

Reviews Unreal Tournament



Is that *The Predator's* lawyers on the phone? Tell them I'm not in!

SHOOT-'EM-UP

Unreal Tournament 2003

System requirements

x86 processor (750MHZ)
128MB RAM (minimum)
3GB HD
Accelerated 3D card (Gforce 2+/ ATI 8500+)

The sport of the future is here, and it involves quite a lot of guns, apparently. **Nick Veitch** is press-ganged into trying it out.



3D first person shooter, with a few extra 'sporty' modes. Also consider Return to Castle Wolfenstein.

■ **DEVELOPERS** Epic/Atari

■ **PRICE** £24.99

■ **WEB** www.unrealtournament2003.com

One of the best features of *Unreal Tournament 2003* is the background story – it's so totally dispensable you don't need to give it a second thought. There is no great plan, underlying subtext or goal to work toward, you just have to shoot people, and occasionally pick up things.

There are five playing modes to the game. Deathmatch is a straightforward frag-fest. Pick up weapons, shields, health, and then stalk the arena gunning down your opponents when they least expect it. The familiar range of powerups and actions are available, including Crouch and Prone to improve your accuracy. Acrobatics are the order of the day, with unfeasible sideways leaps around corners being a sure way of confounding your enemies.

Team Deathmatch, naturally, involves working with a team against a team of opponents, but is otherwise much the same. Friendly fire is an option that can be turned on, and team strategy can be communicated with the handy voice menu, which also includes taunts to the opposition.

Capture The Flag requires a little more teamwork – you have to defend your own base while attempting to capture the opponent's flag. Most of these levels are symmetrical, so there is no particular advantage to either team (though it is a lot easier to get lost), but some are subtly different. Most of these levels include at least two main routes to the opposing base, one of which often requires a bit more skill and agility than the other.

In single-player mode, you can specify actions for your AI teammates (Offence, Defence, Support or Auto) which can significantly alter the outcome of the match, depending on your individual tactics.

Domination is a capture and hold game. This has been updated since

earlier versions of unreal and now requires the capture of two control points. The points must be held for about 10 seconds to score a point.

Finally, Bombing Run actually does have some element of sport in it. Teams compete to deliver the ball to the opposing goal. The twist here is that while you have the ball, you can't use your weapon (the fire button is used to pass or shoot the ball instead), and thus become a sitting duck. Well, perhaps more like a running around and jumping about duck. This last mode is the most different to the standard Deathmatch, in that it does really require co-ordinated teamwork and strategy. Strangely enough, you need to score goals to win, which means protecting the ball carrier and, er, distracting the opposition.

The weapons themselves haven't changed much from earlier versions, though the different rate of fire, blast



Firing many of the weapons will give away your position if you're hidden.

area and range combinations seem to have been adjusted.

More Big Guns

Typically, devastating weapons have a shorter range. The Rocket Launcher is fairly powerful, but rockets are often slow enough to dodge at a reasonable range. The Flak Cannon sprays out shrapnel (which even ricochets off the scenery) but is very limited range-wise.

The sniper's favourite weapon will be the Lightning Gun. Firing a bolt of electricity, it gives an instant hit with no possibility of dodging. The secondary mode activates a scope with infrared capabilities for seeking out figures lurking in the shadows. The most innovative weapon is the Link Gun. The standard weapon fires a pulse shot or a beam as a secondary mode; however, you can also use the beam on team-mates who also have a Link Gun. Instead of harming them, it

boosts their own weapon's power, for more devastating effect. Although it might require a little more organisation, this is a pretty effective strategy for defending static points, and any humming of the *Ghostbusters* theme while you attempt it just adds to the atmosphere.

Design

The graphics themselves and the design of the supplied levels is superb. Sure, there are rather undemanding "inside of a spaceship" maps which are basically metal walls with a few ducts and pipes thrown in for ornamentation. But the 'outside' maps are superb. It would be easy to suffer a few frags because you stopped to admire the view from the brow of a hill. The grass effect is particularly great, and not only looks good when you are dashing through it with an enemy flag, but also provides good cover. The audio is good



This is closer than you usually want to get to your opponents.

Stealth Release?

It does exactly what it says on the box... and a whole lot more!

Unreal Tournament 2003 is a bit of a landmark for Linux gaming. It installs directly 'out of the box'. You don't need any additional downloads as with *RTCW* for example. It is the first mainstream game to be released simultaneously for Windows and Linux, in the same box.

The interesting thing is that there is no mention of Linux on the packaging at all. All the system requirements are for the Windows version. The name 'Linux' doesn't appear in the user manual either. In fact, if you didn't know it was there, you might never find the Linux installer.

There is no mention at all of the Linux version on the official *UT2k3* website either, which is even stranger. It may be that the Linux version was included on the discs at the last minute, but surely the website could have included additional information. There is plenty of info on the demo version for Linux after all.

It seems likely that Epic perhaps didn't want to get into support issues by officially recognising the Linux version, but as they haven't replied to any of our attempts to contact them, so I guess we'll never know.

Graphics cards

It isn't true to say that only Nvidia cards work with *UT2k3*, although these will probably provide the best results. The game makes extensive use of the S3TC (Savage Texture Compression) routines which are only supported under the proprietary Nvidia drivers, not the one included with Xfree86 (they're on the

DVD this issue!). You'll also need to have a GeForce2 or better card to run the game on your box.

Alternatively, the new drivers for the ATI 8500/9000 cards also support S3TC with the new driver available from the ATI site. We have not been able to test how well these work at the moment.

too, but mostly you'll be hearing explosions and the screams of pain from (hopefully) your opponents.

There are maps to suit all types here. Some are more open, others provide more vantage points for snipers. Some are complicated and confusing, favouring those with good memories and the patience to find the quickest route between different points. A few maps are basically a multi-layered collection of open platforms that the player can jump between using the jump points. Aerial

acrobatics may be required to prevent drifting off into space on occasion.

Playability

Unlike many games of this type, there is a deal of playability in the single-player game too – there are plenty of challenging levels and the opponent AI is pretty good – perhaps a little too good on occasions.

The style of the game is a little more fast-paced, even in the Deathmatch modes, which normally lend themselves to camping. Good



Indoor arenas are generic, but you'll want to send postcards from outside.

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Zooming in with the Lightning Gun has an almost X-ray vision effect.



Deathball! looks more like a Sunday-league nightmare than a shooter.



Domination now requires the capture and control of two locations.



"D'oh! Why me?" The vain search for the hot-dog vendor continues...

level design ensures that a range of disciplines is required to truly master the game. You may be able to shoot straight and know where to hide, but that doesn't really help you on the more open levels where speed and

agility are at more of a premium, especially in the Bombing Run games.

As well as the usual integrated multiplayer options (and there are plenty of servers on blueyonder and jolt for UT2k3), there is an integrated

stats capability. Authorised servers transmit completed game stats to the main UT2k3 stats server, which gives a breakdown of your personal scores, as well as the players of the week/month.

Mods

The original *Unreal* game spawned many add-ons and modifications, and UT2k3 looks set to follow suit. There are already any number of new player models and skins to add to the game. Since these are simply generic texture files, they will work just as well on Linux as they will on the Windows version of the game. Since the majority of servers for multiplayer games inevitably seem to run on Linux these days, it's in the interests of everybody that engine modifications are made available for Linux too, so expect to see simultaneous updates..

At the moment a number of mods are already available, including *DeathBall!* – an amusing take on the 'Bombing Run' style of the game.

Conclusion

The fact that it installs pretty easily, it's identical to the Windows version and that it can be updated and modded too means that, to all intents and purposes, it's just as good as the Windows version. At last a great game for which there's no reason to dual boot. *Unreal Tournament 2003* is a great game, definitely the best in the genre for Linux, and set to spawn a whole host of modded fun. **LXF**

Installation

Run the script from the command line

There has been some discussion on websites and newsgroups about the Linux installer for UT2k3. The Linux installer script lives on the disc labelled 'Disc 3' and is a script file that launches the graphical installer (the Loki one),

Since there is no documentation at all for this in the manual, on the disc or on the UT2k3 website, it has caused some people a few problems. Firstly, you shouldn't 'cd' to the disc to run the script. Change to the root user and run the script from the command line using `sh /mnt/cdrom/linuxinstaller.sh` This is important, because the installer will need to swap discs during the install,

and on some distros you may not be able to eject the disk easily.

The second point of note is that the installer names the discs incorrectly. The disc the installer calls 'the Play disc' is the one labelled Disc 1. The disc the installer calls 'Disc 1' is the one labelled Disc 2. We'll leave it to your imagination what happens with the last disc.

The install takes quite a hefty 2.7GB of hard disk space, as it uncompresses and stores all the data locally on your drive. This is because the uncompressed files include the server version of the game, should you want to set up your own LAN or internet server.

VERDICT

Graphics	10/10
Playability	10/10
Features	9/10
Value for money	10/10

Disappointing lack of documentation for Linux install, could've been handled by a big disclaimer. Otherwise – Wow!

LINUX FORMAT RATING
 // // // // // // // // 10/10