

= Ziggurat (video game) =

Ziggurat , stylized as ZiGGURAT , is a retro 16-bit style arcade shooter video game developed by Action Button Entertainment for iOS platforms . As the world 's last human fighting off incoming alien freaks from atop a ziggurat , the player uses simple touch controls to charge and shoot the enemies away , and dies if hit by an enemy . The game has 16-bit graphics style and an 8-bit chiptune soundtrack . Action Button designer Tim Rogers developed the game idea based on his experience with Angry Birds , which later led to his forming Action Button as a company with Ziggurat as its first release on February 17 , 2012 .

The game received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review score aggregator Metacritic . Reviewers praised Ziggurat 's nuanced controls and minimalism . Time magazine picked the game as one of the best for the then new high-resolution third generation iPad .

= = Gameplay = =

As the " Last Human on Earth " , the player fights off approaching enemies with their laser rifle . The player 16-bit character , stationary atop a mountain peak (ziggurat) at the top of the world and end of time , attacks incoming mono-eyed alien freaks and dies upon the first hit from any enemy . The player earns a score based on their number of aliens killed before succumbing . The aliens vary in size and shape , from " blue freaks " who pogo like the Tektites from Zelda , to stealth yellow freaks , to shielded , aggressive red freaks , to bullet-sponge giant freaks .

There are two shooting modes : Precision and Slingshot . In Precision , players control the shot by sliding their fingers along the bottom of the screen , which calculates the arc and direction of the shot . In Slingshot , like Angry Birds , players draw back their shots like slingshots . The shot grows in power the longer the screen is held , and the shot is fired when the player lets go . Weak shots will also arc down with gravity , and strong shots will decrease in power if held too long . There are no power-ups , no gamified micropayments , and no pause function , but there are achievements such as living to see the end of the universe . It also integrates " pro-social " features like GameCenter and Twitter .

Ziggurat uses retro 16-bit style 16-bit graphics and an 8-bit chiptune soundtrack . The player 16-bit character is blonde and dressed in a red jumpsuit , and clouds pass by in parallax motion in the background . The sun 's position in the distance appears as a function of game 's duration . The chiptune soundtrack includes wailing solos , and its pitch appears to intensify with the game 's difficulty . The player 's death is accompanied by a " wince-inducing digital screech " or siren and a " blood-red screen " .

= = Development = =

Action Button Entertainment was founded by Tim Rogers . The studio consists of Rogers , Brent Porter , Michael Kerwin , and Nicholas Wasilewski , who have built all of the studio 's four games from Ziggurat through Videoball . Their games are consistently simple in their aesthetics and controls . Rogers cited Angry Birds as the inspiration for Ziggurat . He found the former " an incredible collision of game design concepts " that worked , though he wanted the game to be more of a " driving range " where he could throw birds at falling stuff , an idea which he refined into a Raiders of the Lost Ark-themed game of slowly hurling projectiles that push back bats in a corridor with no limit of projectiles . When riding the Bay Area Rapid Transit from Oakland to San Francisco a year later , Rogers watched a man play Angry Birds as he perfected a level , whereupon Rogers decided to make his game idea . He asked his friend and indie developer Adam Saltsman for advice , who confirmed and encouraged Rogers 's interest in trying Flixel , the Adobe Flash tools used to make Saltsman 's Canabalt . Upon deciding that he lacked the expertise , he tweeted to recruit others on the project and received some responses that later fell through .

Rogers continued to work as a video game design consultant and met Bob Pelloni (of Bob 's Game

) at the 2010 Game Developers Conference . The two worked on games (including Ziggurat) together . Rogers put out a call for artists on Twitter with a submissions request of " fan art of the Japanese box art of Phantasy Star II " , and Action Button artist Brent Porter replied in under an hour with an entry Rogers called " incredible " . In mid 2011 , Rogers decided to work on an iPhone game for a few weeks as a break from a larger project . While Pelloni was against the buttonless iPhone as a platform , Rogers said the team was convinced by his design document . He contacted an Internet acquaintance who had previously mocked up a design idea from Rogers 's Kotaku column , programmer Michael Kerwin , who came through in a week with a version without graphics or sound , which was later added . Rogers recorded " some insane and rough music " with his band , Large Prime Numbers , that Andrew Toups converted into an 8 @-@ bit soundtrack in the " original Nintendo sound format " that Rogers found " breathtaking " . His friend , QWOP creator Bennett Foddy deemed the game " sort of interesting " .

Six months passed as Rogers worked on a social game before he chose to make a few more changes : more enemy types and progression , graphics in the background , and so emailed people to continue development . Rogers described his own critical list of video games as having minimalist aesthetics with no overt story to tell other than through its game mechanics , and wanted the game to live up to those expectations . He fine @-@ tuned the game with gut @-@ driven decisions . For example , he applied a concept he called " sticky friction " from Super Mario Bros. 3 to the game 's controls . One of the final features was the " scream sound effect " Rogers made with his guitar and " crushed " for a distorted and quasi @-@ digital sound that he compared to those made by eccentric Japanese musicians whose records he owned .

Rogers explained that they did not add a pause option because he did not want non @-@ game icons in the screen and because (like in Contra) players would die too soon after resuming . He saw the game as simultaneously a " snow globe of an electric toy " and a " gosh darn airtight hardcore video game " homage to the Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis , and called Ziggurat a descendant of his hobbies : Ibara : Black Label and the Rubik 's Cube . Rogers added that the game contained nine hours of scripted events and that the Archenemy alien " is only the beginning " . Rogers produced a trailer for the game . It was released for iOS platforms on February 17 , 2012 . Two months later , Freshuu , the game 's publisher , signed Ziggurat as the first client for Gimme , an in @-@ game achievement to " real @-@ life rewards " incentive program . The game received two spikes in sales following positive reviews from journalists , and from a mock infomercial 's release on YouTube , all postrelease and not at the time of launch . Brandon Sheffield , writing for Game Developer , thought that Rogers handled the postrelease well since leaking details to the press before the game was available may have impacted sales .

= = Reception = =

The game received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review score aggregator Metacritic . It won a Destructoid Editors ' Choice Award , and Time magazine picked the game as one of the best for the then new high @-@ resolution third generation iPad .

Edge compared the game to a more pleasurable version of Halo : Reach 's final scene . The magazine also compared the feeling of prioritization as a swarm of enemies appear to the feeling of clutter when stacking Tetris blocks haphazardly . Edge also called the red screen and sound effect that flashes upon the player 's death " brash and lo @-@ fi and unexpectedly poignant " , for which they noted Rogers 's interest in noise rock and credited the effect as " a beguiling personal signature " . Alternatively , Paste 's Joe Bernardi thought the sound did not accomplish what it intended . Joseph Leray of TouchArcade noticed how the guitar sound in Gears of War was reaffirming but the opposite in Ziggurat . Edge noted that nuances such as gravity 's influence on the arc of uncharged shots make Ziggurat more of a basketball or golf @-@ like sport skill than a " 2D Halo " . Edge awarded the game a 9 of 10 , adding that it " prized immediacy " in a manner that matched the iOS platform .

Eurogamer 's Martin Robinson said the game made him nostalgic for a score attack game from the early 90s that does not exist , and as such called Ziggurat " one of the finer simple score @-@

attack shooters ... on the App Store " and an expression of the golden age of the Super Nintendo and Sega Genesis . He called the game 's mechanics " fine @-@ tuned " and the gun 's abilities collated from the best elements of other video games . Danny Cowan of IndieGames.com likewise found the controls " very well suited " for touchscreens . He also praised the chained explosions and shot charging as " satisfying " , and compared the game to Missile Command in its allure . Robinson of Eurogamer said the game 's deserving peers were Geometry Wars and Robotron for their refined play styles that make players predict what enemies are about to act . TouchArcade 's Leray praised the game design and never reached a place where his skills plateaued . He advised against using the Slingshot mode controls .

Joe Bernardi of Paste put Ziggurat in a lineage of iOS games where the player tries to do a fun thing as much as possible before dying , including Canabalt , Bit Pilot , and Super Crate Box . He connected Ziggurat 's mechanics to Rogers 's longstanding interest in " infinite mode " without external rewards , and praised the charge time mechanics as " excellent " and the perfect awkward length to confuse muscle memory . Leray of TouchArcade praised its attention to detail , especially in the character sprites . Paste 's Bernardi called Action Button 's design restraint " admirable " and lauded the game 's balance . He noted its " extremely focused shallowness " as defining , like a Dorito , and called it " one of the best iOS games [he had] ever played " . Reviewing for ActionButton.net , indie developer Adam Saltsman called Ziggurat " French New Wave action videogame fan art " .