Bullet Hell Artistry 8
Unconventional Minimalism

Judgements by Python

# Preamble

In this document, I will evaluate and grade each submission to the Bullet Hell Artistry 8 contest held in Bullet Hell Engines. The submissions will be awarded points in the following categories. My goal in particular is to provide constructive criticism in all aspects that I see myself able to, such that all participants may improve their further work accordingly. If you’ve never received feedback from me, I have a tendency to be *quite* blunt with that. This is not meant as an affront to anyone personally.

Categories per pattern. The final score in these categories is the arithmetic mean of the individual scores of each pattern.

Pattern Design (\*/20)

Factors in the fun had while dodging, the complexity and difficulty level of the attack, in particular how well I (as a Normal/Hard player) am able to learn to deal with it on the contest difficulty or the designated Normal/Hard difficulty. I do not expect to be able to NMNB entries, least of all on the first try.

Pattern Aesthetics (\*/10)

Factors in pattern-specific visuals. By default you’ll get 5 points here. Aesthetically pleasing patterns may score additional points while aesthetically bland patterns may lose some. Due to the contest theme, *visual effects and sound design* are explicitly not a factor here - only the arrangement of the bullets themselves. However, especially poor visuals or sound design that impact gameplay will also detract from this score.

Because a stage is mandatory this time around, it will also be graded in the same way. When possible I will comment on specific sections of each stage, highlighting parts I enjoyed especially and pointing out potential flaws and ways to improve them. Finally, the arithmetic mean pattern score and your stage score are added up for a total maximum of 60 points. For the final tally, all judges’ scores will be scaled to the range 0 - 100. I’ll note this down as “Judgement Score” beneath my own score calculations.

#

# Valon’s Entry

*Touhou Lunar Invaders*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: Marisa

I don’t know if this is something mandated by the Unity engine, but if your game is going to be fullscreen, I’d prefer that it is an option rather than forced. I like to play games windowed rather than fullscreen because I usually do other minor things on the side as well. This does not impact your score, but it was significant enough for me to bring it up. Other than that the menu is fine. I’m surprised at the lack of a dedicated pattern practice option in the practice menu. Again, not relevant to your score, but something to consider for the future.

## Stage Portion (2:54)

Pattern Design (11/20)

It’s a generally solid stage that gets the important fundamentals right in my opinion, but doesn’t do anything outstanding either. It does one of those things that I hate to see in danmaku personally, and that’s setting up bullet formations only to have them unfurl into randomness - they degenerate. There are these enemies that create “windows” of bullets that behave this way.

Design-wise everything is kept pretty safe and simple. A quicker pace might help the stage feel more exciting on repeat playthroughs, since memorizing the enemy formations can lead to a lot of dead air where the player just waits for things to happen and that’s something you should strive to avoid.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Bullet Sign “Circular Wrathmech” (1)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Slow start. I think I know what you wanted to go for, with the big bullets setting up obstacles to weave through as the pink shots return to you. Those also could do with some telegraphing before they come back. The bottom line is, while it’s fine to dodge, it feels underwhelming as a pattern.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Bullet Sign “Revolving Chamber” (2)

Pattern Design (6/20)

The first time around I found myself running across the screen while being chased by a spinny circle of doom. Patterns like these, where the player is supposed to stay in some kind of confinement zone should have that zone trap the player right from the start so there’s no confusion. See Eirin’s Earth/Galaxy in a Pot where the familiars home onto the player position and it’s impossible to escape, or Yukari’s Boundary of Humans and Youkai, where the laser circle comes in from outside the screen and contracts into its final shape, encouraging the player to be in the right place from the get-go. Aside from that, there’s nothing really interesting to dodge inside the circle and in the end it also does the setup -> RNG combo that I dislike.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Toyohime Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (9/20)

The Lunarians are known for the purity and my head finds itself purified of anything worth remarking here as well. There’s nothing wrong with the pattern per se - it feels like it’s right at home with the rest of the stage’s difficulty but it just doesn’t do anything worth getting excited over. This clearly feels like an Extra boss first nonspell where it introduces the basic idea that will be iterated on throughout the fight.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Mountain Legend “Cry of the Pure Yamabiko” (4)

Pattern Design (7/20)

Not the pinnacle of ingenuity either. There’s a bit of a telegraph problem as well in that the dark orbs don’t properly herald the triangle clusters that come back at you. There’s no startup delay for those, no warning of any kind, and their size feels kind of mismatched as well, so it’s easy to just write them off as bullets without additional function. Once the player knows, it becomes fine to dodge. If you delete them with a bomb, the triangles will spawn from the bottom center of the screen anyway.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Toyohime Nonspell 2 (4)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Now the Extra boss nonspell mindset is on full display with the iterations. It’s okay to dodge but neither interesting to do so nor to look at. I find that patterns where bullets don’t neatly group themselves into intuitively distinguishable formations might as well be random to my mind. They do not spark joy.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sea Fantasy “Drowning in the Tranquil Ocean” (5)

Pattern Design (12/20)

This takes some time to get going which dulls the experience a little, but once it does, I find it comfortable to dodge. Personally I think the curving spirals could have turned a little bit over time so that they gradually cross each other. My biggest gripe is with the aimed red and yellow bullets in that they were practically invisible to me for the first few seconds of the pattern. This is because the neatly ordered lines of bullets excite my vision way more and I become blind to the individual pellets that don’t fit the pattern. These kinds of bullets need to command more visual space to be more easily noticed, or the player might find themselves dying to something they couldn’t see. Make the graphic bigger, or use more bullets clumped together to accomplish this. Please never use individual small pellets like that.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

The lines excite the part of my brain that organizes items into groups. It makes them easier to think about unconsciously.

## Toyohime Nonspell 3 (6)

Pattern Design (8/20)

This does not feel significantly different from the base template of the first nonspell. I think it could do with some aimed components, or possibly having the blue lines be longer to better restrict the player’s movement range.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## “Turning Over the Sea and the Mountains” (7)

Pattern Design (7/20)

This one looks like it was made with homing in mind, what with the boss circling around the screen and forcing you to the top, but the other shot types fare just fine with it. This is good. The pattern itself though doesn’t offer anything super interesting. The red aimed wave and the blue balls feel like they exist completely independently of each other. Blue only matters when you move away from Toyohime, and red only matters when you’re standing still but also doesn’t challenge the space that the blue bullets try to restrict you to.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Lunar Weapon “Atomic Purification” (8)

Pattern Design (4/20)

This one takes aaaaages to get going and seems bugged, too. The boss is gone so I’d think it’s a survival, but you can still shoot her and lower her health, clearing the attack that way. The lasers can also be deleted by bombs, which completely kills the entire pattern. Even when dodging it the intended way, the last 20 seconds can be spent sitting still.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boundary “Barrier of Earth and Moon” (9)

Pattern Design (10/20)

I think there could be some variance in speed between the three different amulet colors to make the pattern feel less monotonous. The final wave where everything freezes and heads toward your surprised me at first but isn’t bad to deal with.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

##

## Concluding Remarks

Consideríng this contest is the first one with a mandatory stage portion I’m excited to see that the stage received as much care as it did. I’d say it’s easily the better part in comparison to the boss patterns, which feel as monotonous as they are monochrome. All three players seemed good to play, with my personal ranking being Marisa > Nazrin > Reimu, mostly due to Reimu’s sluggish speed.

##

*Stage Portion (16/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (8.78/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5.11/10)*

# Total Points: 29.89/60

*Judgement Score: 49.82%*

# Kobito’s Entry

*Indigo Horizon*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

Upon downloading this game, I found the window size config to be bugged. For some reason the list of sizes was commented out in the DEF file. Minor issue, no big deal.

More importantly however this entry stands apart from all others in this contest as the only one that managed to cause me physical pain. I don’t say this because I cringed at the danmaku design or anything, but the combination of flashing bullets and excessive red blended together into red soup that caused me to go effectively blind in the last few seconds of the battle, requiring some serious eyeball rest afterwards. Visuals don’t normally manage to overstimulate me in this way, it’s usually auditory noise that gets me. The other judges might disagree but because of this uniquely horrible experience, there will be *no points* for aesthetics anywhere. Wish gave me a modified shot data file that turns off the flashing, which makes the experience more bearable for my eyes, but not by very much. Even while judging I had to take a break from repeated playthroughs to give my eyes enough rest, but I’ll do my best to give your actual pattern design a fair trial.

## Stage Portion (2:12)

Pattern Design (16/20)

I have never touched an “arcade-style” shmup in my life and don’t plan on it. Nevertheless I do like the way this stage flows and feels. It felt overwhelming at first, but with a bit of practice I’m getting the general hang of the attacks. It’s fast and exciting. Where it falls short in my opinion is the actual “design” part because everything ends up feeling the same, and all that changes is that there’s more of everything after the midboss. This makes it very difficult for me to remember what’s going to happen and where it’s going to happen, so more often than not I’ll miss some enemy in a crucial spot and be overwhelmed by them. Especially the big tanks with the double aimed lines.

Part of the issue is definitely the red soup I mentioned in the introduction, but even gameplay-wise I think I’m just swinging from side to side with no real game plan. I can’t practice this stage very much because I want to keep my eyes for a few more years.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

##

## Midboss Attack 1 (1)

Pattern Design (10/20)

Okay to dodge, nothing really outstanding design-wise. The fact that all the bullets are the same color can also make it difficult for me to separate out the individual components (here, big balls and aimed lines). Using shape to tell them apart doesn’t work as well when the color causes them to blend together so easily. Color coding different components of your pattern can better help the human brain organize them into groups, the same way as similarity by shape and proximity can. This issue permeates the stage entirely, so I’ll only bring it up here.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Midboss Attack 2 (2)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Same deal with the similarity problems as in the previous attack. Dodging feels a bit more involved here.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Boss Attack 1 (3)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Got me killed most of the time until I tried dodging towards the left rather than the right. Then it was fine. Feels good to play.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Boss Attack 2 (4)

Pattern Design (16/20)

Probably my favorite boss attack in this entry. There’s not a whole lot of overlap between bullets so I don’t have to worry about being blindsided, and it still captures the high octane dodging action you’re aiming for.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Boss Attack 3 (5)

Pattern Design (15/20)

I also like this one in terms of gameplay, since it feels like a bit of a breather after all the fast-paced dodging that came before it. It’s a bit slower but doesn’t make you sit around, and I found the bullets to be a lot more easily readable here than in previous attacks.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Boss Attack 4 (6)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Cube time. I thought the cube had more attacks, but it’s just a lot of quick patterns in sequence. They’re all kind of whatever but dodging them is still quite exciting, so points for that. Unfortunately this is also the part where I went blind. Probably not entirely the fault of the pattern itself, since my visual receptors were likely already burnt out from everything that came before it.

Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)

For reasons mentioned already.

## Concluding Remarks

> game is called *“indigo” horizon*

> look inside

> red



After playing it a few more times I think this script could’ve been one I really enjoyed if it didn’t try to do what Odysseus did to Polyphemus. And this is in spite of the fact that I do not think I enjoy arcade-style shmups. Not so much because I hate fast bullets (I don’t, dodging them is undeniably exciting), but because it lacks the personality that Touhou style brings to the table. I feel pretty much at home there, and as far as I know, the other judges share this tendency. Which is a bit unfortunate for those contestants who prefer this style of gameplay.

Seriously though, stop with the flashing. Please. I’m begging you.

*Stage Portion (16/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (13.17/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (0/10)*

# Total Points: 29.17/60

*Judgement Score: 48.62%*

# Akemi Yume’s Entry

*Seafoam Aspirations*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: Reimu

When the stage started, I felt like the enemy explosion effects would be too much visual noise. Luckily this ended up not being the case, but I’d still like to advise toning them down a tiny bit in some way, e. g. by restricting them to a smaller space.

## Stage Portion (1:57)

Pattern Design (17/20)

This stage also gets all the important fundamentals right. It feels engaging to play and pretty to look at. The start (up until the first pink splitting laser fairy comes in) is a little bit too slow and the recurring waves of popcorn fairies that don’t shoot anything create the illusion that there’s more happening than is actually the case. Those could’ve been good candidates for fast aimed lines to stream, creating a tiny bit more action in places where there’s not much overlap between enemy formations.

The Nezu-like stop-and-start bullets and the meandering squares are two things I didn’t particularly enjoy dodging. The Nezu-likes might have benefitted from some sort of clustering, e. g. having walls with bigger gaps between them, or bullet wedges or circles. By their lonesome they look kind of bad.

Pattern Aesthetics (8/10)

I am a BIG fan of the sound wave formation! The one near the beginning and right at the end. I love how it syncs up with the whale call in the music, too. This whole stage feels very atmospheric with its pattern design.

## Shimizu Mid Nonspell (1)

Pattern Design (10/20)

Fine to dodge, but conceptually unremarkable. Could’ve done with some overlap between waves or additional patterns to mesh with the main one.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## Shimizu Nonspell 1 (2)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Not a whole lot different from the midboss nonspell, but it’s a little more frantic due to increased speed and obscure bullet trajectories. I think it could’ve also benefitted a lot from some element that lingers long enough to affect the next wave, e. g. slower fireballs that come in bigger groups.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sea Sign “Obedient School of Fish” (3)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Again, the individual waves exist in isolation and don’t mesh with each other, or there’s not really any other component that makes engaging with the waves a little more interesting. The spell is also somewhat trivialized by not shooting, which isn’t a big problem, but personally I’d still have liked to see the fairies do something upon hitting the edge of the screen, forcing you to misdirect the ones you failed to shoot down in time.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Shimizu Nonspell 2 (4)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Conceptually more interesting than the preceding nonspells, but the way the bullets unfurl they turn into repetitive random soup very easily. Feels a lot like Doremy.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Tail Sign “Split Sea Breaching” (5)

Pattern Design (17/20)

This one’s fun to dodge despite its simplicity. Could’ve benefitted from some kind of mixup every three waves or so, even just having the boss come up from the bottom of the screen rather than go down from the top could’ve helped to make it feel less immediately repetitive.

Pattern Aesthetics (7/10)

Good bullet clustering to make the safe lanes easier to distinguish without making everything move perfectly perpendicular to the main beam.

## Shimizu Nonspell 3 (6)

Pattern Design (10/20)

This nonspell is very polarizing in terms of difficulty. The first wave is horrendous to dodge because all the bullets are spread apart so much while still following somewhat similar trajectories. Then the second wave creates lines with wide gaps that make avoiding the fireballs pathetically easy.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

The fireballs can hide the other bullets on occasion due to their long opaque tails. All the bullets feel very isolated as well because the groups they belong to spread apart so much, causing unrelated bullets to be close to each other more often than not, which makes the pattern harder to think about. I’m a tiny bit bothered by the lack of sequential symmetry as well (i. e. the spiral always turns the same way rather than flipping on repeat).

## Light Sign “Guiding Lantern Aura” (7)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Stands out from the rest conceptually, but unfortunately it also gets old pretty fast, since it loops on itself within about five seconds. Repetitive patterns need to spark more excitement in the player by being more frantic to dodge, typically.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Same problem with the fireballs being very good at hiding each other applies.

## Concluding Remarks

Honestly it’s a bit of a shame this was submitted to a contest with no points for visuals. I think the aesthetics are great. The background is bright and atmospheric without interfering with bullet visibility, and there are a lot of little quirks that I like (such as the tiny boss defeat animation between patterns). The stage itself is well-designed both in terms of gameplay and pattern composition.

I like how distinct the nonspells are from each other while still following a general theme, but a lot of the patterns feel like one-trick ponies without much else to them to really flesh them out as danmaku patterns. For the most part all that’s needed to make them more interesting is either an extra component to push the player around, or a bit of a mixup between waves to make them feel less repetitive, or a few more bullets in any given group to make them more visually appealing.

*Stage Portion (25/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (12.86/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)*

# Total Points: 42.86/60

*Judgement Score: 71.43%*

# AnnaSaysHi’s Entry

*ShmupCC BHA8 Build*

Preferred Difficulty: Original

Preferred Player: N/A

I think the menu can sometimes be unresponsive even to arrow key inputs, which don’t depend on my keyboard layout.

## Stage Portion (1:30)

Pattern Design (4/20)

The stage only has three different enemies: the aiming ones, the ones that drop stars and the ones that leave spirals. The latter two are almost identical because their setup degenerates into random soup of singular bullets drifting across the screen. In both cases the first type of enemy is used to create pressure and sweep the player around a little. In principle, that’s the essence of stage design. In practice, everything looks, feels and plays exactly the same.

Generally if you have a small pool of unique enemies, try to vary the ways they are used and most importantly, make sure that each one feels sufficiently distinct from the others. For example, you could make the third type - the star spirals - shoot continuous walls broken up by some larger gaps. That would already make that pattern feel a little different from the other star one. Experiment with different movement paths for your enemies and have the bullets come from the side, or even from the bottom (typically requires a wave that encourages the player to push up beforehand so they don’t get caught off guard). This varies the ways in which the player has to approach the formation even if the underlying enemy types are always the same. Give your formations short introductions in isolation, or if they’re very simple, bunch two introductions together. Then start combining them and mixing them up.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

None to speak of. Everything was either aimed or looked random.

## Midboss Attack 1 (1)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Kind of interesting with the bosses sitting on either side of the screen, but it makes dealing damage to them a little more annoying in practice because you can only stream their attacks towards the center, so early on it has a tendency to overstay its welcome by a large margin. Once the player can stream in a tighter area, it becomes completely unremarkable.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Midboss Attack 2 (2)

Pattern Design (4/20)

It’s like Mike’s first spell without everything that makes Mike’s first spell even remotely interesting. Just random monochrome bullets falling down in a general wave shape that swings from side to side. It’s neither interesting to look at nor exciting to dodge. There’s no pattern to speak of.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

More pure randomness and uniform visuals.

## Boss Attack 1 (3)

Pattern Design (4/20)

Two overlapping spirals and nothing else. At least the boss moves. Introduce some variance in speed, have one of the spirals consist of slow walls with larger gaps while the other uses fast, small lines or clumps. Move the boss a tiny bit while they’re still shooting. There are a lot of ways to make even a primitive pattern like this fun to look at and play.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boss Attack 2 (4)

Pattern Design (5/20)

Again with the degeneration to randomness. You have a pattern setup, so work with that. Have the bullets actually move perpendicular to their source shot’s trajectory or maybe even turn into lasers to restrict player movement while the boss shoots something at them to force them to move through the resulting grid. Or have them shot to the left and right rather than directly at the player, but bounce off the screen walls, lingering for longer and leaving more bullets to drop down and create obstacles for another layer of attacks to cut through and force the player to think about their engagement with each element of the pattern.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Pattern degeneration.

##

## Boss Attack 3 (5)

Pattern Design (5/20)

Same problem as the first boss attack, but I think I can see sliiiight variation in density? The spirals have different numbers of arms - that’s variation! You just have to go a little bit further.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boss Attack 4 (6)

Pattern Design (7/20)

The way the bullets spawn looks really interesting with all the curving, and once you dodge them, the basic star formations are still apparent. Could’ve benefitted from mixups or other components that shove the player around a bit. If you slowed the entire spawning process down a little but made its range huge enough to reach the player, could that be fun?

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Pretty spawning choreography.

## Boss Attack 5 (7)

Pattern Design (8/20)

I would’ve preferred if the star rings didn’t spawn at random base angles and instead formed something like criss-crossing spirals or even just static spirals. This pattern is the most engaging to dodge out of all the boss attacks but it still doesn’t do anything that makes it really stand on its own. Everything moves in a monotonous way, the same way every time.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

This entry’s biggest problem is that pretty much every single attack has one basic element and nothing else to it. There is little to no variance to each attack and several rely on might- as-well-be-random bullet movement, which doesn’t make for any interesting patterns to look at or dodge, generally speaking. Most danmaku attacks have multiple simple elements that mesh together. The simplest, most primitive and/or repetitive patterns tend to be fast or dense in order to keep the player on their toes and provide consistent engagement without lasting too long. The second midboss attack kind of tries this approach, but falls flat because it’s all purely random. Randomness is good to keep patterns fresh, but it should not itself substitute for a pattern.

*Stage Portion (7/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (5.86/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (4.71/10)*

# Total Points: 17.57/60

*Judgement Score: 29.28%*

# Norois’ Entry

*N/A*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

The music is much quieter than the sound effects are, especially the main shot SFX, which is very… pungent. In an auditory way, if that makes sense.

## Stage Portion (2:12)

Pattern Design (3/20)

This stage consists of very cleanly delineated enemy formations that are just faced one after the other. Each formation only does one thing - there are aimed blocks of fire, Junko rings, sparse but fast rings, etc. There’s no overlap between waves and they’re not meshed together in any way, making the stage feel empty and unengaging overall because the player is only ever presented with a single obstacle at any given time. Most of the fairies don’t die either because they have rather high health pools, chasing them down isn’t worth it and the way the patterns are presented it doesn’t make that necessary either.

Generally you want your stage design to force your player to assess threats and make decisions regarding which one(s) to engage with. This means placing multiple enemies in different parts of the screen that do different things and letting the player decide which one they should shoot down first. Do they plug up that train of popcorn enemies shooting a relentless stream of aimed bullets or do they commit to taking out the big enemy shooting area-restricting danmaku on the other side of the screen? Never settle for only a single type of enemy being on screen at any given time short of death fairies (which are basically midbosses). Introduce them in isolation of course (unless they’re REALLY simple, like most of these are), then start mixing known formations together. Vary spawn positions and movement tracks between different instances of the same enemy time in order to change the way in which the player engages with that specific formation. Generally you can incorporate some form of aimed attack into most of your stage time because that’s something your player is immediately forced to engage with. You may have noticed yourself that the aimed blocks of fireballs near the start are the enemy attack that forces the most activity upon the player, at least if you macrododge them like I did.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Small penalty for the blue gem bullets right after the Star midboss. They’re small, move fast, and are colored similarly to the background, making them rather hard to see.

##

## Star Nonspell (1)

Pattern Design (6/20)

There’s a lot of waiting time right at the start of the spell, and then it’s just randomly falling semicircles. Not interesting to look at or dodge, but there’s nothing overtly wrong with this pattern either. Could be spiced up with some lasers or big projectiles that aim at the player to force more movement, for example.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Luna Nonspell (2)

Pattern Design (4/20)

Just a dense bouncing spiral. Same deal as with the previous pattern, there’s nothing overtly wrong with this but it doesn’t make for a good boss pattern on its own. Boss attacks are where all the complexity can shine, so even if you only have simple individual ideas to work with, combine them. Mesh them together. Have the bullets turn into lasers upon hitting the walls to impose greater movement restrictions, for example. Then force the player to deal with these restrictions using aimed attacks. You could even split these roles between bullets: some of the spiral bullets turn to lasers and rebound normally, others aim at the player. Make sure to color-code your components so the player can easily tell them apart at a glance and group them together. This is just very general advice that’s applicable to most of the patterns in this entry.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sunny Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (5/20)

Again, extremely primitive pattern in dire need of some spicing up. Unlike the previous two that fired more or less continuously, this one focuses on sequential bursts. With these kinds of patterns, you might want to mix up the main pattern itself. Alternate between fast and slow bursts, for example. The different velocities naturally cause them to mesh in various ways. Or introduce a second, completely different pattern that’s deployed after a few bursts of the first one to mix up the experience. Of course these can also be combined with patterns that fire continuously.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sunny Spell 1 (4)

Pattern Design (3/20)

This pattern has a whole new problem I’d like to address. Something I call “degeneration”. An attack is degenerate if it has a setup that establishes a clear pattern or formation, but the bullets thereafter either move completely randomly, or in such a way that they might as well be random. This pattern is degenerate in the second way - the bubbles clearly deploy spirals, but the way the bullets move, they might as well be random. There is no clearly visible order to them shortly after spawning. This issue is exacerbated by the fact that all the bullets look completely identical. Furthermore, patterns that rely on deploying a lot of bullets at once and leaving them for a long time are completely crippled by bombs or player deaths that get rid of most of them, resulting in an extremely long waiting time before the next wave hits. Consider making bullets like that spell-resistant or apply the feedback from previous patterns and incorporate additional attacks that prevent this dead air in addition to making the base pattern more interesting than it is by itself.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Degenerate patterns aren’t pretty to look at. Especially when all the bullets also look exactly the same.

## Sunny Nonspell 2 (5)

Pattern Design (6/20)

It’s exactly the same as the first nonspell, but denser and a little slower. The waves also overlap ever so slightly, so I prefer this one. Maybe consider alternating bullet colors between the waves for easier visual distinction.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sunny Spell 2 (6)

Pattern Design (7/20)

Wait this is a Koishi nonspell. It feels like a completely normal boss attack which is why I didn’t register that it’s a survival until like the fourth time I played it. Regardless, it does ramp up over time and introduce additional components, though they don’t do much to really spice up the way the player dodges it. Still, it’s better than having just one primitive pattern!

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

The stage and boss design largely relies on single primitive elements that neither overlap, nor mesh together. I’ve already provided general advice on how to improve both aspects in the sections on stage and pattern feedback. As far as I understand it, this is your first released script and the fact that you made a stage for it is commendable no matter how good or bad it is. This is exactly what I wanted this contest to achieve. So don’t let this score discourage you from trying again and improving. My first stage and my first boss suffered from all the same problems.

*Stage Portion (7/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (5.17/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (4.67/10)*

# Total Points: 16.84/60

*Judgement Score: 28.07%*

# Foxigami’s Entry

*Forest Fire*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

This one is. Interesting, to say the least. The design decisions made for this script make it impossible to actually tell apart the stage from the boss because all enemies look identical, the danmaku design throughout stage and boss is largely the same and the healthbar indication is always meaningless. Furthermore, there’s a bomb indicator even though the player doesn’t have any bombs.

For the purposes of judging this entry I will assume everything prior to the music change to be the stage and everything after the music change to be the boss.

## Stage Portion (3:05)

Pattern Design (11/20)

It seems like the stage only actually advances once you shoot down all the fireballs in any given formation. There’s nothing wrong with this in and of itself, and it’s - to my knowledge - a core feature of caravan shmups. However, caravan shmups are designed around scoring and fast-paced action because they usually come with a time limit, so enemies will never linger on screen for very long because they die. And the faster they die, the faster the next ones will spawn in. This stage doesn’t do that, and it doesn’t exert any pressure on the player either. They can take all the time they want to deal with the extremely resilient enemies, which makes the stage drag on and on as every single formation overstays its welcome. This is the main reason why I find it hard to concede points to the stage.

Pattern-wise, it’s generally fine, but there’s not much diversity in how the player is meant to engage with the attacks. Everything is pretty dense, and the only formation that actually asks the player to move around a lot (the one with the big purple bursts and sparse green walls) is disproportionately difficult when compared with the rest of the stage. There’s also the attack immediately preceding this one that causes white fireballs to spawn on the player. I assumed this was also designed to keep them moving around, Tron-style, but these fireballs don’t seem to have a hitbox. So what’s the point?

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boss Attack 1 (1)

Pattern Design (3/20)

Degenerate spiral (i. e. there’s a clear spiral setup, but the bullets then move in a way where they might as well have been random from the beginning). In the end it’s just random dodging. No pattern to speak of.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Degenerate patterns aren’t pretty to look at. Especially when all the bullets also look exactly the same.

## Boss Attack 2 (2)

Pattern Design (11/20)

I like this one, but it’s a one-trick pony that only needs a little bit more to it to stand on its own. The add-blending hurts pattern readability a little and the pause between waves could be shorter. I think it could also benefit from some extra element that encourages the player to move around more, using the bullets from the screen border mainly to restrict movement rather than as the main gimmick.

Pattern Aesthetics (7/10)

I enjoy the way the waves unfold and how everything converges back into a destination point.

## Boss Attack 3 (3)

Pattern Design (2/20)

It’s literally just streaming a big thing, not even with any obstacles to make that harder.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

The big thing you’re streaming doesn’t even look very intimidating.

##

## Boss Attack 4 (4)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Same as the second attack - it’s a one-trick pony that’s just a smidge away from greatness. It basically has all the same hallmarks and problems as that one. This base pattern works great as a main obstacle, and it just needs something more to it. Something to put pressure on the player to move, or something to restrict their movement and force them to engage with the spiraling bullets in a tight space. It could go either way, so I think this is a better base than the second attack. For that to work though, the gaps between the fireballs should stop widening at some point. There’s a sweetspot where they form walls that are easy to read, easy to look at and fun to dodge. Stop there, then add extra components to the pattern.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Starts out pretty until the gaps between the bullets become too large. They should’ve stopped widening at some point as I said.

## Boss Attack 5 (5)

Pattern Design (4/20)

Starts as a wide spiral… and then degenerates into randomness. For having a slightly more interesting start, I think it’s better than the first attack.

… wait is this BoWaP.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

DEGENERATE ~~MALE~~ PATTERN. This is also where the telegraph lines start to hurt more than they help, adding unnecessary visual clutter.

## Boss Attack 6 (6)

Pattern Design (12/20)

This one’s also generally fine, and the feedback from previous even-numbered attacks applies as well. It tries to be something like Rorschach in Danmaku.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boss Attack 7 (7)

Pattern Design (2/20)

It’s. It’s just random dodging. It’s not even fast like the first one was, or especially dense. Or anything other than “random”. The only reason it still gets points is because I can easily imagine one or two ways in which it could’ve been made actively offensive to play.

Pattern Aesthetics (2/10)

Say it with me: DEGENERATE ~~MALE~~ PATTERN. Telegraph lines now add way too much visual clutter and serve no purpose whatsoever because the bullets aren’t even fast enough to need a warning.

## Boss Attack 8 (8)

Pattern Design (14/20)

Kind of similar to the second attack, and also feels very familiar. And no, not because bullets from the top and bottom mean it’s Evaccaneer DOOM. I’m not GCP. But I could swear I’ve seen this pattern from you before. Either way, it’s probably the best attack in this script.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Nice shapes.

## Concluding Remarks

With a long stage that lets enemies linger until you kill them and 8 boss attacks, half of which are degenerate patterns, this entry very much went for quantity over quality. Word of advice: don’t. Pretty much everyone will prefer a short, spicy, engaging stage over one that forces you to stare at the same bullets for a good thirty seconds before moving on. Your previous scripts that I have seen (e. g. Mercury for the S&Y Script Festival) and about half of this one indicate that you definitely can make engaging patterns and understand pattern design on some level, so as far as I can tell, you had no reason to pad your entry with random dodging.

*Stage Portion (16/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (7.5/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (4.5/10)*

# Total Points: 28/60

*Judgement Score: 46.67%*

# PickledCow’s Entry

*Touhou Eternal Diamond Edition*

Preferred Difficulty: Hard

Preferred Player: N/A

The judges unanimously decided - by coin flip - to only grade the Eternal Diamond version of your submission regardless of differences between them.

## Stage Portion (3:55)

Pattern Design (5/20)

Really cutting it close with the stage length, and as a result there’s a lot of fat that can be trimmed. There are huge chunks of time spent sitting and waiting when the stage transitions into the cave area and when the clearly-not-midbosses come in. I think the stone enemies (I don’t know Pokémon oops) are also unrightfully tanky for how basic their attack is, so their introduction feels a little longer than it needs to be. I have no idea how to dodge the seagull wave appropriately short of tap-streaming upwards at the very edge of the screen.

Design-wise, most of the stage relies on dense, isolated formations faced one by one. There’s very little overlap between waves or any meshing of different elements apart from Bats + Stone Guys. Music note birds, Bidoof and wind chimes are especially poignant examples of this, where their attack patterns are made too dense for any other elements to be incorporated into them. The Gyarados (I know a few Pokémon) section especially feels like huge missed potential because snake-like enemies aren’t something you see a lot of in Touhou (only real example being the spirit trains in TD stage 6 which were recreated in RSS stage 6). Prime opportunity for an enemy like that, with destructible (or at least disable-able) body parts instead of a singular attack that might as well belong to a boss.

Adding EoSD books and LoLK rain at the end is haha funny but they’re two of the most infamous stage formations in the series for a reason. I prefer rain over books personally, but I don’t like either of them very much. Also Sans. At least there’s a good amount of variety to the enemy attacks and because most of them are extremely primitive, it doesn’t feel like the stage is trying to do something new at every turn, which would make it very hard to learn.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## Dialga Nonspell 1 (1)

Pattern Design (7/20)

Holy shit Mitori. The crossing wave seems pretty hard to read. This pattern has the same problem as some stage sections in that it’s not very interesting on its own but at the same time too dense to meaningfully incorporate any additional elements. Could’ve maybe done better with more mixups.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Eternal Echo “Metal Burst” (2)

Pattern Design (8/20)

This pattern would be a lot more fun if the cogwheels actually formed… a pattern. A grid to dodge through, even one created by a slowly turning spiral, rather than arbitrary circles.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Palkia Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Okay to dodge but incredibly boring. Could’ve benefitted from being a tiny bit less dense with extra elements to improve player engagement, same as the previous nonspell.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Cosmic Deluge “Hydro Pump” (4)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Water pushy bullets but it doesn’t serve the pattern well in my opinion. It’s definitely a pattern made with no consideration for how the gimmick could be used in interesting ways. Maybe it could’ve been something like a set of obstacles laid out, and then the player is pushed through them by the water, needing to position themselves in time to not get shoved into a bullet, or the player is pushed to one side of the screen and constrained to only dodge horizontally/vertically for a period of time. Or maybe there are additional bullet spawners that get repositioned by the water.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Giratina Nonspell 1 (5)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Yeah okay this one’s also boring but it keeps the player on their toes reasonably well.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Abyssal Cataclysm “Draco Meteor” (6)

Pattern Design (2/20)

It’s just random dodging. I see no pattern here.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Random attacks are not fun to look at.

## Temporal Rift “Roar of Time” (7)

Pattern Design (2/20)

More random dodging, but the slowdown also makes it take forever. The attack doesn’t even meaningfully evolve over time.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Someone’s getting a lot of mileage out of their space lasers from three contest entries ago. Too bad there are no points for that - only penalties for more random bullets in lieu of actual patterns for the eyes to enjoy.

## Spatial Rift “Subspace Tear” (8)

Pattern Design (11/20)

I like the gimmick and the introduction works if only because the player has no bombs. I think it could’ve done better as a survival with how much movement it forces, and to the attack’s detriment, the final phase goes on for way too long because of that.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## Chaos Rift “Shadow Force” (9)

Pattern Design (9/20)

I’ve tried dodging this from every conceivable angle and got walled off every time.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Funny Unown Spell Name (10)

Pattern Design (0/20)

A lot of tiny attacks some of which aren’t even meaningfully more simple or shorter than some boss attacks presented so far. I’m almost inclined to disqualify this entry for trying to find a way to cheat the pattern limit. But at this point I’ve already put the effort into playing the whole thing multiple times for lack of a practice mode, so it doesn’t even save me any work. There are maybe one or two good ones in there, such as the purple snake lines and the purple stars. Everything else is horse shit (is Arceus a horse…?) that I can’t see serving any purpose besides padding the game’s length to its absolute maximum.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Most of these are so boring I can’t in good conscience say that these patterns are not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

I name you guilty of two sins: quantity over quality, and several patterns that rest too much on their gimmick instead of actually considering pattern design beyond the most primitive. The first point should have been sufficiently illustrated already. I think Subspace Tear is the only one that had decently good integration between pattern design and quirky gimmick.

Oh yeah, and your menu is broken, too.



*Stage Portion (10/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (6.7/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (4.4/10)*

# Total Points: 21.1/60

*Judgement Score: 35.17%*

# Iesua Inane’s Entry

*東方茶試宴招待 ~ Taste Testing Ceremony*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

Power systems. Oh the misery. And when the first enemy that you encounter doesn’t even die because you’re too weak, that can’t mean anything good for the balance.

## Stage Portion (3:51)

Pattern Design (18/20)

It’s a bit on the very long end, but this is a pretty nice stage! The power mechanic didn’t end up being as unbalanced as I feared it might be, but that’s probably because I didn’t die very much. There were a few formations I didn’t like as much, such as the spirits shooting effectively random heart circles that appeared way too much, and a few enemies I’d like to have seen more often, like the indestructible wheel fairies right before the midboss. They could’ve meshed great with some other formations (provided they don’t shoot anything themselves) and made for a very memorable stage section that way.

I really enjoyed dodging the section with the stop-and-go fairies on either side shooting aimed bullets and the star fairy in the middle. I found dodging it in the middle is a bit easier due to how the stars curve, but dodging it on the side and killing more fairies makes it easier to build power. This is a good and meaningful decision for the player to make.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

For the wheel fairies in particular.

## Tea Strainer “Principle of Magic and Fantasy” (1)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Pretty simple streaming attack. I would’ve preferred a more coherent secondary pattern instead of the random green pellets, personally.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Meika Nonspell 1 (2)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Conceptually I love what you were going for with the teapot pouring out bullets. But in terms of dodging, it just feels too random overall, which hurts the experience a lot for me.

Pattern Aesthetics (2/10)

One huge aesthetic problem that ruins the concept: the teapot can cover bullets, and the fireballs have huge tails that can cover the small coins she throws as well. The player is forced to dodge the coins based on sound cue alone more often than not because they’ll only be able to see them once they’ve gotten up close and personal thanks to teapot camouflage.

## Matcha “Frenzied Temae Performance” (3)

Pattern Design (11/20)

Fine to dodge and look at, but not very remarkable by itself. Try experimenting with different spawn points for different pieces of the pattern.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Meika Nonspell 2 (3)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Oh yeah speaking of different spawn points! The big problem I see here is that there’s no indication that the aimed bullets will explode into butterflies upon hitting the screen. Consider giving those butterflies a longer spawn animation so the player isn’t caught off guard so easily. Besides that, it’s an alright pattern. Maybe the trails could linger a while longer to trap the player a bit as well.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## Garden “Chishaku-in’s Beauty” (4)

Pattern Design (7/20)

Oh noooo I was hoping I wouldn’t have to see a degenerate pattern here. Everything was going so welllll. To clarify, I consider a pattern degenerate if it has a clear spawning pattern, but devolves into random bullets either directly (as seen here, with the bullets gaining random trajectories) or in a way where they might as well be random (e. g. plentiful but sparse spirals with big angle increments, which makes the structure less apparent for the eye the further apart the bullets are). The flower formation is very pretty too, perfectly serviceable danmaku from two sides with a slight speed difference between the two, so whyyyyy would you betray me like thiiiis!! Additionally I think the red and cyan bullets could benefit from being bigger so they’re more easily seen. This could be such a good pattern if you cut down on the random movement in all elements of it. Have the flowers themselves curve or something like that.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Point deducted for pattern degeneracy.

## Meika Nonspell 3 (5)

Pattern Design (8/20)

Consider all the same remarks as on the first nonspell. Cute concept that’s ruined both by too much reliance on random trajectories as well as the fireball graphics.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Same problem as the first nonspell - the fireball tails hide smaller bullets.

## Condensation “Piping Hot Water” (6)

Pattern Design (10/20)

I think I’m starting to see a theme here. Conceptually this is a good pattern, but again, the randomness causes problems here, but in a slightly different way to before. It’s not so much personal preference this time. My eyes’ attention is monopolized by the sparsely falling blue drop bullets because they’re fast and bright and kind of clumped together a little. This leaves no mental capacity to take into account the gray steam bullets rising up from the bottom. Even though they have warning lines, they’re practically invisible to me because of how much the water gets in my eyes™. One of these elements has to be regularized somehow so you can predict it better and dodge without having to directly pay attention to it - preferably the steam bullets.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Wabi-sabi “Cramped Tai-an Room” (7)

Pattern Design (6/20)

I personally don’t like modular spells like this that very obviously rely on a sequence of simple patterns (at least it’s not a random sequence as many modular spells do). As a survival spell it also doesn’t really evolve over time, nothing changes except the sequence gets a bit faster. Most of the patterns have major random elements to them which further sours this one for me as illustrated by comments on previous patterns.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment. A concentration effect of some kind to highlight the next wave would be nice, but no penalty for not having it due to contest structure.

## Closing Ceremony “Ephemeral Invitation” (8)

Pattern Design (13/20)

The usual ramp-up finale. Good use of different spawn points. Since the enemies can be hit, I think it would’ve been cool if they could be shot down to disable parts of the pattern, and in exchange they ramp up more over time. Some parts could’ve done with better clustering to stand out more, e. g. the fireballs and the purple crystals. Lonely, isolated bullets in a sea of stuff happening tend to be a little bit hard to see and aesthetically boring. So for example the fireballs could’ve consisted of a clump of fireballs commanding more space, or the crystals could’ve been short lines of crystals, or smaller wedge formations like the orange bullets appear as. Red and blue kunai could’ve been accelerating lines, and so on and so forth. Believe me, this makes a huge difference in terms of making patterns more visually appealing without significantly impacting difficulty. Fuck the gray fireballs though. I almost captured it first try.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

Once again I’m beyond glad to see that stage design received so much care in this contest, since it’s the first time that it’s obligatory. The boss has a lot of cool concepts for patterns that just fumble the execution by relying too much on random trajectories, or in some cases poor visual choices. Those fireball graphics are a special kind of *awful*.

*Stage Portion (24/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (11.25/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)*

# Total Points: 40.25/60

*Judgement Score: 67.08%*

# Makuta Matara’s Entry

*Bug Police Kabuto*

Preferred Difficulty: Normal (Static Rank)

Preferred Player: Forward Focus

Holy shit smartphone danmaku. Yes yes I know back in ye olde days arcade cabinets used this orientation. Menu is neatly designed, options are useful, I do miss X to back out of a submenu. Thank you so much for giving me the option to disable rank, since it can get quite spicy otherwise.

## Stage Portion (3:45)

Pattern Design (17/20)

It’s definitely an engaging stage. I played with rank the first time and found myself overwhelmed very quickly because the difficult ramps up quite a bit. I get the impression higher difficulties are balanced more so around cancelling bullets, which I guess is fine. Normal with Static Rank is surprisingly manageable, and I like that it puts emphasis on using the entire screen as dodging space by having enemies come from the side and the bottom. Even though the title screen advertised this as a forward-focused type, it’s pretty good at hitting everything most of the time. I also appreciate that the high octane activity cools down a bit after the midboss, giving the player some much needed respite.

The encircling formation and the laser wheels were quite neat. I know the box thing at the end is a reference to something, but I’m not a huge fan of it personally. Right after the first time the player is forced upwards by bottom side enemies there’s a big one with four familiars that has a bad tendency to catch you off guard because it quickly appears exactly where the previous formation sent the player to with no warning. There are also bullets that seemingly appear out of nowhere? I think they’re supposed to come from the background tiles but I don’t think that worked out very well, since they’re small and their origin isn’t clearly visible.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

I think the contrast between the background grid tiles once those come in and the bullet colors themselves could have been a bit higher, but I didn’t find these visuals to be negatively impactful in and of themselves. Admittedly I also get tired of the endless onslaught of walls because EVERYTHING is walls. Consider using bigger bullets at times to reduce the number of shots needed to cover your desired area. Helps with the frame rate here and there too, since I did experience a few minor drops.

## Midboss Nonspell (1)

Pattern Design (16/20)

Aaaaaaaaaaa I feel like this one’s a bit of a grade above the intended difficulty with the strongly curving walls. Fun to dodge if you can manage it (I can’t (send help)).

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Keter “Electric Raider” (2)

Pattern Design (18/20)

This one’s simple but fun to play. The pause between waves could stand to be a teeny tiny bit shorter and otherwise it feels a little bit basic.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Boss Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (17/20)

This one I also find to be a smidge too hard for the intended difficulty but I like how it flows, forcing the player to move along with the spiral while both avoiding the walls and making bigger movements to get around the blasts. It’s well thought-out.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

The big bullets can obscure the small ones and the darker ones are a bit hard to see. Also consider color-coding your individual attack components for easier visual processing. In my experience it helps the player read the pattern more easily if everything isn’t the same color.

## Septentrion “Satellite System <Helios>” (4)

Pattern Design (20/20)

I really like this concept! It took me a bit to get the hang of how to dodge it, though I am not confident I could do it in a full run. Now I’ve spent about five minutes trying to find a reason not to give it full marks for design and couldn’t think of any. It’s cool.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Mmmmh geometry. Would’ve liked to give more points, but again, the dark bullets are hard to see at times.

## Boss Nonspell 2 (5)

Pattern Design (18/20)

Being able to destroy the cannons is pretty handy. I see it’s also necessary because otherwise you get blasted by a huge thing. You’re not expected not to shoot anyway, so it’s fine.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Triangulum “Sigma Vector” (6)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Whereas the patterns that came before were pretty well-organized, this one feels like pure chaos. There are so many things happening all over the place and it’s really hard to follow along. It looks like there’s enough empty space to be able to stumble around and win by pure dumb luck, but that’s probably only true of the lower difficulties.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

What’s this? A game called “Bug Police” woefully underpopulated by bugs? A large influx of BEEEEEES ought to put a stop to that!



Jokes aside this is shockingly well put together and dare I say actually balanced well except for one, maybe two attacks. I dare not touch the higher difficulties based on what I’ve seen of ranked mode and your older contest entries still haunt me to this day. But my pants are not about to catch on fire for denying your improvements. Most of the problems stem from poor graphic choices, and there’s not much eye candy in terms of the patterns themselves that I could praise.

This is just a small complaint but please don’t make the pause screen obscure everything. I had to pause a lot in order to write comments on the respective spells and more often than not, because of how fast the attacks are, it’s pretty much impossible to get back into a pattern from the pause screen, since it immediately jumps at you.

*Stage Portion (21/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (17.33/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)*

# Total Points: 43.33/60

*Judgement Score: 72.22%*

# Luna’s Entry

*Fictional Wind Spirit*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: Rin Satsuki (Flower)

If your game is going to be fullscreen, I’d prefer that it is an option rather than forced, since I like playing games windowed in order to more easily switch to other things on the side (like this judging document). In this specific case I also needed to change my keyboard layout to QWERTY, which fullscreen made especially bothersome. Besides that the menu is fine, though it seems like the volume settings don’t take effect until you restart the game and backing out of the player select menu reveals a seeeecret difficulty selection menu that may crash the game. I opted not to touch it.

## Stage Portion (1:53)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Pretty solid stage all things considered, making the player move around quite a bit, never quite growing too dull. On the flipside it also doesn’t do anything that’s particularly worthy of praise or even just special note. Everything is kept very simple. There are a few sections that can be invalidated very easily if the player memorized the stage, e. g. the lines of fairies that shoot wide three-way blue pellets while big fairies come in that shoot these criss-crossing lines. Everything dies pretty quickly, so that entire wave can be spawnkilled. Basically I think the pace of the stage could be quickened in a few places to make it more exciting and exert a bit more pressure on the player.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Miyoi Mid Nonspell (1)

Pattern Design (11/20)

Simple tap-streaming pattern. Could’ve done with a different second wave or some other form of mixup.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

The way it unfurls is quite neat.

##

## Alcohol Sign “Spicy Bubbles” (2)

Pattern Design (14/20)

Conceptually very simple, but dodging it is quite involved and requires a lot of movement, so I enjoyed it. Would’ve personally liked to see something more added to it to make it feel a little more alive.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Miyoi Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (10/20)

This one also doesn’t have much to it that I could comment on, but it also doesn’t really do anything wrong. I feel like this applies to the majority of boss patterns.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Waiting “Kicking Out Unwanted Guests” (4)

Pattern Design (12/20)

For this one I would’ve preferred a bit more organization to the purple knives, maybe having them grouped into small walls or something like that. It’s still fun to dodge since it’s decently fast, but the purple knives can end up being a little bit too scattered sometimes. It also gets old pretty quickly due to the lack of mixups.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Miyoi Nonspell 2 (5)

Pattern Design (0/20)

This attack has two very obvious safespots. One is at the bottom, just a tap or two left of the center line. The other is to the right of the center line and a little bit upwards. Could’ve been fixed with an aimed component, varying the base angle, or even just having the boss move. Since the pattern makes it so easy for me to ignore it and the fix to that is also extremely simple, there might as well not be a pattern here.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Waiting “Leave a Tip” (6)

Pattern Design (4/20)

This is a degenerate pattern. What I mean by this is that it has a clearly defined order to it when it spawns in (coins appear as spirals), but what you’re actually dodging is purely random or so diffused it might as well be random. In this case the coins just turn to random bullets from all sides, and they’re tiny dots at that, too. The concept of destroying the coins with lasers is fine but could’ve easily been executed in a way that still creates an actual coherent pattern. I don’t like foregoing that in favor of random dodging personally.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Degenerate patterns aren’t pretty to look at.

## Alcohol Sign “Morning Hangover” (7)

Pattern Design (11/20)

This one’s fine again. Could’ve also benefitted a lot from extra components, mixups, etc. since it gets old fast and it’s the final spell of the fight, so it feels pretty anticlimactic.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

I like the snaky lasers.

## Concluding Remarks

I tend to be skeptical towards power systems but I didn’t find this one to be problematic at all. Even at 0 power, killing the enemies isn’t impossible. As a background enthusiast myself, I also love the stage BG you made, though you can see the houses disappear at certain angles. Still, great modeling work! There are some technical hiccups here and there like the secret difficulty menu, volume settings not working until you restart the game and the snaky lasers persisted after the final spell ended. They’re all mostly minor problems. The stage itself is pretty decent but the boss leaves a lot to be desired in terms of creativity and action.

Oh and why are the spell prefixes in Japanese but the spell names in English?

*Stage Portion (20/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (8.86/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)*

# Total Points: 33.86/60

*Judgement Score: 56.43%*

# Pyralfruit’s Entry

*Mothman*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

Please package the engine with your entry in the future. Back in ye olde days, just uploading the script files was usually enough but asking people to download the right version of Danmakufu is annoying now that there are like four different branches. I do find it a little unfortunate myself but what can you do?

## Stage Portion (3:15)

Pattern Design (17/20)

Really solid stage design overall with good enemy placement. I liked the idea of forcing the player into specific areas with those big wall fairies, and that’s something that could’ve maybe seen a bit more application so it could’ve been made into a central gimmick that makes the stage more memorable overall (also make those walls spell resistant).

There are also some formations that have a lot of isolated bullets, like the orange arrowhead tornados and the twisty yellow arms. Having the bullets form walls or even just bunching a few together into a line or a cluster or a wedge makes them easier to process visually and more fun to look at. It’s an easy way to make any pattern look tastier without making it much more difficult.

I would’ve liked the enemies to be a wee bit more generous with power items personally and the stage intro graphic should definitely have been a bit higher on the screen. Maybe the green fairy near the start could’ve had some extras shoot aimed bullets to apply pressure and the green yin-yangs directly after the midboss are too empty. That’s really the full extent of my problems with the stage design itself.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

There was some really neat music syncing here with those twisty arms on the beat of the music, but visually not much to chew on. Still, I know how much of a pain music syncing in DNH can be.

##

## Sharon Mid Nonspell (1)

Pattern Design (12/20)

Timeout nonspells aren’t exactly common but I think this one doesn’t linger too long to get annoying the way UM’s stage 4 yin-yang does for instance. I do however think a tiny bit of pattern evolution over time goes a long way with timeouts, even just something like making everything quicker creates a sense of urgency that makes the pattern more fun to engage with in my opinion.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Something about how the moths create most of the actual pattern.

## First Contact “TNT Area Flyby” (2)

Pattern Design (9/20)

Great concept, but the execution is lacking. For starters I think the “mine” bullets can spawn on top of the player, which they really shouldn’t. Secondly, their behavior isn’t readily apparent and their explosion cue is not visible enough in my opinion. The player’s eyeswill generally not be focused near their character sprite so it’s extremely easy to miss both the spawning and the flashing animations. Try having something like a bigger circle contract onto the mine to grab the player’s attention, and maybe show off how they will explode at the start of the pattern or with some kind of telegraph showing how the bullets will scatter shortly before they actually do. The spell also lasts a little too long because of how it’s meant to be played.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Sharon Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (14/20)

Ooough tiny bullets. I mean yeah the midboss non had them too but they were all grouped into walls. Here some of them scatter a bit too much and the walls themselves feel a teeny tiny bit too dense. Crawling through them is pretty tough.

Pattern Aesthetics (9/10)

THIS NONSPELL OOZES PERSONALITY THOUGH OOOH YES THAT’S HOW I LIKE MY TOUHOU BOSSES

## Red Eyes “Bandit’s Disappearance” (4)

Pattern Design (15/20)

This one’s spooky to dodge. It’s too slow and too fast at the same time, though I don’t think the bullets are inappropriately fast. I thiiiink the red bubbles take a bit too long to actually become relevant to the dodging, so maybe having them close in fast at the start, then slow down would remedy that without making the escape from them absurdly tough.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Are you in my walls or something because I like bullets that close in and unfold like the purple wave at the end.

## Sharon Nonspell 2 (5)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Now I’m kind of missing the dot walls here after they’ve been such a core feature of the previous two nonspells. The amulets scatter a tiny bit too much for my liking, probably due to the way they curve at the start, so the wing pattern is lost pretty quickly, but I don’t think it’s quite a degenerate pattern.

Pattern Aesthetics (8/10)

P e r s o n a l i t y

## Terror “Cryptid’s Nighttime Hunt” (6)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Neat misdirection pattern, good choice to show the hunting phase in isolation at the start. Would’ve liked to see the obstacle wave (i. e. the green shots) change a little every time to create different obstacle shapes and keep the experience fresh.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Not the yummiest claws I’ve seen but still a little yummy.

## Sharon Nonspell 3 (7)

Pattern Design (16/20)

Could benefit from a bit of bullet clustering as well, like having some dots bunch up into walls because nobody likes tiny dots in isolation. Maybe a second wave to mix it up or an extra component to apply pressure.

Pattern Aesthetics (9/10)

**P E R S O N A L I T Y**

## Moth “Bullet to a Flame” (8)

Pattern Design (12/20)

What I mainly dislike about this pattern is that the flame’s radius of influence isn’t very clear, so first-time players might get surprised pretty badly by a sudden moth from the back. At the same time I find it a bit unfortunate that this forces you to generously macrododge around the entire thing to the point where the moths being sucked into the light is pretty much irrelevant. The orange bullets falling down would’ve also been a little more visible as short lines or even horizontal walls or something like that.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “Screams of Mouthless Insects” (9)

Pattern Design (9/20)

Going back to what I said about the midboss nonspell, some pattern evolution would’ve really helped here. It’s just the same criss-crossing bullets for a solid 30 seconds, which gets old extremely fast.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Harbinger “Silver Collapse” (10)

Pattern Design (10/20)

I do noooot like those isolated raindrops and stars. They’re very small, very sparse, and even if they weren’t random, those two properties combined make them quite hard to register with all the other big things going on. Moving left and right to dodge the falling… poles? Towers? Is neat, and the way the butterflies spawn, dodging too far means you’ll get sniped by a quick one, so it’s a neat balancing act. I think conceptually this pattern could’ve been merged with the previous one as an evolving survival and all the falling stuff could’ve used more of an actual pattern to it.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

Point for the falling building pole things.

##

## Concluding Remarks

The stage flows nicely and the boss has a strong start, but I feel like pattern quality sort of peters out towards the end, with the final two spells especially being under par compared to pretty much everything that came before it. The most egregious design problems in my opinion are with the midboss spell’s telegraphing and the two survivals’ lack of evolution. Things like poor bullet clustering in some parts are more minor details which can really elevate a pattern if taken care of, and in some cases also help with readability.

*Stage Portion (23/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (12.5/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (6.5/10)*

# Total Points: 42/60

*Judgement Score: 70.0%*

# Kevinmonitor’s Entry

*Terrenus -starlit reverie-*

Preferred Difficulty: Original

Preferred Player: Lavender

Player shot opacity is an option I’m very grateful for because these player shots are veeeery distracting by default. It doesn’t affect Penmaster’s laser unfortunately. Now just give me item opacity and then I’m happy. Clearing a pattern without getting hit or using a burst still triggers the default DNH capture sound which is unaffected by the volume settings (i. e. REALLY LOUD), which I presume to be an oversight.

## Stage Portion (1:39)

Pattern Design (16/20)

Solid stage that’s undeniably fun to play but feels very primitive in terms of its design philosophy and player engagement, basically never going beyond the bread and butter of aimed shots and circles. There’s the odd enemy that comes from the bottom and challenges the player’s home turf, but with how much the game seems to encourage using bursts (one of which is a very effective bullet cancel) for big score, that challenge can be ignored. Game is fun to play for score surely, but in terms of raw dodging there’s not much there to elevate it above a basic experience. Maybe it’s better for higher-end players.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “Starstruck Emerald Eyes” (1)

Pattern Design (11/20)

Wall spirals are fun to dodge but not super interesting by themselves. The falling knives afterwards could’ve benefited from some clustering, e. g. having them arranged into several lines or something like that rather than just existing by themselves to make them a little more visible and visually interesting.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

##

## “Fountain of Envious Stars” (2)

Pattern Design (10/20)

It’s just a falling wave and some aimed knives. The wave commands a lot of attention, making the knives a little hard to see at times.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “TRICHROMANCY // collapsed aberration” (3)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Yeaaah this one’s fun. The red wave at the start of the triple color spiral looks like it has a really bad case of catching you off-guard due to how fast it comes out, but it’s just something to memorize and keep in mind.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “SENTINΣL // beautiful nightmare” (4)

Pattern Design (8/20)

This one on the other hand is dreadfully basic and the two components do not mesh at all. You have a space constricting element in the lasers, but the rest of the pattern doesn’t really challenge your space whatsoever, so the lasers and stars just exist side by side. This is still true on higher difficulties it seems.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “STARGAZER // disgraced starcross” (5)

Pattern Design (15/20)

This attack makes better use of its spatial restrictions and encourages making full use of all the available screen space.. The three way dark lasers can trap you really easily though and are also extremely hard to see against the dark background, so the player might walk into one. Consider underlaying subtract-blended bullets and lasers with a white duplicate to make them stand out more while still blending together.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “let’s sit together // and watch the stars die” (6)

Pattern Design (9/20)

Not a fan of this attack either since you just go and find your gap and then dodge a few stray and randomly scattering stars. It doesn’t feel like a climactic conclusion to the fight or a pattern that’s really interesting on its own unfortunately, but it doesn’t commit any sins.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Concluding Remarks

Most of the pattern design throughout stage and boss errs on the side of caution. The gameplay is very fast-paced which does provide decent player engagement, but it’s very clearly laid out for scoring through bullet cancels rather than dodging intricate bullet formations. I find it unfortunate that this holds true for the boss attacks as well, and I guess if most of the bullets are meant to be cancelled anyway, there’s no point in putting effort into intricate displays. Trichromancy is probably my favorite attack in the game for striking a good balance between fast dodging action and something that’s cool to look at, with Stargazer being a close second. Both midboss patterns and the final boss attack also had issues with bullet persistence after the pattern ended, the lattermost notably with the lasers.

*Stage Portion (21/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (11.33/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)*

# Total Points: 37.33/60

*Judgement Score: 62.22%*

# ABBurlap’s Entry

*Kyourift: Vs. Chevalier*

Preferred Difficulty: Contest

Preferred Player: Agnes Warren

I think this entry could REALLY have benefitted from a pattern practice mode.

## Stage Portion (2:22)

Pattern Design (18/20)

This is a well-designed stage overall, starting off relatively tame and turning pretty tough near the end, forcing the player to assess threats and memorize a few sections. I like the enemies that release their held bullets once shot down, I think that’s a neat concept. There’s good meshing and combining of different previously introduced formations going on, so the stage stays fresh without having to reinvent itself all the time.

Near the end there are those enemies that shoot circles of red wedges. They move to a new spot after hitting certain HP thresholds which is something I found a bit difficult to plan around because the game sets you up to take into consideration the range in which enemies delete bullets - something I wanted to take advantage of in that section. It’s just something to memorize so it’s not too bad, but this is definitely something that can catch first time players off guard in bad ways. I appreciate the boss gimmick being used as part of the stage as well, but I have very strong opinions on the gimmick itself to be detailed in the next section.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

There are a few little things that I appreciated, like the curving enemies post-midboss and the bullets that unfurl on enemy death. The big red bullets should definitely be put on a lower layer though, since they can obscure smaller bullets very easily like in the aforementioned post-midboss section.

## Chevalier Mid Nonspell 1 (1)

Pattern Design (14/20)

These bullet lines could definitely have used a telegraph line, mainly because of how fast they come out. Although their graphics turn based on direction I still found it extremely difficult to sort myself into a gap in time before they come out, and I often misjudged where they would ultimately go.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Chevalier Mid Nonspell 2 (2)

Pattern Design (15/20)

The way the bullets move makes it really awkward to tell what the intended approach is. Do I sit in the trajectory line and let the bullets pass over me (doesn’t always work)? Do I go to the side and try to dodge back inwards through the rather occult lanes before the bullets speed up? Do I macrododge and try to redirect everything to either side of the screen? Having multiple approaches to dodge a pattern is good but somehow every single one of these feels “wrong” when executed.

Pattern Aesthetics (6/10)

On principle I like how the bullets sort themselves into lanes.

## Chevalier Nonspell 1 (3)

Pattern Design (16/20)

The lines could stand to be a little denser I think, since they’re mainly intended to constrict your space while you dodge around the larger bullets, or alternatively have a telegraph line to them if you’re encouraged to slip through them to dodge. There’s the same general visual problem here as with the first midboss nonspell in that these bullet graphics do not do a good job at conveying the direction, especially since the boss sets a precedent for changing the direction of these bullets with their wind.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Tempest Tactic “Aerodynamics in a Sundog” (4)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Even after playing this pattern several times I can’t understand what influences the shooting angle of those wedge formations. It’s definitely not regular, which can make it really easy to get blindsided as you try to hop through the rings.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Chevalier Nonspell 2 (5)

Pattern Design (13/20)

This one THIS NONSPELL is the epitome of occult bullet trajectories. I like the concept, I hate the execution, mainly because the bullets are too fast and too sparse - a problem that most of the nonspells have, but which is especially impactful here. You have pretty much no time to assess your surroundings and are forced to sort yourself into a safe space based on gut instinct like in the first midboss nonspell. Except now these things also curve and the spaces they contain shift as they accelerate again. I couldn’t survive a single wave of this ever, and this is why I would’ve liked a practice mode for this game. Going through the stage every single time just for 20 seconds worth of attempts on this lil’ fucker is a tall ask when you’ve got patterns like this.

Pattern Aesthetics (7/10)

I’ll give you that though, the way the bullets set themselves up is pretty.

## Draft Tactic “Rising Rondo” (6)

Pattern Design (14/20)

Another one I find quite difficult to engage with. It looks like you’re supposed to dodge it by moving off to the side, then pushing up through the falling arrowheads, but the random scattering of the fireballs and the sparseness of the arrowheads makes it difficult to see the safe lanes. Quickly changing directions can also screw up your plan very easily.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Chevalier Nonspell 3 (7)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Problematic for the same reason as the previous one - it’s too dense for something that moves so quickly. I’d definitely have preferred this pattern if the spawned groups actually stayed together to form little walls with bigger gaps rather than scattering the way they do. However I could figure out that you’re supposed to dodge up through them before they scatter, so that you meet the boss when they shoot their red orbs, so this one wasn’t too bad in the end.

Pattern Aesthetics (7/10)

Pretty setup again.

## Current Tactic “Ember Zephyr” (8)

Pattern Design (18/20)

This one feels extremely similar to Aerodynamics in a Sundog and I think it’s the better implementation of this type of spell, with the wind clearly informing the direction in which the wedges are shot. I dislike the random falling bullets and would pretty much always prefer an actual pattern over those, but I won’t deny that it’s fun to play. The way to engage with it also isn’t very obscure. Just push up into the large gap between waves of orbs.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## Whirlwind Tactic “Mach One Freefall” (9)

Pattern Design (13/20)

Bullets fall and rise with the wind. That’s the part I like. But they scatter sparsely and randomly, forcing me to pay attention to every single one as I move around, and I can become blind to the aimed arrows. That’s the part I dislike. A bit of an underwhelming end to the fight, too. I think if the fireballs were more orderly walls that didn’t rely on randomness so you could move through them more based on instinctual pattern recognition, this spell would’ve felt much better and have been much nicer to look at as well.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

The random scattering really ruins this one.

## Concluding Remarks

The stage is executed really well. The boss design largely feels like great concepts with execution that’s, for lack of a better way to describe it, poorly thought out. Maybe the game is just geared towards a higher difficulty than I am capable of playing comfortably, so at the very least I’m glad for the infinite lives. As I mentioned before, pattern practice would’ve been really helpful here. As for how to improve the patterns themselves, I think all they need is a bit of telegraphing and mainly better bullet clustering to establish lanes and groups more clearly. The human brain loves orderly patterns, so when structure is readily apparent, the player doesn’t need to actively think about how every single bullet is moving. In bullet hells, object proximity is the best way to exploit that, and it makes the patterns themselves more visually appealing at the same time. Lines, walls, wedges, clumps, go nuts with those.

I found there to be a rather large power discrepancy between the homing shot and the spread shot, with the homing shot easily wiping out enemies and the forward-focused one absolutely shredding boss health bars. I didn’t bother with the charge shot type at all. This is part of the reason why I had to play the game so many times, since I sometimes accidentally killed a pattern that I was still in the process of assessing and judging, stopping fire too late.

*Stage Portion (24/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (14.78/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (5.33/10)*

# Total Points: 44.11/60

*Judgement Score: 73.52%*

# Syoudre’s Entry

*BHEthal Passageway*

Preferred Difficulty: N/A

Preferred Player: N/A

I’ll do my best to treat this entry with the appropriate level of dignity it deserves. There’s one very big visual issue with the death effect rebounding and lingering on the screen, which hinders vision, thus causing more deaths, thus causing more superdying to bounce around, and so on and so forth. If you don’t die this isn’t an issue, but… well, a -1 penalty to aesthetics all around for this.

## Stage Portion (3:33)

Pattern Design (9/20)

I can’t very well give many points for originality when several sections are lifted 1:1 from Lethal Passageway, but it does try to do its own thing here and there, like the UDoALG section after the first midboss which I thought was conceptually neat but ass to dodge because of all the random scattering. The part with the lung and X-ray emoji is also horrible because, again, those are a little on the small side and can easily just become unnoticeable in the soup of superdying from all the super-dying. I like the falling lines here in principle though, but the pile at the bottom can easily escape the player’s attention, which is being monopolized by the randomly scattered emoji.

Pattern Aesthetics (2/10)

The “18 stars” lasers blend way too much with the background and large portions of the stage just rely on random scattering.

## “The Least Glorious Treasure Castle Labyrinth” (1)

Pattern Design (7/20)

This one is a bit difficult to read at first, and that’s also the only challenge. Then you just spin around and that’s it. Due to the way the pattern starts, the player can also escape from the white center square after being dragged to it but before the bullets appear. This feels like the intuitive thing to do but it just gets them killed.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Mmmmh walls. Geometry even.

##

## “The Arrival of 1997” (2)

Pattern Design (11/20)

Actually quite alright to dodge, but feels pretty barren design-wise. Since it relies on sweeping the players from side to side, I think it could’ve used some vertical obstacles like scrolling wall lines to make that a little bit harder. Forced death at the end as far as I can tell.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “Contest Judging of 9,999 Years” (3)

Pattern Design (0/20)

This spellcard could’ve been grounds for disqualification, since it extends the stage way past the four minute time limit but I think it’d be unfair to judge it that way because then I’d have to judge all the previous midbosses by timeout duration. So I’ll consider holding E to be the same as shooting. Anyway, there’s no pattern for most of it and the end is just a BIT thing.

Pattern Aesthetics (1/10)

Quite a barren attack, if I may say so.

## Housui Nonspell 1 (4)

Pattern Design (15/20)

Okay I actually like dodging this one. Solid pattern all around, but I feel like it could have benefitted from a bit of a mixup here and there to break it up.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “~Indiscriminate Missiles~”(5)

Pattern Design (9/20)

Starts as a rotating spell, gets tighter over time but then just degenerates. Pattern degeneration is a term I use for attacks that have an easily identifiable order at the start, but the actual dodging is either truly random or might as well be random.

Pattern Aesthetics (3/10)

Point deducted for pattern degeneration, which always dumbs down the aesthetic appeal.

## Housui Nonspell 2 (6)

Pattern Design (16/20)

Looks a little chaotic but is ultimately also perfectly fine to dodge. The red bullets feel a bit too lonely at most and it’s otherwise not very innovative.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

## “Polar Annihilation” (7)

Pattern Design (9/20)

Probably one of the better “Ikaruga as a spell gimmick” spells I’ve seen. Would always prefer an orderly pattern over the random green bullets in the second phase. Third phase feels wild and could probably have benefitted from a slight difference in how you dodge the right and left sides of it, maybe having the right side have slightly slower and denser bullets since you’re focused anyway. The fourth phase’s full screen colors aren’t communicated well by the warning provided. Something like an outward pulse to cover the screen would’ve worked a lot better. The bullets in that phase are also degenerate.

Pattern Aesthetics (5/10)

Due to the gimmick, the pattern can’t be too involved, but I’ll concede a point for fading out the bullets you can phase through because I’ve seen this gimmick done without that and it’s so much worse to play.

## “BHEsties of BHE High” (8)

Pattern Design (10/20)

Hourai Elixir without the main thing that makes Hourai Elixir at all remarkable as a pattern - being forced to go through the lasers. The burst phase after that is okay and there’s definitely a good concept there, but it feels kind of tacked-on with how the gimmick works. Either you get the timing right or you just don’t and die, since you have no control over how the gauge charges. What you’re actually dodging in either of the phases is… not bad, but not worthy of further comment.

Pattern Aesthetics (4/10)

Not bad, but not worthy of further comment. I expected more from rainbow Hourai Elixir.

##

## Concluding Remarks

I expected to treat this thing with no dignity whatsoever but as is tradition for Touhou troll stages, the boss is actually… alright? It’s not groundbreaking in any way but it doesn’t feel awful to play either. I know you just wanted to have some fun with a stress-free contest and it’s not up to me to judge whether you succeeded in that regard.

*Stage Portion (11/30)*

*+ Pattern Design (9.63/20)*

*+ Pattern Aesthetics (3.75/10)*

# Total Points: 24.38/60

*Judgement Score: 40.63%*