

FPS Box Art Presentation Script

Hi! I'm Chase, and this is a presentation on first person shooter video game box art and how it has changed over time. They say to never judge a book by its cover, but they never said anything about video games, so let's get started.

Let's go all the way back. Well, not all the way. There were many prototypes that preceded the common notion of the first person shooter. Early games with line art that mimicked a first person perspective, however, these were very primitive. The *first first person shooter* that really gained prominence was DOOM from Id software, released in 1993. With never before seen 3d technology that computers had rarely achieved previous, the game was iconic as soon as it came out, and along with that, its box art. This picture was one of a kind and set the stage for FPS (first person shooter) box art going forward. Created by Don Punchatz, the image depicts the titular *Doomguy* fighting off a hoard of demons on a hill. It uses red as its primary color, showing off the demons and hellish landscape, while the *Doomguy* contrasts with his green armor. The primary color of the image goes from the red at the bottom and transitions to yellow in the skyline and bottom of the Title DOOM, where a grey circuitry looking texture takes over the top of the title. At the time of DOOM's release, it was one of a kind and set the stage for many more games to come. Gamers called these games 'Doom-clones' at the time as the term 'first-person-shooter' hadn't been created yet. Many of these 'clone' games did deserve the title, but others differed so much that they started to carve their own niche in the genre. Soon after DOOM's release, many copyers used a similar aesthetic in their box art, however this similarity would fade somewhat over time.

Moving on to one of DOOM's most successful, well, successors, we have Duke Nukem 3D. Parodying the brutality of doom and introducing a charismatic protagonist, Duke Nukem 3D uses the same aesthetic for its box art. It depicts The Duke, shooting guns in both hands at an unseen enemy beneath him. Focusing on the protagonist in contrast with DOOM, the box art mimics the game, and mimics the stance and appeal of the protagonist depicted in DOOM's box art, putting a nuclear explosion in the background, better suiting the game and title. It uses a very similar red and yellow color palette.

As time moved on and more games released, the first person shooter genre started to develop its own identity, only loosely related to DOOM. The next most popular shooter, with a much more toned down, tactical focus on gameplay and aesthetic, Halo by Bungie, released in 2001, still uses the big buff sci-fi hero of DOOM and the like, but the focus on the world of the game was increased. The box art echos this change in tone. It depicts the main character pointing a rifle towards the camera, with beautiful blues and greens in

the background depicting the sci-fi ring world, or Halo. As game developers started to be more comfortable tinkering with the first-person shooter genre, Bungie decided to take a rapid departure from the over-the-top gore and violence of doom, still focusing on combat, but more on the in-depth world they had crafted. This is much reflected in the cooler tones of the box art. Halo would mark a massive shift in the design of its descendents, and first person shooters would become much more toned back, following the design principles of halo going forward.

Shifting from its sci-fi, cartoony roots, the FPS would become much more realistic as graphics in computers got better over time. Call of Duty 2 from Infinity Ward depicted a more realistic, grounded view of combat. It was set in World War 2 and would again influence the design of games to come. Many of its elements were similar to Halo in design like the weapon system, but it didn't have any of the super-massive macho heroes of FPS past. To reflect this new gritty turn, the box art contains many more soldiers than previously seen in box art. DOOM had another marine in the background, though you'd be forgiven for not seeing it. Halo also has a marine in the background of its art. However, to put the focus on the massive scale of war, and the small role an individual soldier had, the box art of Call of Duty 2 depicts people dying, not before seen on FPS box art. It shows seemingly a scene from D-Day, setting the stage for the game.

A bit after the rise of Call of Duty and its massive success, other studios wanted to take advantage. Taking to a modern day combat scenario, but retaining the gritty, realistic aesthetic, The Battlefield games followed in the footsteps of Call of Duty's earlier move to modern day. It still retains many of the design influence from Halo, but this is carried over from its Call of Duty influence. Wanting to return to the old look of FPS box art, depicting a cool-looking main character, Battlefield 4's box art contains only a single, emphasized soldier with a blurry background filled with tanks and rain.

FPSs have had multiplayer since all the way back in the DOOM days, but the technology wasn't fully developed until the internet had become more prevalent. Many of the games in this set of examples had multiplayer components, but the focus was still arguably on singleplayer. Rainbow Six Siege was an indicator of this changing technology. A fully online-multiplayer game, it depicts a modern day tactical combat situation between teams. In this box art, it uses this fact, cutting the image in 2, with one team in black on the left side and another in white on the other side. It tries to use the same gritty, realistic aesthetic started by Call of Duty, yet framing it in a multiplayer context

As the years went on with gritty realistic shooter after gritty realistic shooter, gamers grew tired and wanted more action-packed games, possibly returning to the FPS days of DOOM and the like before halo. The Arena Shooter as it was often called started to cut out its own niche of subgenre around the 2010s. One big budget game that did this was Titanfall, specifically Titanfall 2. It also goes back to the style of the games it takes

influence from, showing the main character with his titan doing parkour, one feature of the game. It still contains a similar art style to modern shooters, but it is framed in the context of the game, showing off the parkour system and the titular titan.

Fully embracing this new age of Arena Shooters, and from a smaller team, ULTRAKILL takes all of influence from fast-paced action games like Devil May Cry, and Arena Shooters like DOOM or Quake. The url of the game's website is [devilmayquake](http://devilmayquake.com) after all. The box art depicts the main character v1 with his guns atop a mountain of skulls, eerily similar to the likes of DOOM and Duke Nukem. It even uses the red and yellow color palette, though it replaces *doomguy's* green with v1's blue.

Video game box art is an interesting art form, Sometimes it tries to convey the mechanics of a game, other times it uses another popular game as a proxy, invoking images of that game's box art in order to show gamers what the game might be like. Even further, FPS box art comes from a tradition of creation, influence, and rapid departure. One game makes something completely new, another similar game adapts that game's style, and a game after that is entirely different, and the box art is specifically made to look different than those previous games, then the cycle continues. The new Arena Shooters like ULTRAKILL seek to imitate and adapt a previous generation of game, showing that the chain of influence may never fully die.