= The Guardian Legend =

The Guardian Legend , known in Japan as Guardic Gaiden (???????? , G?dikku Gaiden) , is a 1988 hybrid action @-@ adventure / shoot ' em up video game developed by Compile for the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) . It is the sequel to the 1986 MSX game Guardic , and was published and released in Japan by Irem in 1988 , in North America by Brøderbund in 1989 , and in Europe by Nintendo in 1990 .
In the game , the player controls a lone protagonist , the Guardian , who is on a quest to destroy a large alien @-@ infested world named Naju before it reaches the planet Earth . The player must deactivate ten safety devices scattered throughout Naju , thus activating the alien world 's self @-@ destruct sequence . The player explores Naju in a non @-@ linear fashion and can acquire different weapons during the course of the game .
The Guardian Legend received mixed reviews from magazines such as Electronic Gaming Monthly and Nintendo Power . While it has been praised for its impressive graphics , memorable sound , and responsive controls , it has been criticized for its repetitive gameplay and complicated password system .
The game received little fanfare upon its release , but it has since been considered a classic example of a multiple @-@ genre game that set a standard for others such as the title Sigma Star Saga and incorporated gameplay elements from other titles such as The Legend of Zelda , Metroid , and 1942 .

= = Plot = =

In The Guardian Legend , the player controls the gynoid guardian of Earth , a " highly sophisticated aerobot transformer " . The player 's mission is to infiltrate Naju , a large planet @-@ like object which aliens sent hurtling towards the Earth . While inside , the player must activate ten safety devices in order to initialize Naju 's self @-@ destruct mechanism and destroy the alien world before it reaches Earth . Five hostile tribes of alien lifeforms are vying for control of territories within Naju , and the player needs to fight through them to successfully activate the switches and escape .
The story is advanced through a series of messages left by one or more unidentified predecessor (s) who unsuccessfully attempted to engage the self @-@ destruct mechanism of Naju before the Guardian arrived . Left by the sole remaining survivor of the attack on Naju , the first message serves as an introduction ; later messages give hints that help the player open locked corridors .

= = Gameplay = =

Gameplay varies depending on the player 's location within Naju . The player controls the Guardian in humanoid form when exploring the surface of Naju (the Labyrinth) and in spaceship form when investigating Naju 's interior (the Dungeon) . The Guardian has a life meter that decreases after sustaining damage from enemies ; it can be replenished by collecting various items . If the life meter runs out , the Guardian explodes , and the game ends . The player can use a primary rapid @-@ fire weapon with unlimited ammunition as well as various powerful secondary weapons that consume " power chips " with each use . Power chips are also used as currency to purchase upgrades for the Guardian in a handful of shops throughout Naju . Found within the Labyrinth or obtained after defeating a boss , these upgrades include primary weapon improvements , new or upgraded secondary weapons , and round , brightly colored creatures called Landers .
Blue and Red Landers , recurring characters in many Compile games , increase the player 's maximum life and power chip capacities , respectively . Blue Landers play multiple roles in The Guardian Legend . Some of them are not items but non @-@ player characters that dispense advice to the player or exchange upgrades for power chips ; others provide a password that allows the player to resume the game at a later time with their progress retained . These Blue Landers also serve as checkpoints ; players can restart their game in these designated rooms after being defeated provided the system has not been turned off .

In the action @-@ adventure portion of the game known as the " Labyrinth " , the player explores the surface of Naju in humanoid form in a top @-@ down perspective . The player must navigate the Labyrinth and find and infiltrate the corridors and ultimately activate Naju 's ten safety devices . The Labyrinth consists of screen @-@ wide passages and rooms individually plotted as X ? Y coordinates . A map that details these coordinates in a grid @-@ like form can be viewed on the pause subscreen . While the player can generally walk from one screen to the next , some screens are separated by portals called " warp panels " . Warp panels bear a symbol indicative of their surrounding area , and the player can only access these warp panels with keys that match these symbols . Some warp panels lead to rooms containing various clues and story elements while others are gateways to shops , password rooms , and corridors . Keys allow players to access different portions of the Labyrinth , which they can then explore in a non @-@ linear fashion .

In the shoot ' em up portion of the game known as the " Dungeon " , the player battles through Naju 's interior in spaceship form . The Dungeon consists of a series of enemy @-@ filled corridors which are found during exploration of the Labyrinth . The player 's objective in the Dungeon is to progress through each corridor and defeat the boss at the end . Upon completion , the player destroys the corridor and is returned to the Labyrinth , where a power @-@ up (and sometimes a warp panel key) is collected as a reward . While some corridors can be accessed freely , others can only be entered by performing a particular action in the corridor room . Some rooms in the Labyrinth contain clues that indicate how to unseal these corridors . Ten of the corridors in the game serve as the safety devices which must be deactivated to win the game .

= = Development = =

The Guardian Legend was developed for the Nintendo Famicom by Compile as the sequel to the 1986 MSX game Guardic , and it was released as Guardic Gaiden in Japan by Irem on February 5 , 1988 (1988 @-@ 02 @-@ 05) . The director was Masamitsu " Moo " Niitani , Compile 's president and the creator of the Puyo Puyo series . The development team featured many of the staff who helped create Guardic as well as Zanac and Blazing Lazers . The box art for Guardic Gaiden was created by Japanese science @-@ fiction illustrator Naoyuki Kato and depicts the Guardian as a female cyborg . The Guardian Legend was released for the NES and released in North America by Brøderbund in April 1989 ; it was published in Europe by Nintendo in 1990 . Nintendo Power previewed The Guardian Legend in January 1989 , where they discussed the game 's mechanics , graphics , and shoot ' em up sequences . They promised a full review in the following issue , but it was postponed due to a delay of the game 's release . The Guardian Legend was exhibited at the 1989 Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas , Nevada before its release ; it was one of the prime attractions at the Brøderbund booth along with the U @-@ Force controller . In 1990 , remaining inventory of The Guardian Legend was among the assets Brøderbund sold to THQ along with the rest of its New Ventures Division .

= = Reception = =

The game has received both praise and criticism for its multiple @-@ genre format . It was reviewed by four people in a 1989 issue of Electronic Gaming Monthly shortly after the release of the game in 1989 . Steve Harris said that the game does more than most shoot ' em ups and that it 's a " good follow @-@ up for Zanac fans " . He added that the multiple @-@ genre format " helps elevate the whole title to a much higher level " . Ed Semrad called the game a Blaster Master clone and " only average at best " , and he echoed Harris ' opinion that those who enjoyed Zanac would enjoy The Guardian Legend . Donn Nauert said that the game is repetitive and offers little challenge and that it would have been better as a pure shoot ' em up ; he pointed to a special password (" TGL ") in which players can enter to bypass all of the Labyrinth portions . Jim Allee also compared the game to Zanac and repeated what Nauert said about the lack of difficulty except in the boss battles ; he overall praised the game for successfully bringing together two distinct themes .

The Guardian Legend received accolades from the editors of Nintendo Power . The game

appeared in the magazine 's September 1989 issue , where it debuted at # 9 on its " Top 30 " NES Chart . The editors praised the game , and described the protagonist as " the ultimate transforming hero " . The game would remain on the chart for nearly a year . In recognition of its achievements , the magazine 's editors and staff nominated the game for several awards in its first @-@ ever Nintendo Power Awards for 1989 ? among them , " Best Graphics & Sound " , " Best Play Control " , and " Best Overall " ? but the game did not win the top award in any of these categories . Nintendo Power published a partial walkthrough for the game in the following November 1989 issue .

The game received moderate praise in some German gaming magazines after its European release . In Video Games magazine the reviewer praised the game as being a good action @-@ adventure game in the same style of The Legend of Zelda ; he notes that the need to find hidden items and areas and the top @-@ down perspective closely resemble the Nintendo classic . He appreciated the variety and extras in the game , the various strategies needed to fight bosses , its difficulty , and the well @-@ done graphics . The reviewers from Power Play compared The Guardian Legend to The Legend of Zelda and Life Force . They praised the diverse gameplay and weapons , difficulty , and the mixture of action @-@ adventure and shoot ' em up elements . They criticized the game for lacking battery @-@ backed RAM to save player progress ? one of the reviewers said that " the wretched fumbling with the password had long ended " ? as well as its lack of challenging puzzles and a high difficulty level in some of the shoot ' em up sections .

= = Legacy = =

The game continued to receive praise from major game reviewers over a decade since its release . Lucas Thomas of the Evansville Courier & Press favorably compared The Guardian Legend with the NES title The Legend of Zelda and the Game Boy Advance title Sigma Star Saga ; he emphasized Compile 's successful fusion of the action @-@ adventure , shoot ' em up and action role @-@ playing game genres . Later , in a 2008 IGN article , Thomas listed the game at # 2 on his " Top 10 Unreleased NES Hits " list and contended that The Guardian Legend took the concept of the multiple @-@ genre game to a farther extent than Blaster Master . In October 2009 , IGN ranked The Guardian Legend as # 87 on its " Top 100 NES Games of All Time " list and deemed it " one of the most influential games in the history of the gaming industry " . In March 2008 , Game Informer editors referred to the game as " the ultimate genre bender " and likened it to a combination of the NES games The Legend of Zelda , Metroid , and 1942 . While they acclaimed the game for its " exciting and challenging " shooter stages , they criticized it for its complex world map and " outrageous " password system . In a Gamasutra interview , Retro Game Challenge designer Mike Engler said that " The Guardian Legend is one of the best games ever released " .

The graphics and sound of The Guardian Legend have been influential . Robert Dewar and Matthew Smosna of the open computing magazine Open Systems Today cited the game as an example of how graphics co @-@ processors such as those in the NES can compensate for inadequate CPU speed in graphics @-@ intensive computer applications . They noted that the fast @-@ paced action seen in the game could not be replicated on a personal computer at that time (1992) without an expensive graphics board and regardless of CPU speed . The music of the game , composed by Masatomo Miyamoto and Takeshi Santo , has remained popular years after the game 's release . Samantha Amjadali of the Melbourne @-@ based newspaper The Herald Sun reported that a remixed tune from the game was rated as the second most popular track on the website OverClocked ReMix in March 2002 . Video game cover band The Advantage 's 2006 album Elf Titled featured a cover version of music from one of the game 's dungeon levels .