Hearing the projectiles splitting the air above my head, I knew the situation was not going to end well for me. I tried to make a sprint behind a cover but, hearing a bell sound, I realised I have been hit on the way, my body disintegrating into particles of light. I had a chance to start anew and blast the light out of my adversaries.

Competitive first person shooters are not all the same; styles range from the most arcade version to the most realistic ones gameplay wise. It the case of Shootmania Storm, it is a very simple game at first glance, but mastering these single parts ends out being the biggest challenges, much like in arcade games.

It is a refreshing feel that this game brought me, years after I played Unreal Tournament 2004. While most common modern day shooters anchor themselves in relatively realistic universes, Shootmania has that opposite feel. The universe in which you fight in is a futuristic one, where the pretext for action is competition itself. When you die, your character gracefully disappear in an emission of light, avoiding the usual blood spills caused by gun fights, and this turns out to be welcomed. Not really pushing aside violence since characters shoot at each other with glowing-missiles-firing devices, action is not set in an environment that will eventually be painted with blood.

In fact, environments in Shootmania are simply gorgeous; gladiators fight in grassy lands where castles are erected or in ancient ruins full of treacherous angles. Unfortunately, only when you are waiting to respawn you will be able to admire the beauty of the surroundings because the gameplay is adrenaline rushing.

The firing device that is attached to your forearm is the host of the energy through which materialise your missile, and your objective is simple: eliminate your enemies or take control of their checkpoints. This sounds pretty simple but is used in a variety of ways through games modes and maps. Contrary to other FPSs your projectile has a non-infinite speed, meaning it is possible to see it travel to you as an enemy shoots at you.

This is what distinguishes Shootmania and makes it an exciting shooter: firefights are not only based on aiming but also on dodging. The fact that you can escape a precisely shot missile opens the door to a totally different type of combat. Erratic strafing becomes artful dodging, aiming over your target becomes movement anticipation and jumping around like a troll becomes evasive gymnastics.

The gameplay mechanics are just so well threaded together that it becomes instinctive to use them. No mechanic in the game is superfluous. Starting from the idea that bullets are slower than in common FPSs, a whole system of movement is elaborated. The ground modifies the ability that you have to jump, run, and use your weapon. Evasion by jumping is impossible when on a speed-augmenting track, and your slow-traveling missiles will be replaced by an instant traveling lightning on another.

The futuristic look of the character’s equipment has an athletic look that perfectly reflects all the wall-jumping and air gliding that is so common in the game. Surprisingly, while it would have been really easy to go over a female version of the default male character, one is readily available with the same protective metal plated gear. By having a comparable athletic appearance for both characters, the game does a great job at representing equality as it is so rarely in modern video-games.

Shootmania Storm has all the elements that a competitive shooter would need: simple mechanics, lush but light visuals and enough room for players to innovate within this environment. However, one thing falls short of all of this: the community. At almost every time of the day, there are only a few games occupied by players. The game being multiplayer only, this can be a shortcoming if you cannot play at populated hours.

Death after death, kill after kill, it seems the game never loses its pace. Unlike other first person shooters, jumping around is a lot of fun and is also a matter on which you will need to practice to defeat your enemies. The games mechanics are simple but brought together, they achieve something way bigger than themselves.

Pros: Simple game mechanics

Lush but efficient visuals

Great competitive potential

Cons: Few online players

Arcade shooters have not been the norm recently. Pulling back in those roots, Shootmania Storm is a game of precision and speed. With its parkour-ish feels and simplicity in armament, the game mixes two elements that are rarely seen together. Adrenaline-rushing moments are guaranteed but only if you find players to play with you online. Nonetheless, this game is a gem that deserves to be tried by whoever has the ability to enjoy first person shooters.