neak Peek: DOOM II

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NOTE: Screen shots and information presented in this article are based on a pre-release version of DOOM II and are subject to change before final release. This article is not a review.

Those of you who haven't heard of DOOM please raise your hands. Hmm, not too many hands I see. Well, in case you haven't here's a little background on the DOOM phenomenon. Back in 1992 id Software developed a shareware game called Wolfenstein 3D, which was recently released for the Macintosh by MacPLay. Regarded by many as the first popular first-person perspective 3D game, it took the PC world by storm. That is, of course, until id released DOOM in late 1993. DOOM took Wolfenstein even a step forward with more realistic gameplay, graphics, sound...you name it. It simply rocked! Millions of people got hooked and hundreds of thousands sent in their shareware fee, making DOOM the most popular shareware game ever.

DOOM II: Hell on Earth, released on October 10th of 1994 for the PC platform, was the commercial version of this incarnation. It included all new levels and a multitude of new weapons and monsters. Riding on its success, id decided to develop DOOM for other platforms as well including, luckily for us, the Macintosh. id Software hired Lion Entertainment to do the Macintosh port, who also recently completed the Macintosh port of Super Wing Commander for Origin Systems (these guys are on fire!) previewed in the January/February issue of IMG.

It's safe to say that DOOM II is one of the most anticipated games to come to the Macintosh. In this preview we'll mainly concentrate on DOOM II, the commercial version of DOOM. Although we've learned id is also planning on releasing a shareware version of DOOM for the Mac right around the time DOOM II is released. More on the shareware version later. First, a little introduction to the diabolical world of DOOM.

How Did I Get Into This Bloody Mess? DOOM II starts off where DOOM I left off. In DOOM I, you successfully defeated the alien invasion that struck Mars. You stopped the invasion, saved Mars, and became a hero to millions. Now in DOOM II, you have quit the military and are heading home for some well deserved rest. As you open the door from your pod, you see the city ablaze with raging fire. You see people fleeing the flames and then you see...no...it can't be...not again...the same aliens you fought on Mars! Somehow the aliens made their way to Earth and they've killed of billions of innocent people. Many have been transformed

to flesh-eating mutants, but a few are still alive and human. The remaining leaders of humanity have devised a plan to save the human race. They have built a number of enormous ships to carry the remaining people into space and to safety.

But there's one small problem the Earth's only ground spaceport has just been taken over by the aliens and they've constructed a force field over the port, preventing the ships from landing or taking off. It's up to you to save humanity! You must turn off the barrier so that the ships can leave. Are you up to it?

What's DOOM? DOOM is a 3D, virtual reality type action game. The object of the game is simple, shoot to kill. Your mission is to fight your way through each of the alien infested levels. Along the way you will find a melee of aliens as well as a plethora of different guns and ammunition to help you through your struggle. Your ultimate goal on each level is to reach the exit chamber which takes you to the next level.

The DOOM environment is a rich one. Fully texture-mapped graphics bring the player into a realistic and fast paced environment. A lot of time was spent creating realistic looking walls, doors, and other objects to help create a seamless virtual environment. Adding yet another touch of realism are the lighting effects in DOOM that add an erie feeling to the game. The sensation of being in a dark room with a number of those nasty aliens fighting for your life is unlike anything you'll ever experience.

ound also plays an important part in the realization of DOOM. From the ear-pounding blast of the shotgun to the wailing cry of an alien as he falls to his death, the sounds in DOOM create a frightingly wonderful atmosphere of death and destruction that has become an id trademark. Check out the QuickTime movie below. Although you won't be able to see much, listen to the sounds, they make an immense impact on the game.

Getting Combat Ready. Before beginning a game, you can select between 5 difficulty levels. There are also a number of other options available like screen size, control method,

messages, sound volume, etc that allow you to customize DOOM to your liking. Once in the game, you'll be presented with the main view screen (where all the action happens) and the status bar just below it that provides information like your health, ammo level, arms, armor, and key cards.

One of DOOM's biggest attractions is its simplicity. There aren't too many keys to figure out and almost anyone can figure out how to play DOOM in seconds. You basically use the arrow keys to move around, hit Control to fire, Option to side step, and the Space Bar to open doors. DOOM also features an automap mode that allows you to view a top-down map of everything you've seen up to date.

Firepower! To fight the bad guys you're going to need a lot of guts and firepower. DOOM II has a number of cool weapons to help you pulverize the aliens.   To pick up a weapon you simply walk over it. Former humans you kill leave behind guns and ammo you can pick up. Since you can't look up or down in DOOM, you can fire your weapon straight at an alien and hit it, even though it might be above or below you.

Your most basic of weapons is your fist. Not very useful, but it beats having nothing at all. Luckily however, there's a ton of ammo for the pistol, your basic handgun.

The other DOOM II weapons are as follows:

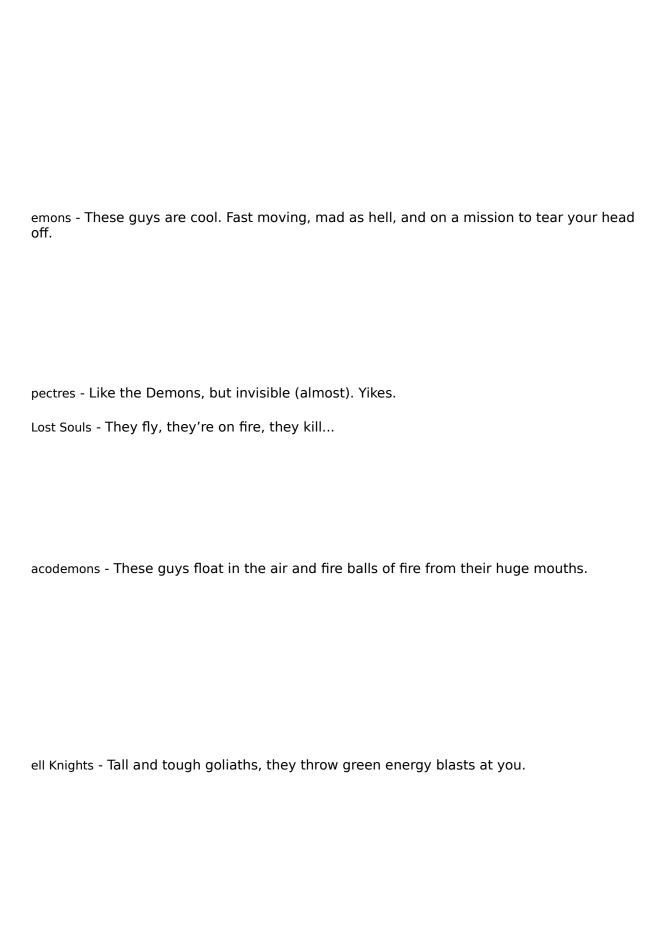Chainsaw - The weapon of choice for close and personal combat. Ready to cut some wood?

hotgun/Combat Shotgun - Yes! These two heavy hitters deliver one hell of a bang. The Combat shotgun (my personal favorite) is a double-barrelled, sawed-off weapon. Oh, and yea, it kicks major butt!
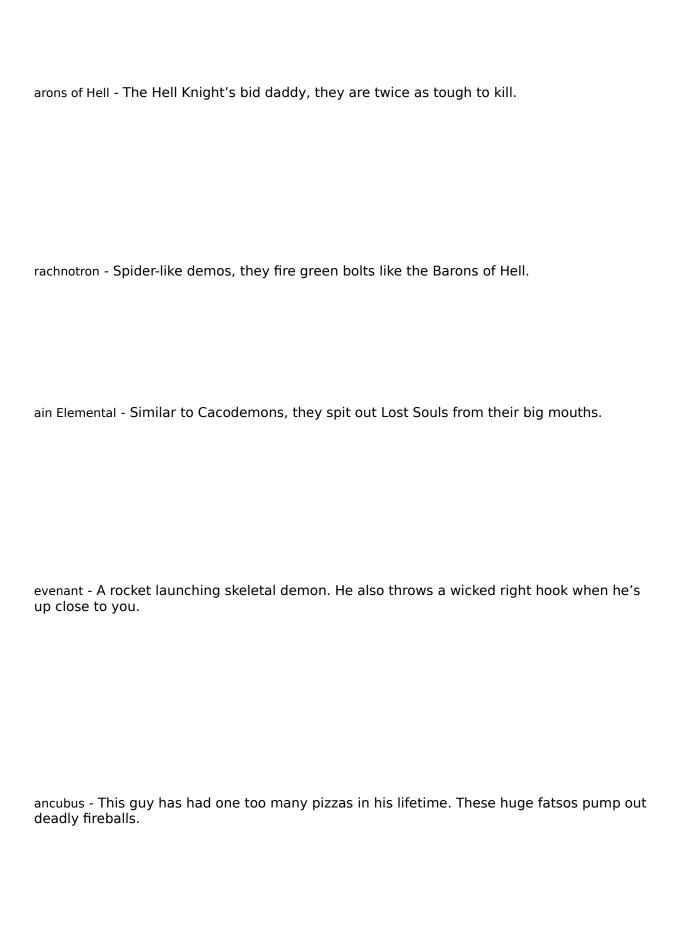
haingun -This weapon is your basic rapid fire, machine gun like pulverizer.

ocket Launcher - Uhh....uhhh....it like fires rockets and stuff....

lasma Rifle - This rapid fire gun uses energy cells to liquefy the enemy. Extremely powerful.

FG 9000 - The ultimate one punch knock out weapon, it fires a single high powered jolt usually wiping out anything in its path.

he Bad Guys. DOOM's creatures are a scary nasty bunch. They're fearless, aggressive, and they all seem to have a lousy attitude.

Former Humans - These former human soldiers have been zombified and are now out to kill you. And to think they were once your comrades.

ormer Human Sergeants - Same as above but meaner and harder to kill. Their shotguns can be deadly.

ormer Commando - Chaingun carrying maggots. They never seem to stop firing. When you kill them you get their chaingun.

mps - These hairy brown creatures fire balls of fire. Quite nasty.

emons - These guys are cool. Fast moving, mad as hell, and on a mission to tear your head off.

pectres - Like the Demons, but invisible (almost). Yikes.

Lost Souls - They fly, they're on fire, they kill...

acodemons - These guys float in the air and fire balls of fire from their huge mouths.

ell Knights - Tall and tough goliaths, they throw green energy blasts at you.

arons of Hell - The Hell Knight's bid daddy, they are twice as tough to kill.

rachnotron - Spider-like demos, they fire green bolts like the Barons of Hell.

ain Elemental - Similar to Cacodemons, they spit out Lost Souls from their big mouths.

evenant - A rocket launching skeletal demon. He also throws a wicked right hook when he's up close to you.

ancubus - This guy has had one too many pizzas in his lifetime. These huge fatsos pump out deadly fireballs.

rch-Vile - Probably the hardest monster to kill in DOOM, the Arch-Vile has a fire attack similar to the BFG 9000. Worst of all, he has the ability to raise demons from the dead. Mommy....

he Spider Mastermind - The Arachnotron's mommy, she packs a super-chaingun.

he Cyberdemon - A missile-launching demom with goat legs. Good luck!

ooperative and Deathmatch Network Play. Up to four players can play multiplayer DOOM. Cooperative play involves teamwork to get through a level. Here all the players begin in the same location. Items like weapons and keys are inexhaustible. So, for example, when a

player picks up a yellow key, it is automatically replaced so other players can pick up the yellow key as well. Other items however are not inexhaustible, so teamwork becomes a key factor.

Deathmatch mode, however, is every man to himself. The object here is to blast at anything that moves. There's no time or kill limit in Deathmatch mode, you decide when the game should end. When you start a Deathmatch, each player begins at a random location. Every player begins the level with all of the necessary keys, making it possible to access any area on the map. Weapons are replenished after a player grabs them, but the player can only grab that object once. It is replenished for the use of other passing players. When a player dies he comes back to life a few seconds later. However, when they return they are stripped of any special weapons or ammo they have accumulated.

The good news is that Macintosh players will be able to play their PC buddies in DOOM. You can do this on an IPX network, connecting 2 modems together, or through the Internet using TCP/IP. Of course, if you just want to play against your Macintosh buddies you can using all of the methods above as well as on AppleTalk networks using LocalTalk or Ethernet.

One of the cool features in network play is the ability to send messages to your buddies by hitting the T key and then typing in your message. You can also send your own pre-defined macros which contain already typed messages.

High-Res Heaven. Like the PC version, DOOM II for the Macintosh runs in 320 X 200 low resolution modes. But thanks to the awesome speed of the Power Macintosh, you can also run DOOM II at 640 X 200 mode and 640 X 400. All of the screen shots in the slide show below were taken in 640 X 400 mode and I'm sure you'll agree with me that they look stunning. The only problem is that you'll need a high end Power Mac if you want to run DOOM in this high resolution mode. People with 040 machines will be happy to learn that you'll be able to run DOOM, albeit in low resolution modes with a smaller screen size.

o how does it run? On my Power Mac 6100 (clocked at 80 MHz with a 256 L2 cache) it ran at around 15-25 frames a second. Not bad at all! But I do expect Lion to get even better frame rates as they get closer to shipping the product by fine-tuning it in the coming months.

Another thing that will help improve frame rates on a Power Mac is the native Sound Manager which should ship by the time DOOM II is released.

Shareware. Id Software is also planning on releasing the shareware version of DOOM, around the same time DOOM II is released commercially. The shareware version contains a total of 3 episodes and can be purchased directly from id for approximately $35-$40. Episode One of the shareware version will be freely distributable, so expect to see it everywhere (including on the IMG CD-ROM) and well as the DOOM II CD-ROM. There probably won't be a demo of DOOM II.

Hell on Earth. You've heard about it, you've seen it, now get ready to live the nightmare. Like many recent ports, DOOM II stands out against its PC cousin with high resolution graphics and a better interface, while at the same time remaining true to the look and feel of PC DOOM. DOOM II is scheduled to be released on the Macintosh sometime in April on floppy disk and CD-ROM.