you to move your hero. Using the joypad buttons brings up the action icons that enable you to talk to other characters, trade and suchlike.

- A** Select a window.
- B** Cancel a request.
- C** Select a window.
- S** Starts the adventure.

HOW TO PLAY

Search the many towns and villages in the land of Rune for volunteers to join the Shining Force — an army that opposes the evil forces at work in Rune.

Guardiana, a picturesque outpost in the land of Rune, is home to a race of people known as the 'Ancients'. For the past ten centuries these people have guarded the 'Gate of Ancients', a prison to the mighty Dark Dragon, also known as the 'Lord of Darkness'. A thousand years has faded the memory of the events that placed this beast in such a place and so the Ancients are now enjoying a time of peace and prosperity. Yet somewhere in the darkest corner of Rune an evil soul named Dark Sol is plotting to make a mess of everything by freeing this dreaded beast. He's amassed an army of hellish creatures for the task — the dreaded Runefaust! Now this is all well and good, at least it is from a distance. However, as the hero of Rune, it is your task to come and sort this mess out before the situation becomes too scary.

The King of Guardiana requests that you assemble an army of warriors. A 'Shining Force' to combat the darkness that threatens. From this point onwards many long journeys await and all are loaded with the threat of battle. The people of Rune await their hero and, believe it or not, this could be you!



Oh, my! Gong is in bad shape. I'll see if I can help.

BOSS NOVA

After the first audience with Guardiana's King his attendant is immediately assigned to the Shining Force as an advisor. This green-skinned, ancient looking half-elf's name is Nova and he dutifully takes his post at the Shining Force's headquarters. The team have headquarters in all the towns of Rune and it is here that the tale's central character seeks Nova's words of wisdom regarding battle tactics. Nova's duties also include assigning missions to the most suitable members of the Shining Force of the player's request. Nova also keeps records on each of the team's progress in the form of status cards. The headquarter buildings are marked by a shield with Guardiana's crest emblazoned on — a plain, green circle.

◀ The gist of this one is that Gong's in a bad way.

▼ Our heroes encounter a Red Automatic lookalike.





SHINING FORCE

FORCE FEED



In response to the King of Guardian's initial request, the hero of Shining Force begins his search for those that would bravely oppose the onslaught of the Runefaut invasion. No sooner has he left the King's presence than the first five volunteers rush after him, including our hero's close friend, Lowe. This warrior quintet are the foundation of the Shining Force and consist of Luke the warrior, Ken the knight, Tao the apprentice mage and Hans who is an elven archer. Lowe offers his services as a healer but is willing to fight when necessary. As the story unfolds and the many miles of Rune are freed from their plague in the name of light, the Shining Force grows as more interesting and useful characters join the fold.

▼ A scene from "Honey, I blow up the Shining Force".



Excellent! Kane will have to do better than that to stop you. On to Alterone!

▼ If you hold your breath for a long time, this happens.

▼ "I suppose an innuendo based on "chopper" will do."



Greetings, Boni. With my powers I can see the future. Care to know your fate?

COMMENT



PAUL

I haven't been so glued to a game since the time when I first bought my Megadrive almost four years ago! Everything that I look

for in a game — stylish graphics, great music, atmosphere and irresistible playability are all present here. The situation is made all the more outstanding for me because Shining Force is an RPG and I usually shy away from such games as they are often too long-winded and very tedious to watch. What makes the game so extra special is that there is a real sense of control over the combat sections. Consequently I find myself wincing at every blow that my comrades take and cheering heartily at every fallen foe. It sounds crazy but then play the game for yourself and see if you don't do the same! Though the graphics appear quite basic at first they certainly improve as the Shining Force progress and earn themselves promotions. Every member of the team is a true individual and have their own trademark methods of attack. As the characters' skills advance so their moves become more intricate making it all the more entertaining as a hero pinpoints then swipes an enemy out of action with just one blow! Exploration of the towns is very compelling too and often very funny — some of the locals who live in these places are flipping mental! As the game is divided into chapters this prevents the story from becoming stale, especially when the presentation helps tie the ends up so well. With the cart boasting 12 megs of swordplay and adventure I have no doubt in recommending this to anyone, and that's coming from one of the converted too, so bear that in mind! Go for it! Definitely!





MEGADRIVE REVIEW

COMMENT



In the ancient land of the Megadrive, the tribe of Sega had been long in wait for a new RPG. And then came Shining

GUS

Force, and there was much joy! This is fab stuff: the sort of game to make you stay up way past bed time, just to get to the next town, or learn a new spell. It works because it's a perfect blend of strategy and adventuring. Instead of stupid 'random encounters', that make most RPG a chore to play, you are allowed to see your enemies in advance, and devise battle tactics using all of your band. Combat becomes as interesting as the moseying round cities. The adventuring is just as much fun, with a brilliant plot, cleverly unravelled, and some killer punchlines delivered by some of the in-game characters. Playing it for the second and third time reveals secrets missed on previous occasions. There's just something about Shining Force that makes it a classic game. Perhaps it's the excellent standard of graphics and the sensible presentation. Whatever it is, it makes it a highly desirable purchase.



LONG TERM REPORT

HOURLY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
DAILY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
WEEKLY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
MONTHLY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
YEARLY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

BREAKDOWN

STRATEGY	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
ACTION	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
CHALLENGE	■ ■ ■ ■ ■
REFLEXES	■ ■ ■ ■ ■

INSIDE MOVES

The further our heroes get into the heart of Runefaust-occupied territory, the stronger their opponents become. Dark Sol's minions start off simple enough and are not quite so hideous as their reputation implies. However, matters get steadily worse and the only way that Rune's last hope counters the horrors ahead is by gaining valuable experience points in battle.



Combat is represented by a plan view of both side's forces with all characters having a specified area in which they move. Land-based members of the Shining Force posse are restricted by the landscape but airborne warriors are free to fly where they will. Battle commences as soon as a member from either side is within range of the other at which point the viewpoint changes to a mightily impressive, three dimensional rendition of the action.

YIELD! YIELD!

Our worthy heroes' will alone is enough to carry them through the first few battles successfully however it isn't long until their miserable selection of armour and arms pales in comparison to that of the Runefaust army. So it's just as well that there are shops in all of the towns of Rune that supply more advanced equipment alongside special herbs for medicinal purposes on the occasion that a warrior is injured in battle. Further exploration of the towns also reveals items that are hidden away in chests or other less obvious places. It's worth giving everywhere a thorough search before moving on to the next confrontation with Runefaust as such items are often more powerful than those offered by the shops!

▼ So... dress up in a stupid costume will you? Now you're mine!

PRESENTATION

▲ All presentation screens suit the nature of the game perfectly well.

88

GRAPHICS

▲ Brilliant battle sequences and great attention to detail throughout. The graphics improve as the plot thickens.

89

SOUND

▲ A wide selection of war themes and rural melodies greet the ears.

86

PLAYABILITY

▲ Though there is much depth to the gameplay the control method is very straightforward. This makes exploration very rewarding!

▼ The combat system is a trifle on the sad side.

92

LASTABILITY

▲ The game is enormous! That in itself ensures a long lasting challenge. It also means that it's possible to miss things along the way, meaning that it's worth playing again.

90

OVERALL

91

A beautifully crafted piece of Megadrive software with just the right balance of action and adventure to satisfy all needs.