**Godstrike review**
**By Chris Getliffe 13/04/21**
**Platforms: PC & Nintendo Switch**
**Reviewed on PC**

I've been enamoured with shoot-em-ups for as early as I can remember. From the surprisingly good port of R-Type on the ZX Spectrum, through to Ikaruga on the Gamecube. Thunderforce IV to this day is still one of my all time favourite games. I love shoot-em-ups, but I don't love Godstrike, which is a novel deviation on the genre by the developers OverPowered Team.

At its core Godstrike is a boss rush bullet hell shooter. Once a boss is defeated you move on to the next, however instead of lives or a health bar, you have time. It's a clever idea on paper, the clock is constantly ticking and anytime you take a hit it will knock off some precious seconds. Once you're out of time you can only take one final hit before your attempt is over. There is no way to get time back once you're in combat, so it forces a very aggressive play style in a game where ideally you want to be careful and precise with your movements. It can on occasion give a sense of panicked desperation, but mostly it's just frustrating, as you barely have enough time, even if you never take a hit.

This lack of time also makes the game incredibly hard, it took me multiple attempts to even get past the first tutorial boss. These bosses have multiples of long health bars that you can only chip away at. Especially at first, where in the story mode you initially have just a weak basic shot and no other offensive abilities unlocked. The only way to get more is to kill the bosses, that you desperately need the upgrades to beat. You eventually learn the patterns that make moving on easier, but it's incredibly repetitive to fight the same enemy again and again. Especially in such visually and audibly bland environments. There's no crunch to the weapons, no thumping soundtrack to stir you up and push you forward. Just the sound of a metaphorical wet fish slapping against your will to continue. Of course the sound effect for your own personal boredom may vary.

There is an Arcade mode with everything unlocked which progresses just like the story, all be it with a stricter time limit. Here you can choose up to 4 offensive active abilities and 4 passive defensive abilities, the same ones you can eventually use in the story. To re-charge your abilities you have to collect power that drops from the bosses, which prompts quick decision making. Do you try and go for those power crystals so you can fire your beam again? It will put you in an awkward position, but that powerful blast does do a lot of damage, and the health clock is forever ticking. These abilities do let you shape your play style to a personal preference, but there are only a few, such as briefly turning into an invincible ball of energy, that will give you meaningful gameplay options.

Thankfully, the attack patterns are mostly well telegraphed and easy to make out, and the projectiles are easy to see, something that's so important, yet often lacking in shoot-em-ups. There is some satisfaction in bobbing and weaving a path through the bullet storm, and the hit detection is spot on. Godstrike feels very functional and cold, as you just don't care about the player character, or who you are fighting. Granted a story is rarely that important in the genre, but without any spectacle to replace it everything just feels monotonous. The bosses although nicely drawn, are just not interesting to fight, they lack any real design inspiration or visual personality. The second boss is just a large static totem poll for instance.

If you're desperate for a new shoot-em-up, and you pride yourself on being incredibly good

at them, then you may find some enjoyment and a lot of challenge in Godstrike. Enough to even warrant adding a one to the score given at the bottom of this review. For everyone else, tedium and frustration will be the lasting experience.

Score
6/10