Quake III Fortress

Game Review

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Basic Information

Quake III Fortress is a remake of the original Team Fortress modification MOD for Quake. At one point, Team Fortress was the most played online first person shooter. Due to it's popularity, there was a high demand to reproduce the game on a more updated 3D engine such as Quake III Arena. Quake III Arena is a 3D action game, better known as a first person shooter (FPS). Quake and Quake III Arena were developed by id Software & distributed by Activision.

The game Quake III Fortress, or Q3F as it's known to the players, was created by a group of gamers who call themselves the Q3F Development Team. There is no official corporation entity sponsoring the game's development & no actual money involved. They created the game for gamers, like themselves, to fill a void.

When Quake III Arena was released in 1999, it retailed for $49.99. Three years later, you *might* be able to find it on store shelves, but it's highly unlikely. id Software did release some expansion packs & other enhancements to the game such as Quake III Team Arena. Today, you can purchase Quake III Gold for $24.99 which includes the original Quake III Arena game, as well as the expansion packs.

Hardware Requirements

The minimum hardware required for Quake III Arena includes a 233 MHz processor with 25 MB of hard disk space and 64 MB of RAM. You'll need a DirectX 3.0 or higher sound card as well as a 3D hardware accelerator (graphics card) with full OpenGL support. To play online, you'll need some type of Internet connection. This could be dialup (in which case you'll need at least a 28.8 Kbps modem), or some type of Ethernet connection.

Quake III Fortress isn't available in stores. The only way to obtain the game is to download it from the Internet. The 140 MB download is available free from www.q3f.com or other mirror sites. To install Q3F, you'll need at least an additional 375 MB for a total of 400 MB of hard disk space.

The actual hardware requirements depend on a few things. If you only have a 233 MHz processor and a low-end graphics card, you'll be able to play the game, but not at the high resolutions you see on the Q3F website (www.q3f.com). I recommend at least a 500 MHz processor with a 32MB or higher graphics card and at least 128 MB of RAM.

Because this game is multiplayer only, you're going to want the fastest connection possible, or at least as fast as your opponents'. If you're on a 28.8 Kbps dial-up Internet connection and your opponent is on a T3 like at a college campus, they will have a distinct advantage over you. To even the playing field, I recommend getting the best hardware possible. It does make a difference in game-play.

Game Summary

Q3F is a team-oriented online game. There are several objectives built in such as capture the flag, command point, capture and hold, and assault & assassination. Since capture the flag is really the only game ever really played, I focused my review on that aspect. Q3F supports up to 32 players simultaneously on the same map with up to six different teams. There is no set objective in the game. It comes with 34 unique maps, each with their own objective. Server admins can determine the time limit for each game, or they could have no time limit. There could also be a score limit. i.e. the first team to capture the flag 10 times wins.

A typical game involves 16 players, 9 on each team. Each team squares off against each other for two, 30-minute rounds. One round is usually played on your server, while the other is played on your opponent's server. Each capture of the flag will gain 1 point for your team. Whoever gets the most points after two rounds wins the match.

Installation & Setup

Installing Q3F is a breeze. Simply use the Windows installation wizard to install it. It includes the typical "Next >, Next >, Next >" screens which allow you to change a few options such as installation directory. Q3F can be installed on Mac & Linux. Those installations are a little bit more complicated. Help is available online.

Once the game is installed, the user can use a simple GUI to change graphics settings, sound settings, and user settings such as controls & mouse speed.

Player's Role

The game itself promotes online leagues due to it's multi-player only team-based focus. A league is composed of different teams called clans. Much like the National Football League has teams with statistics, rankings and such, online gaming leagues have the same. Each league has their own set of rules & standards to follow such as long each round should be.

The game has 9 different classes to choose from, each with unique skills & different attributes. The nine classes are Recon, Soldier, Sniper, Agent, Grenadier, Engineer, Paramedic, Minigunner, and Flamethrower. Here's a quick chart showing some of the attributes of the different classes.

	Health	Armor	Speed	Weapons	Grenades
Recon	75	50	440	Axe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Nail-Gun	Stun, Flash-Bangs
Soldier	100	200	240	Axe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Double Barrel Shotgun, Rocket Launcher	Hand, Nail
Sniper	90	50	280	Axe, Nail-Gun, Sniper Rifle, Assault Rifle	Hand, Flash-Bangs
Agent	90	100	300	Combat Knife, Nail-Gun, Double Barrel Shotgun, Dart Gun	Hand, Gas
Grenadier	90	120	280	Axe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Grenade Launcher, Pipe-Bomb Launcher	Hand, Cluster Bombs
Engineer	90	100	300	Wrench, Double Barrel Shotgun, Rail-Gun	Hand, Pulse
Paramedic	90	100	320	Syringe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Double Barrel Shotgun, Super Nail-Gun	Hand, Stun
Minigunner	100	300	200	Axe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Double Barrel Shotgun, Minigun	Hand, Cluster Bombs
Flamethrower	100	150	300	Axe, Single Barrel Shotgun, Flamethrower, Napalm Launcher	Hand, Napalm

The individual player's role depends on what you and your clan have decided. As a player, you'd usually specialize in a particular class or two. Your clan must come up with different strategies based on the map & what skills you have as a player. An example defense for a map called

2forts would be 1 engineer, 1 grenadier, 2 soldiers, and a sniper. The offense could be 2 soldiers, 1 paramedic, and 1 recon.

Gameplay

Gameplay for the individual player depends on what position he chooses to play. If you were to play the engineer in that particular setup, you might start off by building a sentry gun in the flag-room to protect the flag, then build an ammo dispenser on the way out from your base so the offense can re-fill on their way out. During the game, your sub-objective would be to protect the sentry gun, keep it supplied with ammo, and repair other defensive players' armor. If you were to be the grenadier in this example defensive setup, you might want to throw some pipe bombs around the flag, then hide in a corner. As you see an enemy soldier head for the flag, you could detonate your pipe-bombs, killing the enemy and saving your flag from being taken.

Every aspect of the game changes depending on what map you're playing, what objectives are set on the map and by the different leagues, who you're playing against, and what strategies your team (and your opponents) has decided on.

Look and Feel

The game itself resembles almost any other first person shooter. It has the typical "heads up display" (HUD) displaying your health, armor, how much ammo you have left, and what weapon you're carrying. The HUD for Q3F is completely customizable. If you want to move the items around or even remove them, you are free to do so.

Since all the graphics are rendered in real-time using the Quake III Arena engine, the graphics are as nice as your graphics card is. If you have a high-powered NVidia Ge-Force 4, or ATI 9700, you'll be impressed with stunning 3D effects. If you have a low-end 3D card, you'll be faced with lower detail & lower resolution graphics. The artwork in the game are determined by map-makers. Some maps are very plain and offer no wow-factor, while others are quite stunning.

The sound effects are very appropriate for the game. The typical grunting, explosions, & gun effects are there, plus some other things. If you're quiet enough, you can hear footsteps as someone walks down a hallway. As they approach, the footsteps get louder! The Quake III Arena engine does support 3D sound. With this enabled, if someone is behind you, you will actually hear them behind you! The game doesn't come with any music built-in.

Help & Support?

Because the game is developed for the hard-core gamer by hard core gamers, no manual was ever published. Several websites have been created which offer minimal information on the different classes, maps and such. If you're having a problem, the only thing to do is consult friends & other people who play the game.

Game Review

This game is geared towards the dedicated hard-core gamer, typically males aged 18 – 30. The game itself simply provides a framework for online play. Think of Q3F as a football field. A football field isn't very fun to "play in" unless you have a bunch of other players to play against. Without other players, the game itself is unplayable. Similarly, without players & clans to play against, Q3F is useless.

There is a huge group of players world-wide, called the "Q3F Community" who support & play this game. This is both the advantage of Q3F as well as a disadvantage at the same time. The community involves Internet Relayed Chat (IRC), LAN parties, leagues & tournaments, dedicated websites with news, rankings, statistics & predictions, dedicated servers, clan recruiting, and much more.

If you're lucky enough to be recruited by a clan, the game is very rewarding! Each time you play, it's against a new opponent with different strategies. Every game is different. You never know what to expect. When you beat an opponent, it's the same feeling one gets when they win a basketball game, or their favorite team wins the national championship.

Unfortunately, it's very difficult to even start playing Q3F. You must first have a team of at least 9 players. (Most clans have 20 – 30 players.) You all have to be available to play when the league schedules your game. Your clan must decide on what strategies to use, and then practice those strategies. This takes a lot of time and dedication. Then, you have to wait for the scheduled game-time before you can play a match.

There are several other games like Q3F that promote online play. Q3F is different because it focuses on team-work, not just individual skill. A team with less skill can beat another team by executing a better strategy. In many other online team-based games, individual skill almost always determines the outcome of a game.

Summary

One key factor to Q3F that could be improved is it's team-only focus. There should be an easy way for any individual to join a server, and start playing whenever he or she feels. There should be an interface which sets up a real match-like environment, similar to clan matches in leagues with random people on a public server.

Overall, Q3F is a great game for the hard-core gamers. If you're not looking to dedicating a few hours per week to one particular game, then Q3F is not for you. Q3F's strength of providing a team-based online framework is also it's weakness. New gamers will find it very difficult to start playing Q3F. If you're into first person shooters, and are looking for a more in-depth team oriented game to play with your friends, I totally recommend downloading Q3F. It's free price-tag means everyone should try it at least once.