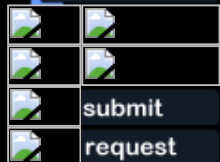




Review : The Armageddon Device



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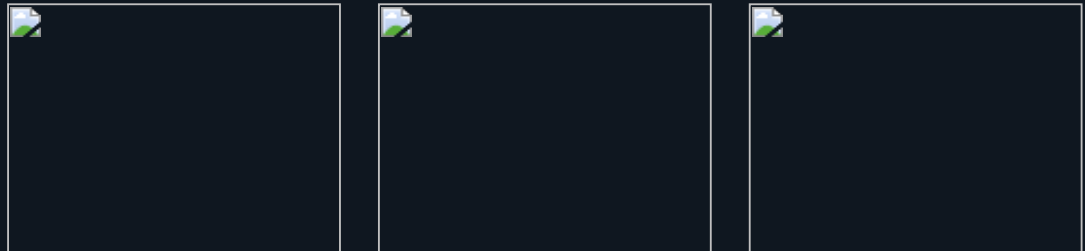
reviews



misc



Telefragged



Level name: The Armageddon Device

Author's name: Roseville Computers

Game: Quake II

File size: 13.0 Mb

Any new graphics? Yes

Number of levels: 8

Any new sound? Yes

Difficulty levels included? Yes

Any new models or code? Yes

Background story? [Yes](#)

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[Reviewed by: [Morgan](#)] - [Date: Tuesday, 12th October, 1999]

The Armageddon Device is the second partial conversion from Roseville Computers, the last one being *Window of Retaliation* which I reviewed for Arcadia. If you've played that previous release then you should probably have a very good idea of what to expect here because the two of them share a lot of common ground.

For a start, all of the new stuff in *WoR* has been carried over to this unit, although they have added some extra features too. In the way of new weapons, you'll find a slightly souped-up blaster, proximity grenades, the feedback laser and the plasma gun. The modified blaster is not terribly noticeable - I didn't use it very much at all - and any extra benefit is cancelled out by the increased levels of defences you'll meet. The proximity grenades are really more of a DM thing and, again, I found little use for them as I played. The last two weapons, however, were quite good. The feedback laser has been re-skinned since *WoR* and looks a lot better now. The actual workings remain the same and it's a reasonably powerful weapon. The final addition to your armoury is undoubtedly the most impressive. It was actually created by Loki's Missions - who made *Escape*, reviewed [here](#) - and the model looks fantastic. The firing effect is not quite so impressive, with a somewhat crude green plasma ball, but I still thought it was a decent effort.

As well as new armament, there's plenty of different Strogg to face in *TAD*. As with *WoR*, they generally consist of one of the more familiar Strogg along with a power screen and perhaps a new weapon or two. The Soldier Stormtrooper, the Flyer Hornet, the Laser Gladiator, the Death Tank and the modified boss tank all match this template. There are, however, some new and surprising enemies: humans. Using the Quake 2 DM models and packing quite a punch, these traitorous soldiers were a very good idea and well-executed too.

So, onto the levels themselves. Is this unit an improvement over its predecessor? Well, actually, not a lot has changed - just as with the weaponry and enemies, in fact. The look is very similar and it has to be said that the quality of the maps really hasn't moved on much from *WoR*. They retain the somewhat bland and repetitive texturing that was found in the first unit and the visuals aren't especially impressive. You still get the feeling that we're dealing with a new author - even though this is [at least] a second work - because most of the familiar traits are all there. The looks aren't helped by the lighting which is, in places, utterly ghastly.

Though the visuals aren't terrific, they're certainly passable, and the problem really lies in the gameplay. Roseville have moved along the unfortunate route of just making everything more powerful, which happens all too often with amateur partial/total conversions - just go look at all of the sub-standard ones produces for Duke Nukem 3D to see what I mean. This issue generally cropped up in one of two ways: either the enemy was no more deadly but simply took a lot more punishment before it died or its offensive capabilities were way over the top. The Laser Gladiator, for instance, falls into the first camp while the Death Tank belongs in the second. Some of the new Strogg were good - I liked the Soldier Stormtrooper and the Flyer Hornet, and the traitorous humans, at least the basic soldier ones, weren't bad either - but others were badly misjudged.

What really spoiled *TAD* for me, however, was the ending. The main problem with it was that it went on for three levels. Before it gets to this point, the difficulty and balance of the maps isn't too bad. Ammo was in slightly short supply at the beginning but otherwise it was going okay. The big guns seemed to be being gradually introduced and things were looking good. Then, all of a sudden, things just got ridiculous. Admittedly the original Quake 2 levels could have done with a greater challenge but this is really taking it just too far; it seemed that there was another big enemy, inevitably with a power screen, around every single corner and the relentless waves of Strogg was just frustrating after a while. It went on for so long that, despite the frantic action, I was very bored and came close to giving up on it. I was playing on hard and perhaps lower difficulty levels are slightly more sensible - judging from the demos included, the main author doesn't play on the higher settings - but I doubt it.

The way that this unit ended up was a bit of a shame. It wasn't going to be great but it was looking to be good fun, just as *WoR* was. It actually turned out to be a much less enjoyable experience and, unless you're something of a masochist, this is not really worth the download at all, especially not at 13Mb. As happens much too frequently, I think the biggest single cause of *TAD*'s difficulties was a lack of playtesting, at least by third parties. I didn't see any mention of it in the credits and playing through your own level simply isn't a good enough quality control. I simply can't recommend this as it stands. If you haven't played Roseville's last partial conversion yet then go give that a try but don't bother with this.

[Second opinion added by: [Jay](#)] - [Date: Thursday, 9th November, 2000]

Well, The Resident SPQ2 Fiend has had The Armageddon Device hidden away to be played for over a year, and is only now getting around to playing it. If it had not already been reviewed, it would definitely qualify as an Out of the Grave map. As it is, The Fiend got several hours out of it, and in fact several hours of enjoyment of a sort. Having finally finished it, The Fiend felt somewhat differently about it than Morgan did a year ago...

First of all, the weapons enhancement for the most part left me pretty cold. I never got around to using the proximity grenades, though I suppose I could have. My one experience with the feedback laser left me dead, so I decided I could live without that. I did use the plasma gun to take out a Flying Boss, but for the most part the Railgun and the Hyperblaster were quite adequate when the DBS and Blaster and Machine Gun weren't quite enough firepower.

I agree to a degree with what Morgan said about the new enemies. The Blaster was supposed to be twice as powerful, but the unprotected Grunts took the same number of hits as they do in other maps, and the other enemies were scaled up to match. The shielded Gladiator was ridiculously difficult to kill: I ran 250 bullets through the machine gun and it was still

coming at me (and took me down, too). The human traitors, male and female (even with different voices when getting hit) were incredibly fast and agile, and hard as the dickens to nail. (Hint: think Hyperblaster - a LOT.) On the other hand, they were all survivable, given enough patience to try and try again. I haven't died out this much since I played Mark Shan's hordes, but I did finally finish.

I would agree that the visuals won't make your eyes bug out in awe, but they aren't all that bad. The urban level was well-executed, I thought. Not pretty, but well-done. There were an adequate number of new constructs in the other levels to keep the scenery different, and I had no real complaints. Many of the levels had alternate paths through, making them more than adequately nonlinear. One thing I did not like, though, was the fact that the level transitions were strictly one-way. That's OK for the teleporters, but not for normal doors...

On the other hand, I rather liked the ending. It isn't gentle at all. The Boss Traitor (female) is hell on wheels, a pretty little thing with a pony tail... and a shield, and a plasma gun, and a BFG, and a chaingun, and a railgun, and a cloaking device... and a BAAAAAD attitude! This was one time where I used the Quad Damage with no guilt whatsoever, after getting waxed about half a dozen times, and it still took me another three or four tries before I got her.

When all is said and done, I quite agree with Morgan that external playtesting would probably have pointed out some of the imbalances (I did not even mention the extremely skimpy health). If you are looking for a fun and not too difficult time, or eye-popping visuals, Morgan is quite right that this is not the map for you. On the other hand, if you want a real challenge, one that is survivable on Medium Skill only with your best gameplay, you should at least consider whether you want to go through the very large download. If you get it, you may get frustrated, but I don't think you'll be bored...