

## = Blaster Master =

Blaster Master is a platform and run and gun video game released by Sunsoft for the Nintendo Entertainment System . It is a localized version of a Japanese Famicom game titled Chô Wakusei Senki Metafight ( ?????????? , which loosely translates to " Super Planetary War Records : Metafight " ) ( also simply called Metafight or Meta Fight ) , which was released on June 17 , 1988 ( 1988 @-@ 06 @-@ 17 ) . The game was released in North America in November 1988 and in Europe on April 25 , 1991 ( 1991 @-@ 04 @-@ 25 ) . The game is the first in the Blaster Master series , and it spawned two spin @-@ off titles as well as two sequels .

The game features a character named Jason who follows his pet frog Fred down a hole in the earth . There he finds a tank and uses it to battle radioactive mutants . The player controls Jason and the tank Sophia the 3rd through eight levels of gameplay to find the whereabouts of Fred and to defeat the mutants and their leader , the Plutonium Boss . The game was praised for its smooth play control and level designs , detailed and clean graphics , and music , and it was criticized for its high difficulty level and lack of passwords or save points . The game was novelized by Peter Lerangis , as part of the Worlds of Power series published by Scholastic Books .

## = = Plot = =

In Chou Wakusei Senki Metafight , the game takes place on the planet Sophia the 3rd , located near the center of the Epsilon Milky Way , in which an advanced civilization flourished . In the year 2052 , the emperor Goez , who has conquered the rest of outer space and declared himself as a god , and his " Inbem Dark Star Cluster " invade and conquer Sophia the 3rd . The only survivor of Goez 's raid is the Science Academy 's Nora Satellite , who has escaped and plans to build a weapon to defeat Goez 's forces . They build an all @-@ purpose tank called " Metal Attacker " that is driven by a boy named Kane Gardner to take the lead in the counterattack . The game 's opening sequence shows Metal Attacker dropped into the battlefield .

The plot of the adapted Western release ( Blaster Master ) is shown at the beginning in a cinematic slideshow as ominous music plays in the background . The game starts with a person named Jason who has a pet frog named Fred who , one day , decides to leap out of his fish bowl and out the door . Fred then touches a radioactive chest , and he grows to an enormous size ; Fred and the chest then fall into a hole in the earth . Jason chases Fred down the hole , which leads to a large underground cavern . While most sources say that Jason chased Fred down the hole , the game 's instruction manual says that Jason fell into the hole while trying to reach for Fred . There , he finds an armored tank named SOPHIA THE 3RD ? a vehicle designed to battle radioactive mutants that live inside the earth . Jason mounts SOPHIA to find the whereabouts of Fred and to destroy the mutants and their leader ? the Plutonium Boss . The opening sequence has been described as " one of the greatest scenes in all of video games " .

## = = Gameplay = =

Blaster Master has two modes of gameplay that depends on the situation and location of the player . The first mode is where the player controls SOPHIA in a two ? dimensional platform mode ; the second mode is where the player controls Jason while outside SOPHIA in either the same 2D platform mode or in a top @-@ down perspective . Gameplay in the top @-@ down perspective consists of a series of labyrinths in which players navigate and defeat enemies along the way . Gameplay is non @-@ linear , and players must return to earlier levels in order to advance to later levels in the game . The objective is to complete all eight levels and destroy the mutants and their bosses with various weaponry such as guns , grenades , and special weapons .

While Jason is inside SOPHIA in the 2D platforming mode , the player can attack the mutants with the main cannon ( which can shoot up , left , and right determined by the orientation of the tank ) or with one of three special weapons . Special weapons have limited ammunition which must be collected from exploring the game . They include the following : homing missiles that , when fired ,

shoot 1 missile at each enemy on screen up to 4 ; " Thunder Break " , which fires a high @-@ damage lightning bolt downward ; and " Multi Warhead Missiles " , which simultaneously fires a set of three missiles at enemies in front of and diagonally up and down . Players select their special weapon and monitor the amounts of each special weapon left by accessing the Menu Screen by pressing the Start button .

Gameplay in the top @-@ down perspective consists of a series of labyrinths in which players defeat enemies along the way . The player switches between the 2D platforming mode and the top @-@ down perspective by leaving the tank and entering small doorways located throughout the game . While in the top @-@ down perspective , players can move Jason in any direction and destroy mutants with a gun or with hand grenades . In this mode , players upgrade the gun by collecting gun capsules , but the gun degrades by one point if Jason receives damage from mutants or hazardous objects . Here players obtain additional vehicle functions by destroying bosses ; these functions include weapon upgrades as well as abilities to swim freely underwater , drive on walls and ceilings , and hover above the ground . The game has a glitch ? colloquially known as the " grenade glitch " ? to easily defeat four of the game 's underbosses . To exploit this glitch , the player throws a grenade at the boss , and while the grenade is exploding and causing damage on the boss , the player pauses the game . While the remainder of the action on the screen freezes , the grenade remains active , continuing to damage the boss . After fifteen seconds the player unpauses the game to find that the boss is destroyed .

Jason and SOPHIA have separate power meters , and they decrease whenever they sustain damage by an enemy or any other hazardous object or whenever Jason falls from a high place . Players can replenish these power meters by collecting power capsules that appear throughout the game . Also , the player can replenish Jason 's health to full at any time by re @-@ entering SOPHIA . The player loses a life if either power meter runs out , and the game ends when all lives are lost . Players get five continues that allow them to restart the game at the same level in which they have lost all their lives . A " hover gauge " monitors the amount of thrust remaining in SOPHIA and is located on the left side of the screen above the power meter ; additional thrust can be obtained by collecting hover capsules .

= = Development = =

The game was released by Sunsoft in Japan as Chô Wakusei Senki Metafight ( also simply called Metafight or Meta Fight ) on June 17 , 1988 ( 1988 @-@ 06 @-@ 17 ) . It was released under the title Blaster Master in North America in November 1988 and in Europe on April 25 , 1991 ( 1991 @-@ 04 @-@ 25 ) . Metafight , along with Ripple Island , was re @-@ released for the PlayStation in Volume 4 of Sunsoft 's Memorial Series in 2002 . The game was released for the Wii 's Virtual Console service in North America on December 14 , 2009 ( 2009 @-@ 12 @-@ 14 ) . The game 's Virtual Console release marked Sunsoft 's first North American release since deciding to return to developing video games for the Western market through its partnership with Gaijinworks . Metafight was released for the Virtual Console in Japan on June 29 , 2010 ( 2010 @-@ 06 @-@ 29 ) for the Wii and on September 5 , 2012 ( 2012 @-@ 09 @-@ 05 ) for the Nintendo 3DS . It was also released in North America for the 3DS on July 24 , 2014 ( 2014 @-@ 07 @-@ 24 ) along with another Sunsoft game Ufouria : The Saga , which released for the Wii U.

Blaster Master was created by Yoshiaki Iwata ( credited as Fanky . ) , who would also direct the reimagining Blaster Master : Overdrive . The game was made by a part @-@ time development team of about five people , which included a main programmer , sub @-@ programmer , lead designer , character designer , and sound programmer . Iwata did the game 's opening sequence and designed the map , overall layout , and bosses ; and he oversaw all phases of the game 's development . In a 2010 interview , Iwata said : " we were trying to make the best action game to date , with all that entails . With SOPHIA ( the game ? s vehicle ) , we wanted to bring to life a sense of action that incorporated all 360 ° of the environment in a way that players hadn ? t really experienced up to that point . Along with that , we wanted large , expansive maps so that we could support that vision . "

The game 's design came from Iwata , who was able to transport his original ideas directly into the game as far as the NES ' graphical capabilities could be taken at that time . He said : " the goal was really to try to pull off the best graphics on the NES to date . Simple graphics were more or less the standard on the NES at the time but I had this firm belief that it was possible to do something better , something prettier . I feel like we pulled it off and were able to show people what could be done [ on the NES ] . It left an impression around the office , and from what I 've heard [ the visuals ] influenced the work of other games that were later made by other NES developers as well . " The game 's music and sound were designed in cooperation between Sunsoft 's staff and an outside composer , Naoki Kodaka , who had previously worked on scores for many of the company 's other titles . Iwata credited him for giving the company a good reputation for video game music in the late 1980s and lamented that " none of those people are working together anymore since they 've all separated from Sunsoft [ over the years ] " .

The other members of Blaster Master 's development team created the system of alternating between the 2D platforming and top @-@ down modes . During the game 's planning , the team came up with the idea that SOPHIA would eventually be able to go anywhere in the game , including navigating on the ceilings and walls . The team created the top @-@ down portions to allow Jason to shoot in all directions and to enable them to " express large bosses that really had an impact " . They did not want to design the gameplay in a linear progression ; instead they drew inspiration from and were influenced by Nintendo 's Metroid to create a game that allowed players to freely move between levels . According to Iwata : " We wanted the player to experience the feeling of excitement that comes from discovering something after endeavoring through a difficult search , which is why we composed a map that allowed the player to move freely between different areas . We really put a great deal of thought into that element of the game design and , I mean this in the best possible way , but we wanted the player to have to struggle . "

The game was localized from Metafight in Japan to Blaster Master for Western markets . In North America , plot elements normally present in anime ( as featured in Metafight ) were not yet popular ; Sunsoft 's U.S. division asked the Japanese development team to change the game 's original plot elements . Hence , the game 's plot changed to that of Jason and his pet frog Fred , and name of the planet " Sophia the 3rd " in Metafight became the name of Jason 's tank in Blaster Master . The original staff also omitted a portion of the map in the fourth level in which " the player was forced to control Jason and make a desperate suicide @-@ leap for a ladder suspended in mid @-@ air , " after complaints from the U.S. staff .

## = = Reception = =

While Sunsoft 's development team , headed by Iwata , were confident that they produced a great game , Chô Wakusei Senki Metafight did not sell well in Japan and , as a result , was not received well within Sunsoft . No sequel was originally planned due to the game 's poor sales ; Iwata already started development on another game when the North American release Blaster Master sold well . The game 's impact led Sunsoft to develop titles with similar top @-@ down gameplay like Gremlins 2 : The New Batch and Fester 's Quest , the latter of whose main designer had helped design the characters for Blaster Master . Iwata incorporated many of the gameplay elements in the remake Blaster Master : Overdrive , which his goal was " for players to recall and think back upon ( the original ) Blaster Master , and so my goal was to find a way to evoke that through this game . "

Blaster Master received praise from reviewers for its gameplay . In a 1988 Electronic Game Player ( later known as Electronic Gaming Monthly ) review , Steve Ryno lauded the concept of combining two " radically different " video game genres into one continuous game . He added that the top @-@ down portion contributes further to the depth of gameplay and said that " everything works well without the game becoming crowded or unbalanced " . The game was featured as one of the " Truly Awesome " games in Game Players ' 1988 buyer 's guide . In a 1992 review in UK magazine Mean Machines , Julian Rignall , praised the overall gameplay and the tank 's control and movements , while co @-@ reviewer Matt Regan enjoyed the game 's fast @-@ paced gameplay and abundance of rooms and bonus areas to explore . Jeremy Parish from 1UP.com praised the gameplay , saying

that the player can explore the map " Metroidvania style " in a large , responsive tank while occasionally having to leave the tank to explore on foot ? something that he compares to the Warthog sequences in the original Halo video game . Nintendo Life 's Corbie Dillard praised the game 's responsive controls and for its non @-@ linearity . GamesRadar ranked it the 21st best NES game ever made and felt that it was ahead of its time .

The game received positive reviews for its graphics and sound . Ryno praised the attention to detail in the graphics , adding that they transition well between levels as new and diverse environments are introduced . He also praised the fluid animation and movement of creatures in the top @-@ down perspective and its music ; he found music " pleasing " and noted that different tracks were scored for each separate level . Dillard praised the game 's impressive graphics , saying that the graphics are varied , distinctive , and well @-@ drawn ; he adds that Sunsoft " did their homework " in this regard . He called the music in the game as one of the best chiptunes in the 8 @-@ bit era , noting the up @-@ tempo tracks and high @-@ quality sound effects . IGN 's Mark Syan Sallee described the music " as memorable as anything from Nintendo " , while Regan said that the game 's sound effects and music bolster the gameplay and graphical atmosphere .

One of the main criticisms of Blaster Master has been its difficulty . IGN 's Levi Buchanan mentioned the lack of passwords or save features as used in Metroid ; the game had to be completed in one sitting . They added that some players need to exploit the " grenade glitch " to beat some of the bosses . Buchanan criticized the game for its difficulty in the on @-@ foot portions , saying that the bosses are too difficult to beat , that the enemies regenerate upon re @-@ entering a screen , and that players can lose a life from falling too far in the 2D platforming mode . IGN 's Lucas Thomas agreed about the lack of passwords or save features , saying that because of the game 's difficulty , dying near the end of the game and having to restart the game all over again without passwords or save points have caused much frustration for players . Parish criticized the game for having a limited number of continues and for the graphics in the top @-@ down perspective , saying that the display is " incredibly cutesy compared to the tank sections , with the protagonist 's head providing about 50 % of his total body mass " .

Some reviewers have found other criticisms in the gameplay . Buchanan mentioned that the character holds his gun in his right hand , requiring the player to compensate by moving left before shooting enemies ( if the player can move left on the screen ) . Thomas echoed Buchanan 's concerns in a later review , adding that this requires players to mentally adjust and to target enemies off @-@ center . Thomas criticized the control of the tank , in particular the lack of traction , which he said may cause players to roll off a platform or cliff . Parish criticized the gameplay in the top @-@ down perspective , saying that the gun the players uses is too weak ; he continues by adding that there are too few upgrades for it and that , whenever the player takes damage , it downgrades from a " high @-@ powered beam of death " to " a stupid unreliable peashooter of mild discomfort " .

The game has received notable recognitions in gaming magazines . It was featured on the cover of the premiere issue of VideoGames & Computer Entertainment in December 1988 . Electronic Gaming Monthly listed the game at # 1 in its " Top Ten Games " list in the premiere issue . In Nintendo Power , the game debuted at # 12 in its " Top 30 " NES games list in its March ? April 1989 issue ; it later climbed to # 6 from May to August 1989 , before it peaked at # 5 in September , behind Zelda II : The Adventure of Link , Super Mario Bros. 2 , Ninja Gaiden , and The Legend of Zelda . The magazine listed it at # 63 in its " 100 Best Games of All Time " list , while Electronic Gaming Monthly listed it at # 184 in its " Top 200 Games of Their Time " list . IGN listed it as # 22 in its " Top 100 NES Games " list .

Nintendo Power reviewed the game in its February 1993 issue , as part of an overview of NES games that the magazine felt were overlooked or otherwise did not sell well . The review said that Sunsoft should have used a licensed character to improve sales . However , they praised its graphics and gameplay , saying that " the action switches between side @-@ scrolling stages and stages that have a Zelda @-@ ish view " . Later , in its 100th issue in September 1997 , the game was listed 63rd in its " 100 Best Games of All Time " list , citing its " fast and furious " gameplay .

= = Legacy = =

At the 1992 Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas , Sunsoft announced that they were planning to develop a sequel for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System , but it never came to be . Instead , Software Creations developed the North American ? exclusive sequel Blaster Master 2 for the Sega Genesis . Later releases include Blaster Master Boy for the Game Boy , Blaster Master : Enemy Below ( released in Japan as MetaFight EX ) for the Game Boy Color , and Blaster Master : Blasting Again for the PlayStation . A re @-@ imagining of the first game , Blaster Master : Overdrive , was released for Nintendo 's WiiWare service in North America on February 8 , 2010 ( 2010 @-@ 02 @-@ 08 ) .

Scholastic Books published a novelization of Blaster Master , written by Peter Lerangis under the pen name " A.L. Singer " . The book was part of the Worlds of Power series ? a collection of loose novelizations of various NES games . He wrote similar novelizations for Ninja Gaiden , Infiltrator , and Bases Loaded II : Second Season . As with the other books in the series , all acts of violence portrayed in the games , including any death scenes , were removed . As a result , the bosses were portrayed in the book as " holographic projections placed over formless blobs " . Shawn Struck and Shawn Sharkey from 1UP.com said that Blaster Master was the hardest book for Lerangis to write because of the lack of a middle plot ; he had to come up with details that were not in the game to connect the game 's actual opening and conclusion . Sunsoft would use Lerangis ' novel as the plot for the game 's sequel , Blaster Master : Blasting Again , making the novel the only one in the Worlds of Power series to be canonized in a video game series .

In a 2010 interview with Iwata , he was surprised about the game 's reception outside Japan , which retrogamers have named it as one of their favorite and most memorable 8 @-@ bit titles . He said : " It ? s kind of funny that the first time I ever really had any sense of the game ? s success was about 10 years following the original release of Blaster Master , when a young staff member from the U.S. office said something to me like , ' You ? d definitely have become a super famous game designer if you were an American . ' " Alex Neuse , creator of the Bit.Trip series , reminisced his memories of playing Blaster Master as a child . He acknowledged that the game was a clone of Metroid that featured a tank that could jump and a corny storyline , but he said it was all " presented in a way that it felt meaningful " . He added that the game 's music convinced him " that video game music could be high @-@ quality , memorable , and evocative " . 1UP.com listed the game as the 11th best NES game of all time in its " Top 25 NES Games " list ; the 1UP.com staff said the game was " an action game that worked like a mishmash of every NES game before it " , noting the expansive map like in Metroid . Paste magazine ranked Blaster Master as the 2nd greatest NES game of all time , behind The Legend of Zelda ; they cited the tank 's additional abilities as a main reason behind its ranking .

On December 15 , 2010 , SOPHIA the 3rd made an appearance in the Flash game Super Mario Bros. Crossover , in its Version 1 @-@ 2 release . In the game , the tank possesses all abilities from Blaster Master and is the first character in the game to have a limited supply of ammunition ; players need to collect power @-@ ups from enemies in order to fire homing missiles , which is necessary to defeat Buzzy Beetles , Spike Tops , and Bullet Bills . The version also allows SOPHIA to grapple onto ceilings . On December 21 , 2012 , the game was updated to include , among other skins , a skin that changes the level , enemy , and interface graphics to those based on Blaster Master . According to the game 's designer , SOPHIA was planned to be in the game from the beginning along with Ryu Hayabusa and Luigi , although they were left out of the first release due to time .

= = = April Fools ' Day hoax = = =

On April Fools ' Day on April 1 , 2010 ( 2010 @-@ 04 @-@ 01 ) , Sunsoft announced that a sequel to the game would be released on the Virtual Console titled Blaster Master : Destination Fred . According to their press release , the game was only purported to be tested on several PlayChoice @-@ 10 machines in the Los Angeles area between 1988 and 1989 . Upon discovery of copies of the game in Sunsoft 's headquarters in Japan , Gaijinworks ' founder Victor Ireland said : " I was blown away when I saw these . When I was going through boxes of stored code , promotional items

, and ROMs to see what we had on hand to release for the U.S. Virtual Console market , finding these nine completely unknown cartridges literally stunned me . I knew it had to be put up on the Virtual Console as fast as we could make it happen . "

The story was supposed to continue with the English plot of the first Blaster Master game . The Plutonium Boss originally intended to inject Jason and Fred with microbots that , even if Jason managed to defeat him , would kill both Jason and Fred , but he could only inject Fred . Jason and SOPHIA the 3rd are then shrunk and injected inside Fred to do battle with the microbots and their contraptions ? something which Ireland described as " a pretty clear video game spin on Fantastic Voyage kind of adventure " . It was planned to be released for the Virtual Console on April 26 , 2010 ( 2010 @-@ 04 @-@ 26 ) for 500 Wii points . IGN 's Daemon Hatfield , after discovering nothing about Blaster Master : Destination Fred in any video game archives , suspected that this was an April Fools ' Day hoax ; he said , however , that after the release of Dark Void Zero it was possible for Sunsoft to release a new 8 @-@ bit title . Destructoid 's Conrad Zimmerman strongly suspected that this was also a hoax ; he said that there was no proof of the game 's existence except for it temporarily being mentioned on Wikipedia and that " Nintendo never lets anybody say when their games are coming out on Virtual Console " . Sunsoft later confirmed on their website that the sequel was an April Fools ' Day hoax .