

Doom II: An incredibly violent (but fun) computer game

Doom II: Hell on Earth is absolutely NOT for children. But some adults will find it a blast.

By Mike Langberg
SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

Doom II: Hell on Earth is an outrageously violent computer game, almost totally devoid of a plot and without a scrap of redeeming social value. It's also incredibly fun and guaranteed to be a runaway best seller.

So I'm stuck with a big dilemma. Part of me wants to condemn Doom II, and the trend it represents toward increasingly mindless mayhem in computer and video games.

Part of me wants to congratulate the crew of 20-something programmers at Id Software in Dallas for creating a non-stop adrenaline rush.

Whatever I think about Doom II doesn't matter, though. A sequel to the overwhelmingly popular Doom, released last year, Doom II was officially launched on "Doom's Day," Oct. 10, with an awesome 500,000 copies already pre-sold to retailers around the country.

Doom II takes you to a Martian moon

Even if GT Interactive Software



JOHN ROBERGE/Democrat

of New York, which is distributing Doom II for Id, doesn't sell one more copy, the game will still rank among the all-time best sellers in entertainment software.

Doom II is really nothing more than a continuation of Doom, with a few added features. Both games are shoot-'em-ups. You are placed in the role of a U.S. Marine, stationed on

Mars sometime in the near future.

In Doom, you go to the Martian moon Phobos to fight hordes of mutant humans and evil creatures from another dimension. In Doom II, you're back on Earth fighting the same collection of monsters and mutants — culminating in a trip to the center of hell to face the Devil himself.

SURVEY INSIDE

- The *Democrat* will begin running a weekly Technology section beginning Sunday, Nov. 20. We want to know what you'd like to read in it. **2C**

ABOUT THE SOFTWARE

- **Name:** Doom II: Hell on Earth
- **Category:** Games
- **Developer:** GT Interactive Software; 1-800-362-9400
- **Format:** DOS
- **Price:** \$69 list, \$49 street

Doom and Doom II are played from a first-person perspective. You look through the eyes of the nameless Marine, controlling his movements with either the keyboard or a mouse, and you see the weapon he's holding near the bottom of the screen.

Marine becomes bloody and battered with each hit

When enemies come into view, you press the fire button and watch them crumple into bloody piles of twitching flesh and bone. A status bar at the very bottom of the screen shows a Dorian Gray picture of the Marine's face — as you suffer injuries from enemy fire or exposure to

pits of radioactive waste, you see the marine becoming increasingly bloody and battered.

What makes Doom and Doom II so compelling is the incredible speed of game play. You move through the corridors of mysterious buildings at a brisk jogging pace, and the computer responds instantly whenever you turn around. The action is so fast that some Doom players report bouts of nausea from the sudden shifts in perspective.

Players can blast each other through a modem

Doom is particularly popular in offices, because as many as four players can face off through a computer network. Two players can also blast away at each other through a modem.

But survival takes more than an itchy trigger finger. You have to pay close attention to your surroundings, searching for helpful objects like first-aid kits, armor, ammunition and extra weapons. Mastering all 30 levels of Doom II will take even expert computer gamers many hours of blood-spattering adventure.

And what about the terrible violence? I don't think Doom and Doom II will do any harm to adults. Partly, that's because the developers have sacrificed graphic detail for speed

Please see GAME, 7C

GAME:

Parents: Keep kids away from Doom II

From 1C

— the bad guys are small, crude images that bear no resemblance to real people or even real outer-space aliens. I'm much more troubled by CD-ROM games using video of live actors to inflict torture and death.

The developers also take a tongue-in-cheek attitude toward their work. The five levels of difficulty, instead of carrying the usual labels like "novice" and "expert," are called "I'm Too Young to Die;" "Hey, Not Too Rough;" "Hurt Me Plenty;" "Ultra-Violence" and "Nightmare!"

How to resolve my dilemma? By putting it on the already overburdened shoulders of parents.

Doom and Doom II are absolutely not for children. The games are not even appropriate for most adults. But there's no reason adults who want to play the two games should be deprived of the opportunity.

It's up to parents to keep their children away from Doom, much as they're responsible for preventing kids from getting to cigarettes, alcohol or X-rated movies. GT Interactive, seeking to cover itself with a small fig leaf, has put an "M" rating label on the box, with a caption stating "Mature, Ages 17plus."

Finally, a word for those of you who are going to buy Doom II regardless of what anybody says. Doom was released last year as shareware. The first of the games's three episodes was distributed for free and could be downloaded by modem from many game bulletin boards. To play the next two epi-

sodes, you had to buy the complete game from Id for about \$40.

Doom II, in contrast, is being sold through conventional retail channels. The only legal way to play Doom II is buying the whole game for about \$49 in most stores. It's available on either CD-ROM or 3.5-inch diskettes. There are two advantages to buying the CD-ROM: You get the shareware episode of the original Doom, and you can play Doom II directly off the CD-ROM, conserving 15 to 20 megabytes of hard-disk space.

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