

Saitek's Illuminated PC Gamers' Keyboard

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I'm Seeing Blue

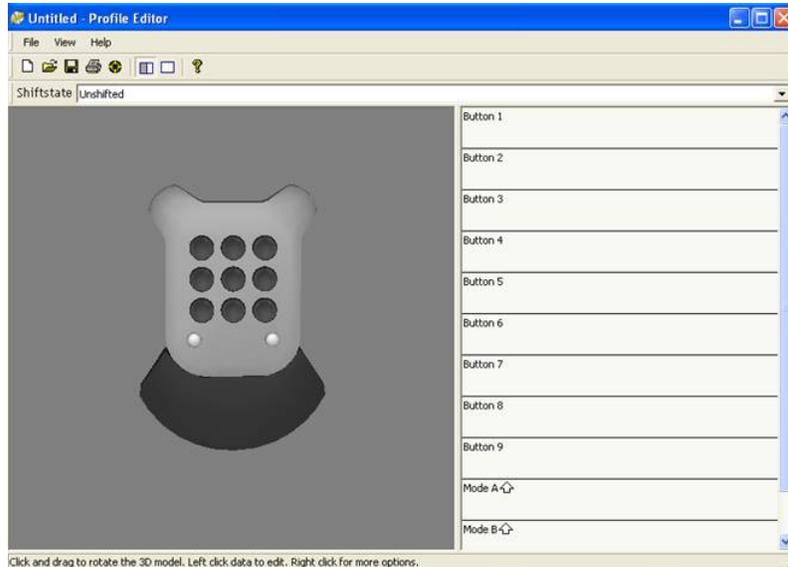
If you've been following PC keyboard innovations with respect to having your keyboard serve double duty as a nightlight, I may have just the keyboard for you. Get ready to start gaming in the dark because the Saitek Illuminated PC Gamers' Keyboard (with Programmable Command Pad) has just arrived! Sure, there been a few doozey's lately—let's just say some ideas and implementations for lighting a keyboard have been better than others. However, when Saitek displayed their entry into the fold at E3 this year with an ice cold illuminated blue background keyboard, adorned with a stunning silver/black finish, I knew this would be my keyboard for Doom 3 at 2 am. Keep in mind the individual keys don't actually light up, but the backlighting of blue is so bright you can still discern the keys. Solid professional grade construction is evident top to bottom including each one of the 104 keys. Did I mention this USB keyboard was designed specifically for gamers by gamers at Saitek's R&D labs?



Stop Your Whining and Start Your Pining

Let's start with the obvious first. It's not wireless but that really doesn't present an issue from a functionality or performance standpoint. Yes it's sexy to cut the cords, but consider power consumption requirements and possible interference from the illumination—and I think you can forgive the cord. I like the option Saitek included to have the lights off, low, or high by toggling the light button on the far right. Oversized rubber pads at the bottom corners absorb your impact and prevent the keyboard from sliding around. The Command Pad's matching blue back-lighting and ambidextrous design allow for placement on the right or left of the keyboard. Programming is accomplished with Saitek's Smart Technology (SST) proprietary software. SST is way cool, easy to use, can be set-up with specific "Game Profiles" from the Saitek's Install

CD (18 Game Profiles on CD with more to come at the Saitek website), or personalize your own. Profiles, for the uninitiated, simply allow you to pre-assign a set of commands and map them to specific keys. You can also trick out your keyboard with the Profile Editor to you heart's content. Interestingly enough, the Programmable Command Pad connects to the keyboard through an RJ-45 connector.



Profile Editor for Command Pad



Touchy Feely

Saitek's Illuminated PC Gamers' Programmable Keyboard is a very sophisticated product. All keys have a sweetly refined tactile response and feel. I pounded out deliberate quick sequence combos and didn't find any inaccuracies (this really is a great keyboard for Doom 3 in the wee hours of the morning). It's much quieter than even the Logitech Cordless MX keyboard I'm comparing it to. Saitek's keys have a sturdy secure feel when depressed, but I realize this is subjective and you may have a different preference. Overall, this is a definitely a product worthy of recommendation and represents a terrific value for an MSRP of \$59.99 (and sheds some light on a great idea). Keep in mind Saitek's legacy and reputation for building quality joysticks and PC gamepads which no doubt contributed in making this...brilliant keyboard. The Saitek Illuminated PC Gamers' Programmable Keyboard comes complete with Keyboard, Programmable Command Pad, wrist rests, CD (including SST software, manual, drivers and installation guide), and is covered by a 2 year warranty. To find out more information about Saitek's quality PC Gaming Peripherals, or this awesome blue nightlight—I mean keyboard, be sure to visit www.saitek.com.

Highs: Adjustable blue backlight (high, low, off). Looks great! Saitek superior build quality, Programmable Command Pad, SST Software.

Lows: It would be nice to have a few multimedia hot keys on main keyboard.

Verdict: In this reviewer's opinion, this is easily the best implementation of a lighted keyboard to date. It was designed from the ground up for gamers...by gamers and it shows.

Rating: 90%