

Nic Howe FPS CPR: Doom vs. DOOM

The reboot of the DOOM franchise released in May of 2016 is quite possibly my favorite FPS of all time. For that reason, I find it intriguing to go back to the original game after having played the new one and tracing the roots of the mechanics and design philosophy of the new DOOM and how it innovated on the design of the original. I believe that the new DOOM's design philosophy was to return the single player FPS experience back to that of the experience of the form in its nascent stages, back when every FPS was attempting to iterate off of its predecessor. At the same time, the new DOOM also iterates and expands upon the frustrating mechanics and technical limitations of its predecessor in order to make it a fully modern and unique experience instead of just rehashing the original.

The clearest example of modernization comes in the differences between the level design. Doom inherently had to be oriented on a single plane simply because the technology had not reached the point where full 3D worlds were possible. In fact, the original Doom is a 2D top down shooter masquerading as a 3D game. While verticality is faked in some points (the imp standing high on a ledge in e1m1 comes to mind) Doom is a strictly single planar experience. The new DOOM breaks that bound and becomes an intensely vertical experience. The introduction of the jump jets allows the player to use the air space in ways that were simply impossible in the original Doom—a game in which you cannot jump. Additionally, the level design frequently encourages the player to take a higher ground than his opponents in order to get a significant advantage. In fact, the very first real level (past the tutorial) starts with the player overlooking a group of enemies that you can take out exclusively by taking shots at them from a cliff. Then when you descend down and more enemies spawn, there are sets of raised

platforms that allow the player to maneuver around the enemies in ways that were impossible in the original game. Even further, the imps—the classic Doom enemy—maneuver around you by jumping around from cliff to cliff, hopping up poles and firing at you from above. Verticality is inherent to the new DOOM in a way that was impossible in the original. Even still, it's clear that the level designers wanted to evoke the same feelings of being lost in a maze that the original levels in Doom evoked in the player. The levels in both games are sprawling and large, requiring a good deal of exploration and use of a map in order to successfully navigate through them.

Additionally, the new DOOM uses graphical enhancements that came with time in order to far better convey how the enemies AI behaves. Imps looked hulking and brutish in the original Doom. In the new game, they are small and nimble, better conveying their role as the enemy that stays the backline and maneuvers around to hit you with projectiles. Enemies like the Mancubi which are hulking demon tanks look about the same size as you in the original, but in the new DOOM are hulking and enormous, far better conveying the role that they play in the combat of the series.