

MAKING LIFE MORE FUN

Hunting Big Games Easier With Net

(NAPSA)—If you're one of the tens of millions of Americans who own a Windows PC, you already have a powerful gaming machine, but with hundreds of new games released each year, how can you find a computer game that best fits you?

Even after you find the perfect game, how can you make sure your current PC meets the game's requirements? Where do you go to make sense of the system and hardware requirements explained on the back of the game box?

Numerous Web sites provide up-to-date information on the growing video game phenomenon, boasting free screenshots and demos or even current news on developers and publishers. Some, such as GameSpot.com and IGN.com, offer exclusive information for their registered members. They can be fantastic sources of information. Some of the sites out there can seem a little inaccessible, however—especially if you can't translate what "1.3 GHz CPU, 256 MB RAM, 5.5 GB HDD and a 32 MB DirectX 8.1 video-card" means.

That's where the updated "Game Advisor" might come in handy. It's designed to be an easy-to-use one-stop-shop for PC gaming, says Microsoft's Dean Lester. "We recently updated a free online



Graphic courtesy of Microsoft Game Studios' "Zoo Tycoon."

It would take the memory of an elephant to remember all the great games now available.

tool that will take you step-by-step through the process of pinpointing the perfect game. In some ways, it makes the whole thing easier than shopping for groceries."

The Windows XP Game Advisor will help you find a game. Simply enter an age group and pick a category, from Strategy, to Action, to Family Entertainment. The Game Advisor provides a list of titles to choose from based on your input, pulling from a database of more than 170 games and nearly three dozen publishers.

The Game Advisor also means you can try it before you buy it. Like some of its other online counterparts, the Game Advisor allows you to download screenshots and trailers, and even demo certain games in order to give you a bet-

ter idea of what the game will be like before you buy it. With the Game Advisor you can finish the process with the "Buy It Now!" button—linking you to a list of online retailers from which you can order the game.

How about that nagging feeling that your current PC might not be up to the challenge of the fancy new game you've chosen? Click "Will it run on my computer?" and the Game Advisor performs a quick check of your computer's hardware to make sure it can run the game with your current system. Results are displayed on an easy-to-read graph that suggests upgrade recommendations, if needed, in order to get your PC "game ready" with a minimum of hassle.

Parents can also be reassured, knowing that Microsoft is working closely with the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) to link game listings to the age rankings created by the board. "By utilizing the ESRB ratings as a key sort criteria, the Windows XP Game Advisor can help parents make informed buying decisions—and the wise choices we encourage consumers to make," said Patricia Vance, president of the ESRB.

Visit the Windows XP Game Advisor at www.windowsgaming.com.