

GUNVOLT: MISSION START!

► By: Henry North

Mega Man is back, and this time he's... blonde? Alright, it's not really a Mega Man game, but as a spiritual successor to the franchise, *Azure Striker Gunvolt* is a great step in the right direction.

Produced by Inti Creates, a company of ex-Capcom staff, and Keiji Inafune, best known for his work with the Mega Man and Resident Evil franchises, *Azure Striker Gunvolt* is a 2D action-platformer for the Nintendo 3DS.

Gunvolt, the title character, is a psychic boy with the ability to control electricity. He is working for a resistance force and human rights organization named QUILL. Their objective is to take down a conglomerate known as the Sumeragi group, which is keeping "peace" in the world by taking anyone with psychic abilities and placing them in concentration camps.

Azure Striker Gunvolt plays like a cross between Mega Man X and Sonic Dash; it's a fast paced, shooter that ends with a boss in every level and has a ranking system. Gunvolt can constantly dash to speed through a level, and deals with any enemies that he encounters with his gun. The gun does little damage, but its main purpose is to tag enemies, so that Gunvolt can finish them off with his Flashfield ability, which strikes any tagged enemies with lightning. The



controls were pretty fluid once I got the hang of it; it was easy to switch from tagging to tasing or doing both at once.

Like the X series, the stage progression involves an introductory stage and then once you finish that, you can choose to play whatever stage you want. Each stage takes place in a different locale with a different boss and objective. I enjoyed the stage design and some of the gimmicks, because each stage was unique. Even if one

stage continuously killed me because it left little room for mistakes, I kept practicing until I got it right, and enjoyed the experience of getting better.

The game has a lot of nifty features, like being able to customize what equipment Gunvolt is using, whether it's in the menu screen or right in the middle of a stage. There are also challenges you can do while in different stages to change up how you go about tackling the level. I'd advise you to play the stages a bit before doing certain challenges, so you can have a better feel for what to expect.

Inti Creates knew what they were doing when they made this game. It is highly enjoyable and if you liked any of the games from the Mega Man franchise, then you'll enjoy adding *Azure Striker Gunvolt* to your video game library.

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