

DOOM!

Why It Took Over My Life



A soldier lies quivering, impaled on a demon's stake. Nobody said this was gonna be a picnic.



by
Matt Firme

With *Doom*,
Id
Software
has forever redefined our expectations of shareware — and PC gaming itself, for that matter. If any new game hopes to win the title Game of the Year, it'll have to beat *Doom* first.

When we started work on this issue, we knew we just had to do a feature on Id Software's *Doom* — the best game to come along in quite some time. So we gathered to make assignments, running through the table of contents and matching writer with article. When we came to *Doom*, everyone turned to me with mingled looks of sadness and relief. They knew about my problem, and at the same time hoped the feature might give me a constructive outlet for my obsession. I doodled on my notepad, feeling their eyes on me. "You know, guys," I stammered, absent-mindedly sketching the complete map of The Shores of Hell, Level One, "I could probably do the *Doom* feature."

You see, *Doom* has taken control of my life. I can't stop playing the game, can't just turn off the computer and walk away. No matter what I *should* be doing, I play *Doom* instead. My wife can come home from work, eat dinner, and go to bed without my ever looking away from the computer. Ed McMahon could pound at my front door, shouting "You are our latest millionaire" through a megaphone, and I'd never hear him. I'd just keep playing *Doom*.

And I'm not alone. Even at the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in January, where the software industry had gathered to show off its best new products, *Doom* was everywhere. From sound board manufacturers to joystick vendors, everyone was using the game to demonstrate their new products. And whenever we asked people what they thought was the hottest game at the show, the answer was the same: "Have you seen *Doom* yet?"

Bulletin boards and on-line services everywhere are full of heartbreaking tales of obsession. There are whole message

The Stars of Doom!

sections filled with categories like "DOOM — HELP! WIFE IS GONNA LEAVE ME!" or "DOOM COST ME MY JOB!"

Sometimes I fear that American productivity may suffer more this year from man-hours lost to *Doom* than to second-hand smoke, computer-terminal radiation, and carpal-tunnel syndrome combined.

Sucked Into Hell

In *Doom*, you play as the last of a military detachment sent to Phobos, one of Mars' moons, to try and stop the monsters who've come into being through the government's secret experiments with inter-dimensional travel and other evil, bureau cratic scheming. All of your buddies have disappeared, leaving only you to get to the bottom of it all. Unfortunately, your pals took all the good weapons with them. You've got only a pistol, 50 rounds of ammunition, and

the game so much, well, *reality*. As you duck back between shipping crates to avoid an Imp's fireball, you'll swear you can feel the solidity of your alcove.

The creatures that come at you seem even more real, thanks to the terrific animation that brings them to life. They all move with such convincing fluidity and such obvious evil intent, it's hard to remember that it's all just a game. You'll actually find yourself flinching back from the screen, trying to dodge fireballs as they hurtle toward you. You'll tense when you see a grinning Cacodemon floating toward you, and you'll have to suppress a scream when you round a corner and find yourself face-to-face with the incredibly

powerful Baron of Hell. Any game that can so effectively trigger these kinds of reflex reactions is doing something mighty impressive indeed.

And then there's the sound and music. Some players automatically turn off the music when they start a game, but that would be a mistake here. This is

primo stuff, all the way from the kickass opening riff to the dirgelike drone of later levels. And the sound effects are some of the most impressive I've ever heard; within an hour of loading the game, you'll realize that your ears are at least as important as your eyes if you're to survive for long. Each creature in the game has its own distinct howls,

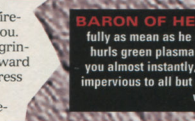
roars, and grunts, and you'll quickly learn to recognize their calls. Most of the time you'll hear the bad guys long before you see them — and recognizing the calls will help to make sure you're ready with enough firepower to face them.

Even more impressive, you'll be able to tell where the creatures are by the sounds they make. *Doom* makes perfect use of your stereo sound card, providing lifesaving hints

If you want to get serious about *Doom!*, you better remember these faces. Learn their habits, and get familiar with their calls. These are your mortal enemies — and they take the job seriously.



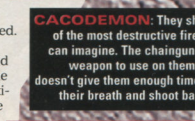
LOST SOULS: They attack in flocks, like Hitchcock's crazed seagulls. Whatever you do, don't let 'em surround you!



BARON OF HELL: He's fully as mean as he looks. He hurls green plasma that kills you almost instantly, and he's impervious to all but your best weapons.



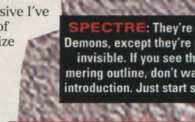
IMP: Imps look like werewolves, and throw fireballs at you like nobody's business. One up-close blast from your shotgun should tame them.



CACODEMON: They shoot some of the most destructive fireballs you can imagine. The chaingun is a good weapon to use on them, 'cause it doesn't give them enough time to catch their breath and shoot back at you.



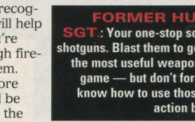
DEMON: They're fast, mean, and thick-skinned. Demons can't attack from far away, but if they get close to you they'll chew your head off.



SPECTRE: They're just like Demons, except they're partially invisible. If you see that shimmering outline, don't wait for an introduction. Just start shooting.



FORMER HUMAN: These guys are the least of your worries. They used to be your pals, but now they're just walking ammo dumps. Blast them to get precious clips for your pistol.



FORMER HUMAN SGT: Your one-stop source for shotguns. Blast them to get one of the most useful weapons in the game — but don't forget, they know how to use those pump-action beauties.



After each completed round in multiplayer mode, you'll quickly see who beat whom.

your innate fear of death to get you through this living hell in one piece.

But what is it about this game that's sucked me and thousands of other gamers into its addictive grasp? You'd have to start by blaming the graphics and animation. The game's weird settings, a mix of *The Exorcist* and *Alien*, are almost hypnotically beautiful. Everything has so much depth and texture that you want to reach out and touch the walls, columns, and doorways that give each and every level of



In multi-player mode, you can look forward to reducing your friends to pathetic death throes. "What went wrong," they'll ask.

The Tools of the Trade



The chaingun — nothing will make those SOB's dance like a sudden shower of molten lead. It's good to be human!



The Chainsaw! Oh, yes, this is going to be fun! It's a surprisingly effective weapon, and a must for those tight corridors.

Your most basic weapon — your fist. Even with the brass knuckles, this kind of fighting is a last resort.



Your standard-issue pistol isn't a whole lot better than your fist, but at least it works from a distance.



The shotgun is your best all-around weapon. It's blast will tear up most foes with ease, although it's not a very fast rapid-fire shooter.



The rocket launcher is awe-inspiring. The rocket launcher is awe-inspiring. One well-aimed shell can take out a whole gang of bad guys. But if you're too near the blast, you're dead meat.



The plasma gun is truly an impressive piece of hardware. It sends blue-hot balls of plasma dancing toward the enemy, and can stop any fiend you meet.



The BFG9000 fires a bolt of energy that vaporizes anything it hits (except Hell Barons, that is), then blossoms out to catch anyone else in the room. It's one of Doom's greatest pleasures.



that a monster is lurking to your right, just beyond that doorway. And if you have an Advanced Gravis Ultrasound with 3D imaging, you'll hear everything around you with such realism that you might start having nightmares about the experience.

Id Software — The Company That Does Everything Right

Doom is just about as good as an action game can get. But the most amazing thing of all is that Id Software, the company responsible for Doom, is smaller than a lot of companies' PR departments. Made up of only eight employees, Id has become one of the hottest design groups in the country thanks to the enormous success of Doom. The whole company is made up of devout gamers, who say they created Doom because they wanted to play it, but the game didn't exist yet. That commitment to gaming comes through in every part of Doom, from its documentation to its no-nonsense game play.

But Id has done everything else right, too. The first level of Doom is shareware, and can be downloaded from any

bulletin board and passed freely between friends — you know, just to give you a taste and get you hooked. Then, to get the complete game, you just call the 1-800 number that appears every time you exit the game. And once you register, you can download upgrades to the product anytime you want.

Id's commitment to the grassroots gaming community has given rise to an impressive word-of-mouth ad campaign for Doom, as well as an incredible following of hackers and helpers ready with hints, maps, and even homemade file editors that give Doom players the ability to customize the game. Some of the editors out there will randomize the location and number of enemies in the game, so each time out is a surprise. Others let you mask things noises for the various monsters, making them squawk like chickens or speak in Richard Nixon's voice. There's even a patch out there that turns the imposing Barons of Hell into Barney the Dinosaur, his head ringed in musical notes as he chants "I love you, you love me." Now that's terrifying!

Kill Your Friends...Here's How!

Id's support for their customers has been quite impressive. Just about every problem users encountered in the first release of Doom — from sound board support problems to DOS extender conflicts — have been addressed and corrected in V. 1.2. But the biggest addition 1.2 brings is incredible head-to-head modem play.

Playing Doom with — or better yet against — friends takes the already great game to incredible new heights. Using either null-modem cables, network, or direct connection via 9600baud modem, you and a friend (or three friends in

You Want Doom Codes? We Got 'em!

There are plenty of terrific utilities on-line, in places like CompuServe and America On-Line, that'll allow you to edit your copy of Doom!, insert new sound effects, new enemies, etc.. But with these passwords, you'll be able to roll through the game with no trouble at all.

Here's what you do: Just type in the following codes while you're actually playing the game. You'll be glad you did.

- iddqd — Enables Degreeeessss mode. You're invulnerable!
- idkfa — Very Happy Ammo. Gives you full ammo, all weapons and keys, and 200% armor.
- iddt — Enter this one in map screen mode, and you'll toggle between normal map, full map, and full map with all the creatures and items revealed!
- idchoppers — Gives you the chainsaw.
- idclev — Warp between levels! Follow it with episode and level numbers.
- idbehold — Displays a menu of cheats. Just hit the first letter of the power you're interested in.
- idspispopid — A great code, this one lets you walk right through walls! Great for finding those hidden goodies!



A treasure trove of goodness: From left to right, a rocket, a backpack full of ammo, a box of shotgun shells, a radiation suit, a supercharge, an ammo clip, and an energy cell. It's better than Christmas!

Network mode) can play at the same time. In cooperative mode you both start each level in the same place, and can move through the game blasting baddies and covering one another every step of the way. In Deathmatch mode you start in different, random sections of each level. Your goal is to hunt down your buddy and let him have it, each of you scrambling for the best weapons and most power-ups before the inevitable showdown.



In cooperative mode, scenes like this need no longer be fatal. Reach for your chain-gun, and give your buddy a helping hand!

Matt's Addiction: The Awful Truth

I've played a lot of games in my time, but few have been as all-consuming and frighteningly addictive as *Doom*. I did have a close call with Bullfrog's classic *Populous* a few years back, requiring several closed-door meetings with my superiors before I finally quit playing and got on with my life.

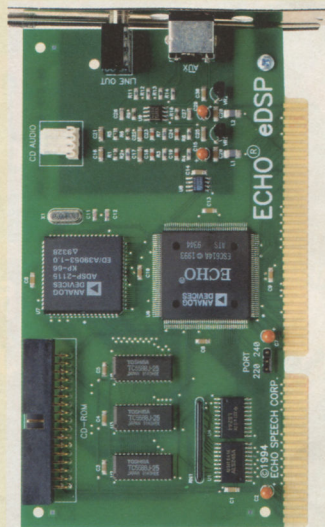
But my *Doom* jones has been so much worse. Not one single day has gone by since I loaded the game that I haven't played for at least an hour or two. I went out and bought a fast new modem so I could play against my friends, and I'm even thinking about buying a big new monitor, just so I can spot those demons before they spot me.

The worst of it is, though, that I don't see any reason why I should give up *Doom*. I keep telling myself that I can handle it, that I'll just play on my lunch break at work, and only a few hours at night. Even though I've beat the game several times now, I just set new rules — no saving games, no using any weapon greater than the shotgun — and play again. I don't think I'm going to be able to shake this *Doom* addiction — and god help me, I don't think I want to shake it.

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