

'Unreal Tournament' beats 'Quake III' in game war

By Cliff Hicks
Staff writer

First-person shooter games have been a staple of the computer-gaming industry since the early days, when "Wolfenstein 3D" grabbed game players' attentions.

In 1996, the war between gamers concerned which game was better — "Duke Nukem 3D" or "Quake." Then "Quake II" came out and it seemed like a new watermark was set.

When "Unreal" came out in 1998, it looked beautiful. But less-than-stable network code made it unplayable.

Fast forward to now. The third incarnation of the "Quake" series, "Quake III Arena," is out, but now it has a rival, "Unreal Tournament."

When id software announced "Quake III Arena" would focus on deathmatch only, many gamers were upset. This was compounded by Epic Games' announcement that the new "Unreal" title, "Unreal Tournament," was doing the same.

Both games are reasonably good, but gamers are a notoriously fickle bunch. Following is a list that breaks down key pieces a good FPS needs.

Graphics

"Q3" is pretty. Everything looks a little more refined than "UT."

"UT" is using an updated version of the "Unreal" engine and it doesn't look bad. "Q3's" big problem is its color scheme.

There are people who defend the "Quake" series' use of three colors — brown, red and an extra-thick dosage of brown — but it gets dull after a while. "UT" borders on going to the other extreme. On very rare occasions, "UT" seems to put a few too many colors, lights and effects.

"Q3" can't be beat for looks.

Winner: "Quake III Arena."

Levels

This is very simple to summarize. "Q3" equals cramped and crowded.

Quake III Arena & Unreal Tournament

REVIEW

SYSTEM: PC
DEVELOPERS: id software & Epic Games
GRADES: B- and A-
FIVE WORDS: There's a new FPS king.

"UT" equals open and airy.

In "Q3," levels give the feeling of being trapped in a tiny box. Maybe part of the goal was to get fewer people on a server, but "UT" blows that concept away.

"UT" sweeps the floor with "Q3" when it comes to level design. "UT" levels aren't about being in tiny little rooms, they're about being in caverns or large hallways. The colors also have a big impact.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

Models

"Q3" also holds the trophy here, for the volume of models available. "UT's" models are human-shaped. "Q3" goes all out with exotics, even a running eyeball with a pair of arms.

"Q3" fails to have damage-specific areas. Hitting a character in the head is the same as hitting them in the foot. Not so for "UT." The game is organized into hit-zones, so when a character is shot in the head, they know it. "Q3's" variety of models is overwhelming.

Winner: "Quake III Arena."

Weapons

"Q3's" weapons pale against those of "UT."

In "Q3," people run for the rocket launcher or railgun. Both of these weapons can kill instantly, but they end up detracting from the fun, as they are the only two regularly used.

Every weapon in "UT" has its use. Some weapons are readily apparent on how to use, like the Flak Cannon. Others, like the Razorjack,



are more specialized.

In "Q3," players begin armed with a machine gun, but it's worthless. "UT" starts players out with an Enforcer, a basic pistol, though not the greatest, is still usable.

If you run out of ammo, "Q3" offers the Gauntlet, an annoying combination of chainsaw and fist which hurts people up close. "UT's" impact hammer also hurts people up close, but those with patience and good timing can use it to deflect rockets.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

Interface

Interface makes a big difference. One of the reasons so many people play "Half-Life" online is because it's easy to navigate.

In "Q3," everything is rudimentary. There isn't a browser. Mods aren't easily accessible. The server browser doesn't display enough information about the game or players. "Q3's" interface is utilitarian and ugly.

"UT's" interface is a work of art. Emulating the best elements of the Windows/Macintosh design, it uses pulldown menus and a clean design. Everything is easy to find.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

Bots

For those who don't want to brave Internet combat zones or have slower connections, computer opponents, or "bots," are available opponents.

"Q3's" bots don't feel human — they run around on track loops and have easily discernible patterns. On mixed games (some human players, some bots) it's easy to tell them apart.

When the difficulty level on the bots is raised, they don't get smarter or move better; aim just improves.

"UT's" bots can be so human, it's scary. They make mistakes, yet they learn from the player's tactics. If a player takes a path, the "UT" bots learn and try to counter it.

"Q3's" bots are useless in team-oriented games, such as Capture the Flag. Giving them orders is unwieldy. Giving orders to a "UT" bot is painless with the voice clip command menu. Players can issue orders to a whole team of bots which will then execute the order.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

Gameplay

Memo to Carmack & Co.: Time to move out of the stone age. It's not all about the deathmatch any more.

When the original "Quake" came out, it was all about deathmatch — a mentality that led to everyone shooting everyone.

"Q3" has Capture the Flag, but it's weak and feels rushed. And that's not what it's about for "Q3." It's all about deathmatch. And not a whole lot else.

"UT" opens new fields of play with a diverse number of play modes, including Domination and Assault.

In Domination, each level contains three command points that must be held. The more points your team holds for longer times, the better.

In Assault, one team has a series of objectives to complete; the other team's objective is to stop them.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

Overall

For pure deathmatch, "Q3" probably will trip your trigger. For other players who like variety, it's "UT" all the way, baby.

The deathmatch game just doesn't feel like enough any more. "Q3" renovates all the things it's had for years. "UT" innovates and is simply more fun. It's got an intangible quality that just brings players back again and again.

Both game engines are up for licensing and I imagine players will see a lot of great games made with the "Q3" engine, but game against game, "UT" not only frags the hell out of "Q3," it leaves the gib splattered against the wall.

Winner: "Unreal Tournament."

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Fox 'swears off' exploitative reality TV

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox says it is swearing off exploitative reality TV shows. But the promise sounds similar to one made in January — a month before it aired the wedding of two strangers and a motorcyclist's jump over a moving train.

Battered by bad publicity over "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire," top Fox executive Sandy Grushow said in Friday's edition of The New York Times that the network was shutting the door on the programming genre it pioneered.

"They're gone," he said. But Grushow, appointed last year as chairman of the Fox Television Group, told reporters in January that he wanted to move away from the stunts because programs like "When Good Pets Go Bad" had damaged Fox's reputation.

"For a while, those programs brilliantly masked many of the growing problems on the Fox schedule," Grushow said in January. "But, unfortunately, this overreliance, oversaturation, has really come back this season to bite us on our collective Fox

behind." A month after he said this, Fox aired "Who Wants to Marry a Multimillionaire."

The show was a sensation, drawing nearly 23 million viewers when Rick Rockwell and Darva Conger exchanged vows. Fox immediately announced plans to rerun a part of the broadcast a week later.

When questions were raised about Rockwell's background, including allegations that he hit an ex-girlfriend, Fox quickly retreated. It canceled the rerun and said it wouldn't air any future multimillionaire weddings.

This week, however, Fox aired another special featuring daredevil Robbie Knievel in a live motorcycle jump over a train. He emerged unhurt.

Grushow hasn't responded to interview requests from The Associated Press to address whether this month's specials contradicted his earlier stated intentions to back away from the reality genre.

He tried to draw a distinction in January between "blood and guts" reality specials that featured car chas-

es and shootouts, and "entertainment reality," which would seem to include prime-time weddings. Fox has likened Knievel's stunts to watching a circus tightrope performer.

He also said Fox would still air some reality shows because they had already paid for them. "Right now we're sort of on the methadone program," he said.

These specials are enormously tempting for television executives because they are far cheaper to produce than traditional comedies and dramas and often get strong ratings, said Tom DeCabilia, executive vice president of the media-buying firm Schulman Advansers NY.

It's unclear whether any Fox executives will lose their jobs in the "Multimillionaire" fallout.

Mike Darnell, Fox's executive vice president of alternative programming, conceived the special and is the industry leader in creating reality shows.

In January, Grushow described Darnell as "one of the finest creative executives working in the business today."