

IMMERCENARY

Reviewed by Jason D'Aprile

Prepare yourself to enter the dark, future cyber-space world of Perfect and its cybercity known as the Garden. In *Immercenary*, you are a time-spanning virtual warrior who must fight for your own future. To do this, you must blast through hordes of cyberconstructs ranging from polygonal stickmen, abstract 2-dimensional assassins, and topless amazonian warriors to a pantheon of cybergods.

Immercenary is the first project from a new company, Five Miles Out and, after rampaging through the game, I think it is a safe bet that they have a bright future. *Immercenary* is extremely impressive with its incredibly smooth 1st person 3D engine and cinema sequences that are a mixture of live action and pop comic book art. Essentially another in a long line of games that are known simply as "Doom Clones," *Immercenary's* designers went the extra mile (no pun intended) to put some truly original

spins and features into the game.

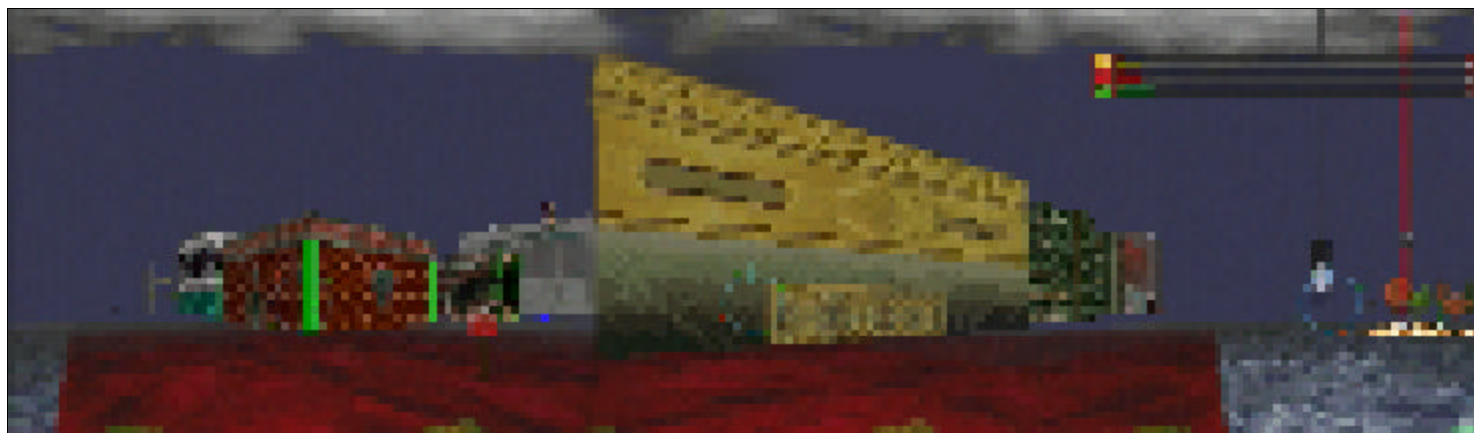
Sporting RPG (Role Playing Game) features as well as standard 1st person blasting power, *Immercenary* requires some degree of skill and strategy in order to gain ground. At the beginning of the game, your character is very weak- barely stronger than the weakest opponents, which are known as Goners. You'll probably be a goner too the first few times you play.

In order to gain more strength and lengthen your energy bars- known as the DOA (Defense, Offense, and Agility)- you must destroy your opponents and quickly absorb the static energy field they leave behind. This technique is called "Huffmanning" in the game and if you do it enough, you'll start to see your DOA levels increasing.

The game gets much easier after you get some strength, but it is never a cake walk by any means.

There are some mean opponents to face off against in the cybercity of the Garden and they like to gang up on your lone soldier as well. The opponents, known as Rithms, are ranked in power. The Goners are the bottom rung and the ultimate being is the insane Sysop known as Perfect1- destroying this creature is your ultimate goal as you struggle to end the virtual nightmare formed by it. As you kill higher Rithms, your rank increases as well and when you are strong enough there are boss Rithms to destroy. The bosses are digitized actors, all other opponents are computer generated.

There are a variety of landscapes in the city including a forest, a lake, and residential and industrial sections. Throughout the city you will find colored spires. These spires, depending upon their color, recharge an aspect of your DOA. The spires have a limited amount of energy,



While the 3D world of *Immercenary* is amazingly smooth and graphically interesting (above), the opponents are not always e



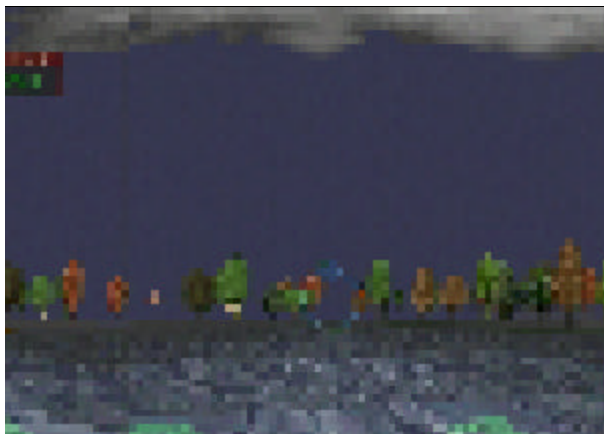
The video segments between your trips to The Garden are an interesting blend of both video and comic graphics.

however, but they get recharged by strange electrical storms that occur fairly often. Also, your opponents can use the spires just as easily as you can, which adds a whole new level of strategy to Immernecy. You will also notice that, while on the battlefield, the Rithms are out to kill each other just as much as they are out to get you. The Happy Garden this is not.

In the middle of the Garden lies

the DOAsys and this special location adds yet another layer to Immernecy's game system. The DOAsys, known for its huge, pulsating spire is a safe haven for all constructs.

Combat is forbidden and impossible in the DOAsys. Enter it to recharge your DOA levels without fear. The DOAsys also gives you the opportunity to talk to the other Rithms. They give you



: detailed (right).





To upgrade your weaponry or gain other advantages in Immernecary, you must find and secure the pool balls (top). The ICE weapon (middle) is considered the mightiest weapon in the Immernecary arsenal.



advice and helpful hints at times and provide useful information. Of course, once you leave the safety of the DOAsys, everybody is back to blasting at everyone else.

Even with the Role playing game elements, Immernecary is still definitely a seek and destroy blaster. The Garden is like a huge maze and, unfortunately, even though the scenery is filled with buildings, you can only go into a handful of them. Only the buildings containing bosses are accessible, everything else is just scenery and good cover.

The background graphics of Immernecary were done in the same style as most 3DO games- like Shockwave and Road Rash- and look great, though there is pixilation at close range. There are neat effects throughout the game, like the storms and the way the landscape turns to primitive outlines at times (whether that effect was intentional or not, I'm not sure). The full screen 3D environment is smooth and does a good job of drawing you into the action. The simple controls make movement seem second nature. However, at times, I did encounter annoying hindrances in moving- either because of an obstacle that was off screen or an enemy somewhere behind-- and it proved very frustrating in the heat of battle. The game also doesn't allow you to sidestep cleanly. The Left and Right



In the DOAsys you can approach an opponent (inset) and ask a variety of selective questions.

shift keys have to be pressed repeatedly to side step, instead of just holding either button down.

The sound in *Immercenary* is also very good and Electronic Arts' trademark for great sound is ever present. The music and sound effects all keep up with the game's fluid, frantic pace. The soundtrack expertly catches the various situations and moods. Though, amidst the near constant action of the game, the music tends to become nearly invisible and only subconsciously noticeable.

There are numerous power-ups scattered all over the Garden that do varying things, but only one of them is really a main weapon upgrade. I would have preferred it if the game had more weapon options than just the standard laser that you're always equipped with and the Boomerang weapon (which uses 3 times as much energy.). You can pick up high power bombs including a "Nukem" nuclear weapon. Other power-ups give you extra ammo power, an energy shield, speed, and weird effects like force fields that push everyone away from you. There are even power-up balls that make you switch places with other rithms, freeze them and one that drops heavy objects from the sky.

The story in *Immercenary* continually evolves, which is commendable since most games of this type have only threadbare plots and the game itself is very non-linear. In fact, once you are powerful enough no matter what your actual ranking is you can take out any of the bosses except the last three. Once the first 10 bosses are gone, you take on Perfect 1 in a one-on-one duel as the whole Perfect world is starting to collapse around you. On the whole, however, the bosses tended to be pretty easy to beat and none of them really displayed much in the way of any sort of artificial intelligence at all.

All told, diehard gamers will probably be able to conquer *Immercenary* over a weekend. Even so, *Immercenary* should have enough in it to keep you interested long after you beat it the first time. It should also be noted that *Immercenary* comes with a pretty good set of manuals - one



Immercenary is a virtual world composed of a variety of elements from the forest (top) to the underground (below) which is only accessible by approaching a telephone booth.

is a sort of hintbook, the other just the instructions. If you find yourself having trouble, the hintbook is very useful though not all together accurate. For instance, Medusa is very, very easy to kill with your standard laser weapon, though the manual says she's virtually immune to laser fire.

Doom is finally coming to the 3DO and very soon the 3DO market is

going to be packed with Doom wannabes, clones and variations. *Immercenary*, however, contains elements and features that no other game in this genre has. It looks and sounds great, plays excellently and keeps you involved with solid gameplay and an interesting story line. Definitely another winner from Electronic Arts.

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