

Doom: Evil Unleashed

Format: PC

Publisher: Id Software

Developer: In-house

Price: Shareware:
£35 for next
two episodes

Size: 4 disks

Release: Out now

It doesn't seem rational, does it? Along comes a fairly simple 3D-perspective maze adventure/shoot 'em up, and suddenly hundreds of grown men start acting like they've never seen a videogame before – and even the normally sober PC press are turned into gun-mad fanatics. Huge ratings, rave reviews across the board... No-one could deny that Id Software's *Doom* has caused quite a stir – on both sides of the Atlantic. And that's before the full version is even out in the shops.

It's got to go down as a marketing coup: by releasing the first episode of their new game as shareware, Id have managed to whip up and control a vast torrent of high-frantic bulletin-board trading. Well, you write a game as immediately playable as *Doom* and ship it with the message, 'please distribute like crazy' and you're guaranteed a big audience.

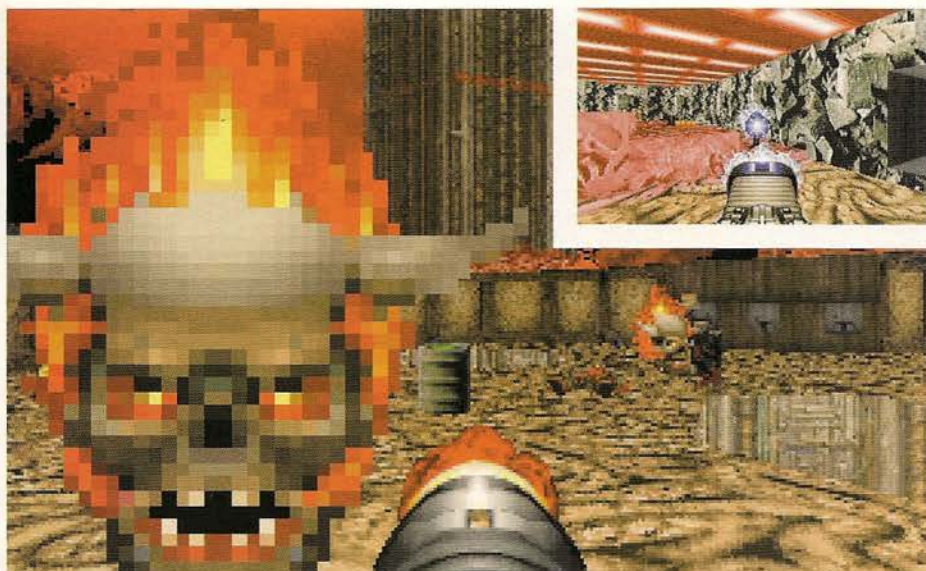
And *Doom* looks like following its forerunner, *Wolfenstein 3D*, in becoming *de rigeur* games software in offices and homes throughout the Western world.

Basically, the way it works is that the first episode of *Doom: Evil Unleashed* is free. Anyone can get hold of it, and they can play it until they're sick of it – or can just discard it straight away if they don't like it. The next two episodes you have to pay for. So get hooked on *Doom* and you'll probably want to buy the rest of it. Interestingly, though, Id Software are also planning to release a more conventional all-in-one, buy-it-in-the-shops version of *Doom* later this year.

One thing that this distribution policy ensures is a vast, vast audience. Almost every PC in the world seems certain at one time or other to have the code to *Doom* ticking away on it. That obviously means that the game



From the earliest scenes of the first episode, you can tell you're in for a treat with *Doom* – like the way the mountains scroll totally convincingly behind the windows (above). And the action's all yet to come – like the charging pink shotgun fodder (inset) you meet later in the episode



The range of scenery in *Doom* is certainly the game's best feature – like the flame-filled caverns (middle), the stunning Alpine splendour of the first level (bottom right), and the fiery views of the second episode – complete with grotesquely massacred corpses (below right). Yep, there's something for everyone here

needs to be kept simple. You don't want anyone losing interest, or being unable to play, because they don't have the manual, or a joystick, or a sound card, etc, etc. And the real beauty of *Doom* – and yes, even a game as undeniably violent as this can have an element of beauty – is the way it works so well within this limitation.

Doom will run okay on almost any hard-disk PC, but play it on a high-end system and it is immediately recognisable as a very, very impressive piece of software, with graphics technology way up there with the *Strike Commanders* and *Comanches* of this

world. And the speed at which it all works is nothing short of breathtaking.

The differences between *Doom* and the now primitive *Wolfenstein* are obvious at first glance. Firstly, I'd have got a lot better at clipping sprites in three axes – which means simply that the action in *Doom* happens on more than one level. There are stairs for you to climb, lifts to find, and aliens firing at you from windows and balconies high above the ground. This adds major new depth to the action – go back and play *Wolfenstein* and you'll laugh at the horrible 2Dness of the 3D perspective. It also makes games like 3DO's

Power ups

Doom has a healthy selection of power-ups dotted throughout its many levels. Don't expect to survive for any length of time without using them – but be warned, some are very tough to find. Often you'll have to risk a great deal of your health to find the much-needed bonuses listed below.

Health bonus. The most common power-up. Each of the flasks of blue, soothing liquid increases your health rating by 1%.

Medipaks. Take the form of a small white chest with a red cross. Each one gives you a 10% health increase.

Stimpaks. Identical in appearance and effect to the ubiquitous Medipaks. Stimpaks provide a boost of raw adrenaline (or maybe testosterone) to help you along in your mission.

Berserk. This green medical pack is very hard to find and only available on later levels. It gives you the ability to literally tear people apart with your bare hands. It also greatly increases your weapons' rate of fire. The effect of this pack is highly satisfying, but it's shortlived – you can expect to get only 30 seconds' boost.

Invincible. A green orb with a human face in it. As its name suggests, it renders you invincible, for 30 seconds.

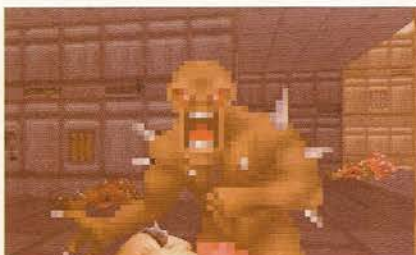
Invisible. A red and blue orb that makes it hard for your enemies to see you, particularly in the dark corridors – but although they're firing blind, they still usually manage to hit you.

Radiation suit. This lets you walk through the green/red/blue poisonous gunk without your health going down.

Light amplifier. Another shortlived effect. It allows you to see clearly in the near pitch-black tunnels.

Armour. Wearing armour greatly reduces the impact of enemy fire on you. There are three types: the first is a helmet which bestows a 1% increase; the second is a green chestplate which gives you 100% armour; the last is a blue chestplate which can double your armour.

Go berserk



The Berserk mode is only available if you find the power-up – it looks like a small black medipak, and lurks on later levels of the game. The power-up lets you give your guns a rest – you now have the power to tear the bad guys apart with just your fists. Oh yeah, and your spiked knuckleduster

The chainsaw



Ah yes, the chainsaw. A beautiful weapon – even the biggest bad guys don't seem quite so keen on a full-frontal attack after you've just carved up one of their friends like this. The sound effects are about as close as you can get to the sound of a chainsaw massacre as well. What fun

Weapons

There are seven weapons in all. Each one is brilliantly animated, and the step-up between each weapon is suitably awesome.

Pistol. You start the game armed with just a pistol, but even that can fire up to 200 shots before you need to reload it. If you die during any level you return to the start of that level, again armed with the pistol.

Shotgun. The first weapon power-up gives you a pump-action shotgun. The bad guys no longer fall down – now they're blown clean off their feet.

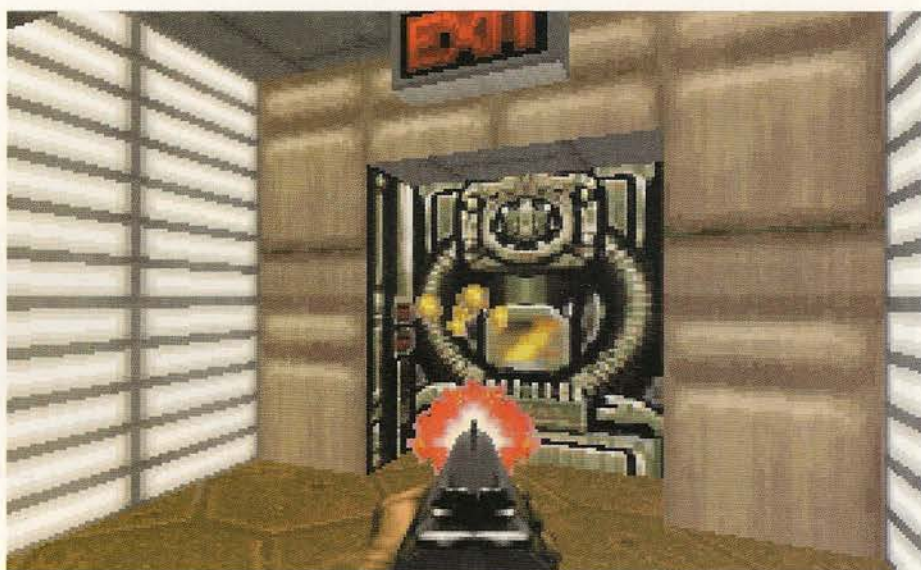
Chainsaw. The next weapon you can expect is a powerful chainsaw. It's best to only use this for closeup work (although chainsawing through a whole crowd can get slightly messy). With this meaty implement in your hands, your enemies don't seem quite so keen to take you on.

Multibarrel machine gun. Watching those grotesque lizard creatures dance around as the bullets rip into them is deeply, and rather worryingly, satisfying. Get your hands on this and suddenly you start getting into this game in a big way.

Rocket launcher. Not much to say about this. It fires rockets. They embed themselves inside your enemies' flesh. They (rocket plus enemy) explode; blood sprays everywhere. You'll face the bosses of the first episode armed with this gun.

Plasma gun. This weapon is apparently reserved for the second episode. It unleashes a bolt of blue electricity which flattens all but the hardest of ghouls.

BFG. No prizes for guessing what this might stand for, but it sure is one big, er, gun. Anyone on the receiving end of the BFG's mega-powerful bolt is quickly turned into a small, smoking pile of ash.



The Exit. It's there on each level, but sometimes it's very tough to find. Sometimes it's even worth a blast or two with your shotgun when you find it. Doesn't really help much, but it makes you feel good

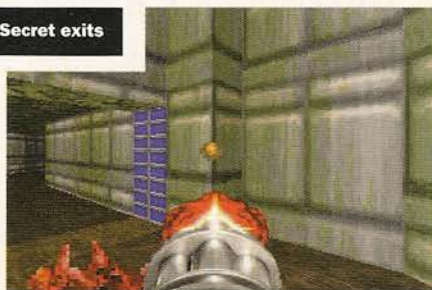
← new *Monster Manor* (Testscreen, page 79) look totally passé before they're even out in the shops.

That said, though, there are problems with the game (Edge has no intention of joining the rabble mindlessly praising *Doom* beyond its worth). Yes, it is good – in fact it's a very, very technically impressive piece of programming – but where's the genuine 3D (look up and down) of *Ultima Underworld*? Where's the variety in the gameplay (it's all just kill, kill,

kill)? And looking at it coldly, what is there really in *Doom* (apart from the graphics) to set it above even the most average, most highly repetitive and tedious 2D shoot 'em up?

Okay, there are some visual touches in this game that will literally blow your mind – like the scaling and parallax on the distant mountains – but then everyone said much the same about the hi-res images in *The 7th Guest*. They may look great, but what do you do with them? You don't ever get to explore

Secret exits



Some of the secret panels are almost impossible to spot. But spot them you must if you plan on surviving the horrors of the mazes in *Doom*. Power-ups, big guns, health points... they're all hidden here

Secrets



A totally secret level in the first episode sees you in control of an oversized machine gun, facing a pen of caged lizard creatures in their barracks. It's a psychopath's wet dream... and they can't even fight back



Secrets

As with their earlier creation, *Wolfenstein 3D*, Id Software have programmed hundreds of secret passages into the mazes in *Doom*. You have to explore every wall with great care, and some secret doors are even obscured by objects that you have to blast aside.

When you reach the end of each level, the game informs you of the percentage of secrets you discovered on that level – and you're doing well if you find 50% of them. The secrets in *Doom* really give the game that incredible 'Go back and see what you've missed' element.

Most of the secret doors can be spotted if you look carefully enough. A slight difference in light shading, suspicious metal pillars on the wall for no reason, an alcove just before a doorway – these are the kind of visual clues you should be on the look-out for. All the big power-ups are secret, and to get your first chance at most of the big weapons you'll need to crack the secret passages on each level. Okay, you can just whip through, but there's always that nagging doubt: 'Just what did I miss back there...'

We don't want to give too much away here, but non-secret hunters will in fact miss at least one entire level – the first episode gives you a secret bonus chance to wipe out hundreds of the aliens in their army barracks. But no-one's forcing you to see that bit...

those distant mountain ranges – they're really little more than impressive padding (as in *The 7th Guest*, you're just meant to watch them – in awe).

Doom is certainly a gorgeous-looking game – it has also, incidentally, made serious advances in what people will expect of 3D graphics in future. But the gameplay is as narrow as it gets: you run along beautifully parallaxed corridors and through stunning 3D rooms shooting at a near-endless supply of green lizards. That's it. Still, we're not going to deny that there is a worryingly addictive fascination in watching the frantic despatching of those little green guys.

On the plus side, some of the lighting effects in the game are truly scary. Everyone at one time or another has described some videogame as scary – and as we all know, they're never scary to anyone with an IQ above, say, 12. Well, that's one generalisation that *Doom* shatters: walking through the computer centre with the lights flashing slowly

and rhythmically, and turning to find one of those hideous pink beasts running behind you is a seriously intense videogame experience.

It's just a shame that the number of enemies is fairly limited. After a while, the multiple pump-action, blood-spraying demise of yet another pink monster is only marginally satisfying. If whenever you turned a corner you could be met by some new, more grotesquely deformed creature than the last, then at least *Doom* could boast that it had replaced gameplay with real horror.

As it is, once the power of *Doom*'s graphics has worn off (they're amazing, so give that at least a week or two), you'll be longing for something new in this game.

If only you could talk to these creatures, then perhaps you could try and make friends with them, form alliances... Now, that would be interesting.

E

Edge rating:

Seven out of ten



Bosses

There are three main bosses in the three episodes of *Doom*. The pink/brown things are in episode one (top left), a rocket-toting guy (above) lives in episode two, and the spiderdemon guards episode three (left)

Doom II: Hell On Earth

Format: PC

Publisher: Virgin

Developer: Id Software

Price: £50

Size: 5 disks

Release: October 10

Just nine months after *Doom: Evil Unleashed* erupted onto the PC with its explosive mix of gunplay, gore and strategy, id Software have returned to the fray with a follow-up that promises even more refined blasting action. Although id released the first game on a 'try before you buy' basis – the initial episode was available free but subsequent ones had to be paid for – *Doom II: Hell On Earth* has been placed on a more conventional commercial footing, with id obviously assuming that *Doom*'s reputation ensures sales of the sequel.

In the initial stages of *Doom II*, it's hard to avoid the suspicion that you've booted up its predecessor by mistake: the backgrounds are the same, the monsters are familiar, and the

gameplay is apparently unchanged. As you get further into the game, though, *Doom II* begins to reveal its unique attraction.

One of the main attractions of *Doom* was its stunning graphics. Not only does *Doom II* clip along faster than any other game on the market, but the variety of the visuals has been dramatically increased. With the benefit of hindsight, you realise how much of *Doom* consisted of monotonous brown walls. Now there's a much greater range of textures, including brickwork, wood panelling, rough-hewn granite and stone slabs.

More importantly, id have made subtle but significant alterations to the gameplay. The shift of emphasis away from utter carnage and towards problem solving that began in the last few levels of *Doom* has been continued in *Doom II*. Switches are scattered liberally throughout the game; the right combinations



The lethal Cyberdemon boss from the original game makes several appearances in the sequel. Six or seven shots from the BFG are needed to stop him, and your life expectancy at this range is short. This new fiend (inset) only needs a line of sight to turn you into a human candle



Monsters



Doom II boasts six new enemies. The fiend (top left) sets fire to you from a distance. The fat man (top middle) is equipped with twin fireballs. The skeletons (above) throw fireballs which follow you around corners. The spider (top right) possesses plasma weapons. The sergeants (above right) are weak but their guns have a long range. The Cacodaemon (inset) launches flaming skulls and explodes when he dies



Multiplayer

Leaping out behind your best friend and turning them into dead meat with a well-aimed shotgun blast is what multiplayer gaming is all about. In recognition of the network game's contribution to *Doom's* success, *Id* have enhanced both the death-match and co-operative modes in *Doom II*. From the DOS prompt, monsters can be turned off, sped up by three times or made to respawn every eight seconds. Your own speed can be increased by up to 250%, although other players are informed if you take advantage of this option. For the seriously vain (or bloodthirsty), matches can be recorded and played back at a later date. However, if you haven't got access to an IPX network you'll just have to dream.

have to be activated to open doors and trigger various other events. Even ostensibly simple rooms often require strategic decisions to be made. Although the pleasure of slaughtering your enemies never wears off, it's unquestionably more satisfying to have to think as well as use your reflexes.

It's this depth that makes *Doom II* more satisfying to play than any other game in its genre. *Alien Vs Predator* (see page 78), *Terminator Rampage* and *Monster Manor* all suffer from shallow gameplay that soon becomes tiresome. In *Doom II*, however, there's always something to be achieved, whether it's finding a keycard to allow you access to a new section of the level, getting hold of a health top-up or a more powerful weapon, or just figuring out a way of dispatching that particularly bothersome monster before he kills you (again).

But although *Doom II* does require a fair degree of logical thought, the strategy involved is never so tortuous that it detracts from the game's playability. Even if the same level has been testing your capabilities for an hour, you know that the solution to your problems lies in

front of you, and it's just a question of working it out. It's an article of faith in *Doom II* that it's always you at fault, not the game.

As you explore *Doom II*, it becomes apparent how much more complex the level architecture is compared to the first game. The corridors and rooms are as labyrinthine as ever, but numerous lifts, flights of steps and darkened pits give the game a much greater vertical dimension. In the open-air stages, for example, you find yourself battling through castles several storeys high – as well as roaming around at ground level, avoiding gunfire from snipers taking potshots from vantage points high above you.

Doom II also boasts a huge number of secret areas. Some are relatively obvious, while others take a while to figure out. The further you get into the game, the more cunningly hidden they are, but they're never so obscure that you give up looking. And they're rewarding when you find them: one of the best-concealed consists of two Nazi-ridden levels of *id's* *Wolfenstein 3D*, the precursor to *Doom*.

Id have deliberately increased the challenge in *Doom II* (if you can't take the heat, they



As in the first game, your enemies fight each other in *Doom II*, which makes your life slightly easier

Gore



Doom II is not for the faint-hearted: scenes like these make it one of the goriest games on the PC, but also one of the most atmospheric

rather unsympathetically recommend that you put in some practice on the first game). Even on the lowest of the five difficulty levels there are numerous enemies to contend with, and on the hardest one (apart from the unplayable 'Nightmare' level) the hordes of rampaging foes make for a frantic blast. The monsters are generally faster and more intelligent than they were in the original game, and it's now only the lowliest humans who blunder round corners into your ambushes. id have made

one concession to frailer gamers, though: whereas the three sections that constituted *Doom* were completely separate, which meant that you had to start each one with the rather ineffectual default weapon, the 30 levels in *Doom II* are continuous, so you can build up your arsenal with impunity.

At a time when the minimum machine specification for PC games is rising faster than the price of high-end machines is falling, it's refreshing to see that *Doom II* runs acceptably on a relatively lowly 486 – although there is noticeable slowdown on some of the more highly populated levels later on in the game, even on a 66MHz DX2 system.

The music, week and beepy in *Doom*, remains uninspiring in the sequel, but the sound effects are consistently excellent. Play



Clove-hooved daemons melt after you ignite a room full of barrels (top). A splintered skull signifies the end of this fat man (above)



the game on an Ultrasound-equipped machine, turn the music off and the sound effects up to full volume, and you're in for a treat.

Doom II's biggest drawback is its price. £50 is a lot to pay for any PC game, but it seems positively extortionate when you consider that thousands of excellent extra levels can be obtained free from various bulletin boards (id's authoring software is available to any amateur level designer) and all you're really paying for is the game engine.

But that shouldn't be allowed to detract from *Doom II*'s achievement. id have managed to improve what was already arguably the most playable game on the PC, and in the process have set new standards to which other PC games will aspire.

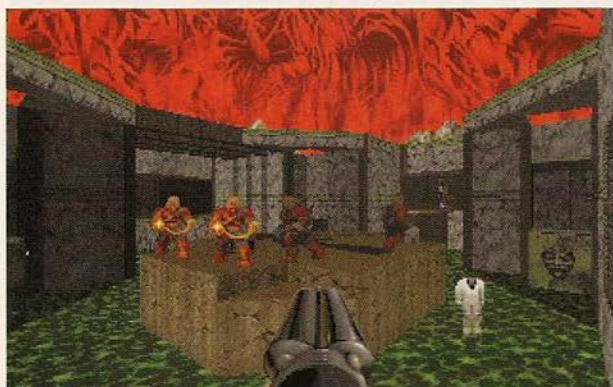
E

Edge rating:

Nine out of ten



Leaving this room alive requires both skill and strategy (top). This skull marks the level exit (above)



From top: a hefty weapon like the plasma gun is vital to deal with many of *Doom*'s new denizens; complex rooms are the rule in *Doom II*; the backgrounds in the Hell levels are particularly chilling; the enhanced *Wolfenstein* levels are difficult to find, but handy power-ups – as well as a few surprises – await the worthy