

Doom Watch

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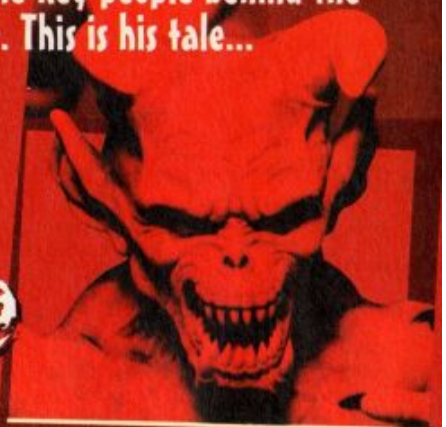
Sujet de l'article : Doom 64

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INTERVIEW

DOOM WATCH

Doom is coming to the N64, and it's set to be bloodiest, most violent version ever created. In this exclusive Interview, Nintendo Magazine's intrepid US correspondent, David Hodgson, travelled to Midway Home Entertainment's HQ and met up with two of the key people behind the project. This is his tale...



NM: Gentlemen, please put down your BFGs and introduce yourselves.

AS: I'm Aaron Seeler, the lead programmer of Doom 64.

SG: I'm Sukru Gilman, the lead artist.

NM: Right, let us begin. How long have you been working on Doom 64?

AS: Since the beginning of [1996].

NM: How many chaps are working on it?

AS: Around eight.

SG: We have three level designers, and we have about three artists.

NM: Did you re-use any of the code from the PC or Playstation versions?

AS: Well, I was the lead programmer on the

Playstation version, and that gave me the chance to know the game inside out. But a lot of the code got changed; the N64 version has a whole new rendering engine and a fair amount of the game logic has been reworked.

NM: For the people who have played Doom before, will the monsters move in a similar sort of manner?

AS: Yes, there will be recognizable behavior – good Doom players are going to see that.

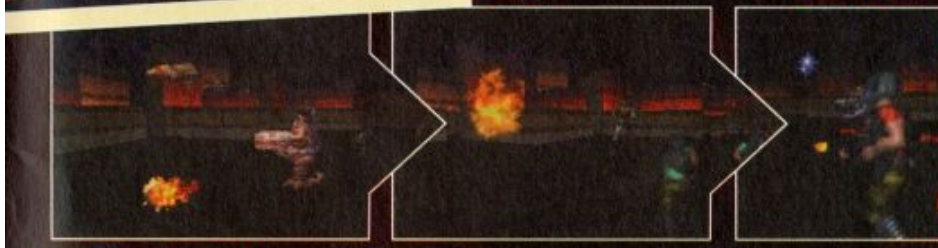
NM: So, it'll just look more impressive?

AS: It's going to look and act a lot more impressively! It'll be far more responsive and much smoother than the PC version, and a lot of those quirky Doom bugs have been taken care of.



"Doom 64 is very smooth. It holds its frame rate, which to us was very important. Having a game slow down... We don't like that very much."

**Sukru Gilman,
Doom 64's lead artist.**



INTERVIEW



ABOVE Doom 64 in all its gloomy glory. If you think it looks good now, wait 'til you see it move!



are 3D now. There's restrictions we put on it to keep what Doom was – I mean, there's no look up and look down. That stuff can be done, but it wasn't 'cos then the game wouldn't have been Doom.

NM: Are the new levels similar to the 'old' Doom levels? Do you have to do the same sorts of things, like find three keys and then exit?

AS: Um, yes, but there's more to it now than just the three keys. That does exist because that's part of Doom, but finishing the level doesn't just involved getting the keys; there's much more skill and strategy involved now.

SG: It's not just find the keys, open the door and you're out – you have to solve puzzles and you have to be paying attention.

NM: How many secret levels are there?

AS: There's a fair amount of secrets that we've put into the game. The player will not be bored looking for secret stuff.

NM: Doom 64's weapons have a new look. Who decided to redesign them?

AS: That was a Williams/Midway thing. We were asked to bring Doom to the N64 in a whole new way, in terms of coming up with weapons and the look of the items...

SG: ...Like the monsters, for example. The Mancubus, it's got some of the features that remind you of the old Mancubus, but it's been redesigned and the animation's been changed. And the Plasma Gun, it reminds you of the Plasma Gun but it's been enhanced.

NM: So you're not going to be making a cut-down version for the Playstation?

SG: Doom 64's been tailored for the N64. I couldn't see it working on anything else.

NM: Any weapons we've not seen before?

AS: Yes, there are. But we don't want to talk about that, it's part of the plot...

NM: How are the attributes of the guns compared to previous versions?

AS: For the most part very similar, but there's new stuff that's going to change slightly. The Plasma Gun is going to work like the rapid-fire gun that you remember...

NM: ...And the BFG is still going to take out huge hoards of mutants...?

AS: ...But it's going to require understanding how the weapons work a little better in terms of their spray radius and their blast radius. I mean, you can just go in and start carnage but it's going to be really difficult unless you understand the finer points of the weapons.

NM: Does the N64 version have more frames of animation than before?

AS: Some have, some haven't. Remember that we're making a game that's very large on a PC with unlimited storage and it hogs the RAM. As much as we would have liked to have added a bazillion frames to everything and have made it totally smooth, the reality was that it's an 64 meg cartridge and we still wanted a decent compliment of levels.

NM: Did you have any memory problems?

AS: Yeah, there were problems, but they've been solved.

NM: People are saying "Oh cartridges can't hold as much as a CD", which is true but because you have a CD people have a tendency to waste memory.

AS: Yeah. Every byte is treated very specially on the cart. There's not a whole lot to go around, so it's a very valuable resource.

NM: How about sound? Will we hear the same grizzly soundtrack and effects?

AS: Yes, and then some! You'll hear more echoing effects – the sound for the N64 has

NM: How much of a free reign did you have for this project, or were id quite strict about what they wanted?

AS: Id wanted us to be true to what Doom was. Originally we had a lot of ideas about taking Doom in a different direction, and they were very like "Er... no. Doom is like this, don't mess with the equation too much..."

NM: ...Because I heard that you had some intention to create a slightly different look from id's original plans...

AS: Yeah, we went off on this sort of a minor, false tangent. We thought we'd add different types of architectural elements because we wanted to exploit the N64, but they were like "Cool, but that's not really Doom."

SG: They said "Why don't you try it?" and they saw it and said "Er, that's too 'Inca' for us, but why not try this?"

AS: Id were very particular about their game – which I understand perfectly – but we were allowed to experiment with some areas of the game, and the stuff they saw they were very pleased with. At that point they basically said "Okay, you guys are on track. Keep going in this direction, and it'll come out really well".

NM: Does the Doom 64 engine allow for true 3D level design?

AS: Whereas the PC was a 2D hack, the levels



SHEER BLOODY BRILLIANCE!

The Doom phenomenon started just over three years ago when, in December 1993, a small Texas-based team of PC coders called id Software released a demo version of the game into the Shareware market. Within days it seemed like the whole world was going crazy over the game's perfect mix of adrenalin-pumping action, spine-chilling gore and brain-busting puzzles. Since then the game has been converted onto almost every computer and console you can think of – even the Super NES – and has spawned dozens of spin-offs and imitators. The N64 conversion of Doom is being handled by Midway Home Entertainment, the people behind Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey, NBA Hang Time and, er, Cruis'n USA, and is set to be the most spectacular version of them all. Featuring around 30 never-before-seen levels and newly-rendered monster sprites, Doom 64 makes full use of the Nintendo 64's awesome graphic capabilities to create the most immersive, intense first-person blaster you've ever experienced. We can't wait...



real-time dynamic sound updating as shots and projectiles travel across the room.

NM: On an early demo, I saw marine sprites. How are you going to handle the Deathmatch aspect of Doom 64?

AS: Simple: there's no Deathmatch. If it couldn't be done right, there was no point to it.

NM: You could have a split screen, but then I suppose playing a Deathmatch on the same screen is not a Deathmatch.

AS: Multi-player is a neat thing to see for about five minutes, then it's like...

NM: ...I can see you, take that...

AS: ...Yeah. It works well for other games, but not Doom.

NM: So, about those three marine sprites.

Are they going to be mutated versions of yourself or something?

AS: We're playing with the idea of evil drones...

NM: If Doom 64 sells well (which it should) can we expect sequels?

AS: Sure, I would hope so, most probably on the 64DD 'bulky drive'.

NM: Have you seen Turok yet?

AS: I've only seen screenshots. I've heard mixed opinions about it, some good, some not so good, so I don't know what to believe.

NM: I've played an early version, and it's awesome. You can hit a Raptor in the head and they'll flop about, spraying blood, then collapse and twitch.

AS: That does sound good. Are there a lot of monsters to fight at one time?

NM: Yes, but they slowed the frame rate – although this was a very early version.

"There's no look up and look down. That stuff can be done, but it wasn't because then the game wouldn't have been Doom."

**Aaron Seeler,
Doom 64's lead programmer.**

BACK TO HELL!

Picking up their BFGs, Aaron and Sukru head off to waste a few Imps and Mancubi. Nintendo Magazine would like to thank them and everyone else at Midway Home Entertainment for their help with this interview. And if everything goes according to plan, you can read the exclusive review of Doom 64 in next month's issue!

