= Iridion 3D =

Iridion 3D is a quasi @-@ 3D rail shooter video game developed by Shin 'en . A launch title for the Game Boy Advance portable game console , it was released in North America on May 29 , 2001 and in Europe on September 21 the same year . Influenced by the Commodore 64 game Uridium , the game features a single starship fighting the alien Iridion , who have attacked Earth . Iridion spans seven levels from Earth to the aliens ' home planet , each with a fixed linear path that ends with a boss .

Iridion began development as a shooter for the Game Boy Color ; when Shin 'en decided to drop development and shift their focus to the Game Boy Advance , Iridion was the first game by the developer to appear on the system . Though billed as a 3D game , Shin 'en used realtime encoding and resizing to manipulate the size of 2D sprites instead of creating a true 3D environment . More room on the game cartridge was available for graphics due to the game 's use of the GAX Sound Engine , which allowed real @-@ time decoding of song data in a small file size .

On release Iridion garnered generally poor reviews . The graphics and sound were generally praised ; even a year after its release , critics at TechTV considered it the best @-@ looking game on the platform . In contrast , critics derided the game 's repetitive and frustrating gameplay . Despite lukewarm reception to the title upon release , Iridion 3D influenced future Shin 'en shooters such as Iridion II and Nanostray .

= = Gameplay = =

The game is a simple forward @-@ scrolling rail shooter , similar to the Star Fox series . Only the Game Boy Advance 's directional pad , A , and Start buttons are used during gameplay . The ship remains locked at a set speed and cannot brake or speed up .

The player encounters more than fifteen types of enemy , not including level bosses . Some are easy to destroy ; others , including the fire creatures found on the Iridion home world , are indestructible and must be avoided . Other enemies prevent the player from dodging enemy fire by laying mines to block paths . Passive objects , such as garbage or asteroids , can damage or destroy the player 's craft . Enemies vary in armor and weaponry ? some cannot return fire but travel in waves to ram the player .

Each level has the player follow a linear path through waves of enemies and culminates with a boss . In boss stages the player 's craft does not move forward , but hovers in front of the boss . Each boss has a single vulnerability which flashes when hit . These areas are often heavily shielded and must be hit repeatedly to remove armor . Other bosses ' vulnerabilities are hidden and appear for only short periods . Most bosses have weapons that fire upon the player or reflect the player 's shots . At the end of each level , players receive bonuses for defeated enemies , lives remaining , and the energy level of the player 's craft . An extra life is granted if the score reaches certain thresholds .

Iridion 3D features five types of weapons , with three levels of power each . Players boost weapon power by collecting powerups of the color that matches the current weapon . Collecting a different color gives the player the first level of that weapon type . If the player 's ship is destroyed the power level of the weapon is reduced by one . Each weapon has advantages and disadvantages . The player starts with the red weapon , which is relatively weak but fires rapidly in a large spread . Green weapons are inaccurate but fill the screen with shots . Purple weapons spin in a counterclockwise motion slowly and are fairly strong . Yellow torpedo @-@ like weapons are very powerful but powerups are rare and the weapon fires slowly . Blue weapons , a more powerful version of Yellow weapons , are found only on the last level . Flashing powerups restore the craft 's shields .

= = Plot = =

In the opening cinematic of Iridion 3D Earth is attacked without warning by the Iridion , who take over much of the surface and lay mines in orbit and bombs in the Pacific Ocean . The player is the pilot of an experimental SHN fighter , the last hope for defending Earth from the Iridion . The player

pilots his ship alone against hordes of Iridion fighters and natural obstacles . The early stages begin on Earth , with the player fighting through an Iridion garbage tunnel . The player proceeds to the Pacific Ocean and destroys much of the Iridion invasion fleet on Earth before heading into the stratosphere to destroy the orbital blockade around Earth and subsequently annihilating the Iridion boss at the Moon .

 With the invasion fleet in ruins , the player heads into the far reaches of space . After destroying an Iridion mining colony within an asteroid belt , the player proceeds into the Iridion home system . Eventually the player fights the Iridion on their home world , destroying the Iridion " mainframe " and ending the alien threat forever .

= = Development = =

 Iridion started development as a shooter for the Game Boy Color ; on January 10 , 2001 , Shin 'en announced they would stop making games for the Color , instead working on games exclusively for the Game Boy Advance . Iridion 's executive producer was Dan Kitchen , a former programmer for Atari . Iridion 3D was Shin 'en 's first product to utilize the GAX Sound Engine , which allowed real @-@ time decoding of song data in an extremely small file size ; this allowed more space on the cartridge to be used for graphics .

 Although advertised as a 3D game , Iridion 3D uses solely 2D graphics for texture scrolling and sprites which depict explosions and enemies . The developers create the illusion of 3D by looping background textures ? a graphically intensive technique for the Game Boy Advance . Graphical objects shrink or enlarge to depict position relative to the player . Level environments feature changes such as progression from day to night . Kitchen , Majesco 's vice president of handhelds , wrote that " by pushing the graphics hardware of the Game Boy Advance to its technical limits , Iridion 3D provides a truly realistic 3D gaming experience . " He hoped that " players will be amazed that such smooth environments and intense gameplay can now be achieved on a portable system . "

 By March 2001 , the GBA version of Iridion was shown in workable form . IGN saw early screens and declared that Iridion was " aiming to set the standard [of what GBA shooters should be] ... Set the standard with a hail of bullets . " They felt Shin 'en was pushing the Game Boy Advance to its limits , producing the most stunning game seen at the time for the handheld system . GameSpot 's Ben Stahl previewed Iridion 3D on March 21 , 2001 , shortly before the release of the game in the United States . He noted the excellent graphics and high frame rate , ending with " At this point , Iridion 3D looks like it could be a great game for fans of the genre . "

= = Reception = =

 Despite praise for its graphics and sound , Iridion 3D was received mixed reviews from critics ; the game received 53 % and 57 % ratings on review aggregate web sites Metacritic and Game Rankings , respectively .

 The graphics were almost universally praised . Andrew Bub of GameSpy asserted that Nintendo should have used Iridion to advertise the Game Boy Advance , as it took full advantage of the system 's power . A year after its release , TechTV 's Miguel Concepcion argued it was still the best @-@ looking game for the system . Miguel Lopez of GameSpot lauded the graphics , writing that " while it 's ultimately all smoke and mirrors , Iridion 's world is richly detailed , has remarkable depth , and is unbelievably fluid . It 's often hard to tell if the game 's backgrounds are composed of streaming full motion video or just some really fancy math @-@ powered 2D bitmaps . "

 In contrast to praise for Iridion 's graphics , its actual gameplay was generally panned . IGN 's Craig Harris wrote that " Shin 'en 's shooter for the Game Boy Advance will impress with all its effects , but that 's about it . " He noted that the player is limited to shooting and dodging , making gameplay repetitive . Harris and Concepcion complained that on a small screen distances are hard to judge ; the player 's ship is hit by bullets that appear to be in the distance . Bub and Game Informer 's Jay Fitzloff criticized the craft placement , as the player 's view was often obscured by their own ship .

Lopez also gave Iridion low marks , warning that " after the initial ' wow ' wears off , you 'll be stuck with an empty experience . " Edge observed that Iridion is " a sweet number that will entertain , if only for a week or so " . Allgame 's Skyler Miller said Iridion 3D was nothing more than a technology demo and awarded it two out of five stars . A more positive review came from GamePro , whose reviewer summed up his experience by writing that " if you 're looking for some classic shooter action on your new GBA , Iridion 3D will fit the bill nicely without blowing you away . "

 Positive comments were usually directed at sound ; WiredLounge.com said that " The soundtrack is an instant classic , maybe even one of the best shooter scores ever . " Concepcion noted that the game 's mood @-@ fitting " high energy techno " was an oddity coming from a German game company . Despite poor reviews , Shin 'en 's Manfred Linzner felt that Iridion 3D was the best game for the Game Boy Advance without licensed characters .