



•Duel mode is a series of 1-on-1 matches in close quarters.



•Pew pew pew!



•As their centerpiece, maps like Kargo and Containment have confined heavy firepower like this Goliath.



•The Warfare mode features orbs that quickly grab enemy nodes.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3

Otherwise known as *Unreal Tournament 2008*

PUBLISHER: Midway DEVELOPER: Epic Games GENRE: First-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Mature
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 8GB hard drive space, GeForce 6200 or Radeon 9600 videocard MULTIPLAYER: 2-32 players VERSION REVIEWED: Retail Box

REVIEW

After a long and fulfilling four years with *Unreal Tournament 2004*, it's a bit surprising that Epic's pulled a *Madden*, giving us a good game that's been tweaked instead of advanced. Perhaps if they'd continued the yearly naming convention instead of switching to ordinal numbers we would've been better prepared for the increment that is *Unreal Tournament 3*.

It doesn't feel very different. You're liable to stumble across doodads like gelatinous cubes and shield pods, but don't look for any new weapons. That the old guns hold up as well as they do underscores Epic's canny sense for balance and variety. But when you're in that shooter groove, fragging and being fragged, the basic sensation is no different than it's been for lo these four years. The visuals don't differ much, even with a thick layer of *Gears of War*-style postprocessing smeared between you and the game. The new looks include a fair bit of Oriental decor and even a giant redwood forest—but the levels are still an orgy of elaborate geometry, choked with details and trim.

MY TRIPOD CAN BEAT UP YOUR TRIPOD

The new Necris race gives Epic a great opportunity to break out of the Gothic-angst-meets-Rob-Liefeld schtick. Necris vehicles are tentacled and funky—part Borg, part *War of the Worlds*—with the towering Darkwalker standing out as one of the coolest things you'll see in a shooter this year. Yeah, sure, they're ripping off Steven Spielberg... but who isn't? Tripods are all the rage these days. The new Warfare mode is a great bit of remodeling, taking the old Onslaught game type and fusing with it scripting tricks from Assault and the ball from Bombing Run. We get plenty of familiar maps (including an ominous new Deck 17) and plenty of new maps, almost all sharp exercises in multiplayer level design. Say what you will about Epic: You can't deny they've cornered the market when it comes to mapmaking talent.

The campaign is a peripheral part of the *UT* experience, but Epic put some energy into it this time, marching you across a map and giving you bonus cards (which bequeath temporary perks ranging from extra bots to higher vehicle HP) to make tough missions easier. Playing missions cooperatively is a great way to power through to the end. It's a bit silly how the story tries to explain spawning and flag captures, only to gradually peter out when it comes to the Warfare mode.

NO ONE CAN ACCUSE EPIC OF A FOOLISH CONSISTENCY.

Speaking of silly: hoverboards? They're a great addition to the gameplay, letting players get where they need to go quickly and with a bit of risk. But the only thing more ridiculous would've been unicycles. Everything looks wicked awesome as a towering Darkwalker rises over the rooftops and uses its death ray to fry a Goliath, while a Scavenger scurries out of a dark alley and disintegrates some dudes. But then along come a couple of hoverboarding jokers, Marty McFly-style, skiing behind a dune buggy. No one can accuse Epic of a foolish consistency.

BIG MAN ON CAMPUS '04

The biggest problem with *UT3* is that it's still so...2004. Back then, before *Quake Wars* or *Team Fortress 2*, this was the go-to series for fast action, wild weapons, clever vehicles, online teamwork, and videocard-straining visuals. *Unreal Tournament* stood alone and triumphant, with *Quake* under its boot, *Counter-Strike* practically in a whole other genre, *Joint Operations* a dirty little secret, and *Battlefield* socked in by fog. But slick and stylish speed shooters aren't so scarce anymore. These days, *UT* feels relatively superficial, even when it tries new gimmicks like the mobile artillery from the bonus pack or the Necris Nightshade's deployable items. These are too little, too late, and too me-too.

The online support disappoints, with very little in the way of achievements or persistent stats. The friends list isn't very friendly, and the server browser might as well scream for you to get off its lawn. Setting up LAN games or bot skirmishes is frustrating, limited, and counterintuitive. Decking out your avatar with unlockable bits of clothing is so very EA. It's still a good game—lovely, and a little tired. But these days, even a favorite old dog like *UT* needs to learn more than a few new tricks. •Tom Chick

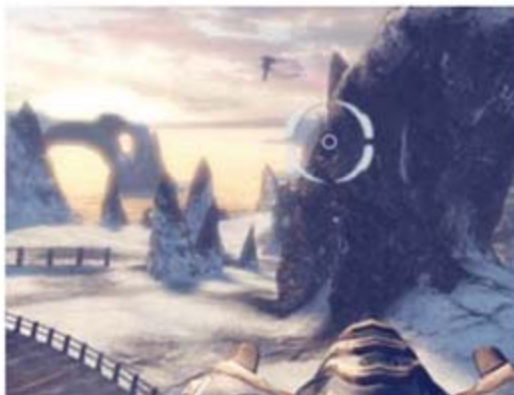
VERDICT

- Good visuals; great map design; Darkwalkers!
- Feels very 2004.

6/10

AVERAGE

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• Weather's lovely on Dusk, one of the new maps—wish you were here!

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