



There's a reason these Strog gunships are called "Tormentors."



○ ○ ○ NOT SINCE *UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003* HAS A MULTIPLAYER GAME SHIPPED WITH AN A.I. THIS LIVELY, CONVINCING, AND EFFECTIVE.



● Rocket launcher vs. grenade? Who will win?



● Leading with a grenade is a great way to make a memorable entrance.

ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

The smartest shooter in the room is also one of the sexiest

PUBLISHER: Activision DEVELOPER: id/Splash Damage GENRE: First-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Teen MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2.8GHz CPU, 512MB RAM (768MB in Windows Vista), 5GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: 2-32 players VERSION REVIEWED: Retail Box

REVIEW



EDITORS' CHOICE
Games for Windows
THE OFFICIAL PROGRAM

It's possible this isn't the most meticulously built team-based shooter ever made, but that's not for lack of trying; *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* shows every sign of a talented developer mulling long and hard over how to make things work better, faster, and stronger. If

you listen closely, under the din of thundering howitzers, thudding grenades, snarling Stroggs, and a Goliath's whining servos, you can almost hear developer Splash Damage thinking.

The design mandates are clear: The action must never let up, it must always focus on a single location, a player must always have a choice of very specific tasks, teamwork must always overcome numbers, and the two sides must be distinct (how very timely that Splash Damage insists warfare is an asymmetrical affair). At first, this seems like a frenetic and splashy jump-in-and-have-fun sci-fi shooter. But *Quake Wars* is a calculated design, carefully crafted by people who have learned a lot in the decade between *Team Fortress* and *Team Fortress 2*.

Although you get "only" 12 maps, you'll discover an impressive amount of variety. Each map poses at least three objectives, each its own tactical puzzle. How do you protect a moving target? How do you defend three hallways? How do you get Covert Ops players into that little courtyard? How do you carry this briefcase into that fortified valley? And, of course, how do you do it with the teammates you have?

WHAT'S THE CORKSCREW FOR?

The tools to solve these tactical puzzles are the different classes, each a Swiss Army knife of sub-tools. Every class has a place at any given moment, and it changes with the objectives. Snipers must descend from the hills to hack a shield generator from time to time. Heavy gunners might have to put down the Hyperblaster and plant a plasma charge. Defenders will go on the offensive; wide-open battles will move indoors, with both the attacker and defender taking turns bitching that this map is unbalanced. The winds of *Quake Wars* are constantly changing direction—like with the weather in New England, if you don't like the current situation, just wait a little while.

Most servers run three-map campaigns, during which you'll unlock bonuses based on

how you play. This adds just the right amount of persistence, and it gives you incentive to stick with one class. If you just spent the last map unlocking that scoped assault rifle, you're not going to want to give it up by switching classes. Similarly, if you get enough kills with a vehicle, you'll want to keep using vehicles to take advantage of the unlockable damage bonus. *Quake Wars* encourages and rewards consistent roles over willy-nilly seat-of-your-pants running-and-gunning.

FIGHTING A ONE-MAN WAR

Although it's eminently accessible, it's equally deep. But Splash Damage doesn't just throw you into the deep end of the Internet; one of *Quake Wars'* unique selling points is that it works just fine as a single-player game. Not since *Unreal Tournament 2003* has a multiplayer game shipped with an A.I. this lively, convincing, and effective. The bots here know how to use all the toys, and they aren't just ruthlessly efficient. One of the best ways to wrap your head around the gameplay and learn the maps is to jump right in with a mess of easy bots. You might not even notice the lack of a tutorial.

Whatever Splash Damage and id did with the *Doom 3* engine ("megatextures" was a commonly used buzzword), it works: A gorgeous and muscular outdoor engine has busted out of mere space dungeons to paint deserts, canyons, and forests from a palette of *Quakely* brooding browns and oranges, with a hint of GDF olive drab, and even a splash of ocean blue on a couple of maps.

Quake Wars is dropping into the middle of a competitive genre—enemy territory, indeed. When it comes to teaming up and shooting other people online, plenty of good games come to mind. Even a middling game comes alive when you play with other people. But when a game is built as carefully as *Quake Wars*—for play online and offline, for new players and veterans, for quick thrills and long learning curves, for hyper action and careful tactics—this is as good as it gets.

• Tom Chick

VERDICT

■ Accessible, fast, and gorgeous; lots of tactical depth; excellent bots for offline single-player games.

■ Could have used a tutorial; 12 maps seem like too few.

9/10

EXCELLENT

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• *Quake Wars* is one of the brownest games since, well, *Quake*.

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