

You can now play an ultra-rare Quake arcade cabinet at home

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Video of *Quake Arcade Tournament Edition*, featuring the “Instaprize!” backpacks.

Since its 1996 PC release, id’s seminal shooter *Quake* has been ported to everything from flip phones and smartphones to game consoles and Web browsers. But even many serious fans of the series don’t know about *Quake Arcade Tournament Edition* (*Quake ATE*), an officially licensed version of the game that ran on custom arcade cabinets.

Even among those who know about it, few ever got a chance to play it during the brief time it was in arcades, and hardware-based DRM built into the cabinet meant the game wasn’t playable on home emulators. That state of affairs now seems set to change thanks to the recent release of a Windows executable that can decrypt the data dumped from those aging arcade hard drives for play on a modern home computer.

From PC to arcade

First released in May 1998, *Quake ATE* featured a custom Quicksilver PC made by a little-known company called

Quantum3D. That hardware—running Windows 95 on a blazing-fast 266 MHz Pentium II with 32MB of RAM—was squeezed into an arcade cabinet with a 27" or 33" CRT monitor, seven control buttons, and a trackball, all hooked up to the PC through a special connector called the Quantum3D Game Control Interface. Slap on a few AVI videos for the attract mode (which warns players of the coming "ANIMATED VIOLENCE STRONG") and some software to detect coin drops, and suddenly your PC shooter is an arcade game.

As shown in the above video, the single-player version of *ATE* plays almost identically to the well-known PC release. The main difference is that enemies occasionally drop backpacks that earn players in-game "coins," (and an announced crying "Instaprize!" when you pick them up). Those coins can, in turn, can cause the game to spout out prize-redemption tickets through an optional printer.

The game also featured what porting company LBE Systems said was "the world's first multi-player arcade game network, SparkyNET OS." That system let multiple cabinets in a single location be hooked up in a LAN for deathmatch play, including *Quake II*'s famous "The Edge" map for good measure.

A preserved rarity

In a statement when the game launched, id Software CEO Todd Hollenshead said *Quake ATE* "gives a large number of *Quake* players an opportunity to experience the excitement and thrill of playing multiplayer *Quake* in the arcades. But that "large number" part turned out to be a stretch, since not many late-'90s arcade owners were willing to shell out for a cabinet based around a high-end PC just to offer *Quake* to their patrons.

[embedded content]

Quake ATE's Attract Mode.

While cabinetmaker Lazer-Tron produced a limited run of

specially designed cabinets for the game, *Quake ATE* was more often seen as a conversion kit jammed inside some much jankier-looking setups. Even those conversions weren't common, though; the International Arcade Museum ranks the game as one of the rarest in members' collections, with only six extant copies to be found among the nearly 150,000 cabinets tracked from nearly 9,000 collectors.

While the 225MB of game data found on those Quantum3D hard drives had been dumped long ago, the game itself remained unplayable without a special decryption dongle that was included with the actual arcade hardware. Last month, though, Github user mills5 has fixed that with a decryption program that ensures this historical curiosity will be preserved and playable even without a preserved cabinet.

Not that *Quake ATE* has finally been freed from its arcade-cabinet prison, we have to wonder what other never-emulated classics may soon be playable at home.

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