

Loading...

Free online gaming has been the bread and butter of many PC users for years, but it is now threatened by recent developments in the console and broadband markets.

With increased broadband penetration, thanks to realistic pricing and the approaching rollout of pay-per-play online services for console owners, PC gamers could soon find themselves having to cough up for internet services.

Despite exclamations that the console war is over, with Sony shipping more PS2 (PlayStation2) units than Microsoft managed for the Xbox, it is simply moving to a new arena: the internet.

Doom for free online gaming

Online console gaming will be big business. According to a study commissioned by the Elspa (European Leisure Software Publishers Association) and carried out by Screen Digest, spending on these emerging services by European consumers will grow by 5,000 percent in 2006. The report forecasts that online console services will generate more than €2.5bn in European revenues by 2006 and will drive the takeup of broadband in Europe – with a predicted 16.6 million households in Europe connecting their game consoles to the internet over the next five years.

While Nintendo has yet to announce any plans, Microsoft and Sony are ahead of the game. Michel Cassius, European director of Microsoft's Xbox, recently announced that the European Xbox Live will launch on 14 March 2003 and will provide Xbox owners with a comprehensive online game service. Owners have to pay £39.99 for the Xbox Live Starter Pack, an out-of-the-box solution that includes a year's subscription to the online service.

Sony has already launched its online PS2 service in the US and Japan, but refused to comment on the infrastructure it intends to adopt for the eventual European launch in 2003.

"At the moment there's only conjecture and we're not necessarily going down the same route as the US and Japanese models," said David

Wilson, PR manager at Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. That said, he added, "We're watching the European market to see what happens."

Mainstreaming video games

Whatever model Sony and Nintendo opt for in Europe, it's sure to involve paying for content. This will have an impact on the freeplay culture that PC gamers have utilised for the past 10 years. Some companies hosting free servers for players are already planning payment systems, suggesting that online gamers are on the cusp of an inexorable slide to subscription-based services.

Huge MMORPG (massive multiplayer online role playing game) PC games, such as EverQuest, have always been subscription-based because they require players to devote a lot of time online. But it is the casual player who is now being targeted by companies.

"I can say with some confidence that no professionally-run PC online games

service will exist within 12 months unless it looks at

charging users," said Geraint Bungay, head of Games Strategy at BTopenworld. BT owns Games Domain, a new payment-only service. Bungay's portent rang true when BarrysWorld, one of the best free sites for online European gamers, declared its intent to charge for its services. The only other European service that can compete with BarrysWorld is Jolt which, at the time of writing, didn't have any plans to introduce charges.

Of course, professional gamers already know how to run and set up amateur servers and there is no doubt that a passionate PC gamer who is technologically savvy will find avenues for free play sites. But, for the majority of online players, this heralds the beginning of the end for free play. ■

Spencer Dalziel



↑ Play dough: soon online games services like BarrysWorld will be charging gamers for the privilege



PC GAMES CHART	
1	Unreal Tournament 2003
2	Hitman 2
3	Battlefield 1942
4	Mafia
5	Sims Unleashed
6	Medieval: Total War
7	The Thing
8	Medal of Honour Allied Assault
9	Sims
10	Sims: On Holiday

Positions correct for week 04/10/02 - 11/10/02

Battlefield 1942

Battlefield 1942 is an incredible feat of programming and an ambitious amalgam of the best in first-person shooters, simplified strategy and vehicle simulations. Yet we have to append certain qualifications to our praise, particularly asking, "Will you be able to play it in its full intended glory?" All will be explained.

Despite the first-person shooter tag and World War II setting, Battlefield 1942 plays nothing like expectations. Imagine a simplified strategy version of Sudden Strike, but a first-person view in full 3D glory, and the ability to command an array of vehicles from tanks to planes with an easy control system, and you can start to build a picture. The realism and ease of play that this all adds up to means you can almost feel the blood-encrusted sand of Omaha beach under your fingernails.

There's no narrative arc to Battlefield 1942. You choose from a number of environments with set objectives and play as Axis or Allied troops. Some of the graphics look a little sketchy in closeup, but you have to take into account how much is happening onscreen at any one time.

→ Time to make tracks: you have to know when you're beaten

Compensating for this are the excellent game physics, sound effects and ballistics. It is nice enough to play on your own, but Battlefield 1942 was initially conceived as a multiplayer online experience, and here it fails.

The trouble is, if you play against more than a couple of opponents you'll have severe time-lag issues. The only way to fully appreciate the greatness of the multiplay element, is by using a LAN (Local Area Network) and a Power PC from the year 2010. This is a shame as most players won't get to admire the full epic scope of the online Battlefield 1942 experience. ■

Spencer Dalziel



Battlefield 1942

- Electronic Arts: 01932 450 000
- Website: www.uk.ea.com
- Price: £29.99

System requirements

500MHz Pentium III; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB RAM; 1.2GB hard disk space.

Overall rating



Project IGI 2: Covert Strike

Project IGI 2: Covert Strike

- Codemasters: 01926 816 044
- Website: www.codemasters.com
- Price: TBA

System requirements

1GHz Pentium processor; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 256MB RAM; 620MB hard disk space.

Overall rating



Project IGI was the surprise hit from Norwegian developer Innerloop around Christmas 2000. Codemasters snapped up the rights to the sequel and decided to share the latest preview beta with us.

In the finest spy movie tradition, SAS veteran David Jones returns in a new adventure which will take him from the former Soviet Union to China, with a stopover in Libya, in a hunt for valuable new technology such as weapons-friendly computer chips. The story unfolds

through the cutscene action and dialogue before you're dropped into the thick of things with a knife, silenced handgun and HK sub-machinegun.

With a further 30 weapons you'll soon be taking on and discarding enemy ordnance in the best

← Wide game boys: cross-country running all around the world, but with guns – sounds great

first-person shooter tradition but, as in the original, stealth is as crucial as fire power. Sharp-shooting is also a must, as only a headshot will put a bad guy down for good. Any other hit and the opponent can get up and have another try.

The PlayStation-style polygon folding of the graphics is a thing of the past, although Innerloop's Terraform-powered proprietary engine requires ample RAM for its smooth undulating vistas. The AI (artificial intelligence) is as calculating as before – keeping you on the run as reinforcements arrive to try and finish you off, or forcing you to sneak around or shoot it out.

Swimming has been added to your abilities, but there is still an awkwardness about object manipulation. If you want to turn a door-knob, for example, you must position your hand with minute precision before pressing the Action key, which is somewhat awkward. After all, taking too long to flick a switch in this game can kill.

However, as long as you can climb ladders without incident, IGI 2: Covert Strike should be adopted by wannabe undercover operatives everywhere when released. ■

Kenneth Henry



Divine Divinity

A dose of omnipotence of an evening is the perfect tonic after a stressful day at the office. Wielding magic powers, or even a stout cudgel, to dispatch your enemies can fill you with such a sweet sense of satisfaction. Before you call 999 let us reassure you, we are talking about god games – not real life.

You don't get much more celestial than Larian Studios' Divine Divinity. This game has been in development for years; we remember how excited we were when the first press teasers came into the office last year. But was it worth waiting for?

The god of huge things

Divine Divinity is certainly one of the most bloated RPGs (role-playing games) titles we've seen, taking up a whopping 2.5GB on your hard drive. But all this space is wisely used offering tens of thousands of screens filled with dwarves, monsters, wizards, zombies and the other citizens typical of fantasy games.

The basic premise is familiar as you take on the quest of attempting to restore order to the magical land of Rivellon, which has been torn apart for millennia by evil magic. You can choose three different types of character to play and you can be either male or female. Your decision will affect how gameplay unfolds.

The three paths you can choose from are warrior, wizard or survivor. Each character type

↓ Coming, ready or not: this is going to be a short round of hide and seek



specialises in different skills, which you build on as you play by completing challenges and tasks, until your character becomes an infinitely more powerful version of what you started with.

There are close to 100 skills to be learned, and 480 skill levels, so you have your work cut out to become a master. To keep things interesting there are also three levels of difficulty, so if things are a cinch at the Easy setting, you can give yourself a challenge on the Hard level.

Light fingers needed

As soon as you start playing you begin collecting goods that may come in useful during the game. Unlike the biblically legalistic Morrowind, if you nick goods from other characters they will just get a bit cross, rather than want to kill you, so you can help yourself with impunity. Like all RPGs check every vessel and dark corner for useful objects – although the game will point out any hidden objects.

Graphics are as stunning as we have come to expect, with loads of detail. As the game is so huge it covers a lot of ground, so finding your way around can be time-consuming, despite help from onscreen maps. But, as you get more skilled (and collect the right activation scrolls), you can use the teleport function to transport you between key locations. There are also portable units that you can place at handy locations.

The soundtrack is evocative, but if you opt to have your characters speak, their inane mid-Atlantic accents can become a bit irritating.

One criticism we did have was the level of information with which the game bombards you. Every character is ready to have a lengthy dialogue with you, and even in the first half hour of playing we had read innumerable manuscripts and books. Information overload soon ensues and you forget what you've been told.

We like Divine Divinity, and while it isn't as instantly captivating as some of its rivals, we think it will reward a bit of effort. Its complex nature means it should keep players happy for long enough to justify its price tag, and with no multiplayer option this is a must. ■



↑ Magic circle (top): midnight meetings in churchyards are all the rage this season

↑ Addictive gameplay (bottom): he's not afraid to kill to protect his magic mushrooms

Divine Divinity

- CDV Software: 020 8880 4144
- Website: www.divinedivinity.com
- Price: £30

System requirements

450MHz Pentium processor;
Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 128MB
RAM; 2.5GB hard disk space.

Overall rating



Ben Camm-Jones

Ejay Clubworld PlayStation2 DVD game

Back in the days when you wanted to emulate your favourite bands you would reach for your guitar or piano. When it comes to emulating your favourite tracks by The Prodigy or Basement Jaxx, however, you might strain a wrist with a conventional instrument. Ejay, spotting this drawback, has long been producing music-making utilities for the PC that allow you to arrange your own samples, beats and loops. It has now gone one step further by creating a version for the PlayStation2.

At first glance we wondered why it has bothered making a utility for a gaming console, but a little experimentation showed it is fun. Ejay Clubworld is hosted by Carl Cox (international super-DJ) who starts by giving you a few nuggets of wisdom regarding music creation. You can then choose from seven club locations, each offering a different genre of music for you to create. Once ensconced in your club of choice there's a wide selection of different sounds for you to manipulate as well as a variety of unique tools that allow you to scratch over your tracks or create your own samples.

→ Wheels of fortune: spin the right tune and you could be on the way to fame, fortune and constant tinnitus

The interfaces and control system are surprisingly easy to use, even without a mouse. The music sounds fantastic, delivering heavy bass and crystal-clear mid-range and treble (provided you have the speakers to deliver it).

Our only criticism is the unfortunate lack of connectivity that comes from being a console game. You cannot share your tracks online or download additional sounds as you can with PC music creators. However, Ejay Clubworld is a great introduction to digital music creation and may well whet your appetite for more complex PC titles. ■



Ejay Clubworld

- Empire Interactive:
020 8492 1049
- Website: www.ejay.co.uk
- Price: £29.99

System requirements

PlayStation2

Overall rating



Simon Alveranga

Music 2002 club edition

For those of you out there who would like to experiment with digital music creation, but who don't have a PS2 (PlayStation2), may we suggest Music 2002 club edition from Jester Interactive? This PC program is a simple music maker for those out there with little experience. This is not to say that those who know what they're doing won't have use for this package, as it costs a lot less than professional and semi-professional programs. However, it does lack some of the delicate manipulation tools they supply.

The package is endorsed by super club Slinky and includes several tracks composed by professional DJs. These allow you to see how it is done and they can be edited as well. Also included with Music 2002 are 500 sound samples from the Slinky archives for you to manipulate and adjust.

Although this seems like quite a meagre amount compared to the 10,000 samples included with PS2's Ejay Clubworld, you are able to adjust them using a variety of tools within the package. This means that your 500 samples can be made to sound as different as you see fit.

At times this program was difficult to use, especially for a novice. The cut and paste facility couldn't be initiated with a simple right mouse-click, but rather needed three left-clicks and a menu scroll. We would have preferred a more user-friendly interface as, at times, it felt that simple and repetitive tasks were taking too long to complete.

All in all, though, this is a good package with the full array of tools that you would expect from a music creation program. This is not the first release in this genre by Jester Interactive and fans of previous titles will no doubt enjoy composing with this latest offering. ■

Simon Alveranga

→ Drumming you out: build up your club anthem from nothing with this PC-based dance tune producer

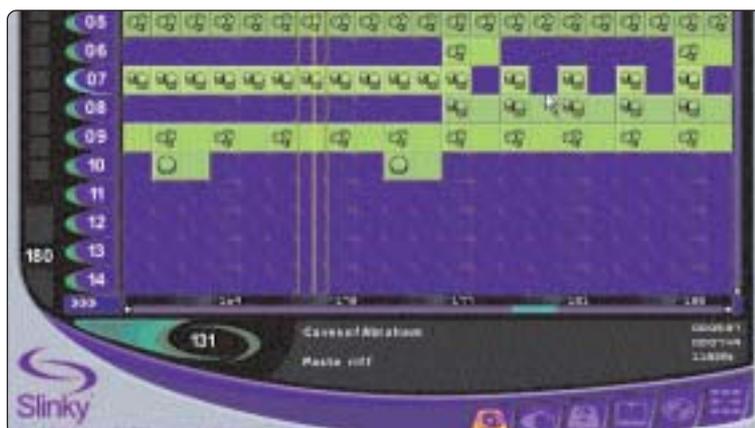
Music 2002 club edition

- Jester Interactive: 01244 537 770
- Website:
www.jesterinteractive.co.uk
- Price: £34.99

System requirements

266GHz Pentium II; Windows 95/98/2000/Me/XP; 64MB RAM; 895MB hard disk space

Overall rating



Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe GBA



➤ Goldenballs: get some old-skool ultra-violence on the Game Boy Advance



Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe

- Bitmap Brothers: 020 8343 9143
- Website: www.wanadoo-edition.com
- Price: £19.99

System requirements

GameBoy Advance

Overall rating



Rose-tinted nostalgia-festing is a dangerous pastime. It can lead a man to think, for example, that the 1983 hit *True* by Spandau Ballet is a top tune with poignant lyrics and a spine-tingling sax solo. It is not, though, nor will it ever be. It simply reminds me of snogging girls at teenage parties, light-headed from the rush

of hormones and the overpowering effect of the half-bottle of Kuros aftershave I'd liberally sprinkled on myself. Happy days.

Somehow, this circuitous self-indulgence brings me to Speedball 2. I was worried that the game I enjoyed so much on the Amiga back in 1990 would now be embarrassingly naff on the GBA (Game Boy Advance); worried that I had built it up to be more than it was because it reminded me

of a hazy half-remembered time before mortgages, contents insurance and too much nasal hair.

I am pleased to report that, it is not as good as memory serves – it's even better. In fact, it's even better than even better. I think the word I'm looking for is even betterer.

Speedball 2 takes its roots from the film *Rollerball*, set in a near future when baying crowds will only be sated by violent team-based sports whose sole rule is that there ain't no rules. Two teams of five heavily armoured players fight in a bid to slam a steel ball into the opposition's goal in whichever way they can.

The game's beauty is in its simplicity. The control system couldn't be easier and it feels perfectly at home on the GBA. The gameplay is supremely addictive and I get the feeling EA based its whole FIFA Football series on Speedball's smooth flow.

Speedball 2 sums up everything that is good about arcade gaming and the GBA. It's worth buying a GBA just to play this game. So true, funny how it seems... ■

Spencer Dalziel

Front Line Attack: War Over Europe

If you're a power-crazed adrenalin junkie with a burning desire to command an army of thousands and take over the world, you're either the editor of *PC Advisor* or the type of person who plays real-time strategy games, like *Front Line Attack: War Over Europe*. Whichever of these you are, get out your old maps of Poland, dust off your trusty service revolver and stick a saucepan on your head, because this is going to be fun.

The saucepan won't really be necessary, of course – you'll be perfectly safe playing this game. However, you will need courage, determination and patience, as well as an eye for an opportunity. You'll also benefit from having a good few hours (in which) to kill, as the process of planning your battles and getting thumped by the opposition can be a lengthy one.

Using a design similar to many other real-time strategy games, *Front Line Attack: War Over Europe* is a vast game where you can take control over the Red Army, the Allied forces or the Germans and fight battles from Italy to the Ardennes. You can play the game over a network, over the internet or against the computer.

There's a whole range of vehicles, tanks, troops and even aircraft at your disposal in your pursuit of victory, but be warned – the artificial intelligence you face if you choose to take on the PC is formidable and will require a lot of trial, error and patience to overcome.

If you're a real-time strategy fanatic you will probably find *Front Line Attack* engrossing although not a great deal different from many other games on the market at the moment – besides the obvious differences in the plot.

If you're looking to get into this genre, though, I wouldn't recommend trying this one first as it is a bit too difficult. ■

Ben Camm-Jones

➔ Arc enemies: get the bad guys in your sights then pummel them mercilessly with ordnance – you could change history

Front Line Attack

- Eidos: 020 8636 3000
- Website: www.totalwar.com
- Price: £29.99

System requirements

333MHz Pentium processor;
Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB
RAM; 620MBB hard disk space.

Overall rating



Blade II Xbox

Blade, our half-vampire hero, may have vowed to rid the world of all blood suckers, but that's going to have to take a back burner for a while as now there is a greater threat. There's some rogue vamp DNA on the loose and it's up to Blade to bring it under control, mainly by killing anything that moves.

The game promises a "360-degree combat system" along with "unholy rage powers", "lethal weapons" and (my personal favourite) "gruesome, over-the-top kills".

While a 360-degree combat system sounds exciting it can be something of a hit and miss affair, literally. It's more a matter of lunging at an opponent and letting Blade decide whether to punch or kick.

The other three promises translate into gaining the use of a sword by repeatedly hitting people; a sword, some guns, a knuckleduster and a glaive (think boomerang with spikes); and the action constantly cutting to detailed, slow-motion deaths, which can become annoying.

→ Split personality: half man, half vampire, Blade is prone to unpredictable rages

Gameplay consists of getting from one place to another and destroying things (cars/phones/computers) in between. But if you thought there was nothing for the thinking man, then you'd be wrong. Get further into the game and you must find levers to open doors before you can continue slaying vampires.

The developer is clearly proud of the scenery it has created, so much so that the same stuff appears over and over again. Each new room gives you a strange feeling of *déjà vu*.

Blade II can take a while to get into, but once you've mastered the fighting and unlocked the weapons there's little left to do other than kill yet more things while travelling from point A to point B. ■



Blade II Xbox

- Activation: 01753 756 100
- Website: www.activision.com
- Price: £34

System requirements

Xbox

Overall rating



Will Head

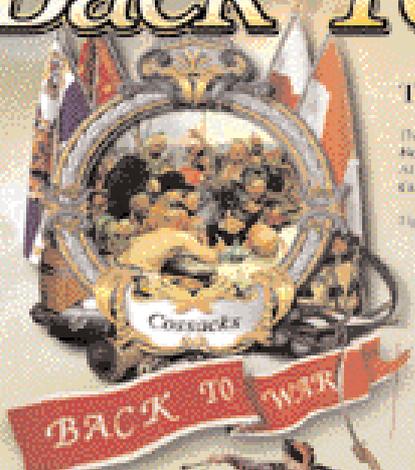
Cossacks: Back To War



The battle continues...

The award-winning historical real-time strategy game returns! For the first time in the series, *Back To War* offers up to two missions, new scenarios and maps, and even more improved AI for the AI opponents. *Cossacks - Back To War* has been developed on a private AI shell so that you get the most and most optimized gameplay experience possible with the latest of graphical features.

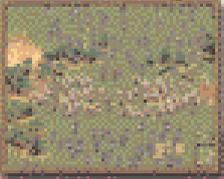
High quality as in most the best titles of the genre, with sales and awards for every AI system and for every scenario, *Cossacks* is still and more!



Features

- **Cossacks - Back To War** is back a multiplatform version (also support a classic version of Cossacks and its expansion pack)
- A total of 30 different scenarios, missions to complete!
- **100 NEW UNIT PLAYER MODELS**
- 4 levels of difficulty
- 4 new nations: The Cossacks and Hungarians
- 1 large mission now to each new nation, with 20 new battles
- 4 new battle maps
- 4 new Hungarian maps
- New, but revised Campaigning: General AI AI makes the very best decisions to improve
- Special AI/200+ units, including 100+ AI units for AI controlling
- New and old tactics & strategy. The best and toughest AI combat
- Extra AI/200+ units, including new units, including 100+ AI units








www.cossacks.com

Lilo & Stitch: Hawaiian Discovery and Trouble in Paradise

Lilo & Stitch

- Disney Interactive: 020 8222 1413
- Website: www.disneyinteractive.com
- Price: £19.99 each

System requirements

PII 266 or better; Windows 95/98/Me/XP; 32MB RAM; 80MB hard disk space.

Overall: Hawaiian Discovery



Overall: Trouble in Paradise



↓ Trouble in Paradise (top): Lilo finds out just how big the fish are on other planets

↓ Hawaiian Discovery (bottom): Stitch finally locates the source of the ice-cream van music



Stitch must be the luckiest fugitive alien going. Having hightailed it from an intergalactic prison his spacecraft crash-lands on Hawaii where, after a nasty collision, he ends up in a dog pound and is spotted by lonely orphan Lilo. Unaware that the blue-skinned creature is a more exotic breed than she believes, Lilo adopts Stitch and they become inseparable – as much a family as the one Lilo has been mourning.

So far so predictable for a Disney film, but both the story and these two spin-off games offer something much more than a cute tale about a sense of belonging. As Disney's president of feature animation, Thomas Schumacher, explains, "It's got Hawaii, Elvis and a space alien – you know, your typical movie."

And these ingredients are just as appealing when translated into PC games. The Hawaiian setting is a cause for celebration and you get to surf to your heart's content, adorn yourself with garlands and, a crucial element for all little (and not so little) girls – you get to learn to hula.

Hawaiian luau

Hawaiian Discovery is aimed at kids as young as four and, after a short video lesson in how to step and sway with style, you crack on with the serious business of keeping the dependably destructive Stitch out of trouble.

There are seven entertaining

games in all, none of which is especially innovative (think pairs, uncovering hidden objects, rescuing the heroes from a pod surrounded by coloured bricks and bringing parachuting characters to the safety of your spacecraft before they fall to Earth).

This doesn't matter as each scene is packed with visual interest. There's plenty of sassy commentary as you try to keep the dogs in the pound under control and make sure Stitch doesn't clock up too many traffic offences by applying doses of caffeine to get him

moving and spraying him with water to regulate his driving through a complex maze of roads and traffic lights.

Similar checks and balances are applied in the locals' restaurant where you try and keep the regulars entertained while snubbing the out-of-place tourists. Each challenge requires quite a bit of mousing dexterity, which ensures plenty of frustration for kids of all ages, especially if you opt for the hardest difficulty level.



Paradise postponed

Trouble in Paradise treads more familiar ground, taking the form of a 3D action adventure involving a variety of undesirables including bounty hunters and native nasties such as scorpions and wild boar as well as alien adversaries. You can play as either character – as Stitch you must learn to move stealthily and acquire special moves to help you get around inside the island's volcano.

His main concern is avoiding being captured by Gantu and returned to face justice at home. He can only succeed with the help of Lilo and her special voodoo dolls – your best means of scaring off some of the most fearsome enemies you'll encounter.

On route from Lilo's Hawaiian home you need to retrieve a number of secret objects and complete a number of challenges in order to progress through the jungle, past the school and on to the volcano park for the final showdown.

Though you must first overcome some seemingly indestructible foes, there are prizes along the way in the form of clips from the film that you add to your gallery and photos you can display on Lilo's bedroom wall. Best of all, though, you are cheered on by The King himself. Assuming recent releases from Gareth Gates and Junkie XL haven't ruined your enjoyment of Elvis forever, this is the sort of canny bonus that adult as well as younger gamers will appreciate. ■

Rosemary Haworth



Frankie Animal Adventures

- Vivendi Universal Interactive:
01268 531245
- Website: www.vivendi-universal-interactive.co.uk
- Price: £19.99

System requirements

233MHz Pentium; Windows 98/Me/2000/XP; 64MB RAM; 30MB hard disk space.

Overall rating



↑ **Beastly good fun:** Frankie and his friend set their sights on a the massive Brazilian Toucan

you complete a bit of the contest sheet for that habitat. Photographing certain animals helps with learning and recognition of different creatures such as wildebeest and spiny lobsters, and your reward for completing a contest sheet is a page of arts and crafts activities – when you have enough pages you can print them out and make a book.

Frankie Animal Adventures

This Frankie CD has a clever conceit with which to draw the user.

You are taking part in an animal habitat competition, visit four different animal habitats (Temperate Forest, the Savannas, the Tide Pool and the Rain Forest) and play three or four games. Each time you win a game,

It is nicely done with attractive, if garish, animation and there is nothing in the games that will be too complicated for an average five- to eight-year-old. From an adult point of view, it can be a bit tiresome. Click on any creature and it will give you a little spiel about itself in an annoying regional accent. Alarmingly, some of the animals also burst into song, and there is nothing you can do to stop them. But the small child who played with this loved it.

The games were all quite satisfying, although there were slightly too many that included the identical task of feeding an animal by pointing and clicking at moving insects. The dam-building game was slightly more challenging, and I particularly liked the crab fight – for the first time I saw the appeal of all those violent computer games that teenage boys like so much.

It is probably a little pricey, but it will almost certainly keep your seven-year-old quiet for a couple of hours, in which case you may consider it well worth the money. ■

Kim Thomas



Encyclopaedia Britannica 2003

There is something that has always puzzled me: how is one side of Sellotape sticky, while the part underneath it on the roll is not? It is not a profound question, but still it baffles me. Unfortunately, the new Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite 2003 didn't offer the solution to this mystery, so my search goes on. However, it did provide me with an impressive wealth of knowledge, sure to make me the envy of anyone I meet.

After an intrepid journey down the Interactive Timeline, I now know that football has its origins in 206 BC, when the people of China happily spent their Saturday afternoons playing tsu-chu. The Knowledge Browser has informed me that most raccoons wash their food before eating it, a fact that shall surely delight all our mothers. And the third service on the Encyclopaedia Britannica, the World Atlas, has cordially shown me a place in Canada called Happy Valley.

Searching through the Encyclopaedia is perhaps too easy, and the precious few daylight hours of winter can be whiled away learning about the migratory habits of Norwegian salmon. The program is divided into three basic

sections, suitable for readers ranging from primary school children to university students. The Alphabetical browser and the General search engine both offer prompt results and the general layout of the screen is attractive.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Encyclopaedia Britannica is that it gives you in-depth and reliable knowledge, without simply skimming the surface of a subject as other programs often do.

The Britannica Encyclopaedia claims to be "the knowledge you need from the source you trust" and, still basking in the glory of my first ever Trivial Pursuit victory, I am inclined to agree. ■



← **International inquiry:** from pea-brains to professors, you can learn a lot from this encyclopedia

Encyclopaedia Britannica 2003

- Encyclopaedia Britannica:
020 7500 7800
- Website: www.britannica.co.uk
- Price: £59.99

System requirements

266MHz Pentium; Windows 98/2000/Me/NT/XP; 128MB RAM; 400MB hard disk space.

Overall rating



Nel Staveley-Dick