

by Bill Jahnel

RAM,
Interactive at

Disney. While
push for com-
comes at a
Books no long
sounds to play on
does a wonder-
interactive elements
to the story.

in stores,
to adapt a
passively watching
go beyond

Disney Interactive, \$29. Requirements : 68040/PowerPC, 8MB
System 7.1 or later, 2x CD-ROM drive. Contact Disney
<http://www.Disney.com>.

When it comes to animation, few people do it better than
some might see Disney's Animated Storybook line as a crass
mercialism, the move to interactive storybooks for youngsters
time of increasing sophistication in the book and toy market.
just pop-up to create interaction but now often come with
small pushbutton strips. The Hercules Animated Storybook
ful job of retelling the movie's story and adding in the
that will capture a child's attention and keep them coming back

I suppose that considering that the video is so readily available
the question remains what Disney or any other company can do
story to keep a child in a storybook setting rather than
on the television. The Disney Animated Storybook manages to

things for
the movie
them so
children can
narration, the
the words
(much like
reactions from
characters are
Disney driving its
call.
the film,
perspective than they

wonder and
Interactive title

being just a marketing tool for the movie and really tries to find children to enjoy.

The main story is told in animated cut frames. The muses from narrate in rhymed couplets with the sassy attitude that made enjoyable in the film. Their narrations appear on a scroll, so associate the written words with the spoken words. After the scroll rolls up but is in the corner in case a child wants to see again. The child is then encouraged to explore the landscape Cosmic Osmo and the award-winning Grandma and Me) to get characters or areas in the scenery. The reactions of the light, fun, and sure to please. One of the best aspects of own software vehicle is that it has top animators at its beck and Rather than go the lazy way out and reuse animation cells from they have often taken scenes from a slightly different were in the movie, which allows children to feel like they are re-experiencing the film's actions from a new perspective.

However, as much as it might be enjoyable for the sense of exploration, parents might wonder what the Hercules actually might teach a child.

mythology and
are high-
definitions of
probably best
show them
idea of going
to "make

with songs from
are played by
performers
hearts content.
compliments them on
might have
However, few
and exciting
of sing-a-
children like to

There is a form
picking the two
and out of the
positive feedback

Because of the theme, the title emphasizes learning Greek
some word skills. A number of words in the text on the scrolls
lighted where children can click on them and hear and see the
words. However, since the scrolls roll up out of sight, it is
that parents encourage their children to re-open the words and
the first few words they can click on. This will encourage the
back to the scroll as part of the fun of exploration of being able
something happen."

One of the best ideas on the CD is a form of Karioke machine
Hercules. Three of the tunes, somewhat abbreviated in form,
Hermes on his stage, and children can sing along with the voice
or turn off all but the musical background and sing to their
The program offers positive feedback to children and
their singing, though one or two variations on the compliments
made this seem a little more sincere and less perfunctory.
forms of self-expression and ego-boosting are more valuable
than seeing a child sing their favorite songs, and Disney's line
long tapes has given them vast experience in seeing what
see on screen to encourage them to sing out proud.

Hercules also tries to offer a few elementary logic puzzles.
of matching game where Hercules must beat the Hydra by
heads that exactly match. Since the heads keep popping in
cave, it lands an air of excitement to the activity, and the

chance for
reprises his role
levels of
to the board

for catching the Hydra makes it a cute activity for kids.
For the slightly older side of the learning curve, there is also a
children to play checkers against Hades. Bobcat Goldwaite
as the demon "Panic" and the computer plays at three different
difficulty. The presentation is snappy and a good introduction
game or a chance for children to hone their skills.

which is
and match
monster they
If they
computer rewards
rewards
activity that

Another winning activity in the game is a "monster maker,"
mostly a tool for imaginative and creative play. Children mix
heads, torsos, and lower bodies in a cauldron until they find a
thing is suitably scary and then it jiggles around and animates.
choose parts that all match a single type of creature, the
matching skills; if they make a unique creation, the computer
their imaginations. It's a fun approach and a cute activity.
There is only one small quibble in this entire CD, and it's an

end for
neither
skill
the
easily

parents face is
passive enter-
animated
comfortable
the world
feedback and
is a good one

world of
jokes just for
warthog (from
might explain to
clicks on
the Future.
investment will
asking for the
be a good
entertainment.

seems out of place. There is a semi-action sequence near the Hercules to climb Mount Olympus to rescue the gods, but it is complex enough to really work as a problem-solving or logic-endueavor (it isn't really a maze) and is probably too boring for Nintendo generation. However, one miss in a series of hits is overlooked.

This is a great title for younger kids. One of the difficulties moving their kids away from the attraction of the tube and tainment. With the tremendous draw of children to Disney's features, products like the storybook manage to get children with interacting with a computer and excited about exploring through a computer. The game is full of confidence-building encourages expression. The underlying message of the story too: Heroism comes from the heart.

And lest the parents in the crowd feel a little left out in the Barney, Disney blessfully leaves a couple of things that are us adults to understand. Astute parents might see Pumba the the Lion King movie) fly across the screen once. They also a child why they started laughing when a theatre that the child announces as its next feature films are "Greece" or "Bacchus to If your child fits in the storybook demographic, the small prove to be a valuable one. In fact, if your child has been Hercules Video, perhaps bundling the Storybook with it might idea, to try and combat the underworld monsters of passive

