

after hours: *family*

We welcome the multimedia debut of children's TV character Pingu the penguin, go for a spin in Classic Cars, and have fun learning chemistry



Pingu

He's cuddly! He's lovable! He's fun! And now he's on CD-ROM.

Pingu, the cheeky penguin beloved by children (and not a few adults) has made his multimedia debut on a CD-ROM for children aged 3-6. Featuring original video and audio sequences from the TV

series, the program includes games, puzzles and screen savers.

There are five puzzles to choose from, each one easy to use, great fun and supporting the National Curriculum. The most popular with our testers was the Number Puzzle, in which Pingu and his friend Robby the Seal bustle onto the screen,



pushing a number of objects in front of them. At the easy level, the aim of the game is to say how many objects have been brought on. To help, large numbers are shown on the screen and, if you

move the cursor over any of them, the number is spoken. This is great for encouraging early counting practice and number recognition – click the right number to get applause from Pingu and Robby. At harder levels, simple arithmetic is introduced, so this puzzle has lasting value.

Another fun activity is the shape puzzle, when Pingu throws out simple shapes from his toy box, ►



family/multimedia news

In **Hercules**, the newest title from Disney Interactive, players must re-enact the legendary deeds of the Greek hero. Defeating monsters and mythical beasts, then fighting through the depths of Hades, will let you take your place beside the gods. The disc features voices and animations from Disney's latest film, also called *Hercules*, and will be released in the autumn.

Disney Interactive: 0181 222 1413
www.disney.co.uk

Aircom Education has launched a series of **GCSE study CD-ROMs** for use at home as well as in the

classroom. Using 3D graphics and mock exams to help keep their content stimulating, discs covering **English, Maths and Physics** are already available at £21.50 each, while **Biology, Chemistry and Geography** will be released soon. Parents and teachers of GCSE students can



ring the number below for the chance to win sets of discs for their school.

Aircom Education: 01737 224434

Just out from Watts Publishing are four new sets of **Interfact** educational books and CD-ROMs. Designed to work either independently or as complementary products, the first titles cover the **Egyptians and Vikings, Electricity and the Solar System. Oceans and Rainforests** will be released at the end of October, with all titles costing £9.99 and available through WH Smith. Watts Publishing: 0171 739 2929



After hours family

which you have to put together to make a picture. Again, there are various levels of difficulty that you select by clicking on a cheerful Pingu for easy, a morose one for medium and a tearful one for hard.

As well as the puzzles, there are some entertaining games – both Fish Tennis and Ice Flow proved to be particularly popular. In Fish Tennis, Pingu plays a version of tennis either against Robby (for the two-player version) or the Fish-o-matic machine (for the one-player version), using a fish instead of a ball. Ice Flow is a Pingu-ised version of Frogger, in which Pingu has to get across the river to deliver parcels by jumping onto ice blocks.

This is a superb example of children's software – an engaging, familiar character, enormous fun and educational as well. Click up a penguin today!

£24.99 (inc VAT)

BBC Multimedia: 01483 268888

Pingu

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Presentation | ★★★★★ |
| Ease of use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| Overall | ★★★★★ |

Minimum requirements: 486/DX2, 8Mb of RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, 16-bit colour display, 16-bit sound card, Win 3.1/Win 95.

Classic Cars

On the face of it, if you're into cars, Classic Cars should be a fascinating disc. It aims to provide historical and technical information on some 400 cars, especially those notable either for their design or technical innovation.

Together with this, it includes photographs and videos, explains how a car works, and takes a brief



look at the greatest manufacturers.

All our favourite cars, from the Citroen DS to the Mini Cooper, are on the disc, as are all the Maseratis and Aston Martins which you can drool over. If you prefer the Stanley Gentleman's Steamer, then there's a picture of that too.

A mouse-click takes you from the picture into details of the car. While some of the information here is a bit anoraky – telling you what size tyres a Mini takes won't replace the Haynes manual – it does at least make for some interesting comparisons.

Elsewhere in the slightly laboured 'Museum hall' interface, it's possible to get into the garage. Here, there's a fair bit of mechanical detail. As long as you've got a vague idea of how a car works, the explanations and videos here will help to clarify matters. It's also helpful, once you've learned about, for instance, disc brakes, to go directly to those cars which use them, although the continuity of these sections is rather poor.

Classic Cars is a disc that tries hard. It collates a lot of interesting, though not necessarily useful, information that it would be tedious to get

from elsewhere, but it's a bit too superficial for us to recommend it wholeheartedly. We'd rather have a day out at the Motor Museum in Beaulieu.

£19.99 (inc VAT)

KOCH Media: 01256 707767

Classic Cars

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Presentation | ★★★★★ |
| Ease of use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| Overall | ★★★★★ |

Minimum requirements: 386DX/33MHz PC, 4 megabytes of RAM, 5 megabytes of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive, sound card, SVGA graphics.

States of Matter

Solids, Liquids and Gases

Changes of State

Revision



States of Matter

If you've ever sat through a school chemistry class taking nothing in, then you'll understand the sense of frustration States of Matter aims to cure. Yardley McClutchin, a cartoon teacher with a heavy Scottish accent, takes you through the basics of the kinetic theory to explain how gases, solids and liquids relate to each other.

Fortunately, his approach is miles away from the chalk-and-talk loved by teachers of our schooldays. Slides and cartoons pop up to illustrate each new concept: animated particles bouncing around the screen are a lot easier to follow than a dry explanation or a textbook picture.

There's a game so you can check your understanding, a copy of the periodic table for ready reference, and you can print out copies of Yardley's lectures to peruse at leisure.

Finally, the program runs straight from the CD on both PCs and Macs: it needs no installation or hard disk space.

States of Matter actually manages to make chemistry quite fun. Its explanations are simple, its graphics are colourful and its facts are spot on. If you need to brush up on your school science to about GCSE level, then this is an entertaining way of doing it: it's just a shame it covers so little of the curriculum and that it is so expensive.

£58.69 (inc VAT)

New Media: 01491 413999

States of Matter

| | |
|-----------------|-------|
| Presentation | ★★★★★ |
| Ease of use | ★★★★★ |
| Value for money | ★★★★★ |
| Overall | ★★★★★ |

Minimum requirements: PC: 486, 8Mb of RAM, Windows 3.x or later, 2x CD-ROM drive, 256-colour graphics, sound card. Mac: 68040 processor, System 7.1, 8Mb of RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, 256-colour display.

