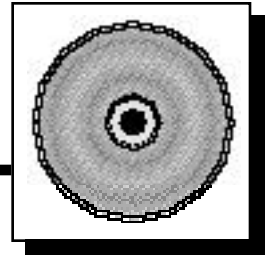# *CD Roundup*

A Survey of Current Titles

1993 must be the year of the CD. (If not, 1994 surely will be.) What many computer users viewed as a curiosity a year or so ago has turned into a phenomena. Prices for CD players have dropped to less than half of their earlier amounts. Where once only a few titles were available, now there are whole catalogs of CDs.

The lure of the CD for software publishers is great. After the initial mastering has been completed, the price drops down to what must be less than the price of a double handful of floppy diskettes.

There are widespread rumors that Apple will soon put CD players in *all* of its Macintoshes. Already many models equipped with CD-ROMs do not ship with system floppies; rather, there is an "Install Me First" CD.

Adobe has joined the revolution in a typically creative way by offering CD versions of upgrades or deluxe editions of its major software packages: Photoshop 2.5, Illustrator 5.0, and Premiere 3.0. These packages go way beyond their floppy counterparts by including many extras; fonts and utilities are included. One of the biggest bonuses on Adobe's CDs are the animated tutorials — QuickTime movies in which authorities from programmers to professional artists give lessons and tips on program features. Premiere 3.0 consists of two CDs!

With many of its CD packages, Adobe even includes "Type on Call," *another* CD with the complete Adobe type library. Type on Call lets you sample any face; a call to Adobe (and a charge on your credit card) allows you to "unlock" the faces and use them just as if you had made a trip to the software store to purchase them normally. Other font companies, such as Bitstream and Monotype have rushed in with their own type libraries on CD.

Apple has a new idea, too: produce a CD that has *all* of the major software packages from major companies — available in "try-out" versions. Like the Adobe Type On Call CD, you can "unlock" the software by credit card and telephone.

MacZone has countered by announcing the availablity of the **Instant Access CD**, consisting of over 150 Macintosh graphics, business, multimedia, entertainment,. and educational software applications and utilities. According to their release, customers will have everything they need to immediately find, try out, and buy the software of their choice, directly from their desktops. All of the software on the CD is expected to be priced lower than software currently available through the MacZone catalog or any other retail channel.

Other companies will surely bring out competing products. Soon, the idea of a software store may become obsolete. (It is yet to be seen how this will affect tech support.)

Independent software/publishing companies have not been sluggish in bringing out titles ranging from educational through entertainment categories. We've previewed a few in recent months and can now report on our findings.
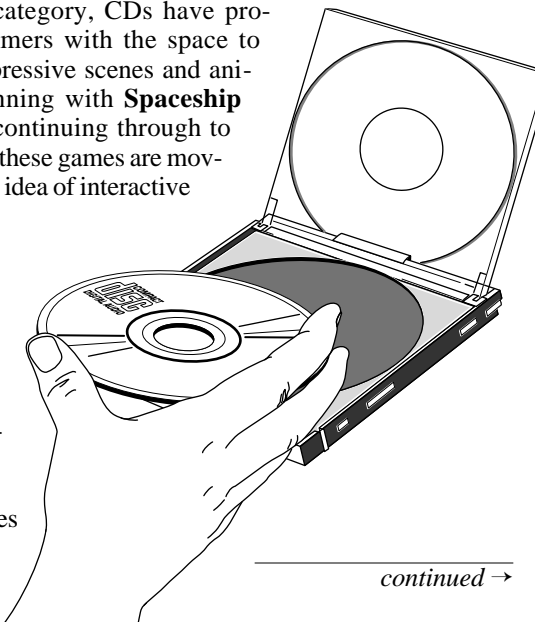
The Animals! is the best educational CD production we've seen. From the San Diego Zoo (and The Software Toolworks), this multimedia package lets you see and hear over 200 mammals, birds, and reptiles in over 60 minutes of video clips.

The tour begins at the Habitat Map, an artist's rendering of the world's major climate zones — tropical forests, deserts, savannahs, or tundra. There are over 300 "exhibits" here, plus sections on endangered species, zoo gardens, and behind-the-scenes looks at the history and mission of one of the world's best-known zoos.

A Media Library gives instant access to over 80 video footage clips (with sound); over 1300 color photographs; over 2500 pages of animal habitat description, articles, and scientific data; and over 2½ hours of audio. The Animals! should be the model for educational multimedia projects. You'll return to this one many times whether you're an adult or a child.

In the games category, CDs have provided programmers with the space to make truly impressive scenes and animations. Beginning with **Spaceship Warlock** and continuing through to the **Iron Helix**, these games are moving closer to the idea of interactive movies.

In **The Journeyman Project**, for instance, a team of programmers and artists have created entire worlds of 3D ray-traced scenes which can be explored

Scenes from The Journeyman Project

with a branching story line. The story unfolds as you choose your actions and interact with both animated and live actors in stunningly realistic environments. An original music score accompanies your exploration of different worlds and different times.

So elaborate is the production of The Journeyman Project that a few pages in the manual are devoted to the making of the game — from initial sketches of scenes ad characters, through the creation of detailed 3D models, to the texture- and bump-mapping of surfaces and the lighting which affected the final rendering of the over 1600 different views. Animations and live action scenes were choreographed to fit into these scenes. The interface was added, as well as the music score and the sound effects; you'll hear yourself gasping for breath if you forget to take an oxygen mask into some of the areas. The entire pocess is said to have taken more than 15,000 man hours of work.

As beautiful as the graphics are, The Journeyman Project is limited by CD access times — perhaps the Achilles heel of all of the interactive 3D games. You'll need patience to wait when you open a door and the next "room" full of data has to load into your computer. At one point in the game, you walk down a long corridor to an intersection. On our test computer, a 20MB Mac IIfx with a new Apple 300 CD-ROM drive, it took over 40 seconds to turn the corner and see the next section of hallway. I grew so restless that I never finished the game.

Funny you should say that…

If The Journeyman Project seems like a movie, **Funny** bills itself as one — "A Brad Ferren Film." Actually it's a lot of movies; nearly 100 QuickTime movies of people telling jokes, several of which are pretty far off color. This is definitely an adult CD.

If you like, you can just start it up and watch them all in order, or you can use various indexes that allow you to pick jokes by subject (doctor jokes, money jokes, marriage jokes), genre (riddles,

Sports Illustrated CD-ROM Sports Almanac

Space Shuttle

long stories), ratings, or joke tellers. These range from professionals such as Henny Youngman and Alan King, to actors, bartenders, bus drivers, lawyers, musicians, and even children.

If you're a serious comedy addict, there's even an After Dark screen saver module that will play random jokes when your computer is idle. (We did *not* test this feature.)

Many of the jokes are quite funny. This CD could give you lots of material for the watercooler crowd.

Just Grandma and Me (Broderbund, $59.95) is fantastic for kids — and you'll probably get a kick out of it yourself. It's multilingual to boot.

Space Shuttle, also from The Software Toolworks, is a multimedia history of NASA's space program. It covers 53 missions, from blast-off to the highlights of each individual flight. You'll see untethered space walks, meet the crews, monitor the delivery of a satellite, and observe weightlessness experiments. A narrated video from Johnson Space Center provides the introduction to these adventures.

Sports fans will want to deck out the **Sports Illustrated CD-ROM Sports Almanac** (Warner New Media), a year's worth of sports highlights, history, and records. Every major sport is included. There are profiles of nearly 500 prominent sports figures, athletic awards from 1931 to the present, public opinion polls, dozens of articles by *Sports Illustrated* writers, and more. The only thing missing is the swimsuit issue. Sorry, fellas.

In 1977, two extraordinary spacecraft, both called Voyager, were launched toward the stars. Affixed to each was a gold-coated phonograph record inscribed with the music, images, and sounds of our planet. **Murmurs of Earth** (Warner New Media) is a big set consisting of two CD discs; a 275 page book by Carl Sagan; and Voyager Gallery, a 16-page, full-color gallery of images transmitted back from Voyager to Earth; plus an update on the progress and significance of the Voyager project.

Fascinating as history, however, Murmurs of Earth is something of a fizzle as multimedia goes. The pictures contained on the CDs are basically the same as those in the book. The CDs do include all 90 minutes of the music and sounds included in the Voyager

Record, but there's very little "interactivity" in this package. Although this is a handsome package, with definite historical worth, browsing a CD full of still images just isn't anything special; and you'll probably spend more time with the analog book.

A Hard Day's Night is, of course, the Beatles movie. The CD version contains nearly two hours' worth of full motion video. Like most CD volumes containing movies, the actual animated area is pretty small, but the surrounding area is usually filled with interesting information.

When we bought our Apple CD 300 drive, a selection of free CDs was included. The most impressive was **From Alice To Ocean** (Addison-Wesley, $48.95), the story of Robyn Davidson's trek across the Australian desert accompanied by several camels and a dog. A true multimedia production, it is filled with top-notch photos by Rick Smolan. Another disc included with our drive was **The Mozart String Quartet**, which helps you to understand the intricacies of classical music.

The Desktop Publishing CD (Educorp/ Gazelle) contains a wealth of items for designers: over 160 TIFF images, over 1600 EPS clip art files, over 300 fonts, and over 200 demo and utility programs. (Modesty prohibits me from telling you about the collection of World War I aircraft pictures on this disk that were created by yours truly.)

Conclusion

There are hundreds of other CD titles available, covering just about any topic you can imagine. *Mac Monitor* has previously published articles and reviews of the **Wet Set Clip Art** package, Software Toolwork's **World Atlas**, the **Nautilus** subscription service (a new CD every month), and others. Expect to see even more in coming months.

If you've already wondered whether you should buy a CD-ROM for your Mac, the answer is probably yes. Hardware prices are dropping, and the number of titles is growing. Some items are *only* available on CD. The push is on, and there might not be a better time. Climb aboard.

by Jim Alley
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