



SHINING FORCE

• Mega Drive • Sega • £44.99 • UK Release •

The land of Rune is under attack! Leader of the Shining Force, Dan Goodleff, takes great pleasure in flossing Death's teeth as he wades through reams of evil monsters.

IF YOU CAN TAKE HAVING A centaur called Ken in your band of adventurers then you'll be well away with this silky smooth RPG from Sega. It won't fry your synapses – à la *Ultima 4* (Sega Power 9: 92%) or *Phantasy Star 3* – but it will entertain you with its beautiful visuals, mild dose of humour, quests within quests – and exciting battle sequences.

Dark Dragon (a real nasty and no mistake) has risen again after ten centuries locked behind the Gate Of The Ancients. Now the kingdom of Runefaulst, under the leadership of Dark Dragon's evil

vassal, Kane, has unleashed its armies on the land of Rune.

You start your adventure in the town of Guardia (one of the few strongholds of good remaining in the land of Rune) under the expert tutelage of master swordsman Lord Varios the centaur.

The game is divided up into eight chapters with the action alternating between a typical RPG wander about isometric 3D landscapes (villages, castles and countryside) and complex battles against the forces of Darkness.

It's during the myriad RPG sections where you explore the land, talk to the inhabitants,



Don't look at the screen, kids. Double entendre is rife in *Shining Force* (and to think this guy is a leading figure in the Church of Rune too).

rudrui characters and generally have a good interactive rummage that you get to grips with the icon-driven control system.

And it's really so simple to use too – I didn't need to look at the instructions once. All the icons are reinforced by text and you can

easily select items just by using the joystick and Button A.

You start out alone, but before long you'll have a whole entourage of followers (see box at the top of the facing page). Together you make up what's called the Shining Force – an elite band of warriors, mages, priests, monks...

At any time you can summon up a status screen of all the usual RPG bits 'n' pieces (strength, magic, inventory and so on) for every member of your party. You can even see what they look like.

Unfortunately, shopping in *Shining Force* can be a right pain in the butt because you can't buy any item in bulk. Instead you have to buy all your goods individually for each one of your characters. Naturally, this means you've got to

FIGHTING HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH FUN, Y'HEAR?

It's musical, it's graphical, it's combatastical! It's also extremely challenging as you and your party take on every kind of staple RPG creature in the book. Here's a taster of what your team are up against...

I haven't put the apple on my head yet! cries the goblin. Too late! Hans The Archer, lost in dreams of William...

Hans L1
HP 14/14
MP 0/0

Now who's this handsome chap? Yes, girls, it's yours truly, as dashing on-screen as he is in real life...

DANNYDUY L1
HP 9/12
MP 8/8



Goblin L1
HP 8/8

...Tell, prepares to shoot his enemy straight through the forehead.

Goblin L1
HP 0/12
MP 0/0

...(Pass the sick-bag – Karen). Note the goblin's zero hitpoints. Well hit, my man.

A zombie (wearing the latest in undead lingerie) meets the leader of the Shining Force and prepares to die.

DAN L1
HP 18/18
MP 10/10

The lithe and pointy-eared Hans lets his arrow fly – straight into the colossal beard of a Dark Dwarf...

Hans L1
HP 14/14
MP 0/0



Inflicts 5 points of damage on the Zombie.

Dark Dwarf L1
HP 6/18
MP 0/0

...What whiskers, sir! I suggest you visit a barber very soon.

POWER POINTS

PLAYERS 1
CHAPTERS 8
SKILL LEVELS None
RELEASE DATE July

OTHER DETAILS

You can save up to three different game positions. You can also tweak the speed of battles and detail of text during combat.

TIME TO COMPLETE

Couple of weeks.



■ **Lowe The Priest:** healer, wannabe fighter and okay guy.



■ **Gord The Warrior:** strong, short and tough as new nails.



■ **Mae The Knight:** child of Varius - and a tough nut.



■ **Dan The Swordsman:** the leader of the Shining Force.



■ **Chip The Priest:** knobby knees, but a great healer.



■ **Gong The Monk:** great fighter-healer combination.



■ **Ken The Knight:** a strong centaur forward player (ahem).



■ **Hans The Archer:** agile with his bow and arrow (I).



■ **Anri The Mage:** a decent spellcaster is invaluable.



■ **Tao The Mage:** this girl's a real blast at parties (sorry).



■ **Luke The Warrior:** small, but packs one hell of a punch.

ORBS, SCHMORBS AND BATTLES GALORE

Chapter Two, and you've got to retrieve the Orb Of Light from these hordes of Darkness. This dungeon lies underneath the Mage's school in Manarina - and it's a toughie, so stock up on healing herbs and get to it.



ALTERNATIVES



■ Classic RPGing in *Phantasy Star 3*.

Phantasy Star 3 (Sega Power 25: 93) is getting on a bit now, but is still superior in terms of long-term adventure. *Shining Force* outstrips it on the combat side though.

keep going through the same icon manoeuvres over and over again.

Once you've talked to the right people and explored everything, the game switches into battle

mode. Here you're presented with a larger than one screen map of the battle terrain - a water-filled dungeon, a tract of land between two cities or whatever.

This 'battlefield' is effectively split into a grid of squares, with each character (good or evil) occupying one particular square. The range of a given character's movement, attack or magic is then shown as a series of shaded squares within the battle grid.

The archer Hans, for instance, can fire his arrows in all eight compass directions, whereas Ken The Knight cannot charge on the diagonals. Get the idea?

Battle takes place in turns - a character can move and then a) attack, b) cast a spell or c) give an item to another member of their party. Once you engage an enemy in battle, the screen switches to a

mock up display of the situation - where a text box relays battle information as it happens. Once you (or the bad guy) has done his or her move, the display reverts back to the map screen.

You continue to take turns until you've either wiped the enemy out or you've been destroyed.

And that, in a small golden amulet, is it. Except I haven't told you quite how much fun it is. And it is fun, believe me.

It's beautifully presented, got loads of appealing characters, is packed with great sounds and boasts great gameplay.

So where's the Gold then, eh? Well, the strongest point about the entire title are the battles, which really are outstandingly good fun, but the other parts pale after a short while because you're led by the nose most of the way - and

that's not what being in control is all about, is it? Thus, no Gold.

But what *Shining Force* may lack in role-playing complexity, it more than makes up for with its highly involving battle sequences (which, admittedly, also call for a fair degree of strategy). Highly recommended to **SEGA POWER** fans of the genre.

SHINING FORCE

■ Mega Drive ■ Sega ■
■ £44.99 ■ UK Release ■

For more information, contact
Sega on # (071) 373 3000

- Tremendously engaging battles
- Beautiful to look at and play
- Loads of individual characters
- Simple control system
- Bit too easy for RPG devotees

GRAPHICS



SOUND



ADDICTION



BRAINPOWER



FINAL VERDICT

"A beautifully-produced RPG. Great tactical battle sequences. Loads of unique, cute characters, speedy gameplay and lots to see 'n' do. Gorgeous to play and look at."

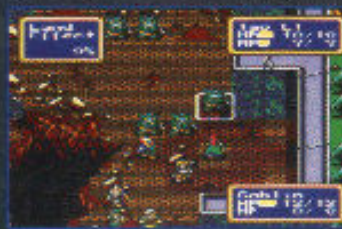
89%

AS THEY SAY IN RUNE, THAT'S THE WAY TO DO IT, TAO!

According to my dictionary, one meaning of Tao is 'the course of life and its relation to eternal truth'. Hmm, this mage girl's got a lot of explaining to do. Er, what do you mean, she's incinerating a goblin?



■ **Tao The Mage** (the one with the red cap and green cape) selects a level one Blast spell. The potential attack area is shown by the shaded squares surrounding her.



■ There's only one goblin in range and that's automatically highlighted by a white square. Note the enemy statistics on the bottom-right. 12 hit points? No problem!



■ Tao waves her staff brusquely, the screen flickers redly and a ball of flame erupts at the goblin's feet - seven points of damage too. He won't last long. Lovely job, Tao.