THE DOOM MASTER

WADAZINE

Why?
Play **90s**
W A D s .

30
years   of
DOOM

ALL RETRO!

**Maximal
D o o m**
The Top 50
WADs from 1994

**Echoes of
Damnations:**
a short story

B e y o n d
B o o m

ROMERO RETURNS!

SIGIL

And you run, and you run to catch up with the sun but it's sinking… And thirty years have come, like nothing at all. Three full decades. Let that little thought sink in for a little. It can be a dauting task to just realize how much time has come and go, but it can also be a reflective space to look back behind and see how far we have come. As I write this, it is an interesting mental exercise, to try and understand just how much time that is. Thirty full years, three whole decades, that is more or less a full generation, and more or less, enough time to see the world change almost completely. But as things change, some things also stay the same. Has *Doom* truly changed? Well one could say of course it has, just look at *Doom Eternal,* but at the same time, it feels like we are stuck in a time chamber, willingly enjoying the good old smell of closed wardrobes and yellow plastic from *CRT monitors*. Some of us embrace that memory; booting up *Doom* for the first time, hearing that eerie drumming and badass guitar riff as *E1M1* starts, and enjoying violence like never before, 2x2 pixels wide.

What a time to be alive that was.

But yet, is the present so bleak? Not at all. For *Doom* is still the same, and while it might not be the same *i486* processor running all your software, *Doom* is still here, staring at you back from the source port abyss. Some modern, some a little too new, some old, some far too old. Can you believe people still play with *DOSBOX?* Why could that be? To emulate what once was? To rekindle a long-extinguished fire? Who knows? Truly, to me the answer is pretty simple: *Doom* is timeless, and whatever way you decide to play, it feels good.

December 10, 2023, *Doom* becomes old enough to have a mid-life crisis and back problems. Our community has grown so much that is insane to think how far we have come, and from what we were born. Simple 500 linedefs WADs with only a few rooms joined by dimensionless corridors, to magnificent beasts that challenge even modern hardware by giving you ultra-detailed panoramas of pure hell that just seem to be straight up from an AAA title. And oh boy, did the community reminded us just how much we have accomplished. *Eviternity II* and *SIGIL II* were released during the same day, the first one being a complete surprise that sent doomers into frenzy, and the latter a long-awaited sequel by one of the hearts of the game itself. People celebrated all around the world with different ways. The *Russian Community* hosted an awesome and huge LAN party, for example. Internationally, multiplayer matches became a match in the dark once again, and community projects inspired around Xmas, or the *OG Doom* emerged like an ocean wave. It was a moment of pure bliss, a true enjoyment as a *Doom* fan. And I am quite happy for what we have done and manage to do. The *Wadazine i*s a little part of the whole, and I really wish you, dear readers, a merry Xmas, and great *Doom* year.

— **Endless**
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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CONTENTS

WHY PLAY 90s WADs?

Well, that's a tough question so I'll give two answers. The short version: I enjoy them. They are fun to my tastes and always feel like opening a surprise box.

Oh, wanna read the long version?

Well, it is hard to truly try and capture exactly what makes me (and many others) enthralled to play some of the oldest, shittiest possible experiences that you can have in the world of Doom.

Well, I think a better term is "many worlds of Doom", because the moment you start grasping the prolific bulk of content that was published during the golden age, you quickly notice that Doom was a massive experience that reached millions around the world.

For starters, the game was designed to be quite open to modding in comparison to other games from that time.

Its approachable nature and the availability of resources was something that not many companies offered back then, meaning that it quickly garnered a big community of mappers and modders.

While the professional tools would take a while to properly come out of the oven, by March of 1994 there was already a sign of good, steady growth.

It was a rough start, that is for sure; and yet despite all the difficulties (and all the shit that you had to fling aside until you found the good stuff) it was a precious, lovely world that was all about the passion of a bunch of nerds.

So in 2023 when there are cool as fuck modern WADs being released daily, why play the old stuff? Why go back and enjoy something that's just out of the picture? I wonder so myself, and I hope to adequately explain it here.

Though my writing will focus on objective reasons, the biggest appeal is more about a feel, an idea; and ideas, Mr.

Doomer, are bulletproof.

They Are Living History

Well, not actually alive of course.

I like to think of myself as a newbie history buff.

I enjoy history, and I tend to really dig deep into the history of stuff I like, which means I tend to spend some time living in the past rather than looking for the future.

However, it is by looking backwards that I can understand where the future is heading and why the present is here.

A little pretentious, right?

But look at it this way; let's say you are a WW2 history buff, and you love experiencing parts of the history through physical memories, like veterans, weapons or equipment from the time, or even going to actual battlefields.
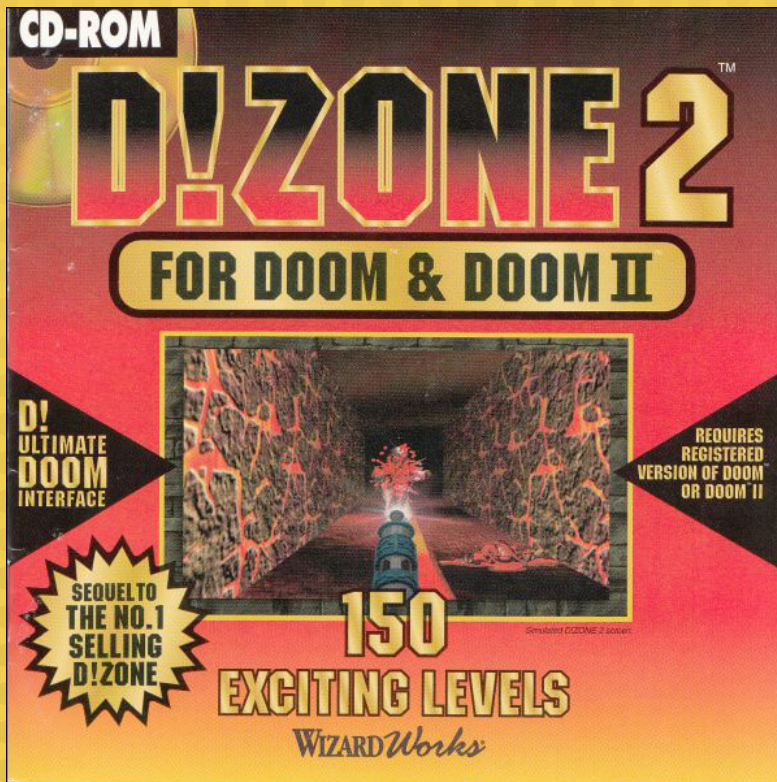
But let's say you are a Mexican WW2 history buff.

You love it and read about it all the time, but, can you actually feel it? Can you actually touch it? There's not a lot of living WW2 veterans today, and I imagine there's probably none living in Mexico.

All right, so that's out the question, but what about going to a battlefield? What about visiting the field where soldiers fought and died to for their countries? Well, unless you have a lot of money to make a trip to Europe, you are probably not going to be able to have the feel of being in a place that was once a clash of ti-tans and nations.

Weird examples aside, here's what I like: As a Doom fan, I can actually live and breathe that history.

I can go to the /idgames archive and just look for a random WAD from 1994, and here I am, touching the bricks of Alexandria.

A WAD is a piece of history, archived in a huge library, open to all, no matter where you are.

The US, Mexico, Canada, Russia, Brazil, Japan, even! No matter the distance, you can experience it with your own senses.

Go the extra mile, install a retro source-port, and you can live it like it's 1994, baby.

That is something I like because I like exploring what our ancestors lived, played, and made.

I like experiencing the world of yesteryear, both for entertaining and educational purposes.

Sure, I will never be in the year 1994, but I can at least relive a part of it.

The Odd and the Rare

The first years of WAD history were ones of testing, experimenting and training.

Everyone was new to everything, and vice versa.

If you wanted to map back in 1994 you had to be patient, learn the ropes, and then pray to the Doom Gods the editor didn't crash.

If you were lucky, it would take about a few hours, depending on the size, to build all the map nodes.

Oh, there wasn't a 3D view mode either, so everyone was doing everything with just gut feel.

Will this look okay? Are the textures properly aligned? Did I properly add shadows? Welp, no idea mate! Good luck testing a WAD multiple times in succession in 1994 with your DOS machine.

It was grueling.

And as such, mapping wasn't really something you could effortlessly do like nowadays.

Even the way we understand level design has changed.

Back then if you were a good mapper you would most likely use something for reference.

A lot of mappers used other similar games to recreate maps in Doom.

If you start paying attention to a lot of early WADs, you will quickly notice some similarities: Mazes, dungeons, secrets doors everywhere, puzzles, and too many corridors.

Quite the interesting combination but it sure as hell was common back then.

My theory is that this comes from the fact that a lot of Doomers were most

likely geeks that enjoyed and were influenced by other games of that era.

Fantasy was pretty popular on PC, and the Ultima series was all the rage back then.

In 1992, Ultima Underworld was a big title that was also in first-person and had a similar style to Doom when it came to control and movement.

So yeah, I do think that a lot of mappers were inspired by games like Ultima, or even TTRPG adventures, particularly from D&D, which almost always included a full map.

It wouldn't be so far out there because the fathers of Doom themselves were D&D players and were even inspired by it to create the premise of the game.

WOAH

Everyone back then was still taking their first steps, so every WAD feels unique and different in its own way, despite all having similar quality and consistency; you never truly know what you will get.

Sometimes it sucks, other times it's quite nice, and every once in a while you find something that makes you say "woah this was in 1994?".

There's always a treasure hiding in the depths of the ocean.

But are you willing to take the dive? That's the true dilemma.

Less Is More

This comes down more to my personal taste.

When it comes to maps, I enjoy simplicity.

I find maps that stick to the limits of the engine to be enough for me.

And yes, I love maps that are also grandiose in scope and style, but I still prefer simpler maps that I can just plug-and-play without worrying much about the time going by and relaxing in a simple stroll of HMP violence.

Most 90s WADs are easy to play. Sure, there's the bullshit 100 cyberdemon orgy in a single sector here and there, but people weren't that fucking dumb in general back then, and they understood that it was not really that fun.

There's a lot of maps that are simple recreations of what the original ID mappers created.

People learnt from them, some faster than others, and as such the gameplay tends to be more relaxing, accompanied by a lovely beauty of simple color palettes and just the right amount of texturing work.

Every once in a while someone would do something unique and cool, and create bombastic adventures that are, even to date, a joy to gaze upon.

Less is more is an adage that I respect, enjoy, and embrace.

I think most 90s WADs succeed at it by sheer nature of their circumstances.

I Like Obscure Shit

Dear heavens do I say a lot of swearing words lately, geez.

So yeah, I like obscure stuff.

Mostly because finding rare pieces of history feels like discovering an unkown species of animal, or some super rare diamond in the rough, and the 90s were full of them.

Because this was an era of baby-internet, there's tons, TONS, of WADs that never actually got to be preserved forever in the archives of the virtual world.

Some rare ones, with no downloads or even reviews, can be found every once in a while.

But if you want to go deeper, your only option is to actually find shovelware disks, and look for those that are not in any other WAD archive in the internet.

Yes, despite /idgames being huge and old as hell, it is not a repository of everything (sadly) and there's a large portion of it that's still lost, maybe to never be found.

While it is tragic, it does pose a question: is it even worth it to try to find and play them all? But that's a topic for another day; for now, what I'd like to say is that once you realize that you are playing something that no one else has since 1994, or possibly ever, you start to feel like an explorer, finally climbing that mountain that no one has managed to climb before.

The final frontier: WADs!

The Golden

If you were born in the 2000s, or late 90s, you missed the rise and golden age of Doom WADs.

You missed the mark for being witness to history, but now you are part of that history in its continuum.

WADs are still being published daily, and there's nothing holding you back from playing the older works by the veterans of this community.

An entire archive awaits you to be explored and experienced.

If you have never played any of the old WADs, now is good chance to do it.

You might like it, you might not, but you will most surely experience something unique; living history.

In conclusion: I play old-school WADs because I love them.

I love that you can find a simple E1 rework that's as traditional as it can get, and on the other hand you can have a fantastical avant-garde piece that tries to recreate something otherworldly that not even the ID designers could do.

There is always something unique to explore, to enjoy, and to remember.

One could argue that there's also nostalgia involved, and I'm sure there is for a lot of doomers out there, but it is a weird case for me.

How can I say I feel nostalgic for something I wasn't even there to truly enjoy? I am a late fan.

I only played classic Doom all the way back in 2013 or so.

I never touched a DOS computer in my life, and never truly knew the struggle of playing at 320×200 with keyboard only (yes I know there was mouse support) with square CRT monitors.

And yet, I can't help but feel when I play an old map, in some random archive across the internet, that I am reliving a childhood I never had.

A distant, ephemeral dream that seems to fade away each day, it's reborn each time I click that /idgames link and read: 1994.

That is, in a way, an emotional response.
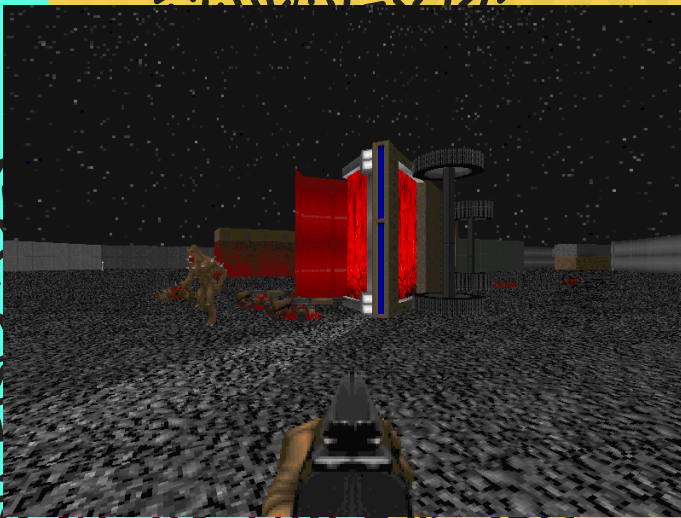
Not many games, or things, make me feel things nowadays, but any time I go through the annals of WAD history, I feel like I'm back to a home I never had, to a time I never lived, to emotions I never felt.

What others say:

But that's enough of my Endless ramblings, let's also hear from other fellow old-school enthusiasts from around the community! I invited a few Doom friends to share their experiences and opinions regarding 90s WADs, and this is what they said:

Walter confetti: I like them Mostly for nostalgic value, but also for discovering the things that have been done with vanilla engine pushing to their limits, both technically and in gameplay format, and after Carmack released the Doom source code at the end of the 90s, new ports like Boom, MBF and Legacy are born, creating all the things known today in Doom modding.

They are also way more experimental in ideas than today's standards, everything goes in those years! Houses, school, animated series, movies, TV shows… Everything's welcome!

Chris Hansen: Thinking back to the mid to late 90's when I started to really dig into Doom, I think we all were just really enamored by the power of creation.

A few designers were ahead of their time and detailed their levels beyond belief.

The other 90% of us just loved seeing our vague imaginations turned to life.

If we happened to create a somewhat playable level in the process we were totally ecstatic! But that was rarely the case and we were left with mediocre levels that had tons heart and little quality.

And that's why I love them. Heart and soul.

FEDEX: I enjoy playing 90s WADs… Because above all I am a veteran player, and those levels remind me of my childhood, when I used to play with my brother levels that we bought on the famous floppy disks, on our dear old 386 (minimum requirement to be able to play Doom).

Because those old levels were the basis for the most current levels, much more detailed, where mappers like Gene Bird or Chris Hansen appeared.

Also back then there wasn't that fetish of doing ultra mega difficult levels bordering on carnage.

It is very meritorious to be current after almost 30 years of its launch.

Something rarely seen.

Roofi: So, After playing tons of random (old) wads on idgames, I think I've simply ended up enjoying playing ordinary WADs made by ordinary people.

This is not limited to the wads of the 1990s, but this decade is the most full of them.

You might not realize it, but the many WADs featured in Cacowards, for example, are at the top end of what the community has to offer.

Of course those wads are a must-play for right reasons but I'm enjoying more and more seeing ideas implemented in amateur wads, even if they're very badly executed.

In the same way, these wads teach me that level design doesn't obey any rules, and that the "established" rules were far from obvious back then.

How many times have I seen unmarked doors in these old wads? Maybe thousands! For my part, the randomness makes it addictive too.

Not knowing what to expect is a big part of the appeal.

– 𝕰𝖓𝖉𝖑𝖊𝖘𝖘

The Wadazine is made entirely by the D��M fan community and readers like you! If you want to contribute to the next Wadazine in any way, join the Wadazine Discord Community or tweet @Endless_DMW today!

ART
COVER ART SUBMISSIONS
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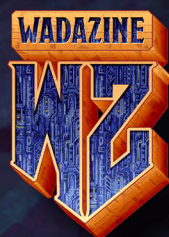
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ETHEREAL BREAKDOWN

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33 NEW LEVELS FOR DOOM 64

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ABSOLUTE TECHNICOLOR NIGHTMARISH CONQUEST!

elegant agony 64

by JSGraham
aka. psyren aka. ishisnameiden

13 MAPS

ELEGENT AGONY 64

INTENDED PORT:
DOOM 64 REMASTER,
DOOM 64 EX+/SUPER EX+

NUMBER OF MAPS: 13
(MAP01-12 TO MAP27)

REVIEW BY TAUFAN99
AND IMMORPHER

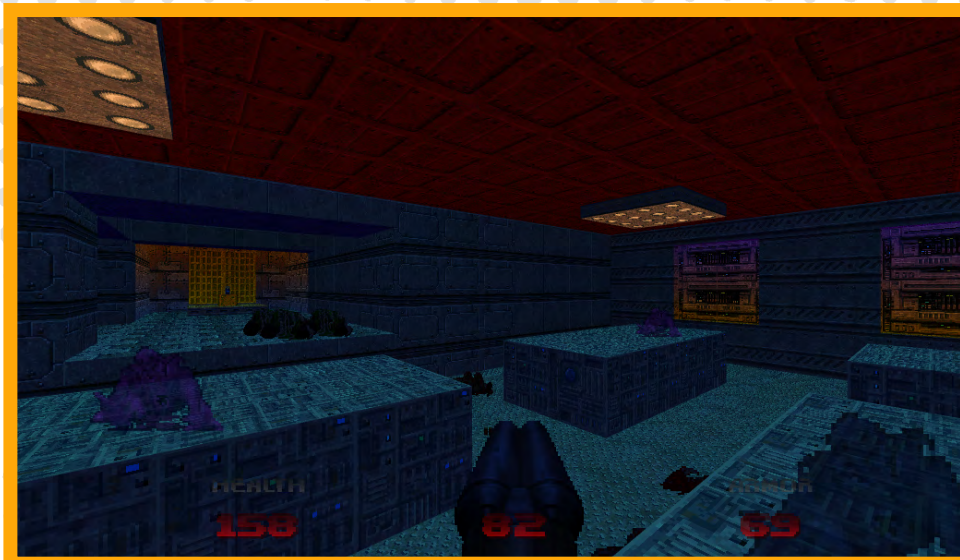The **Doom 64** modding scene, often in stark contrast to the older sibling, hasn't become generally noticed until recently. Which is understandable, given the base game's obscurity on legal distribution until its inclusion for a **Doom Eternal** pre-order campaign that paved way to its permanent stand-alone sales ever since. That being said, every now and then **D64** also has a bunch of alluring mapsets, like a secret treasure, and **Elegant Agony 64 (EA64)** by **JSGraham,** is one such mapset (released in April 2023).

If you've played **Ethereal Breakdown** before, chances are you've probably stumbled upon a solid and unique rendition of **Duke Nukem 3D's** iconic foremost map **Hollywood Holocaust,** which is made possible by the cooperation of **JSGraham** and **Dexiaz.** Like many other great Doom mappers, **JSGraham** decided to break the limits by this time making an original mapset that contains style and charm.

Many a self-respecting **Doom** fan will reckon that one of the main charms of **Doom 64** is its colored lighting capabilities. For fellow fans of that feature alone, **EA64** takes much delight in it. However, a colorful view means nothing without a compelling structure and

ecstatic gameplay. Indeed, all the maps are packed with a higher than average number of secrets that not only are useful to help you mow down through the hellish levels, but also induce quite a lot of dopamine once you figure them out, true to the original **D64** spirit. From simple clues to more complex means of discovering them, keep your eyes (or even ears!) focused on the small details scattered around, lest you miss them away.

Did I say "mow down through the hellish levels" earlier? Because, indeed, the levels have a huge amount of monsters every here and there, designated to take you down for good. While the numbers don't amount to as many as those on the likes of **Serious Sam** or even **Nuts.wad**, their presence is more than enough to prove a challenge for both newcomers and seasoned

players alike. Having such a high monster count alone is typically unusual for **Doom 64** but also a nice surprise.

Another notable positive quality of the mapset is consistent use of themes on maps (both textual and architectural). The first two maps **(MAP01: Area 99** and **MAP02: Systemic Abcess [sic])** are centered around the techbase theme (typical among first maps), whereas latter maps have the players journey throughout rocky, ancient locations from the likes of the caverns of **MAP05: Vexo Vermillion,** granite halls of **MAP10: Putrid Infection,** to the exotic Southeast Asian-themed temple of **MAP08: Kalachakria,** before eventually culminating with **MAP12: Relentless.**

Architecturally, there are at least two consistent patterns scattered
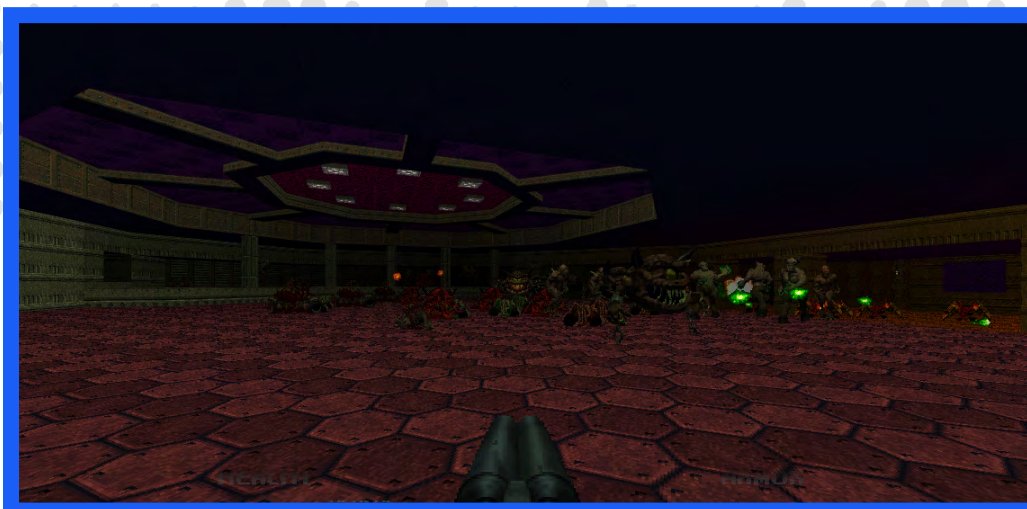
around all these maps; narrow pathways that connect several other parts and at least one central part that often serves as the hotbed of the larger monster encounters. Yet another set of patterns within the latter can also be noticed; these central parts tend to be either circular or anything else. This circular architecture is perhaps the most prominent out of all other shapes, drawing influence from the Indian mandala. One such map, **MAP06: Mandalirium,** even makes it clearer with the map name being a portmanteau of "mandala" and "delirium", if the architecture alone
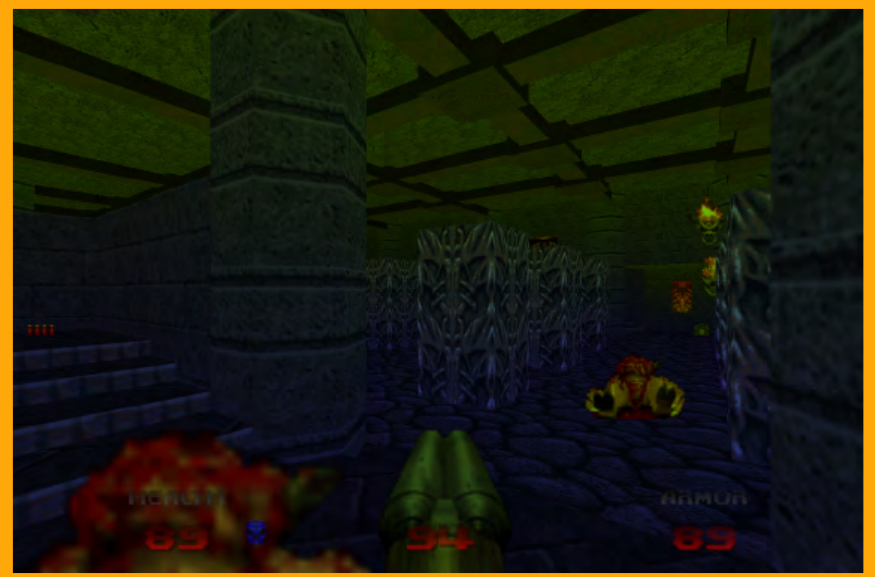
Did I say "mow down through the hellish levels" earlier?
Because, indeed, the levels have a huge amount of monsters....

isn't more than enough to further prove the inspiration.

Now that we've talked about the good aspects. Let's move along onto the elephants in the room, shall we? While many maps pit the player within tightly-packed rooms (**MAP11: Cathedral** is perhaps the guiltiest out of these), the overall sizes are nevertheless much larger. This means a higher of getting lost inside the maps, as is evident in **MAP01.** Fortunately, the following maps are less complicated and more straightforward in their progress approach, although also no less challenging in their own due to the monster density. The original **Doom 64** intermission texts are also kept intact, so there isn't much of a story conveyed.

Nonetheless, **Elegant Agony 64** is a unique experience that needs to be
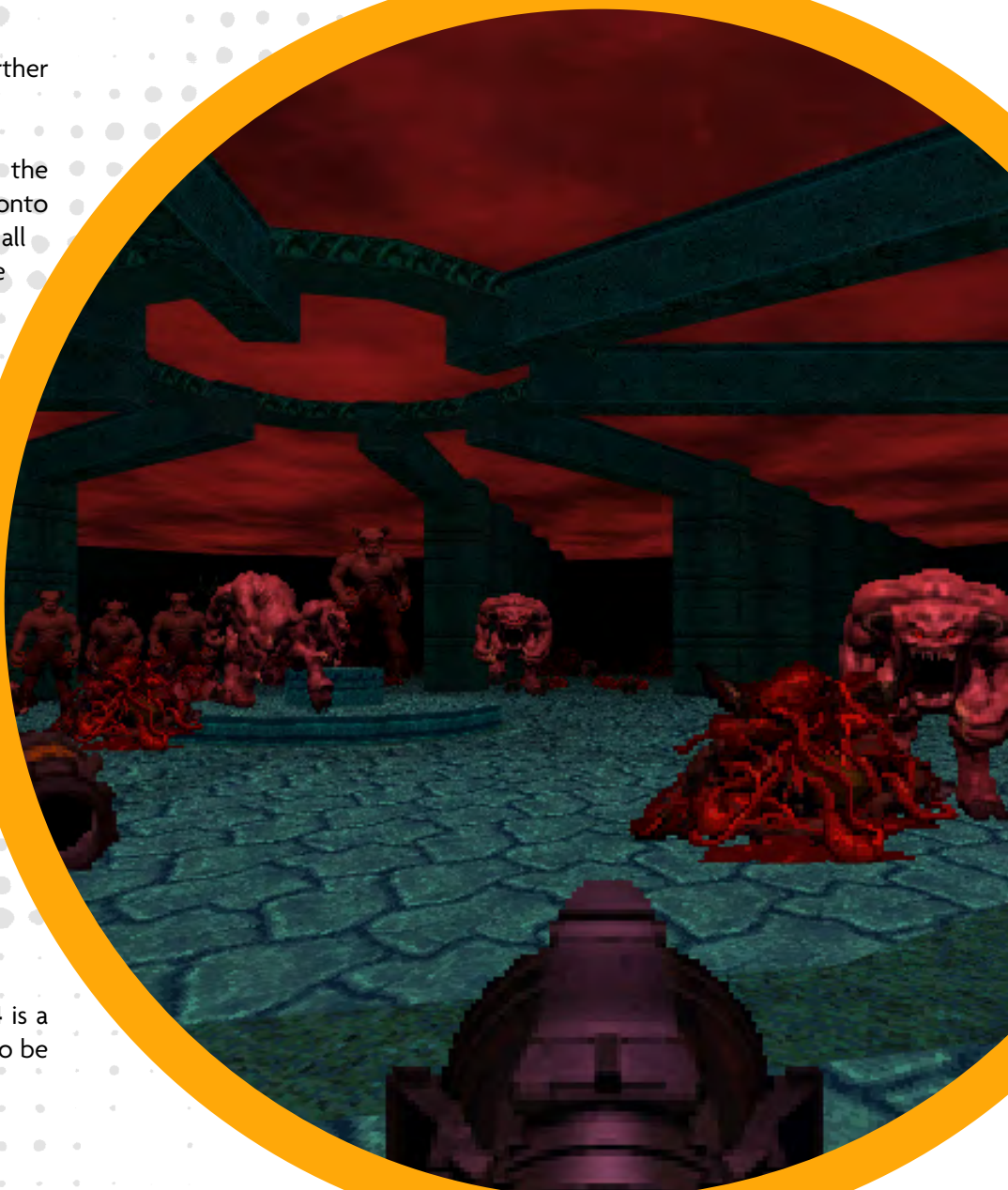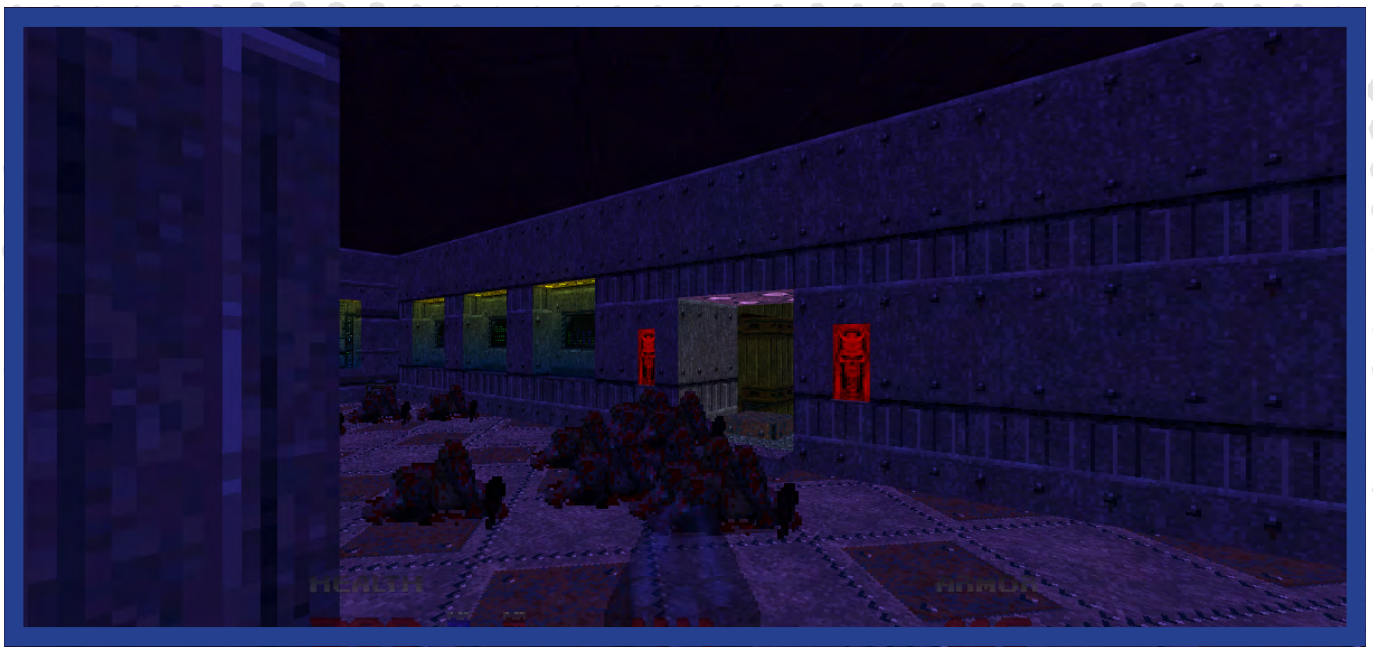
experienced as a whole for all **D64** players. In fact, it's no less reminiscent to the Vedic soma than some of the more extravagant **Boom/GZDoom** mapsets out there. It may lack a story, however its monster-dense maps in fun locations more than make up for it.

MBF
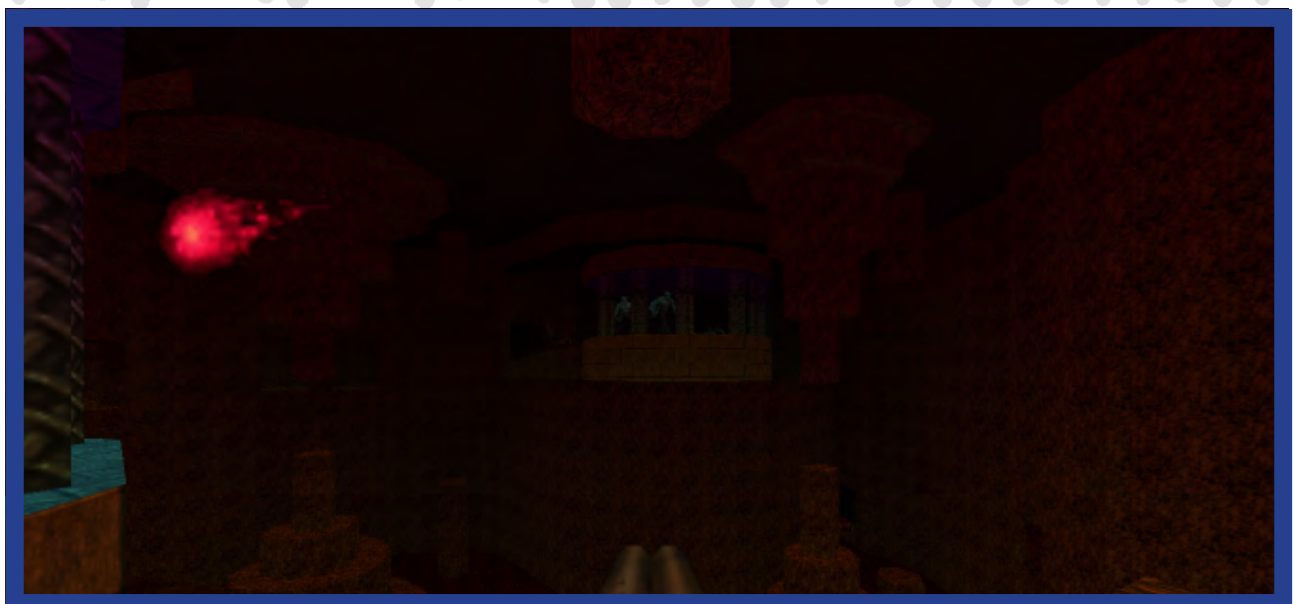
BEYOND BOOM

BY ERIC CLAUS

INTRODUCTION

MBF (Marine's Best Friend), complevel 11; the famed port by Lee Killough that took Boom even further beyond is an important milestone in **Doom**'s storied past, and will forever be remembered as an important lynchpin in the evolution of **Doom**'s source ports. The origins of MBF lie in Boom: a storied port by Team TNT in 1998 which added invaluable features to **Doom** (a big story in and of itself, worthy of another article). Lee Killough worked on the Boom project but left during the same year and pursued his own work building on the Boom codebase, creating MBF and adding even more features to a port that had already

revolutionized **Doom** mapping. What are some of MBF's features? What maps have been made using its powerful extensions and what source ports have descended from it? Let us take a look.

MBF FEATURES, POINTERS, AND WADS

While Boom added some nice mapping features and made some big changes to some of the game logic, MBF brought things to another level in terms of features. One of the big killer features for me was the jump to 640x480 resolution, which is something that is

ubiquitous among all except the most conservative source ports. Other nice features are the friendly enemies (the namesake dog actor being the most prominent example), a line special that lets mappers change the sky texture, dehacked embedding (another feature very standard in ports nowadays), and enemy AI changes. The biggest additions, however, are the extra code pointers and dehacked capabilities. MBF really shines in the regard; while custom monsters and weapons were possible before MBF, the new capabilities of the port allowed for broader customization and more interesting modifications to vanilla **Doom** behavior. This is perhaps the killer feature that would result in some of the most prominent wads the coming years, and far into the future.

MBF doesn't boast as large of a WAD catalog in comparison to Boom or Vanilla, but some of the wads that do exist are strong candidates for the best in the community's history, and take

advantage of MBF's additional capabilities. An iconic example is the suicide bomber from *Skillsaw*'s Valiant (2015). This monster creatively uses the A_Detonate code pointer, which causes it to violently explode after a mad sprint toward the player. The suicide bomber would have never been possible in vanilla Doom or Boom, and serves as a display of the creative possibilities afforded by MBF. You can also see the use of various pointers such as RandomJump in the dehacked portion of Valiant which allows you to move to other code pointers which can be used to give multiple attacks. Valiant is not the only example of well-known and regarded wads utilizing MBF's features; *Dragonfly*'s Eviternity (2018) is an equally important example.

Eviternity continued in the great tradition of MBF by including some nasty beasts of its own, and one standout example here is the Astral Cacodemon.

The Astral Cacodemon is well known for being nasty, and its nastiness is aided by MBF features. You can find in the dehacked logic that the Astral Caco uses the aforementioned RandomJump feature which switches around different movement animations allowing for its dodgy movement with its ability to shoot its projectiles. Doom monsters that can shift what they are doing mid animation can definitely get spooky and add an element of unpredictability to enemies who normally just follow a logical progression in their AI of move and attack.

The original MBF source port itself isn't generally used as much anymore, as it's old and exclusively runs in DOS (though there is an updated version of it made by Gerwin Broers of the Vogon forums). There are some ports directly descended from MBF itself, though most have faded into the past as they were no longer maintained or have had their features co-opted into more modern alternatives. *Fraggle*'s Smack My Marine Up, commonly abbreviated to SMMU, is perhaps the most famous direct offshoot of MBF.

SMMU threw in some interesting features such as Fragglescript and colored lighting, but the port is best remembered as the foundation of the Eternity Engine, a more advanced port that continues to this day (and is worthy of an overview on its own). The other key port that would rise from MBF is WinMBF which ported MBF into Windows and would include fullscreen and windowed modes alongside several bug fixes. While significant on its own for being a version of MBF that ran on a more popular operating system, development eventually stopped and left the port in a dormant state.

In current years, WinMBF got a new lease on life when *Fabian* released Woof at the start of 2020. Woof was a huge leap forward for MBF, bringing the codebase into current year and adding novel features of its own. Woof became one of the most popular modern source ports while keeping the original spirit o f

M B F alive. Woof adds widescreen support, complevels, UMAPINFO support, and a successor standard in MBF21, which I will cover briefly later, just to name a few nice pieces. I will admit that Woof is my favorite port in the Boom and MBF ecosystem, and serves as the base of another port called Nugget Doom which will be covered by *Ludi* in a separate article.

There is a second offshoot of WinMBF that deserves mentioning called Pooch. The aim of Pooch is simply to be a more conservative update of WinMBF to get it to run on more modern operating systems, and it only includes stability updates from some other ports. Pooch is not as frequently updated but as there are fewer features to deal with it doesn't need as many. This port can sort of be thought of as a Chocolate MBF, whereas Woof is a Crispy MBF.

Pooch and Woof serve as the main offshoots of MBF, but many other source ports, while not direct descendants, have included its code and features. GZDoom brought in most of MBF's code pointers and made them available for mappers to exploit. PRBoom+ and its modern fork DSDA-Doom also latched on to the features of WinMBF. They have long had demo compatibility with MBF and utilized similar ideas or even went beyond them such as greater resolution rendering and dehacked embedding. Odds are if you are using a modern port it's got some of MBF's code or features in there either back ported into vanilla gameplay, or embraced for the future.

Woof logo

In Conclusion, Our Best Friend

While there is so much that can be said about MBF I feel it best to give a shorter introduction, and encourage you to look at MBF projects and the links I include here to learn more. MBF is not the end however; in 2021 MBF21 was released and adopted by source ports over time which sought to fix some long standing bugs of MBF and to continue in its spirit by offering even more code pointers and customization. MBF21 will be covered more in depth in a future article as there is much to talk about on its own, and I feel it's best done separately to get a better sense of context. MBF was part of a time when **Doom** was getting more exploratory and new ideas were being introduced into the old paradigm of client function; its new set of features define much of how source ports operate to this day. I feel we owe much to Lee Killough and also the Boom team for pushing this client evolution, and I hope my brief words evoke some idea of how important MBF really was and still is. Long live Marine's Best Friend, and much love to those that paved the way to the future!

DoomWiki MBF Article

Zdoom Wiki MBF Article

Original MBF website

DoomWiki SMMU Article

DoomWiki WinMBF Article

DoomWiki Pooch Article

MBF 2.0.4 the most modern version of the original DOS version, blessed by Lee Killough himself

DoomWiki Woof! Article

Woof Doomworld post

Pooch Doomworld post

DoomWiki Boom Article

Echoes of Damnation

By Chris McAuley

>….
>…. The Mars research facility was seen as a monument to human ambition. It was the poster child for the UAC's success; the news vids on Earth painted it as a state-of-the-art facility which promised miraculous technological breakthroughs. The UAC press officers promised that through the work on Mars mankind would soon beat cancer, be able to travel across the universe in minutes and colonize distant worlds. Dr. Elena Voss knew better. As she moved cautiously through the dimly lit corridors her footsteps reverberated through the metallic labyrinths. Each echo seemed like a mournful reminder of the horrors which her team had unwittingly set free.

>…. It had begun as a misguided experiment, a desperate attempt to utilize the infernal energies of Hell to alleviate Earth's energy crisis. In their arrogance the UAC had torn a portal between dimensions, birthing a maelstrom of demonic horrors into existence.

In the moments that followed she had gone from brilliant scientist to trembling survivor, watching her colleagues mutilated by grotesque monstrosities born from the abyss. During the madness, she sealed herself within her own laboratory, the sanctum of her guilt-ridden research. After a few days, the screams outside ceased and the bellowing of the pink beasts that had erupted through the portal

>…. had quietened. The air within the lab was becoming stale, the stench of her own fear mixed with the acrid tang of chemicals burned her nostrils. Desperation had begun to claw at her sanity. The meager supplies within her makeshift sanctuary were dwindling and the gnawing hunger in her gut was driving her mad. The laboratory environment, once her haven, had grown oppressive; its glaring fluorescent lights and the sterile hum of the machinery seemed to close in upon her. She felt trapped, her sense of isolation grew with each passing moment.

There was also the matter of the communication console in her lab.
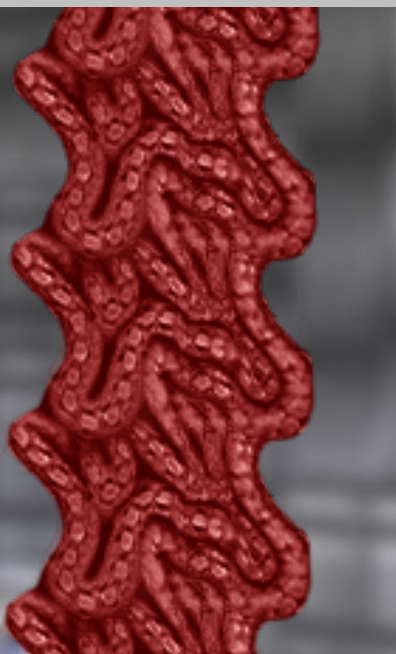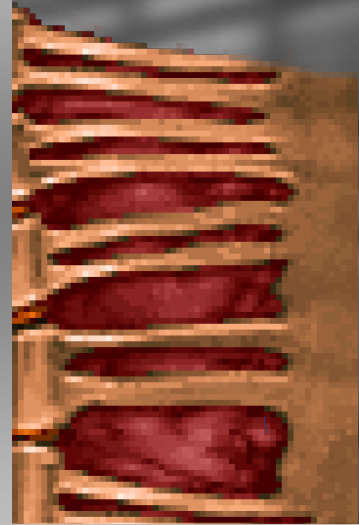
>…. It had remained frustratingly silent since the initial outbreak. She needed help, and she needed it desperately. The UAC Marine Sergeant Kelly was her only hope. She had spent countless hours attempting to reach him, her trembling fingers pressing buttons on the console, sending distress signals into the void. But there had been no response, no reassuring voice on the other end to tell her that salvation was on the way.

Elena knew that she had to leave the lab and that every step outside its safety would bring her closer to the horrors that had torn her world asunder. She had no choice. So, driven by fear and a determination to make amends for her role in this disaster, Elena Voss steeled

>…. herself to face the nightmarish reality outside and seek out any UAC marines left who might hold the key to her survival.

The corridors, once alive with the voices of diligent scientists, had metamorphosed into winding tunnels of despair. Twisted remnants of humanity prowled these lightless passages. Once colleagues and friends, their bodies were twisted into grotesque parodies of themselves. Blisters and sores from their faces ran yellow with pus. Their hands had become claws and their clothing torn to rags as sharp grey bones had erupted from their backs and chest. These former humans' faces were fused into grotesque masks of agony. In the dim recesses, they lurked, their red rimmed eyes burning with a hungry hatred.

Suddenly, the dimly lit corridor erupted in a deafening cacophony of gunfire and hellish roars. In the flickering strobe of plasma bursts, a hulking figure of a marine emerged from

>....the shadows. His green armor was adorned with the marks of countless battles, a testament to his unrelenting war against the demonic horde.

Elena froze, her eyes wide with awe and disbelief. The solider moved with a form of otherworldly grace as he cast the spent plasma rifle aside and smoothly drew the double-barreled shotgun from the holster on his back. He unloaded shotgun shells into the zombie-like creatures splitting them in two. Their insides erupted over the facility's walls. The deep green gastric juices of their punctured stomachs mixing with the rich burgundy of their blood. Elena stared at the gnarled remains
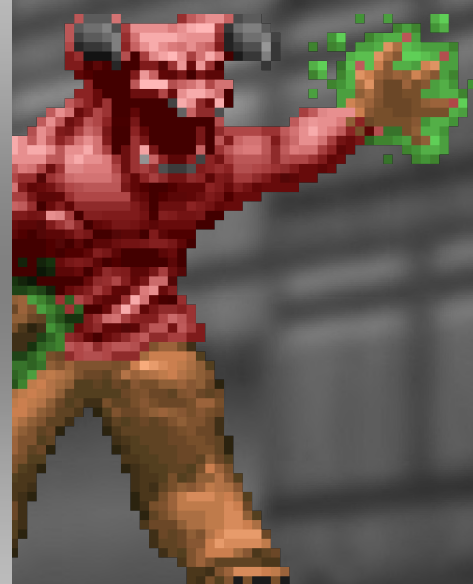
>....of the demons as the marine strode confidently towards her. As he reloaded his shotgun, he quickly glanced up at her.

"You don't belong here, scientist."

Elena stammered, her voice trembling, "I...I know. I didn't mean for any of this to happen. I need to find your Sergeant Kelly. He's the only one with the access codes to open the docking bay. We need to get out of here and warn Earth."

The marine regarded her for a moment, his helmeted gaze unyielding. Then, with a slow, deliberate motion, he snapped open the clips which held the pistol at his side. The weapon's chrome plated finish gleamed ominously in the dim light. He held it out towards Elena.

"Take this." He rasped, his words punctuated by the hiss of hydraulic servos, "And stay close, we're getting out of here."

The scientist hesitated only for a moment before accepting the weapon. The weight of the pistol felt both terrifying and reassuring in her trembling hands. She

>....clutched it tightly as she looked back at the enigmatic warrior.

"Come with me." The marine ordered; his voice left no room for debate. "We'll find Kelly together."

Elena nodded, her eyes welling with gratitude. In the depths of despair, she had found an unexpected ally in this seemingly relentless, armored sentinel. With this newfound protector by her side, she ventured deeper into the hellish labyrinth; determined to find the elusive Sergeant Kelly, and perhaps a flicker of hope amid the infernal chaos that surrounded them.

>.....

ELEMENTALISM
PHASE ONE
BAUUL ET AL
2022

Phase 1 of Elementalism released September of 2022, and has been in production since 2018. I remember seeing its forum post some years back but was saddened that I wouldn't get a chance to play it yet, but now with Phase 1 we can see more of what *Bauul* and crew were cooking up. Elementalism is a beautiful mapset that will only run on GZDoom 4.7.1 or later, and requires you to use the OpenGL rendering mode to get all of the effects, and it may have trouble on lower end hardware ; but *Bauul* has stated the team worked hard to try and optimize the maps as much as they could. Elementalism phase 1 includes 15 maps with a hub, split into 5 each for the elements of Earth, Water, and Fire .With another 15 maps, Air, Light, and Darkness will arrive with Phase 2 in the future.

Plainly stated, Elementalism is a work of art that is worth reviewing on the merit of its aesthetic design alone. One key element of how Elementalism stylizes itself is the fitting color palettes that go with each Element. Starting with Earth there is a great use of greens, browns and stone

like colors, water has blues and the fire realm has ashen, orange, red etc. However, Elementalism doesn't just stop with a logical color selection ; what makes it strong is the architectural theme on top of the elemental one. With Earth you find yourself fighting through Mayan

water with oasis-like landscapes and sunken temples. Fire has a bit of a tonal shift compared to the last two, as reds, lava, volcano and industrial elements abound in this world as well with more Hell associated imagery.

urable option in the Elementalism menu that you may change if you want. The hub mechanic is also in play. You will start the game in a hub that lets you pick between the 3 episodes and you can return here at any time from the menu. Thus you don't have to play any of the sets in any
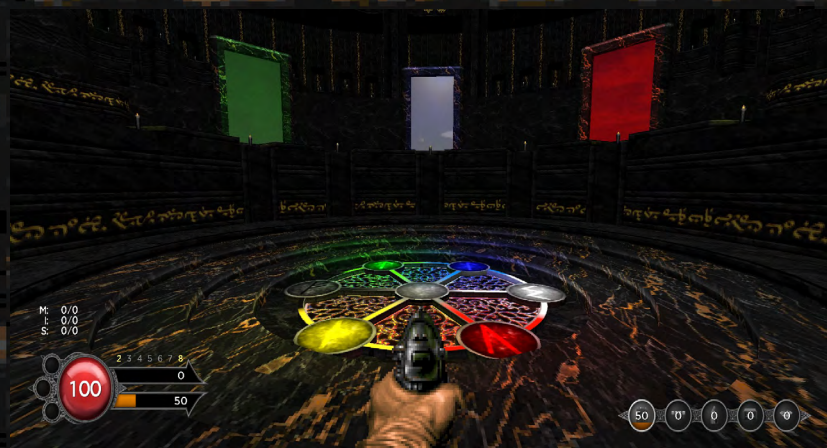
and Aztec ruins in a jungle, which makes the stonework and nature part of the Earth theme. This way, it isn't simply just stone and dirt, but a deeper exploration of the element in place. Going further , as you may have guessed the Water Element levels have plenty of

Elementalism goes beyond just aesthetics though, and includes some gameplay changes by introducing some new monsters, adding a new weapon, and utilizing some additional mechanics. First of all, the mapset has pistol starts enforced on each level; but that remains a config-

particular order and you get a lot of freedom to explore the game. A nice approach with the elemental themes as well is that there are unique monsters that are included in each of the episodes so you have different enemies to contend with ; which will change things up from typi-

cal **Doom** combat : a solid example being revs that don't have rockets and are just punching machines for example. The episode themes also apply to the new weapon, the Wand of the Elements, whereby picking up the right power-up in a level will gain the elemental power such as an earth related ability for the Earth episode.

Stunning visuals, new enemies, well paced combat for different difficulty levels, and an excellent showcase of GZDoom features makes Phase 1 of Elementalism a great start to what Elementalism has been developing for some time, and I am sure Phase 2 will continue to deliver. I highly recommend Elementalism to anyone who is comfortable using GZDoom ; you will not be disappointed.

ERIC CLAUS

Oh, mother of God, GMOTA (2014) is a mod that has been in development for almost 10 years at this point, and trust me, it's worth it. With a unique innovative retro style that takes inspiration from the old games of NES and SNES, GMOTA or better known as "Go Medieval On Their Asses", is truly one of the most enjoyable mods that I've played in a long time (I played ALL of Scythe 2 with this mod so... you get my point).

GMOTA brings us 3 playable... wait, they are 2 now? What happened? Oh, rework... Damn, I know that pain. So now what... Um, well... *clears throat* Ok, let's go again...

GMOTA brings us 2 playable classes: Lord Blaz and Doom Slayer,

a fully new bestiary (Dear God I love the sprite of Terminator) that accommodates a medieval style, retro-style sprites, sounds, and even music! That truly hit on my nostalgia, as someone who played many SNES games in my childhood (Ahh, I love you Illusion of Gaia).

But aside from the lovely art style, what matters in this mod is the distinct gameplay that each class brings on the table. Starting with Doom Slayer, he is made to resemble more of a classic doom experience, but of course with his own twist; he is similar but with new abilities and mechanics.

The weapons are like the classic ones, but have slight differences. For example, the chaingun is now projectile-based, and the BFG/Unmaker is not a weapon but rather a skill that you can use as soon as the cooldown ends. I find this to be a really fun and creative

way to balance a weapon like the BFG, making it still as powerful as we know but in a unique way.

I truly loved the refresh that Kegan gave to the Doom Slayer, as he is a middle point between Lord Blaz and the original Doomguy. So, what is Lord Blaz?

Lord Blaz is basically the full melee experience of GMOTA, so be ready to tear through the demon hordes. He is the one that I'm more experienced with. Trust me, I loved replaying Scythe 2 with Lord Blaz. :)

So, how does Lord Blaz work? He has only 2 weapons (technically more, but they count more as skills rather than proper weapons): his sword Zarach, and a demonic weapon on his wrist. Both can be upgraded to get more powerful, with new features that I won't

spoil, but trust me, they are great and give a sensation of progression in large megawads.

Also, Lord Blaz can use the Zoom Key to throw a hook and grab monsters. This is useful when enemies are in towers and you can't reach them easily, because Lord Blaz generally lacks other ranged damage.

But don't let that make you think his ranged weapon is useless, because it is one of the most important tools! The blaster, even though it doesn't deal much damage, has the great capability of always stunning any monster. Trust me, in any game, stunning enemies is very useful and here is no exception. So it gives you a tool to either attack without putting yourself in danger or to save your life in deadly situations.

Lord Blaz can also use multiple sub-weapons that you can pick from monsters (there are more than 100). More interestingly, Lord Blaz can also throw his sword and use his fists. This is helpful to reduce cooldown of his blaster, even if his fists doesn't have damage comparable to the sword it's still very nice to be able to play like you have berserk. :)

So, in summary, do I recommend GMOTA? No! Thanks for reading! Nah I'm kidding. It's one

of the best mods that I've tried. I literally played all of Scythe 2 with this mod, and I didn't it want it to end, because it was truly fun to kill monsters with a sword. I'm truly eager to see what else Combine_Kegan has to bring, not only because of other mods, but also because there are still 2 classes more for GMOTA and also a rework for Doom Slayer.
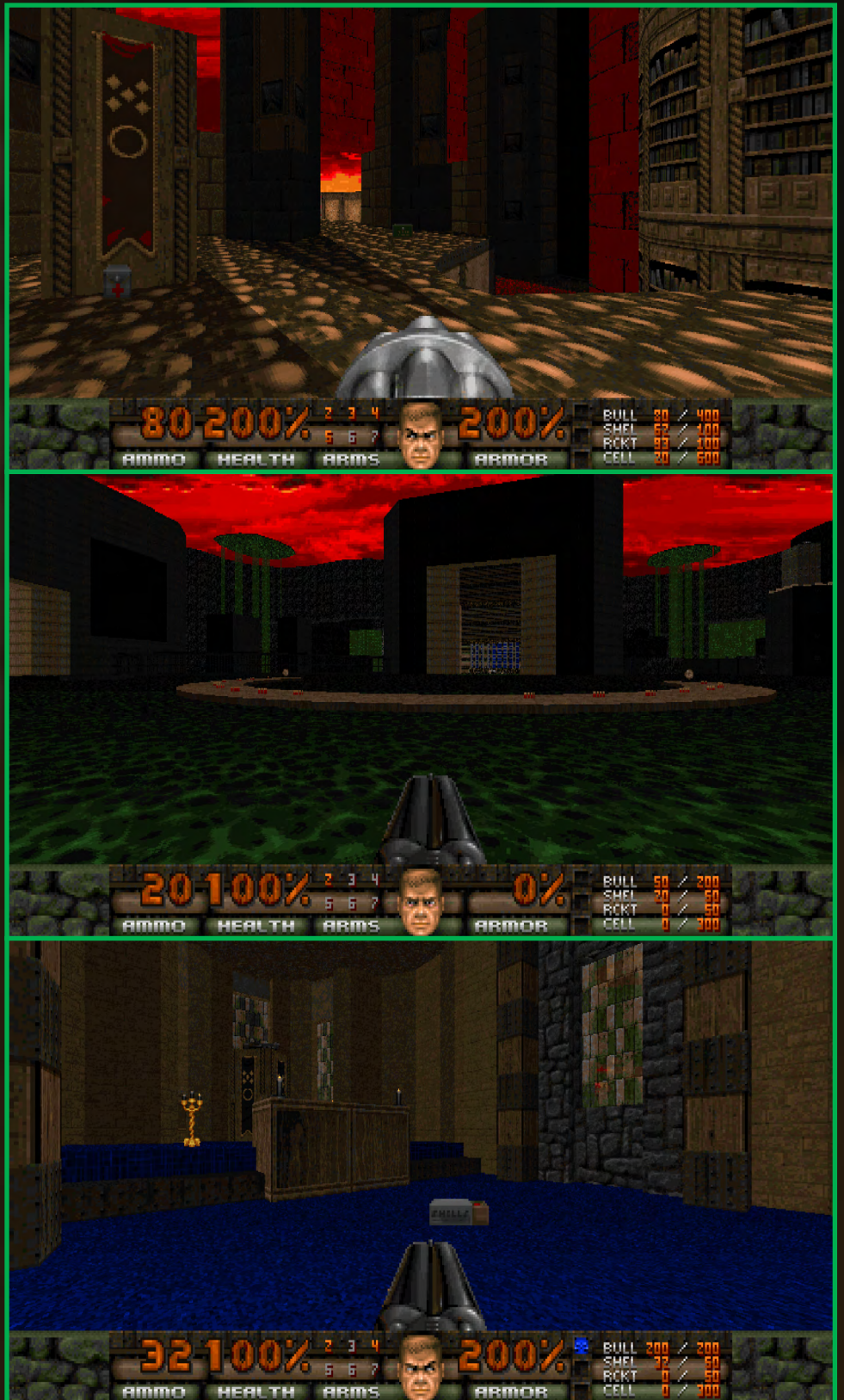
So, take your sword and Get Medieval On Their Asses! :)

Gaia74

AFTERNOON
BY LUDI ET AL.   2023

Afternoon is a speedmap set of 15 maps. The project was led by *Ludi* with custom music by fellow mapper *Korp* and each was map made in 3 hours with vanilla textures only. This wad uses Boom (cl 9) and UMAPINFO so you will want to use a port with that support. I was able to run the set on Woof just fine (which of course supports both Boom and UMAPINFO). Newer PrBOOM+ versions and DSDA Doom are also ideal ports. The wad tends to have short and sweet maps toward the beginning with maps 10-15 being slaughter maps. The earlier maps are easier with difficulty going up as the maps progress, and while difficulties are available, the balancing is centered around UV which is the difficulty I played at.

First let's talk about the first 9 levels, as this wad does feel like it has a couple of different sections with the more Scythe –like maps in the first 9 and more slaughter maps for the rest. The first 9 maps are short but action-

packed and you can indeed easily compare them to Scythe. Vanilla textures are used quite well to create some nice environments that range from tech-base to more hellish maps, so there isn't really a set theme between them and you will get a nice mix. Further breaking down the maps; the layouts can be cramped in places but they are never too samey and offer plenty of good combat while being short and sweet: letting you do a no-save run without really any loss of time if you die. You can shoot through them in, well, an Afternoon. You will get a decent challenge in these maps that does ramp as you go. They are my favorite and I would recommend them for those not a fan of slaughter-inclined maps.

Maps 10 to 15 are more slaughter-oriented. I will be honest and say I am not a big slaughtermaps fan or player (no judgment to those who like them, just not my thing) BUT I still found these maps in this set to be interesting, and worth looking at. One nice thing I have liked about the more slaughter-heavy maps is that they have some nice looking arena layouts with the vanilla textures. That makes them stand out from the slaughter maps I have sampled which looked very plain and stretched. Tasting the

combat in these maps; I can tell you they are intense for me and should pose a challenge to any average player on UV. If you want safety, get ready to fight for it! Check out map 15: it's a bit more typical slaughter map but you get plenty of mega-spheres and BFGs with ammo ... so this is a fun one to check out even if you are not a big slaughter map player, just for a laugh and some quick carnage (which fits the theme of the wad overall).

Afternoon is a nice quick blood fest that is easy to hop into with a Boom port. While there isn't

anything super obvious in the Boom usage, there are some clever uses of transparency for textures and multi switch doors so there are some subtle effects at play. Vanilla textures can be a mixed bag; but also can still be used well and I think Afternoon pulls this off nicely. Fire up your favorite Boom and MAPINFO compatible port and take a stab at Afternoon : I feel it's worth your time!

- Eric Claus

LOST CIVILIZATION
Jaakko "Jaska" Impola
October 2019

Doom II mapping has a certain tendency to be based in tropes which have existed in some form since the early days, specifically, some fairly large open areas but with a noted tendency towards indoor locations. The 2019 Cacoward winner Lost Civilization thusly sets out to blow both of these characteristics right out of the water! Featuring a number of massively open locations (with hardly any indoor settings!) that start out strongly natured-centered before eventually transitioning into more settled areas, and eventually, a very interesting turn in the last few maps to a laboratory, real "lost civilizations" and finally, a modern industrial installment that serves as the last map.

Part of this would undoubtably be the music score. While not being original, the New Age -ish compositions of *Jaska*'s fellow countryman *Bjorn* prove to be the perfect soundtrack to wandering through vast fields, climbing mountains, or working one's way through vegetation. Later on, several energetic James Paddock midis are also used which suits the more action -oriented feel of the last half.

Combat is not going to be what people will remember in most maps. The emphasis especially in the early maps is on exploring every nook and cranny, which is to say, exploring caves, climbing cliffs, and finding a way inside some shed or another. *Jaska* does occasionally in unorganized hordes and at select points, shows a particular affinity for archviles. Difficulty starts to pick up noticeably in the last few maps though, as architecture becomes noticeably more grand-scale and locales become oddly enough MORE exotic than they were before. We find ourselves in Greek and Egyptian ruins with spaceships and finally, a massive modern

already is actually kind of a cinematic finale.

Ultimately, if you like to get lost in maps, don't mind combat flow being so constant, and just are a person who likes to drink in the visual detail of **Doom** in general, you can't go wrong with Lost Civilization. It's a seriously compelling and engaging experience that ultimately seeks out different avenues other than non-stop action and it reaches said avenues with far more consistency than you might expect!

-LadyMistDragon

industrial complex that puts almost anything made under OTEX to shame. Only some of the early maps in the wad Heartland can match but they aren't anywhere near as massive, despite said maps not exactly being bite-sized themselves.

Finally, a little bit should be said on the progression throughout the entire wad. There isn't really a consistent narrative but we're basically starting at the oceanside, making our way through villages, river canyons, mansions, an odd spooky diversion, then a journey through some strong if largely unambitious depictions of urban environments. From there, we then head into some government facilities, right before we take a mild turn into left field in the last 2 maps. These ones easily con-

tain the most ambitious and creative designs, actually putting in the sort of environmental storytelling not seen in the megawad thus far! The end-game actually pits us against someone we'll just call an Ancient Aliens refugee, for lack of a better term and to avoid spoilers. The futuristic complex said end game occurs in helps underscore what

THE BEST 50 WADS FROM 1994
CURATED AND COMPILED BY ENDLESS

FOREWORD

In March 1994, Origwad, the very first custom level made for **Doom**, was released. Created by Jeffrey Bird to prove that creation of WADs was possible, this level consists of a simple door joining two rooms and a few enemies. Nothing else, nothing more. From this, everything was born.

In 1994, more than 1,000 WADs would be uploaded for preservation in the /idgames archive alone. A fever for creation spread like a virus across the world, and soon enough, the world would have a thousand-thousand hours of possible gametime thanks to the output of a very passionate community that,

despite lacking experience and working with chisel and stone, managed to fill entire libraries of lore.

But 1994 is a date that lives both in nostalgia and infamy. It represents some of the best and worst facets of the early community. While productivity was high, quality was still missing in a large percentage of works. *It was the best of times; it was the worst of times…*

And yet, it endured, and it showed that with time and patience, the community could be as good as the official id mappers. In this compilation, you will find some of the best, most fun and relevant pieces of WAD works from 1994.

It is important to understand that

this effort was created with a semi-academical interest, as well as a passionate respect for the predecessors of our history. To the modern eye, these WADs represent a bygone era that best be left sleeping, but to the enthusiastic archeologist, this a monument to civilization and doomers around the world. Messy design, texture misalignment, unfair gameplay, random teleporters, missing tags, and either too many monsters or too little, 1994 was an era of experimentation and freedom. There were no standards, only yours.

If you are interested in learning about what the best of 1994 had to offer, you are welcome here. Embrace it.

WAD INDEX
FROM A TO Z

Aliens TC

Some would call it a modern classic. Aliens TC was the very fist total-conversion WAD in history, completely changing the style and gameplay of the game to something more horror-oriented.

Base

A small yet tightly designed map that rivals Romero's standards from the time. Quick gameplay and cohesive level design make this one an enjoyable experience and one of the few "traditional" levels that managed to be on par with the originals.

Bilbo's Smegging WAD

An interesting exercise in violence and gore. Bilbo's Smegging WAD is not only an absurdly named WAD, but also a rather absurd experience that seems to mix and match all the classic visuals themes from the 90s, and with a good effect.

Bleak House

A semi realistic experience with some incredible mansion architecture that encourages exploration and personal vendettas. Bleak House is a great example on consistency and great visuals. One of the earliest and best examples of a MyHouse kind of WAD.

Castle of Evil

If you've ever wondered into the old archives of Doomworld, then you most likely have heard of Castle of Evil. One of the biggest, meanest, and baddest level of all time. Castle of Evil is, to date, one of the biggest single-level WADs in history, a map so huge that it would have most than likely crashed you PC back then.

Castle of the Renegades

Castle of Renegades is a lost marble adventure that seems to have been forgotten. A solid adventure level filled with little rooms and different areas to explore, as well as some good combat and neat little custom textures that fill a man's heart.

Caverns

Probable one of the best underground levels, to date. Caverns is a magnificently well-done level that nails the ambience and mood of a dark and evil cavern system, filled with satanic souls and tormented victims, azure rivers flow away as their waters turn red. Caverns nails exploration and horror-ambience like no other, without the need of changing the core of Doom.

Cooper's Creosote

A classic adventure across a multitude of areas that exhume old-school vibes. And what is that? Monochrome texturing, simplistic design, square architecture, and far too many rooms to explore. Just perfect. Cooper's Creosote is a simplistic yet effective level that sticks to the basics and delivers well.

Command Control

Techbase to the brim, the peak of what a classic traditional level looked like in 1994. From metallic frames to open outdoors to boss arenas. You got it.

Crossing Acheron

Part of the Doomworld Top 100 of all Time feature, Crossing Acheron really needs no introduction. Considered to be one of the, if not the *most* polished level from 1994, it manages to up the level and surpass the quality of even some the originals.

Dante's Gate

Another classic that has managed to withstand the test of time. Dante's Gate is a solid level that checks all the quality boxes of a traditional Doom map. It is beautifully designed, darkly lit, and well textured, accompanied by a branching pathing that ensures replayability, it deserves new life.

Cooper's Creosote

A classic adventure across a multitude of areas that exhume old-school vibes. And what is that? Monochrome texturing, simplistic design, square architecture, and far too many rooms to explore. Just perfect. Cooper's Creosote is a simplistic yet effective level that sticks to the basics and delivers well.

Der Turm

A massive sprawling adventure through the depths of a techbase. Der Turm is a showcase of pure vanilla goodness with neat lightning and a dark atmosphere.

Doom Anomaly

A simple but fun level that's probably been played by a few hundred or so Doom aficionados that have dared themselves to play through Maximum Doom. This is one of those lost levels that are hard to find, but once you do, they are a good fun time.

Doomsday of UAC

On the other hand, Doomsday of UAC is probably one of the most popular and well-recognized levels of all time, and with good reason. This level was a pioneer of many techniques that are still used in vanilla format, and it showcases some of the best tricks of creativity at the time. John Romero himself said he was awed by this level, so there's that.

Doomtown

Before there was Doom City, there was Doomtown. As the name implies, this is one of the first urban-setting levels in history and a hidden little piece of history for the semi-realistic style of mapping.

E1M1SAS

What makes E1M1SAS such an interesting experience is how creative and simple it is, while also being exceptionally well polished, for its time, of course. Start in a prison cell, fight you way through dungeon, reach the gallows, and escape from a marble fortress. Simple ideas done right were quite the rarity back then, and this one manages to execute its narrative with great success.

Eternity

Would be unfair to make a top list without including the glorious piece of Doom history that is Eternity. To make it simple: it is a good level, considered among the best from the time and a timeless classic that is still enjoyable today.

Galaxia

Considered to be the very first "story-heavy" WAD, Galaxia presented a strong narrative accompanied by an extensive storyline on its .txt, as well as scenic narration.

H_Hotel

An extensive adventure through a semi-realistic hotel filled with a variety of lovely looking rooms and great architecture for its time. Exploration is the gist here, and there's plenty of it.

Infestation

A nuclear plant has been invaded by demons, and now, is up to you to clean it. This medium-sized level is a solid concept with a good execution that makes up for a rather dull texturing, but fun adventuring.

Invasion... Level 1: Contamination

The first part of the incredible Invasion series. This WAD encapsulates peak 90s mapping with all the greatness that comes with it. There really are no WADs close to it from 1994, and it would take a few more months and years to reach such levels of detailing, storytelling, and quality. Fair warning: it is quite a long level to finish.

Invasion... Level 2: The Upper Decks

Invasion 2 ups the level and quality of the original one, adding more well-needed polish, custom texturing, incredible level of lightning detail, and an awesome combination of techbase horror reminiscent of Alien.

Killing Zone

Killing Zone is a proto-slaughter bonanza of simple proportions and delightful violence. An extensive, semi-linear level with a variety of "arenas" with high number of enemies.

Legion Down Under

Extensive and intense. Legion Down Under is a big level with plenty of combat, centered around exploration and diverse panoramas that shift themes with a sense of cohesion. One of those levels that just look really good on a mini map too.

Mayan Temple

One of the first, if not the first, Mesoamerican-themed map in history. Mayan Temple is what it says on the cover, using clever little custom texturing and pyramidal architecture.

NJ Doom

Deserves to be in this list alone on the fact that it was the very first standalone megawad that was fully made by a single author, meaning not a compilation (like Heroes) and each map was unique on its own.

Nuclear

A rough diamond lost in a sea of garbage. Nuclear is

a beautifully simple level that goes across an extensive nuclear plant. You'll be walking through ventilation shafts, toxic sludge, cramped corridors, radioactive rooms, and cooling stations. An awesome adventure.

PUEBLO.WAD

An early deathmatch level that makes some great usage of realistic texturing and architecture to create a comfy and cozy town.

Red Rock

Red Rock is one of those early WADs that tried to make good use of the natural setting of **Doom**, that being the martian moons. Set in Deimos, there's a palpable sense of setting that's both enjoyable and a curiosity to explore.

REDRUM

A solid level that's a worthy contender to duel one of the originals from **Doom**. It shares some similarities with E1 and E2, adding deeper puzzles and a variety of secrets.

REoL TOUGH: TOTAL WAR III: Land of Weirdness

An historical entry, Land of Weirdness is, most likely, the first proper slaughter map in history, and it was made for the original **Doom**, so you can expect quite the grind.

Return to Phobos

A classic from 1994, and part of Doomworld Top 100 WADs of All Time, and well deserved. Return to Phobos is a classic adventure through a brown techbases and gloomy arenas. It feels and plays in a similar way to Quake and Doom 2, with all the brown and that.

Runaway

Runaway feels more like a modern attempt at a vanilla map. It is really well polished, visually clean, fast-paced, and open. A start contrast to the cramped mazes of the 90s, Runaway is an entertaining example of what a solid level is by a legendary author from the era.

Serenity

Another well-known classic that deserves a spot for its relevancy and quality. Not much to say other than this one is a must for WAD history aficionados.

Skycity

Skycity feels like a liminal world in a Doom level. A clear blue sky showering a white marble city. Empty, quiet, and serene. A very unique experience in 1994.

Slaughter Until Death

Not many episodes were released during 1994, and a lot of such episodes were, at beast, forgettable. On the other hand, Slaughter Until Death still manages to be a fun and quick ride through a Doom 2-like setting of brown and vines.

STONES.WAD

Origwad has the spot for the first ever WAD in history, but it was more of an experiment than actual level. STONES.WAD, on the other hand, is a proper map, and the first one of its kind. Among the first ten levels in history, Stones feels like taking a time machine into the years of yore, and guess what? It is actually a very fun level.

Street

A personal favorite of mine, Street is an early urban-themed level that has you exploring a city and the underground subway system.

SunGod 1.0

An early magnum opus, SunGod feels like a drug-induced dream through geometrical perfection and ultra violence. A big, sprawling, and very creative map that totally deserves this spot.

Suppression of Resistance

A short trek through a silver techbase filled with dark secrets and neat vanilla tricks that recreate a realistic, almost alive ambience.

The Cathedral

An eerie exploration-focused WAD with a very brown and open theme that seems like it was meant for slaughter, and yet, it is quiet.

The Deimos Subway

A 90s classic that is well known among old-school lovers, but not so much to the rest due to not being part of any major lists, yet being an awesomely fun and creative WAD that, as the title says, recreates a subway with a fair level of consistency.

The Evil Unleashed

The last good episode WAD the 90s saw, released by the same authors of Slaughter Until Death, you can consider it as a sort of sequel.

TIBET.WAD

Despite the name, you are not actually in the great mountains of the Tibet, but maybe you are underneath them! This is a mix of dungeon crawl with techbase flavor, enhanced by a plethora of modified and custom textures that create a fantastical ambience.

TMP

TMP is one of those WADs that are really, really hard to find unless you read the Doom Wiki like a mad man, or accidently stumble upon it. A linear yet consistently fun level set in a beautiful marble fortress with some Mayan details added to it before Aztec even existed. Also fun fact: TMP was the winner of a mapping competition back in 1994.

Trinity College

The prime example of a realistic WAD in 1994. Making use of photorealistic textures and palpable architecture that tries to recreate a real place in our world, Trinity College holds a close place in the heart of hundreds of old-school lovers due to its thematic quality and uniqueness.

UACPEN.WAD

An underrated Little gem that makes a strong emphasis its visual narrative and level progression. Geometrically delightful and visually appealing, it is quite the forgotten piece of work that deserves a new look.

UCA

Welcome to the Deimos Moon Base, in the Anguilla Crater (no such place in Deimos) where a corrupted techbase mixed with infernal delight awaits you.

Urbnbeta

Probably one of the best realized semi-realistic WADs from the decade of the 90s, Urbnbeta cames packed full with awesome little details that are just incredible even today, including a CRT monitor displaying a game of Doom.

Wasteland: Mountain of Fire

Mountain of Fire has one of the most unique and "ugly" looking map layouts that despite looking like a mess, is actually pretty damn good and creative. A sort of canyon base, now turned into a diabolic chasm, filled with ravines, lava lakes, and collapsed bunkers. It is cool.

END LESS

Vanilla, limit removing, MBF and Boom compatible!

DOOM' RETRO

SOURCE PORT
v5.2.1 OUT NOW!!

ART: @BUSTERTOON

DOOM 64
TRIGGER MORTIS

COMING SOON
FOR DOOM 64 EX

NEW STUFF

BY LADYMISTDRAGON

Sound to Screen—M8f

For GZDoom. *M8f* is probably best known as the creator of the resurrected "Top 100 Wads" thread on Doomworld. But he apparently does some modding as well. Basically, Sound to Screen is a visual aid for those who are hearing-impaired or can't hear at all. Truthfully, there could be a little bit more explanation on what the different sound icons displayed represent. At least they're coming from multiple directions though.

Emerald Ambush– Rook

Limit-removing. It seems like *Rook* has gone quiet since Sucker Punch 2 because this was made apparently as an effort to prepare for Sucker Punch 3. As a return, it's quite good. The ever-present green's reminiscent of the 3rd episode of 1K Lines 3, like an alternate version of *Guardsoul*'s map perhaps. As usual, enemy placement is lovingly and cleverly crafted and you get a fairly open layout where it's tough to hide. Let's hope you haven't screwed up by the yellow key trap unless you like ending up in a fire-y grave.

Ammonia - rd

Limit-removing. Ok, done comparing *rd* to *Dos Equis*. Somewhat tighter and shorter than her previous efforts, yet with an incredibly sadistic approach to both ammo and health, this one should be beatable if you're skilled. Cool hell theme though, and that ending is just so silly. In any case, it wasn't worth it for me to bother with the Cyberdemon here. The chaingunners and the Lost Souls were a far worst problem.

Spell of Destruction - Kisadillah

limit-removing. A new mapper debuts with this little adventure of sorts. All the corridors are pretty narrow. Starting in a techbase, you then descend underground and traverse some slime tunnels. Difficulty steadily picks up, although not too much. Although you eventually find yourself in a land of tan and stone brick with some library shelves in one room, along with an obvious marble alter. While I've certainly played more intriguing maps of this style, the traps are still nicely timed and might kill you if

you're not expecting some tricks. The finale is set amongst a large outdoor area, with a Cyberdemon at one end next to an experimental teleporter that contains Arch-viles inside. Decent ending, though if you find the plasma rifle, this probably won't be too difficult.

Gulf of Madness
xdarkmasterx

Vanilla, though you run the risk of intercept overflows (whatevs, I'm no technical genius) Anyway, *Darkmaster* returns with yet another ball-busting if not quite slaughter map, set in a myriad of different adjacent locations, each with some distinct and quite unusual visual touches. You should have enough health to get by, but you'll probably have little for much of the map and also, you'll definitely find yourself leaning heavily on in-

fighting for much of it. There's a definite deathmatch influence on the layout. Yet for all of that, the combat doesn't feel quite as stimulating as many of *darkmaster*'s other previous efforts. Encounters just don't stand out the way they did in something like Buried Castle. Still something I would recommend.

Sient Halls - ChestedArmor

For GZDoom. Something I would strongly recommend if you're less about action and more about finding a way through. The pistol at the beginning seems useless, but in fact it's a silencer that will prove absolutely critical. Don't shoot the barrels in the second room from the beginning btw, it'll insta-kill you. Shoot who you need to, but leave every thing else alone, because you have next to no ammo, and firing non-silenced weapons will lead to your Doom apart from the very end. Great stuff !

Koko Ricky: Back with the Central Processing—Koko Ricky

For limit-removing ports. Koko Ricky releases another map in his E1 remake series. Like his previous maps, Ricky utilizes the basis of E1M6 in order to create a more-finely detailed and possibly intricate as well experience. A train station is added at the beginning, reportedly in accordance with something which was described in the Doom Bible, and those square pools of slime you may remember from the original have been transformed into a

lab with samples stored in tanks. The music is shockingly not just Andrew Hulshult's cover of "On the Hunt," but instead is an entirely original composition by Ricky himself, containing some metal elements but mostly comprised of some other styles.

Vicarious - Zemystic

Limit-removing. *ZeMystic* is probably best known as a member of the Squonker crew. Anyways, this is a set of three speedmaps, sort of medieval and gothic-themed with a challenge to match. Though this doesn't go full slaughter until the last map. If you're stumped, there's rockets in the corners. Fun but as flash-in-the-pan as it gets.

Acid Reflux
RiviTheWarlock

Boom-compatible. Three intense and sort of sewer-themed maps, they will still probably make you life miserable and cause you to die at least a few times, due to how you're often forced to kill Arch-viles under some unideal circumstances. However, you get a few Dehacked modifications: the hyper-fist from Rowdy Rudy's, a semi-automatic rifle that resembles something from that same wad which replaces your pistol, and a slightly

speeded-up chaingun. A rocket launcher would have made things go by so much smoother. Although that wouldn't change the nature of specific fights, such as the one near the end of Map 01 where you're surrounded on both sides by Imps and you're expected to chaingun them to a point with hardly any room to strafe. But again, Rivi shows an impressive grasp of detailing in the third map that largely takes place in a subway station.

Beta Style Mod - ShallowB

vanilla. People who've absolutely consumed all Doom material, including screens of the early beta versions of monsters and weapons, are unlikely to check this out. This is definitely a different aesthetic. It's interesting how all the human enemies used to wear helmets or how absolutely butt-ugly the Revenants used to be (believe me, the red shorts are stupid, but the final version is nowhere near as ugly!). I'm a touch confused on why the rifle was switched out for a pistol when they basically have the same power. The original machine gun is absolutely atrocious though. Ok as a curiosity, but hard to see much value in it otherwise.

Angdoom - Dasha

Plays in any port that can generate its own nodes (ZDoom, EDGE, Eternity and probably some others). Basically, this is a random map generator using the base code of the 1992 roguelike dungeon crawler Angband to create some rather nasty and twisted dungeon-style maps. Definitely not for someone who hates mazes. Still a decent utility.

WADS OF THE MONTH

Antemortum - Snaxalotl

Plays in GZDoom. After two years of development, *Snaxalotl*'s main mapping project has finally been (half) finished. "Episode 1" contains five large highly-detailed and quite difficult maps, beautifully-rendered and full of intrigue. This isn't really slaughter though, and the dfficulty is probably more comparable to the middle of BTSX2 than something like Sunlust. Instead of the void-like setting and striking architecture of the latter though, this focuses on more realistic though still impressive spaces. Powered by Supercharge 2.0, the combat should feel far less tedious than you might expect. A non-megawad highlight of 2022's first half.

Hell Cartel - Johnny Cruelty

For GZDoom. *Johnny Cruelty* released each of their starting maps individually before putting them together in a collection and calling it "Hell Cartel." These are filled with all sorts of eager amateurish detail, and gameplay that surprisingly doesn't slack off too much. Despite little flaws like a strangely-placed Pain Elemental and yellow key in Map 01, things start to rapidly improve from there. Many maps end with cool large-ish ambushes that aren't really too difficult but are lots of fun. The attempts at rendering a realistic space without really incorporating Doomcute for the most part are surprisingly effective. It's also quite fun to hit on walls and look for secrets in such an environment. Recommended.

Liquidium - gabirupee

Boom-compatible, complevel 9. A sort of visual testing map, this nevertheless manages to pack in some slaughter-lite-ish, tense and frantic combat. The Arch-vile/Revenant combo at the beginning probably asks for infighting, but you might want to plunge into the depths before. Though it still won't be easy - there's a rocket launcher, but you'll then have to contend with Pain Elementals and I think Hell Knights. An excellent short map.

Hospoda - Gibbon

Vanilla. Taking place in what most American would think as a generic European cafe, you're having a relaxing meal when demons invade! This is a short and tough little mini-slaughter situation you've got to blast your way through while listening to some generic peasant-folk ditty. But aren't guns hard to acquire in most countries? Yes, this really makes little sense but that's missing the point. Get on it!

RUNNER-UP 1

The Mauve Zone - The Royal We

GZDoom. One of those wads where you wake up in your bedroom. Very soon, you end up taking a few trips to a nightmarish

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fireblu dimension, ending in a dangerous rendition of E1M1 with three Cyberdemons. Despite having less than 100 enemies, *TheRoyalWe* knows when to spam enemies where it counts and generally displays an incredibly evil sense of encounter design. Not recommended if you are easily frustrated, and the small size of the rooms speak more to quality of life than intended challenge, imo. However, this is one map that has to be seen to be believed. It gets at the very essence of Doomguy in a perpetual nightmare state that the infamous "all wads are canon" fan theory implies.

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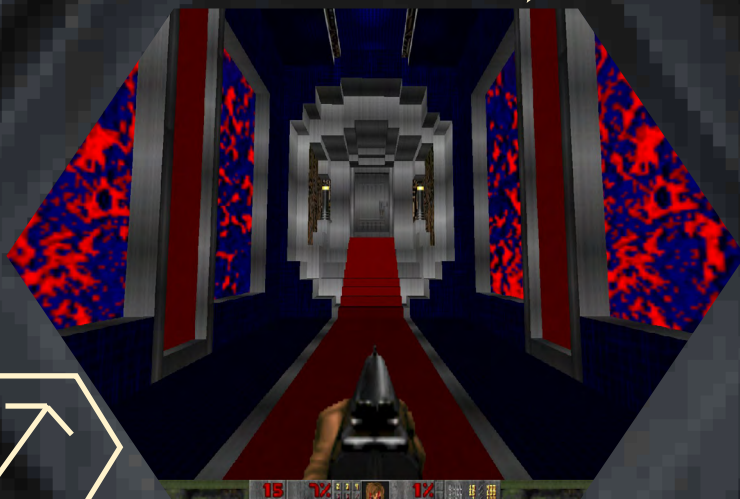
RUNNERS - UP 2

No Rest for the Living Intermission Screen — oliacym

Vanilla. Just like with Doom II, oliacym has brought you an awesome pair of intermission screens for No Rest for The Living, both using animation and reflecting said wad's themes.

Supercharge - Final Scourge - Austinado

For GZDoom. Those who frequent Doomworld may recognize the name *Austinado* as that wonderful individual who posted that "Looking for a playtester?..." thread, though he's also participated in the Ironman/Eagle competitions and has engaged in some speedmapping over the years. But he finally makes a solo debut with this 10-map set powered by the latest version of Supercharge 2.0. Containing some Plutonia influence but obviously marching to its own distinct frenetic drum, you're taken to a variety

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of locations and fending off demons on a fairly constant basis. It's not terribly difficult when compared with other wads, but the enemy counts tend to border on the higher end of things. Still, Supercharge wads tend to play excellently, and this one isn't an exception! Otherwise classic vanilla progression and combat at its finest!

RUNNER - UP 3

Pocket Slaughter - SCF

A full-length megawad of bite-sized maps from a mapper that I seriously wish we could see a little bit more of, though I think he might prefer speedrunning. Some maps don't quite work out so well, but as a work by one person, this more than satisfies, as SCF's talent for meting out pain and clean Scythe-esque visuals is just too hard to deny.
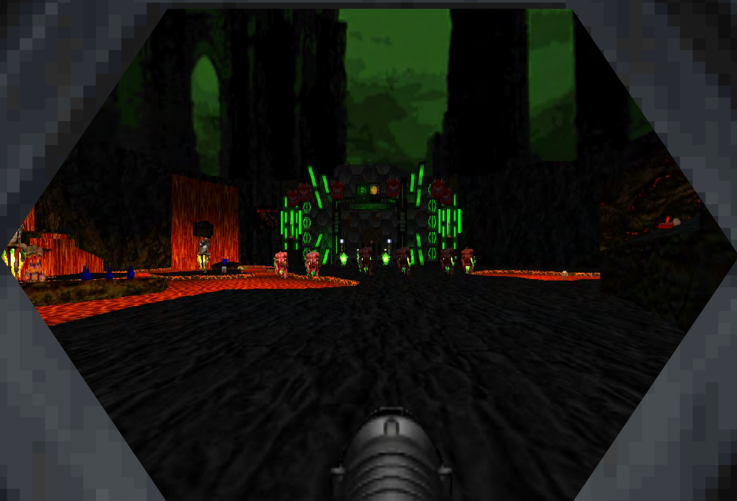
Pulse of Agony - Antonio Spaziano

For GZDoom. Fairly standard starting techbase map, with the exception of tough monsters showing up very early, but thankfully you're not too deprived for very long. The room with the slime waterfalls and Cyberdemon is a particular highlight. The last hallway gets a little chaotic with the enemy placement, but you do have some room to hide, so it's still possible.

MOST VISUALLY IMPRESSIVE

Brain Dead - azerty

GZDoom. Azerty returns with possibly his best map yet! Combining CC4 and OTEX textures to create a truly fascinating run-down techbase with tons of lighting variance, visuals aren't even the map's biggest stength. One of *azerty*'s first maps was quite tough but horrifically unbalanced. This one is quite hard, but gives you at least some of the tools that you'll need to win, although they're hidden away in secrets. The se-

quence where you enter an empty room with enemies who mysteriously drop dead, only to be revived by Arch-viles with the sheer misfortune to teleport in and end up killed in infighting thanks to the shape of the room is easily the highlight.

Warehouse Raid - IcarusOfDaggers

GZDoom. An excellent debut map, this one starts off with some monsters quite close to you being killed and it's instantly off to the races! This opening courtyard is clearly pierced everywhere with an amateur's eagerness and more besides! Due to a number of tricky ambushes, you find yourself facing a large variety of combat puzzle situations. For a first-time mapper, Icarus has a shockingly strong grasp on combat. Definitely worth your time.

TNT Intermission Screen - olicym

Vanilla. See No Rest for the Living and Doom II screens. It is a little amusing to see 21, 22, and 23 placed in hell despite the fact that's just what the base vanilla dictated with it's use of skies.

Home Invasion - CursedJade999

GZDoom. a lovingly-detailed myfirstmap, but one that almost feels like a joke due to the vast amount of monsters stuffed within. Seeing the hell knights in the kitchen was funny though. Do they think eating more will get them promoted one day? Ain't how it works chief. Elsewhere is dickish enemy placement and overwhelming odds, which outside Alien Vendetta (...) is undiluted misery. As a piece of art, it's quite amusing and shows potential when combat's been ironed out. As anything worth playing, not on your life!

Metastasis - elio.exe

Limit-removing. A mapper that everyone probably forgot about due to their rather small, humble efforts, (à la Clippy buddy *evil_scientist*) has shockingly returned! This time sporting a corrupted techbase aesthetic, walls and square rooms with crates can be found literally everywhere. On the flip side, this map easily features elio's best combat to date! There's nothing massively impressive, however, there's definitely a stronger dip into

Doom's extended roster. There's one bit with Archnotrons in a watery courtyard, a Spider Mastermind when you acquire the final key, Lost Souls harassing you at various points like something out of Hellbound and some uncomfortably tight ammo management, which is actually on par for most Elio maps. A strong return, and hopefullly, elio still has more to show us!

Bermuda Triangle

Vanilla. A combat puzzle map, though a somewhat simplistic and not quite well-honed one. Basically, you've got a collection of pyramids with zombiemen and around 4 different Arch-viles. Keep moving until you find a chaingun, then you can unload on the zombies to a degree, all while lowering the pillars around the exit. If you're observant, you can even snag a plasma rifle to use on the viles, although your ammo's quite limited to take all of them out.

Big Fucking Guts-gabirupee

Boom-compatible. Short but incredibly difficult map with some combat puzzle elements, although sadistic monster placement guarantees a certain amount of luck. It's a cool slime aesthetic. After some initial punching and getting precisely one pillar to hide behind, hitting a switch will open an area behind you with a Cyberdemon. You can run in and grab a BFG but you can probably imagine how that'll go before you're able to grab it.

Lunar Something or Another - Omniarch

Limit-removing. Omniarch has never really finished a project as such. Although said unfinished maps end up in something called the "Slag Heap" (of which the first edition got reviewed in a Newstuff guide around a year ago), this is probably his first complete map in possibly ever. Featuring a rocky background with some careful attention to detail, and a combination of nighttime sky/verticality a la Pavera, this is definitely one of the better maps to emerge from the Doomworld "Two/three weapon" challenge. Move quickly, an Arch-

vile will be revealed behind you when you press the first switch, but regardless, dodge around the Hell Knights/Revenants than try to dodge and provoke some infighting. You'll get a Super Shotgun here, but the rocket launcher will still be your primary weapon.

Three Weapons Challenge - Astro X

Vanilla. *Astro X* has arguably had a penchant for fairly lengthy maps if the release of such works as Tomb of Cheogh was any indication. Though that map was certainly fine, if tough to justify playing through any more than once or twice, this little puppy that came from one of the secret slots in Astroverse (31)s *easily* his best map of those I've played (as of this writing, that's not quite true anymore). **Wolfenstein** textures predominate for much of the map. While the opening series of

square rooms is quite bland, the dark blue brick is used much better. And there are lots of entertaining fights! There's one involving some Spectres in darkness and Imps on a nearby ledge that works out much better than you'd think. The best one would have to be in the one room with columns where you're attacked by two successive waves of Revenants, before you're forced to contend with two Arch-viles. Secrets aren't bad either, though I only found two of them.

Embers of Hell - Lost Mission 1- ARMCoder

For GZDoom. A darkened and not particularly aesthetic techbase map. Love how in your face this map gets early, though much of the challenge comes in trying to shoot enemies in the dark. If you like an intense ending with lots of Cyberdemons, you'll certainly like how it opens up and reveals many of them, with a BFG to take care of them and more ammo than you'll ever need. Cool secret too.

Gerd Cowman's Bloodmire Surgery - knifeworld.

Most limit-removing ports (not tested on Crispy though) So...this was a fun little speedmap thing-y. After fending off pairs both of Arachnotrons and chaingunners and some silly platforming, you're into the main fights! Two Spider Masterminds on either side, a Cyber on one of these sides whilst Imps and Revenants to a lesser degree constantly are teleporting in. After this, one could call the final room disappointing or they could call it a fun way to

blow off steam, since the potential for infighting the Cyber with the enemies nearby is quite obvious. There still isn't too much room to move around though, so it all works out.

The Crater - DoomerCheems

For GZDoom. Set of 3 maps with a story with writing that's surprisingly not terrible, unlike many of the early scripted ZDoom wads (Virgil the Doom Poet, I'm looking at you). Mostly stepping aside from the usual empty character building, this centers around a group of marines trapped in UAC facility that was probably built over an ancient Indian burial ground because EVERYTHING goes wrong here. The cutscenes do drag on at certain

Sphinx Lowering - Nefelibeta

Boom-compatible. Replaces Map 05 and you may recognize what this map's supposed to be a tribute to by the name. It still stands on its own as a distinct set of encounters. While personally, Three Weapons Challenge manages to leave a larger impact for a variety of reasons, this really isn't too far behind, though the homage will be obvious to anyone who has played Stardate 20X7 (not me). Mostly, there are series of some vaguely combat puzzl-y fights but *Nefelibeta* has a generally

more chaotic approach than *ribbiks* and it shows. Favorite fight would have to be the rocket launcher ambush where Revenants, Hell Knights, and Imps teleport into the corners while an Arch-vile lurks behind the Knights. I had to rewind several times here. The succeeding encounters weren't exactly a walk in the park either. The Arch-viles at the end might give you the most trouble, but you'll have long had a BFG by that point, but it might be the most RNG based fight here.

times, but they aren't too bad. Gameplay is also quite solid. You're supposed to enter a tower to unleash on the demonic invaders, but due to various complicated reasons, you have to teleport to an experimentation facility, do some stuff, then come back to a facility largely collapsed upon itself with lava everywhere. Most of the gimmicky stuff doesn't feel distracting at all, such as when you're traveling the caves to the final tower and flood a room with slime so that you can access the final tunnel to the end. The occasional amusing dialogue

(though they missed a chance to tell Hank "Whatever, nerd!") and strong use of environmental storytelling really add a lot. Is it worth more than a few playthroughs? Probably not, but if you don't totally hate ZDoom cutscenes, play this!

Starshine—EANB

Limit-removing. Another solid miniwad by EANB, this one takes place in a techbase set in something of a crumbling natural environment. All 3 maps are quite solid, clearly taking at least some cues from Back to Saturn X. While not massively difficult, there are some little bits of spiciness every now and then that feel like a highly refined version of what EANB is done in the past. Favorite bit would have to be the mild Archvile spam toward the end. Check it out!

Scorpion - MFG38

Boom-compatible. MFG38 is known to be something of an experimental mapper that tends to draw inspiration from Doom's more dangerous edges. This speed set of 17 maps synthesizes all that. Some maps are a little bland and don't really work too well (the various circle maps where you slaughter some fools), however Map 02 is a cool infuriating experience while Map 05 throws some fair bit of situations at you. There's nearly as many misses as hits though.

Remnant Texture Pack - StalkerBlade

For GZDoom. Egyptian-themed maps have always had a consistent audience, ever since they first made an appearance in Map 31 of TNT. Despite wads like Evil Egypt and Epic making some tasteful use of custom Egyptian textures in the past, you may have wished it's potential was showcased a little better. Wait no longer, we finally have a truly gorgeous set of Egyp-

tian-themed textures, aiming for a visual fidelity more akin to that of Serious Sam than a less-fuzzy vanilla Doom. There are over a hundred to choose from, along with large number of objects that'll also greatly complement whatever Egyptian adventure you want to craft!

Quinescence - RockyGaming4725

Boom-compatible. 165 enemies, but still quite difficult due to some of the more nasty and sadistic design choices. Kind of a nice burnt-out building. Better keep your six on though, Rocky will not hesitate to open up closets of chaingunners right next to you, not to mention aggressive

and cheerful use of Revenants. Like Rocky's other maps, you can provoke infighting among certain groups of monsters, but it doesn't seem quite as reliable as in some other ones. Recommended if you like this style though.

SEKHEMTI
SHAWN-2023

Sekhemti. The double crown worn by rulers in ancient Egypt.

In the lands of the low desert and across the valley of ancient kings, an oasis of slaughter opens to a new visitor. Sekhemti welcomes you to its battleground. A 6-level Boom-compatible WAD created by newcomer *Shawn*, set in the annals of ancient Egypt and its fantastical landscapes filled with tombs of god-kings and temples to the Sun. Just like the real ancient Egypt, Sekhemti feels like a proper epic across the sands of **Doom**.

Shawn creates a series of flowing and synergized maps that look absolutely stunning in sheer simplicity, making use of tuned colors by contrasting the monotone landscape with magnificent constructions of limestone. The beige colors make great combination with the sudden break of the cyan waters and green oasis. Dusty locales vibrant with life, telling that this place once was the home of great rulers and terrible tyrants. Using mostly boxy and pyramidal constructions, some of the maps might feel a bit too square at times, but with clever usage of pathing and progression, you

start to realize the cohesion that all this makes by creating a believable scenario that's brim with fantastical detailing. From the glyps on the walls, to the Greek pools accompanied by tall palm trees. It is a beautiful thing to behold. I guess it is the juxtaposition that makes it so enticing. This remote, lonely landscape of dust and sand, suddenly infected by some of the most thirst-inducing waters I've seen. You'll probably want a good glass of water next to you while playing.

From the well-realized architecture to the smooth texturing work that transitions perfectly as you progress, Sehkemti is a beauty to behold with all its Boom glory. One particular map makes some clever use of portals that will make you go '*Oh, clever*' once you get to it.

With a traditional gameplay style, Sekhemti is a very approachable adventure that balances itself around fast-paced action and short to medium sized maps. It would be a rare occurrence to get lost around these lonely temples of sand. It doesn't waste your time but doesn't hold your hand either. Each map gets progressively harder and starts throwing some more challenging challenges at you. The lava dungeon scene was an entertaining and hot one, cleverly designed to make you aware of your surrounding and pumping your senses with danger. You won't have to worry about this being too easy : steady difficulty and progressive encounters offer you just the right amount of combat you need.

Sekhemti thralls you into a world of kings and gods in the cradle of civilization. It is an engaging experience that shines thanks to its visual fidelity and thematic beauty. It is distinctive enough that if you find yourself tired of all the hells and techbases of Doom (impossible!) you will surely enjoy this new journey into ancient Egypt.

-ENDLESS
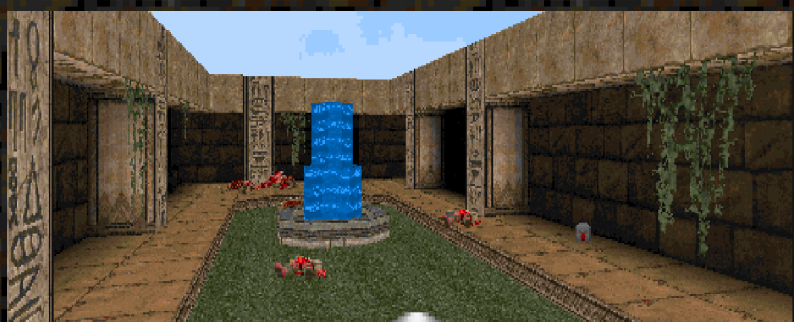
TERMINAL STAGES OF NOSTALGIA
AD_79 - 2023

A gigantic artwork that feels like dipping your toes in cool turquoise water.

Terminal Stages of Nostalgia is a single-level PWAD for Doom 2 that's set around a massive structure of beautiful magnitude complemented by a soft and lively color palette that's a joy to the eyes. What AD_79 created here is a beautiful showcase of color, design skills, and creativity.

Woah, where to start? You know a map is really good when you just stop playing for a few minutes and take a few breaths to process what you just experienced. This is the kind of maps that I struggle to review; it is easier to point out the flaws in anything (that goes for all crafts and hobbies), but it is far harder to praise what is, pretty much, an experience without any major or noticeable flaws. Sure, there is no such thing as perfection, for nothing can satisfy everyone, but there are a few pieces of brilliant work that manage to just graze that grace. Terminal Stages of Nostalgia feels like that. It feels like starting an adventure that you don't even know about. Exploring an ancient, old world where colors are the same, yet different. A total exposure of the senses let's start with just how beautiful this map is. It is quite big, gigantic all things considered. The design of the map is one that establishes its consistency from the get-go by using clever geometry that looks grandiose, but it is quite

simple and easy to digest. It is the way everything is carefully set and positioned that really starts to make the mix go boom. All that you are seeing is vanilla-compatible, as such, sectors, lighting, linedefs, height variations, etc., all must be considered to create something that looks good, and actually plays good in vanilla ports. It is a challenge, a massive one that I've tackled myself, and yet, *AD_79* makes it look as if it is nothing but a stroll through Ultimate Doom Builder. Of course, this map took sweat and effort to perfectly design around the box of limits that is vanilla, and it works so, so damn well.

It feels, at same time, like a collage of various pieces set together into motion. The map mostly consists of a series of disconnected areas that must be reached by portals, slowly joining them all together to form a single massive level. This opens the opportunity to have a lot of variation, both in visuals and even the gameplay style. The starter area is a lightless void floating across nothing, and then the map turns into an aqua-colored techbase that makes you thirsty with its cyan coloring, and then it becomes a vanilla-fest by using stock textures, slightly modified through PLAYPAL colors. It is amazing how such little details can enhance an experience to higher levels of quality. *AD_79* changes are subtle enough that they feel seamless, working in tandem with the vanilla textures to create an eerily odd landscape that's beautiful to look at. The geometry is, of course, much simpler and doesn't waste time on details, but instead, it focuses on the important areas and works its scale to make them feel much more fantastical and unique. The design feels proper, in the sense that there's nothing that's out of its own way, interrupting the flow of both the visuals and the game itself. It just works. How beautifully so, too.

Terminal Stages of Nostalgia comes packed with a set of challenges that are designed

around your skills. Slightly modifying the typical skill-level menu, you now have three main difficulties to choose from: No-Mo, Easy, and Normal. Normal is more or less UV in scale, but the challenge still feels dampened enough that it's manageable with just a few deaths here and there. Easy on the other hand feels more like HMP, with more than 200 enemies less and establishes an entertaining yet relaxing experience across a vast world. I didn't finish this in NoMo, but I can see the point of it as a walking-simulator where you can experience the simplicity of the map in your own pace, and your own time. It is an odd, but acceptable change that could serve a good purpose for those that enjoy some **Doom** tourism. But fret not, of course, because the map still packs a lot of combat for those that want to enjoy a bit of blood spilling without discrimination. Most of encounters are traditional and tightly designed around the area that you are found, and a few slaughter-ish surprises might catch you with your pants down, but they are more than doable and not luck dependent, which is something I highly appreciate in a map that boasts such size. As the saying goes: it's got a little bit for everyone.

Terminal Stages of Nostalgia is a great map that's absolutely beautiful, an excitement to the senses that employs clever usage of color, while also giving you more than a few pieces of meat to enjoy in glorious combat. It is fantastically fun and a great ex-

ample of what a great mapper AD_79 is. Maps like this are the ones that you remember, and even randomly think about every once in a while. It is, in simple words, a memorable experience.

CORRUPTION

NinjaDelphox. Et al.(2023)

The MBF 21 spec started development just over 2 years ago, and is slowly picking up steam with some mapsets developing for it over the last couple of years. I was looking around for a megawad that would show off some of the capabilities of MBF 21 and I believe CORRUPTION, now currently in RC 2 as of writing this review, shows off what the upgrade to the now venerable MBF setup is capable of.

To play CORRUPTION you need an MBF 21 compatible port, or the Zdoom family as there is a version of the WAD for Zdoom, I played in WOOF *but DSDA Doom and some others are also compatible* as more source port authors add the spec.

As a note about skill level I found this one harder then some others, and even a bit challenging on **IDWTD** as it seems the adjustments are based mostly around ammo and item counts versus monster counts so take that as a warning.

Visuals in this WAD are simply amazing, and the different episodes touch well on different themes that riff on more vanilla themes just such as hell and techbases to custom themes like caves we have seen in later wads.

The visuals are far from boring for each theme though, and every level is colorful and beautiful really showing off a diverse and I would even say an enjoyably insane palette.

Textures come from a variety of sources, and the maps have an almost **Eviternity-esque** presentation but without using OTEX, and while not all are true vanilla textures you get a vanilla like feel from them.

Map layouts are diverse as well offering different types of combat from cramped corridors to wider open slaughter-esque fights sometimes all in the same level so be prepared to deal with any given type of encounter.

An additional detail is that the maps definitely reward you for exploration as well and secrets can be tricky but not too hard at least for some of them and you will be rewarded well for seeking them out so if you see something juicy take a look around when safe to do so as you can likely find a cleverly hidden switch.

Prepare yourself to find some odd constructs such as cleverly sectored "ladders" which will facilitate you moving around the map, the texturing helps to give them away but can be missed at first.

Now other than having great visuals and layouts what does CORRUPTION bring to the table in terms of being MBF 21 compatibility? You will find old enemies customized, weapon behavior improved in some regards, and even new enemies to mess with you as well.

The tweaks and new enemies mix things up a bit and that is where more advanced modding features stand out as there can be even more fundamental changes to the usual assumptions we go by when playing Doom.
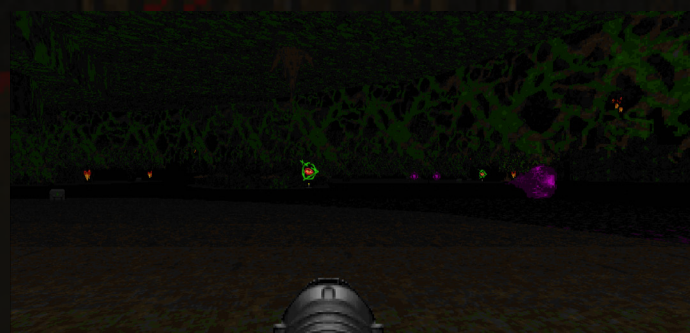
I won't go too deeply into the enemy changes in case you want to discover them yourself.

As mentioned earlier the difficulty is high but I am having trouble placing it as you get plenty of ammo on lower difficulties, but generally the monster counts and varieties are not changed much so if you are having trouble plowing through them you will have to repeat parts and skill up a bit especially with the newer quirks and monsters.

I anticipate CORRUPTION will be a hit among the community and especially loved for helping to push MBF21 format forward especially as it enters official release.

As time goes on I also anticipate more usage of the MBF21 format in general as mappers get more comfortable with it. The community should look forward to seeing MBF21 flourish and new tricks being discovered to map it's full potential. I know I am waiting eagerly.

- Eric Claus

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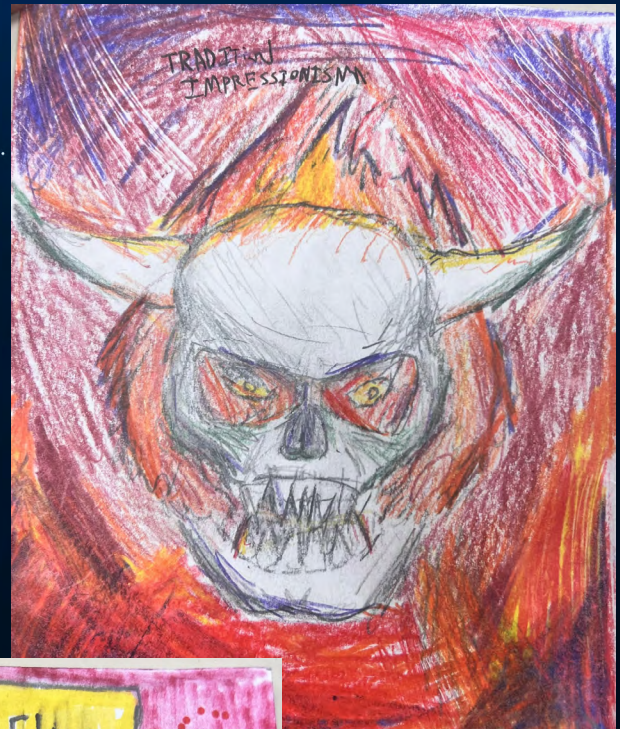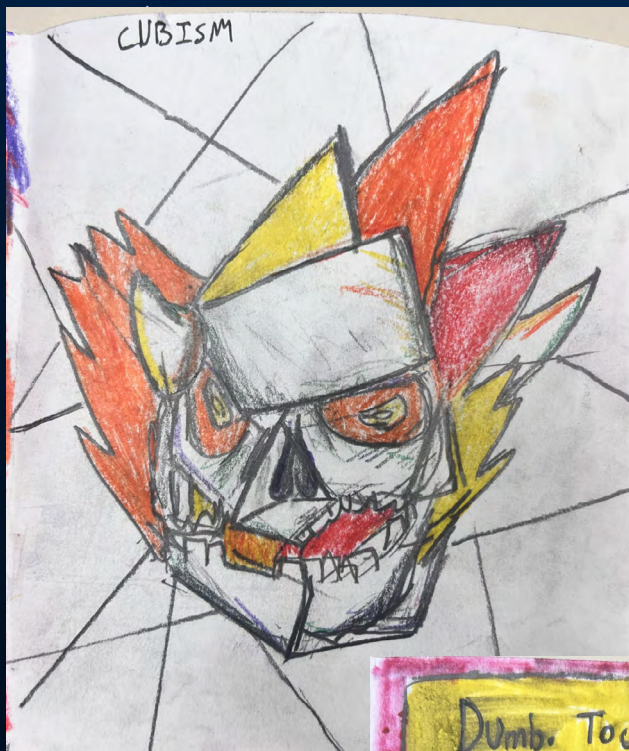
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