



Twenty-one areas of US territory have been captured by the evil might of an unknown airborne empire. Their powerful MiG fighters have decimated the entire US airforce, and now only one lone F-14 Tomcat remains.

Tom is the US Top Gun (mainly because he is only fighter pilot left) and it's his mission to take to the skies and blow away as much of the empire as possible with the aid of his super-deadly Vulcan cannon and his fire-and-forget Sidewinder missiles. Simply by running the on-screen sight over the approaching MiGs, the F-14's computer system locks on and a missile can be despatched. Missiles have a far longer range than the cannon and they never miss. The trade-off is that you get more points by using the more old-fashioned cannon-method.

The action is depicted in sprite-based 3D, with enemy fighters arriving from all angles with Tom's death at the top of their agendas. They have much the same weaponry as Tom, though their missiles are a lot less accurate and since Tom is such a good flyer he can dodge them with ease.

The action only lets up when the F-14 makes a routine rendezvous with a tanker aircraft, where more fuel and extra missiles are given.

AFTER BURNER

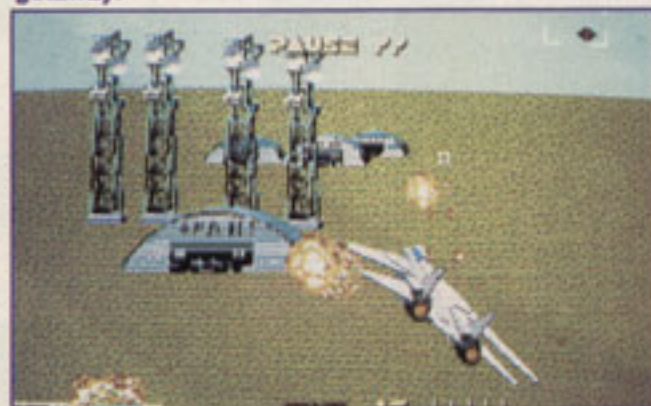
AERIAL ARCADE ACE



▲ The F-14 gets a napalm enemy!

ENGAGE AFTERBURNERS!

The joypad buttons allow you to change the speed your F-14 travels at. Travelling at low-speed is essential for the canyon attacks in levels eight and seventeen. When your F-14 is at top speed another stab at the speed button engages the afterburners for a short burst of extra speed - perfect for the quick getaway.



LOW-LEVEL ATTACK

The canyon runs are the perfect places to squeeze some extra points out of the game. Here, the objective is simply to wipe out a ground-based enemy contingent - cunningly hiding in a canyon to escape detection. Simply slow down, point the nose down and fire away! The only things that can possibly harm you are the canyon walls - so slow down and fly carefully!





▲ Night-time flying in Afterburner.

COUNTER-ATTACK

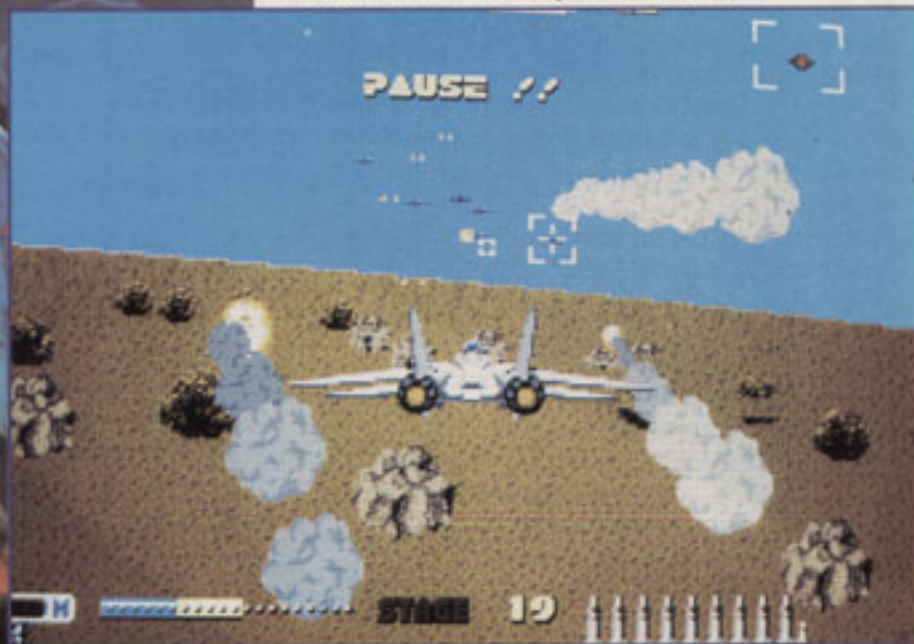
The F-14 faces most of the enemy fleet head-on, but later stages witness the underhand enemy sending up planes behind you in order to blow you away with their cannons at close range. Cruise missiles also follow the same behaviour pattern, so watch out! The best way to avoid these dangers is to simply ignite the afterburners - not even cruise missiles can catch up with an F-14 flying at top speed (well, not in this game any way)!



JULIAN

The fast and frantic action of the coin-op has been fully captured in this cracking conversion, with the player flying into battle at supersonic speeds, dodging bullets, rockets and planes while simultaneously trying to lock his sights onto the enemy craft and bring them down with his plane's guns and homing missiles! The graphics are awesome, with rapid, convincing 3D sprite update - the planes come towards you at incredible speeds! As well as great looks, Afterburner also features brilliant soundtracks and effects, and very tough and challenging action - beating all 22 levels takes some doing! One thing I feel I must say is that Afterburner is one of those games you either love or hate. We at MEAN MACHINES think it's fab, but there will be some who disagree, thinking the plane-blasting action is too repetitive to make long-term play worthwhile. So if you've never seen the arcade game, make sure you have a good look before you buy, just in case!

▼ Missiles streak away from the F-14!





AERIAL AEROBICS

Tom is a bit of a dab hand when it comes to flying an F-14 and when it comes to dodging missiles fired at close range, he has a rather cunning trick up his sleeves. Simply by turning one direction and suddenly yanking the stick over in the other, a brilliant 360 degrees turn can be achieved! Good eh?



AFTERBURNER: THE COIN-OP

The arcade version of Afterburner amazed arcade players all over the world with its amazing graphics, super-slick hard rock soundtracks and cosmic hydraulics! Unfortunately, the coin-op's joystick was so long that it made the F-14's responsiveness very questionable to say the least. Thankfully, that problem isn't present in this Megadrive cart!

COMMENT



The coin-op version is one of the all-time great arcade experiences (especially in the deluxe hydraulic cabinets), so this Megadrive version certainly has a lot to live up to.

MATT

Thankfully, Afterburner is more than pulls off this gargantuan feat. The graphics are less detailed than the coin-op, but the programmers have concentrated on making the action look superb rather than the scenery. The 3D effect on all of the planes is excellent and there are loads of big explosions to make the destruction that more appealing. The sound is excellent too, with sampled "speech" and effects and some of the best music I've heard on the Megadrive. The gameplay is repetitive, but the high-speed thrills 'n' spills offered by the game more than makes up for it. Afterburner is an excellent conversion and a superlative game in its own right that more than deserves a place in your Megadrive collection.



▲ A cruise missile causes F-14 annihilation.



▲ Formation destruction!



BY: SEGA

PRICE: £34.99

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
 GAME DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM
 LIVES: 3
 CONTINUES: 3
 SKILL LEVELS: 3
 RESPONSIVENESS: WHIZZ



PRESENTATION 86%

Loads of options to wade through and an arcade-perfect attract sequence.

GRAPHICS 92%

Superlative 3D sprites whizz around the screen at top speed!

SOUND 93%

Hard and heavy rock soundtracks the like of which have not been heard on the Megadrive. Excellent explosive effects too.

PLAYABILITY 94%

A super-responsive F-14 makes this more enjoyable to play than the coin-op!

LASTABILITY 88%

Twenty-one levels of airborne destruction that'll have you playing again and again!

OVERALL 90%

Airborne excitement which has yet to be successfully replicated on any other console. Go for it!