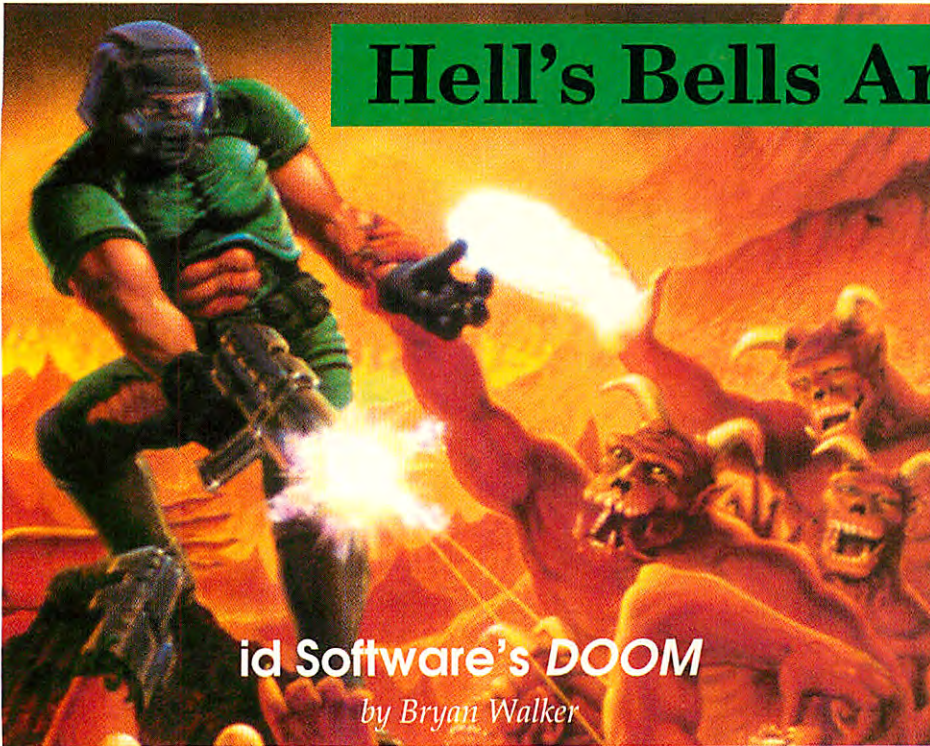


# Hell's Bells And Whistles



## id Software's DOOM

by Bryan Walker

With *Wolfenstein 3-D* and *Spear of Destiny*, id Software established itself as king of the action-game hill. The outstanding graphics and first-person 3-D environment of these games so convincingly immersed players in their world that some players were known to actually duck and swerve in their seats, and to be noticeably startled when jumped by a lurking Nazi guard. Since these overwhelming successes, id Software has been working hard on their encore while eager gamers have been whispering one word: *DOOM*. It's here, and it was worth the wait.

*DOOM* casts the player as a courageous Space Marine investigating trouble at a futuristic research base. This investigation quickly becomes a desperate fight for survival, as vicious creatures and dangerous traps threaten the player at every 3-D turn. *DOOM*'s adventure unfolds in three increasingly difficult episodes, "Knee-Deep in the Dead," "The Shores of Hell," and "Inferno." Each episode features a different theme with several locales to explore, and each offers a remarkable variety of scenery, monsters, weapons, and special items to gather, all adding up to a wonderfully involved and engaging game. *DOOM* also represents a huge technical improvement over id's earlier titles, giving the gamers what they asked for, and the industry a new benchmark.

*DOOM* is easy to install and configure, and it can be up and running in minutes. The screen size, graphics detail, sound, music, and control options are easy to adjust, accommodating a variety of systems and playing preferences. *DOOM* can be controlled with a keyboard, mouse, or joystick, with the ability to custom-configure each controller to the



player's taste. Difficulty levels can also be adjusted, helping novice Space Marines have fun without getting their faces quickly chewed off.

### Satan's Sensory Symphony

*DOOM*'s first-person 3-D graphics are simply *dazzling*. The detailed textures of the walls, ceilings, and floors, the superb shading effects, and the fluid animation provide the most believable environment

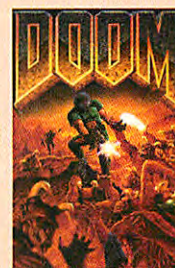
I've ever encountered in a PC game. Fully-functional stairs, elevators, and moving platforms are common, with many structures containing two or more levels. The deadly crushing ceiling traps and toxic rivers are beautifully rendered, and are ready to snare a reckless Marine. Shadows, strobe lights, fantastic architecture, and the occasional view of surreal lunar and infernal landscapes combine to form a deliciously nightmarish experience. The macabre imagination of veteran game designer Sandy Petersen (who designed the *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game for Chaosium) is very evident in *DOOM*'s devilishly constructed levels and eerie theme, giving the lavish graphics a brooding, sinister flavor. The game's first-person view is top-notch, incorporating a variety of subtle improvements over id's earlier titles. The weaving and bobbing viewpoint that results from running and jumping is a wonderful touch that's almost too natural to notice!

Owners of a Sound Blaster or compatible sound card are going to love *DOOM*'s superb digitized effects. The monsters growl, scream, roar, squeal and hiss, while the stoic Marine winces in pain and gasps for breath. Anxiously listening as the breathy snarling of approaching creatures grows louder is not just thrilling, but downright spooky! The aggressive weapon sounds are equally realistic, capable of rattling tooth fillings if piped through amplified speakers. The background music is a good touch, going from fast and frantic to chilling, skillfully capturing the ambiance of each scenario.

### Something Under The Bed Is Drooling

It won't take long to encounter *DOOM*'s eager monsters. As loathsome as the Nazis of *Wolfenstein 3-D* were, *DOOM*'s enemies are positively despicable! From possessed ex-Marines to drooling denizens of Hell itself, gamers will find themselves being chewed, clawed, scorched and shot. The

## DOOM



TITLE: DOOM  
 PRICE: \$40.00  
 SYSTEM: IBM  
 REQUIREMENTS: 386DX or better (486 recommended), 4MB RAM, VGA graphics, 17MB hard disk space; supports Sound Blaster and compatible sound cards  
 PROTECTION: None  
 DESIGNERS: John Carmack, Sandy Petersen, John Romero, Dave Taylor  
 PUBLISHER: id Software, 1-800-ID-GAMES

eight different types of "normal" monsters are very dangerous, possessing unique attacks, intelligence, durability and voices. The cleverly-designed Spectres are particularly tough, sporting an invisibility effect very similar to that of the otherworldly antagonist of *Predator*. To make matters worse, each episode has at least one fearsome super-beast that must be dispatched to continue the adventure.

While the monsters are tough and plentiful, they hate each other nearly as much as they hate the player's heroic Marines. Using this enmity to advantage, a savvy player can cause different species of angry creatures to inadvertently attack one another. When the sibling rivalry turns nasty, the player can dash away and watch the fracas from a safe distance. With the huge end-level guardians often surrounded by an escort of different monsters, causing a family feud is often a winning strategy!

With the bad guys enjoying numerical superiority, players will appreciate the handy selection of potent weapons. The pistol with which the player begins the game won't do much, but pump shotguns, rapid-firing multi-barrel machine guns, and powerful rocket launchers can be found early in the game. Diligent players can also unearth plasma rifles and the Ultimate Weapon, the BFG 9000. Those in dire straits can always resort to fisticuffs, but finding a chainsaw lying around can add new meaning to the term "wet work." While I found the shotgun to be the most useful for "close encounters," many situations seem tailor-made for a particular weapon. During the numerous fire-fights, veterans of id's earlier games will notice some nice new touches. Errant bullets realistically ricochet off walls, while rounds hitting their mark tear chunks of flesh from the unfortunate target. A particularly amusing feature is the ability to send a charging monster hurtling backwards with a close-range blast from the shotgun. It's also not uncommon to see creatures tumbling off ledges when breathing their last, reminiscent of a Wild West shoot-out. Gamers who like their computer combat brutal and bloody will find *DOOM* serves up an all-you-can-shoot buffet.

*DOOM* also has many useful items scattered around to help the player survive, evade, resist and escape. Extra ammunition, healing kits, various types of armor, and high-capacity backpacks are valuable finds. Certain computer chips augment the handy automatic mapping function, revealing that level's

complete floor plan, secret doors, and hidden rooms. Various mystical globes can give a health-point supercharge, grant partial invisibility, or even temporary invulnerability. My personal favorite was the Berserker Pack, which provides tremendous hand-to-hand combat ability as well as a health-point boost. Astute players will also find the toxic-waste barrels scattered throughout the complex make great bombs. When faced with a room-full of snarling beasties, shooting a barrel will cause the contents, and any nearby monsters, to detonate in a gratuitous display of destruction.

### Hell, Hell, The Gang's All Here!

Perhaps the most exciting feature of *DOOM* is its multiplayer capability. Up to four players can join in over an IPX-protocol network. Version 1.2 of *DOOM* also provides modem play at speeds of 9600 baud or faster. Multiplayer games can be played cooperatively, or as cutthroat DeathMatches where anything that breathes is fair game. Cooperative sessions are a great deal of fun, and can easily become rollicking all-night affairs. Many gamers are going to have flashbacks of the movie *Aliens*, as they and their fellow Space Marines face the lurking terrors of *DOOM* as a close-knit team.

On the other hand, the open-ended DeathMatches may be the most intense gaming experience available today. The ever-present monsters are bad enough, but add some twisted human opponents looking to use chain saws on each other and there's a seriously antisocial situation in the making. During one particularly ugly DeathMatch, I became so fixated with stalking a human opponent that an unseen Spectre was able to sneak up and jump my hapless Marine from behind. The resulting adrenaline surge, mixed with the tremendous suspense of the hunt, actually caused me to break my cher-



ished Thrustmaster joystick! That's how intense multiplayer *DOOM* can get! There have been reports of major corporations and even other computer-game companies [and computer game magazines -Ed] issuing memos specifically forbidding their employees from playing *DOOM* on company time. Jay Wilbur, CEO of id Software, summed it up best: "If you haven't played multiplayer *DOOM*, you haven't played *DOOM*!"

### Misfires

With some companies releasing bug-filled games that are little more than boxed beta-copies, I'm pleased to say that I've encountered no technical problems with *DOOM*. This is pretty remarkable considering the crude network environment and variety of machines it was reviewed on. The only complaint I've heard more than once referred to difficulties running *DOOM* under OS/2. The only quibble I can muster regards the ho-hum endgame. The ultimate end-level monster was too easy to kill, and the following "attaboy" sequence was something of a let-down. However, given *DOOM*'s many strengths, these minor complaints carry very little weight.

### Locked, Cocked, and Ready to Rock

*DOOM* is a virtuoso performance. Stunning graphics, pulse-pounding sound, intense gameplay, and multiplayer mayhem combine to form what is probably the best action game to date. Those squeamish about intense violence, dark undertones, and mangled joysticks should probably look for more pedestrian fare. However, hot-blooded players looking to have the time of their gaming lives are simply going to love *DOOM*.

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