

Reviewed by: Misha

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Following in the footsteps of its predecessors (Wolfenstein 3D, Doom, Doom II, Ultimate Doom) Hexen delivers many of the same aspects, good or bad, and qualities of those previous games.

Hexen's engine is almost identical to that of Doom 2. The concept hasn't changed much and neither has the game play. But Hexen is the only first-person perspective killing game out there to take place in a medieval setting. And in that respect, the game is very unique. Hexen also allows you to choose between three classes of characters: fighter, cleric, and mage, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. As you might have guessed, you do not demolish your enemies with a shotgun or chain gun, but rather by the means available at that time. Each class has a particular specialty; the fighter only uses close range weapons but does the most damage, the cleric has two close range and two long range weapons, and the mage has four long range weapons. Close range weapons include your fist and a mace and chain while the longer range weapons consist of "magic" jewels that emit some kind of electric energy.

Typical graphic problems. Hexen's graphics follow the similar format of other GTInteractive

games with three detail settings (low, medium, high) and 6 screen sizes (ranging from 320x300 to 640x480). However, I encountered numerous speed problems with Hexen and its graphics. On my 66/33Mhz 040 the game was unplayable. Even at the lowest screen size, which makes things almost too small to even see, the game's performance was slow and jerky. I enlarged the screen but put the detail to 'low'. No speed gain, in fact, because of the now larger screen size the game was going even slower. Restarting with extensions off gave the game a little speed boost, but it was still unplayable. "68040 chip requirement." Sure, the game will run on an 040, but unless you have a lot of time and patience you'll find yourself griping about the speed more than enjoying killing an enemy. I then tried the game out on my 66MHz PowerPC 601 as well as on a 75MHz 601. While the speed gain was noticeable because of the faster chip, the game was barely playable. With the screen size setting at the smallest possible the game was playable, but still often jerky and everything was so small! To sum up the graphics area of Hexen, they're not bad at all, but unless you have a 120MHz chip, it's doubtful that you'll be able to enjoy them at 640x480 at high detail. If you have an 040 or a PowerPC running at 60 or 66 MHz (without level 2 cache) don't even bother downloading the demo, or purchasing the game for that matter.

The soundtrack and sound effects are high quality and very clear, or at least they are when you're standing still and the game has nothing else to do but play music. The moment you start moving (remember, this is on a 66MHz PowerPC) the music starts to crack up, with a moment of silence coming through your speakers every 2 seconds. Then the music starts up again, stops, starts, stops...

Hexen does seem to carry some sort of plot rather than just killing everything and advancing to the next level. Hexen also allows you to teleport (teleport in medieval times?) back to previous levels, and you often end up having to in order to advance to the next level. While this is a rather new concept to be introduced to a first-person killing game, other games in the works, such as Marathon Infinity, also sport this idea.

Scaled 73%

The competition, which currently includes Marathon 2 seems to have the upper-hand on Hexen. Despite the being more than a year old, I find Marathon 2 to be a far more superior game. Why? Marathon 2 does not have any graphic/speed problems. On an 040 you can run Marathon 2 at full screen, thousands of colors (Hexen, by the way, only uses 256), and high resolution and the game is still very playable (though admitably a bit jerky). Lower the screen size to 75% and the game runs flawlessly. Marathon 2 also contains better sound features. With high quality 16-bit sounds and the option to make them ambient (they get louder as you get nearer to source) I found that Marathon 2's music and sounds were more appealing to the ear. Speed plays an enormous role in what is labeled "a fast-paced first person shooting game". Marathon 2 is fast paced, Hexen simply isn't. Period.

The Bottom Line Hexen has the potential to be a great game but unfortunately carries all the problems found in previous GTInteractive games. Like Doom 2, it only uses 256 colors and has an enormous speed problem. Hexen also doesn't have those little details that adds a touch of reality to the game, such as different enemy carcass images when killed with different weapons (found in M2) or being able to shoot out lights if you want (also in M2). If GTInteractive wants to be on top of the first-person killing game it has quite a bit of work to do, just to bring it up to par with M2 or Marathon Infinity. If GT wants to be ahead, it has to develop a better and more realistic engine. Shooting out glass windows or showing marks on walls when a bullet hits it would all be nice little touches that would make a game more appealing.

graphics*
music#

sound effects

challenge#
fun factor#

addictiveness#

concept
story line

gameplay#

overall

- graphics are rated at 640x480, high detail.

- ratings are given assuming your macintosh is powerful enough to run the game smoothly

Hexen's System Requirements:

- 16 megabytes of hard drive space
- 7.5 megabytes of RAM
- monitor capable of displaying 256 colors
- 68040 or 68LC040 processor minimum, PowerPC recommended (PowerPC required to play Hexen)

Download Time: ~ 146 minutes (14,400)

Hexen Demo Codes

BGOKEY:	God Mode
CRHINEHART:	All Weapons
EBEISSMAN:	Porkelator
BRAFFEL:	All Artifacts
PMACARTHUR:	Version Info
PLIPO:	Change Class
MRAYMONDJUDY:	All Keys
SGURNO:	Full Health
CSTIKA:	Kill All Creatures
TMOORE:	All Puzzle Items
JSUMWALT:	XY Coordinates
KSCHILDER:	Sound Debug
RJOHNSON:	Clipping Mode
BPELLETIER:	Level Warp
MWAGABAZA:	Run Script
RRETTENMUND:	Frame Rate
REVEAL:	View Entire Map
INIT:	Reload Level
ARNOLD:	Gary's Marriage Proposal
ALBOUY:	The Wife's Answer
BENTON:	Earthquake 1
BHOLT:	Earthquake 2
MDRCREW:	Sticky Floors
PRESAGE:	Freeze All Enimies

