

y Jason Carter

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

You thought it was all over. You slaughtered Doom and Wolfenstein 3D. Marathon and Marathon 2 was a breeze. Dark Forces? That was child's play. But there's another that's on the way, ready to de-throne all its predecessors, entitled Hexen: Beyond Heretic. After road testing Hexen at a friend's house, I was almost ready to buy a new PC to play it one more time (forgive me for my sinful thinking!). I decided instead to write to a member of id's staff about a port of the game. I received a response in -- no joke! -- five minutes, and it confirmed my hopeful dream: Hexen is being ported to the Mac! The port is being done by Presage software, whom you might remember from Might & Magic III, Lode Runner, etc. All of the information about the port itself comes straight from the mouth of Gary Arnold, one of Mac-Hexen's main programmers at Presage.

[What the Heck is Hexen?](#)

Hexen is id Software's follow-up to their medieval Doom-like game Heretic. Nay, dear sir, this is no Doom to Doom II like sequel. This is a complete reconstruction of the Doom/Heretic engine, transforming it into possibly the very best game ever written by id Software. You have your choice of three different and amazing characters in the game: the magical mage, Daedalon, the hulking fighter, Baratus, and the powerful cleric, Parias. Each character comes with special abilities and weapons that only he can use, each as deadly as those of the others.

Instead of just weapons, there are hoards of specialized trinkets that are used only for killing, such as exploding fletchettes, the porkilator, and even a Dark Servant voodoo doll, that when used, turns into what looks like a massive and angry bull on some serious steroids. It charges across the screen and smashes other enemies into a bloody pulp with a gigantic sledge hammer. As you would expect, it's great for a deathmatch!

[What Makes Hexen Different](#)

Hexen uses a dramatically improved Doom engine, which is the basis for all id's games right now (excluding Quake, which will run on a totally new 3D engine). In this game, you have the ability to look up and down, jump, swim around in rivers and swamps, as well as fly. Also,

many objects can be interacted with, such as trees that you can chop down, windows that can be shattered, and a huge bell that can be rung!

There is also tremendously improved physics in the game. One example of this is that when you fall off a cliff, instead of feeling fine -- like in Doom -- you accelerate very, very fast, and you can almost feel the gut wrenching jolt to your body as you smash onto some rock hard surface. Most of the time, your body bounces before final impact, which is very gross. And sometimes, you are given the pleasure of seeing your guts splatter out in front of you.

Hexen utilizes doors that can swing and slide open, instead of just moving up. There are now atmospheric effects, such as fog (really cool) and lightning. There are even overlapping and scrolling skies.

Hexen is not as linear as any of the other 3D games out there. You don't just complete a level and hop magically to the next. There are gigantic blood red portals that teleport you to different boards, and back again. For example, on Level 2, there are portals to levels 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. You can beat them in any order you please, and in some cases, you can get an item in one level that you need to beat another earlier level with.

Most of the levels center around puzzles that you must solve, and although they are not as challenging as Marathon, they can be tricky.

Hexen also sports a little nifty thing called scripting, in which level authors can make a variety of things happen at once, depending on an action you take. Say you enter a room. With scripting, many things can happen. Suddenly the lights dim. You hear a rumble and the floor drops down 50 feet, exposing searing hot lava! All of the windows shatter and monsters burst through ready for some meat. Scripting will let designers do much more with their add-on levels than ever before!

How is it in Deathmatch?

I just had to try out the deathmatch options, so later that day (after hours of playing), we hooked up with another friend. We started.

Immaculate trees stood in the courtyard around it, guardians of ancient. The wind was high, golden autumn leaves swirling around me. I'd stop to admire the beauty, but I knew that a deadly foe was searching for me.

I grabbed a little thing called the Porkilator. This came to very good use. I saw a cave in the distance, but I decided instead to wander into the building. Inside, I found an impressive inner chamber, with three stained glass windows on each corner of the wall. I saw my friend, the fighter, smashing each window like a wild man, looking for weapons and items. This is what I'd been waiting for! I decided to see what this Porkilator can do.

I switch to my items list, and selected the mysterious object. My foe turned around and rushed me head on, only to be met with. . . THE PORKILATOR. Instantly, he is transformed into a tiny, itty bitty squealing pig, ready for the chopping!

The pig blazes through the building at top speed, still squealing, and not hesitating an instant. (Them pigs sure do run fast!) However, I was slightly faster. I ready my Hammer of Retribution and corner him. SMASH! I hear a tremendous squeal as his little pig body tears apart and lets loose a small pile of bones and blood. I laugh aloud with my friend, and without anything better to say, I add heartily: "This game is awesome."

Quietus is one of the most powerful weapons in the game. (You can tell because it sounds really cool.) It is assembled from various sword pieces you find throughout the game, and attacks by slashing and sending off deadly green bolts of fire. (Well, it looks like fire anyway.)

I was lucky enough to find all the pieces of Quietus during our little deathmatch, much to the sorrow of my dear foe. I found him slogging around a little river in Level 2, looking for health or something I guess. I smiled to myself and decided to charge. Quietus was just itching to go! He smashed me a time or two, but I managed to get him cornered between two gargoyles. Quietus lifted up, and smashed upon his body with a rage! Two slashes and his body burst. Much to my surprise, his bloody head flipped two complete turns in the air before finally coming to rest. That was a hell of a sight!

The Macintosh Port

Well, is the Mac version going to have anything extra that the PC doesn't? Yes!

The most obvious is the resolution. The PC version graphics are standard 320x200, and cannot be changed. In the Mac port, we'll have the ability to play in 320x200, 320x240, 640x400, and 640x480 screen sizes. Players will be able to switch anytime they please! And yes, that annoying keyboard layout for Macintosh Doom is no longer a problem. There will be a fully customizable keyboard that can be changed on-the-fly. Mac-to-Mac and Mac-to-PC modem and network play are included too. There are new sound drivers that allow enhanced stereo panning effects, as well as better music drivers that allow improved MIDI quality. And finally, we'll have an integrated Macintosh interface with standard Mac menus, option dialogs, and everything else.

This game has it all, and looks to be one of the best for 1996. Look for it sometime in early March.

