

MEDIA RELEASE



REWRITE HISTORY WITH RISE OF NATIONS

Lead your civilisation to a position of global domination



Trade, espionage, diplomacy or war? Microsoft and Big Huge Game Studios have created a game with something for the budding entrepreneur, spy, diplomat or dictator in us all with the launch of their latest epic Strategy game - Rise of Nations.

With Brian Reynolds at the helm, renowned for the hugely popular Civilization game, Rise of Nations is set to change the RTS landscape by seamlessly combining the epic scope of turn based with the fast paced action of real time strategy.

Traverse a 6,000 year cross-section of human technological development and master a multitude of ages as you lead your civilisation onwards and upwards

Players are given a myriad of 18 different civilisations to choose from, each offering specific advantages based on the cultural characteristics of the society in question. The Mayans have a competitive advantage in creating buildings through advanced architectural knowledge, whilst the Spanish's expertise in exploration gives them unrivalled access to the territories' layout.

Further deepening gameplay, each civilisation's abilities are also affected by the various ages of development. Eight separate epochs of history must be mastered and knowledge accumulated. From the Stone Age to the Information Age, players' capacity to stay abreast of their competitors is tested as they collate know-how on over 50 different technologies. For the first time ever, the ancient philosophies of long dead civilisations can be tested against modern technology and ideals. Aztecs behind the controls of stealth bombers and Mongols rampaging in ultra-modern tank units? It's all possible in Rise of Nations.

However, Rise of Nations is much more than a combat focused game. By making shrewd trade and diplomatic alliances, an astute player can forward their position just as quickly as a player employing the more under-handed tactics involved with espionage. Features including national borders, flank attacks, generals, spies and much more create a truly strategic gaming experience when brought together.

Rise of Nations' single player scenario revolves around the gradual conquer of a series of territories – unlocking new territories opens up access to 32 rare resources, tributes and increased powers. The game can also be set to evolve rapidly, shrinking 6,000 years of development into an hour. The multiplayer options allow up to eight players to compete head to head for supremacy. Challenge other players on the Internet or over a LAN. In-game matchmaking even lets you pick up games online against others waiting for a challenge.

“Rise of Nations blends a great depth of options, challenges and missions with a streamlined format that allows players to focus on individually determined strategy levels” said Richard Hirst, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft. “Game dynamics can be altered to minimise ‘micro-management’, allowing gamers to focus on the bigger picture.” ”.

The customisation available in victory conditions mirrors the depth of gameplay. Brute force can (and does) bring victory, but you can choose how you want to take over the world by setting victory conditions to your liking. Make raw power the only condition for success, or choose another strategy like espionage, diplomacy, technology races, territory expansion or set multiple conditions simultaneously.

Gamers rise up! A new epoch in RTS games is upon us!

More information on Rise of Nations is available on the official Web site at [http:// www.microsoft.com/games/riseofnations/](http://www.microsoft.com/games/riseofnations/)

Pricing and Availability

Rise of Nations will be available from late April at leading computer and software retailers for \$99.95 RRP.

About Microsoft Game Studios

Microsoft Game Studios is a leading worldwide publisher and developer of games for the PC, Xbox video game system and online platforms. Comprising a network of top developers, Microsoft Game Studios is committed to creating innovative and diverse game portfolios for PC (<http://www.microsoft.com/games/>), including such franchises as "Age of Empires®," "Flight Simulator" and Zoo Tycoon; Xbox (<http://www.xbox.com/>), including such franchises as "Halo," "Project Gotham Racing" and "NFL Fever"; and Zone.com (<http://zone.msn.com/>), the official games channel for the MSN® network and home to such hits as "Bejeweled" and "Outsmart."

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and Internet technologies for personal and business computing. The company offers a wide range of products and services designed to empower people through great software -- any time, any place and on any device.

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