

Save the world from alien invaders in Quake 2, star in Blade Runner – The Game, join in the struggle for civilisation, and browse through the Encyclopaedia Britannica

Home & Entertainment



Interplay is set to release *Earth 2140*, a futuristic strategy game set in a war between two great world powers – The United Civilised States and the android-based Eurasian dynasty. Already a smash hit with our German



Continued opposite...

QUAKE 2

Every so often a game comes along that's so original and well designed it completely redefines its genre. Last month, *Tomb Raider II* set a new standard in arcade adventures, and now it looks as if there's hope for 3D shoot-em-ups. *Quake 2* is the latest from Id software, creators of the legendary *Doom*, and it's going to be the one to beat for a long time to come.

Originality doesn't extend to the plot, however, and as usual the aim is to save the world from alien invaders. This time it's the Strogg, a race of cyborgs with a taste for human flesh, and it's up to you to give them a permanent case of indigestion.

The game is set on the Strogg homeworld and is split into eight areas, each with a series of sub-levels and objectives to be completed. Having crash-landed on the planet near a military base, your first mission is to infiltrate it and establish contact with the rest of your fleet.

Aliens aiming to make your game a short one range from simple foot soldiers through to mutants, berserkers, enforcers, tank commanders and even the occasional gladiator. Each alien you encounter is more cunning than the last, and it's here that Id's programmers start to show their colours.

Impressive artificial intelligence has your Strogg opponents following you around corners, opening doors, and ducking out of the way when least expected.

Fans of the original *Quake* will be pleased to hear that many of the weapons they know and love are back, bigger and better than ever. The shotgun is in there, albeit slightly different, along with

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the chain gun, grenade and rocket launchers, and the all important BFG. As before, weapons are hidden throughout the levels along with appropriate ammunition, and the further you progress the meatier they become.

Quake 2's later levels have you destroying gun emplacements and disabling interplanetary gateways before taking on the Strogg commander himself. Only by defeating him will the galaxy finally be purged of human hamburgers.

Graphically, Quake 2 is miles ahead of its predecessor, with built-in support for the major 3D graphics cards. Unlike some games, Quake 2 can run smoothly without 3D acceler-

ation, but it's almost worth buying one just for the difference it makes to this title. Sound is great too. And network players will also be pleased to hear that Quake's multi-player 'deathmatch' option is intact.

Quake 2 surpasses the original and sets the new standard in 3D shoot-em-ups. Chris Cain

Quake 2
Overall ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: Pentium 90MHz, Windows 95, 16Mb of RAM, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card, 4x CD-ROM drive, 25Mb of hard disk space.



Continued...

cousins, the game allows players to command armies and conquer territories in over 70 exhilarating missions in a bid to control the globe.

Interplay: 01628 423666

Flight simulation fans itching for a new challenge should take a look at the latest release from Ocean Software. **F22 Air Dominance**

Fighter lets you take to the skies as the pilot of an F22 Raptor jet fighter in a number of exciting scenarios.

The game boasts no fewer than 60 aircraft, training missions, quick-thrill scenarios, mission debriefings and camera angles that apparently 'make Top Gun look dull'. It runs on Windows 95 and makes full use of Microsoft's new DirectX and major 3D technologies.

Also due from Ocean is **Holiday Island**, a strategy affair that lets players create the holiday resorts of their dreams. Build hotels, casinos, swimming pools, parks and other tourist attractions in an attempt to be the best in the business.

Ocean: 0161 827 8038

Billed as 'the thinking man's Descent', **Defiance** is the first game from US-based newcomers Visceral Productions. A fast-action 3D shoot-em-up, it offers 13 levels of mayhem, 18 horrific creatures to fight and some fiendish puzzles to solve while you're doing it.

Defiance runs under Windows 95, and supports the latest 3D accelerator cards including 3Dfx-based cards and the Rendition Verite. It requires a P90 or higher with 16Mb of RAM, and 30Mb of hard disk space.

Avalon Hill: 001 410 254 9200

AGE RATINGS

Age ratings: We have assigned viewing suitability ratings for each game.

U = Universal;

PG = Parental Guidance;

15 = suitable for viewing by 15-year-olds and above;

18 = suitable for viewing by 18-year-olds and above.



BLADE RUNNER

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Back in 1982 when Ridley Scott was still a film director of flair and originality, he released his oblique masterpiece *Blade Runner* to appalling reviews and total indifference. As with all cult successes though, the reputation of the film has only grown with the years, so much so that *Blade Runner - The Game* is felt to be a going commercial concern 15 years on.

In a wise move by Westwood's game designers, you don't play the laconic Deckard from the film. Instead, you are one of his contemporaries, rookie 'Runner' Ray McCoy, and you must solve a series of cases in order to progress through the game. The sprawling,

chaotic world of downtown LA opens up as you follow leads and suspects, flying in your patrol car between the LAPD precinct, your apartment, and the replicant lowlife. In an interesting twist, every so often the paths of McCoy and Deckard cross, and you find



yourself talking to the same characters, in the same locations that any devotee of the film will recognise.

Full installation means kissing goodbye to 1.5Gb of your hard drive, although you can fit on the bare essentials for a 'mere'

170Mb. The game is delivered on four CDs, and is a vast software experience with groundbreaking graphics, fabulous ambient sound and speech, the original Vangelis soundtrack, and over 70 motion-captured characters to question, some of whom are reprising their roles from the film.

Blade Runner's gameplay is eerily similar to that of the film; nothing seems to happen for long periods, but then 'nothing' has ever happened with greater aplomb; the ambience, visuals, and music are bewitchingly faithful to the film, and the numerous alternate routes the 'plot' can take are fascinating. After 10 minutes of pounding the beat with no apparent leads, suddenly the plot opens up and dazzles all over again with another handful of dazzling 'environments' to explore.

It is difficult to overstate how gorgeous this game looks, and how easily it plays. Frustration is guaranteed, but if you have a suitably robust computer and a couple of days to spare, then this is a great game to get into.

Fantastic presentation and in-depth gameplay make this ideal for both traditional adventurers and *Blade Runner* fans.

Ken Young

● £44.99 (inc VAT)

● Virgin Interactive: 0171 3682255
www.westwood.com

Blade Runner

Overall ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: P90 (P133 recommended), 16Mb of RAM, 2Mb DirectX 5.0-compatible graphics card, 4x CD-ROM, DirectX 5.0-compatible mouse and driver.



AGE OF EMPIRES



Ecco est Laura. Laura est puella romana. As we brushed up furiously on our less than commanding knowledge of Latin, we realised that Microsoft's latest offering Age of Empires was nothing to do with the Roman Empire at all.

In fact, Age of Empires, the latest in the Microsoft stable of God Sim strategies, pits various other early civilisations against each other, starting off in the Stone Age. Up to eight different races can simultaneously evolve, out of a choice of 12, and can be controlled either via 'multiplayer forum' or with the opponents played by the computer.

The scramble for civilisation as we know it starts with a basic village, accompanied by a few hirsute-looking but ultimately helpful villagers. Each villager can be used to perform a multitude of tasks, from the politically incorrect tree-felling and hunting, to building anything from barracks and stores to docks and trading boats. These are obviously important tasks, as your supplies of raw materials are limited, and you cannot advance without wood and food.

As your population increases and you start trading, your riches increase. Presuming you have not been duffed up by the pesky Phoenicians by this point, you will soon be able to construct stone buildings, and consequently advance on into the next age.

Age of Empires offers real-time action, which adds greatly to the playability. This basically means that while it is still a strategy game, you



can watch the events you have planned unveil as they happen. The detail of the graphics and animation is exceptionally good, from the men themselves to the scenarios they



inhabit. And while there is no booming soundtrack, the effects tinkle along merrily as you go.

Like many strategy games, it takes a patient person to actually achieve something substantial, partly because it takes a long time, and partly because it is thankfully difficult. This does not detract from the game, which is immensely playable, but merely serves as a warning to the uninitiated.

Microsoft has come up trumps again with Age of Empires. With great detail and an easy-to-use interface, it is great fun. Remember though, that patience is a virtue!

Jim Haryott

- £39.99 (inc VAT)
- Microsoft: 0345 002000

Age of Empires

Overall ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: Pentium 90, 16 Mb of RAM, Windows 95, 80Mb of hard disk space, 50Mb of free disk space for swap file, 4x CD-ROM.

HMV GAMES CHART



	Title	Manufacturer
1	Grand Theft Auto	BMG Interactive
2	FIFA: Road to World Cup '98	EA
3	Championship Manager 2 97/98	Eidos
4	Tomb Raider 2	Eidos
5	Quake 2	GT Interactive
6	Virtual Springfield	EA
7	TOCA Touring Car Championship	Codemasters
8	Worms 2	Microprose
9	Age of Empires	Microsoft
10	Blade Runner	Virgin

This chart is based on the latest available figures at the time of going to press.

Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 98

What has 44 million words, 65,000 articles and comes in 32 lug-gable volumes?

The print version of Encyclopaedia Britannica, that's what. If you subscribe to the view that buying a bookcase full of information is something that went out of fashion around the same time as the arrival of colour TV, you may be relieved to know that the Encyclopaedia Britannica is also available on CD.

Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 98 has all the text of the paper product and at £125 (plus VAT) is £720 cheaper. In return for this, you've got to give up some of the illustrations available in the original and the thrill of showing off your shiny volumes to visiting neighbours. The choice is yours, at least as long as you've got a spare 45Mb of hard disk space lying around.

Encyclopaedia Britannica began shifting to the world of CD-ROM in 1994 when only the text was transferred. Versions 2.0 and 3.0 saw the introduction of illustrations and this version is the first 'multimedia' product: it's got animations and the opportunity to analyse the database.

Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 98 consists of three CDs. One is the installation disc while the other two are the 'advanced search' CD and the 'multimedia' disc'. Installation takes a couple of minutes and isn't too fiddly but watch out if you're a Netscape lover, because the software requests that you load Microsoft's Internet Explorer from the CD if you haven't already installed it.



So what's it like? Unfortunately, it's not as easy to use as the books. Because it's a multimedia offering, you can get moving pictures and sound, and it's relatively easy to search. The downside is that you spend far too long clicking around and waiting for images and text to download. You also have to get used to swapping the CDs over: which one you need in the drive depends on whether you are searching or looking at the visuals.

The main menu gives you the option of looking into five multimedia features: Spotlights (multimedia presentations such

as a virtual tour of the world's ecosystems), Compass (a series of interactive world maps), Analyst (allows you to manipulate data about countries), Timelines (historical event timelines by chosen subject), and finally Spectrum (categorises and classifies showing links between information).

On the searching front you are able to enter searches such as 'why does my mother suck eggs' because the CD allows what are called natural language searches. Encyclopaedia Britannica is a family product and the CD is clearly aimed at family learning. It is too slow to be a professional tool but it does provide access to a wide range of useful information which would otherwise clog up your bookshelf.

One word of warning: the attempt to please a US and UK audience with what Britannica calls 'international English' doesn't always hit the spot. Search on 'football,' for example, and you will find links to that strange derivative of rugby they play over the pond rather than examples of the beautiful game.

Although it's stacked with information and highly searchable, its slow speed is disappointing.

Ken Young

● £146.87 (inc VAT)

● Encyclopaedia Britannica: 0800 282433



Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 98

Overall ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: 486DX2-66, Windows 95 or Windows NT 4.0, 16Mb of RAM, 45Mb of free hard drive space.



If you like star gazing, you'll want the new edition of **Redshift** from Maris Multimedia. Distributed by Dorling Kindersley, Redshift 3 lets you study the night sky anywhere in the world from the comfort of your own home.

With details of over a million stars



and planets, you can create your own 3D fly-throughs in outer space.

Dorling Kindersley: 0171 836 5411

Europress Software is entering the competitive multimedia encyclopaedia market with its new **Family Encyclopedia**. It contains the whole text of the Cambridge Encyclopedia as well as some 20 other reference books, and includes biographies and 20th-century events. With 10,000 photographs as well as videos and sound clips, it's been brought right up to date for release at the end of January. It will cost £29.99.

Europress: 01625 859333

The Internet has almost doubled the number of fathers who are heavily involved in their children's home learning. A recent survey for **BT HomeCampus** shows that men are attracted by the 'glamour' of PCs and enjoy helping their children surf the Web more than simply supervising homework.

BT HomeCampus itself is an online learning support site. For one month's free trial, point your browser at:

www.campus.bt.com/HomeCampus/ or call 0345 678578.

Jump Ahead Year 2

Jump Ahead is an educational multimedia title from Knowledge Adventure. Aimed at Year Two - 6 to 7-year-olds to you and me - it's one of a series of CDs which help children with the good old three Rs.

A chirpy Liverpoolian frog named CJ and a firefly by the name of Edison guide you through the various tasks. Each step is a mini-game in itself, but they make no bones about the educational agenda. To complete the games you must successfully complete words, do sums, or even learn about adjectives and verbs.

There are also challenges: you must embark on these once you have gained enough points. Each task is set when you receive a postcard from around the world. Again, these assignments involve writing letters as well as a multitude of other tasks.

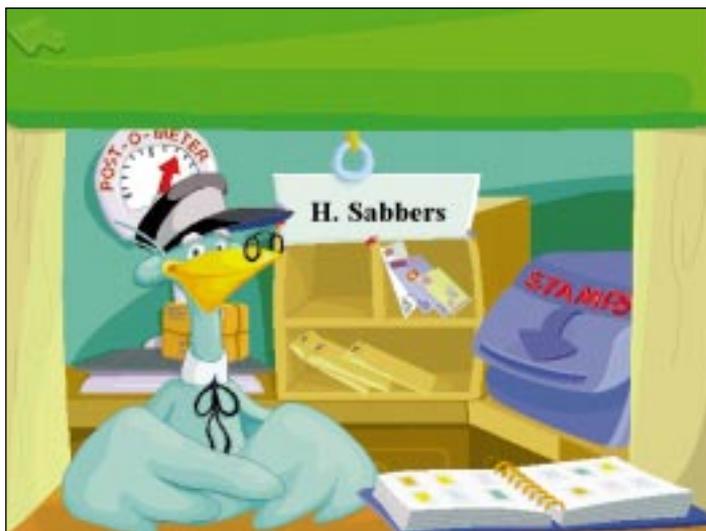
For a six-year-old these puzzles and games will certainly be challenging, and it is unlikely that one go will prove enough. There are lots of things to do, ranging from sums to musical scales, as well as a map of the solar system so that you can learn about the planets.

The CD is well presented and visually appealing, and is certain to provide hours of fun as well as being a great learning tool. It has been developed with the help of feedback from teachers, parents and schools, and it is suitable for both the National and the Scottish 5-14 Curricula.

Jump Ahead is certainly a good mix of fun and education, and is not difficult to master. The two guiding characters are there to help if you don't get the gist of what to do straight away.

Jim Haryott

- £29.99 (inc VAT)
- Knowledge Adventure:



Jump Ahead Year 2

Overall



Minimum requirements: Windows 95, 486DX or faster 2x CD-ROM or faster, 8Mb of RAM, 12Mb hard disk space. Also Mac-compatible.