

after hours: family

This month we potter down to Hundred-Acre Wood with Pooh and friends, ponder some spooky puzzles in the search for Dracula's Secret and 'read all about it' in a CD-ROM version of *The Times*

Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree

Disney Interactive has now released this animated version of the classic A A Milne story. Within seconds of putting the CD in the drive you're transported to the Hundred-Acre Wood where Piglet is explaining the

options. You can listen and read the story – each word is highlighted as it is read – or turn off the sound and just read.

The story is about Pooh's passion for honey and, in his search for fresh supplies, he visits his friends Rabbit, Kanga, Roo, Christopher Robin and Tigger. The wood is alive

with wildlife, and all the screens are filled with action waiting to be triggered by a click with the cursor (which takes the form of a bee).

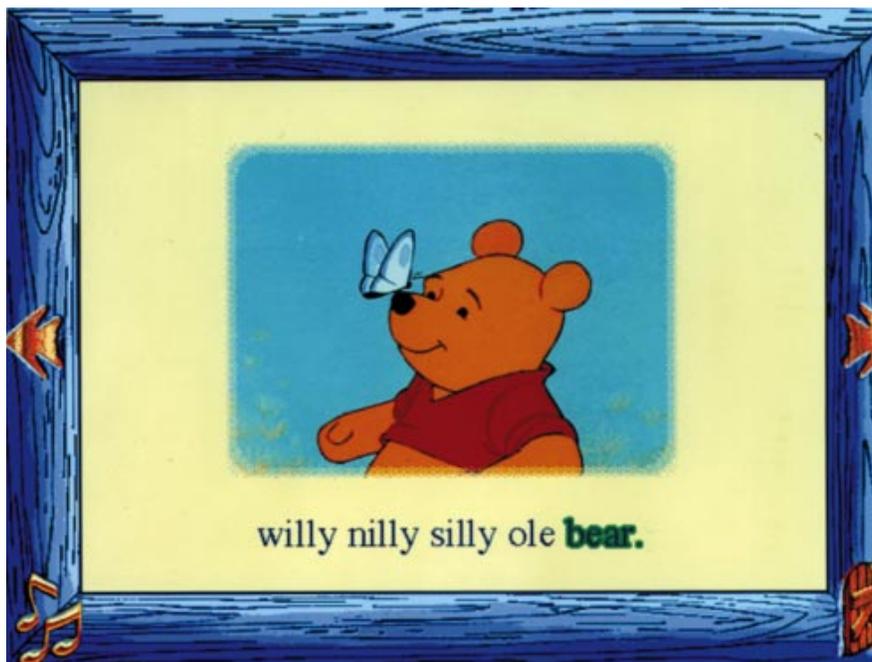
As in the films, the characters are colourful and highly detailed. Their movements are smooth and natural and, in true Disney style, they occasionally burst into song – and you're invited to sing along.

This CD is a true interactive cartoon, and the design and content is top quality. The action-filled screens take slightly longer to load than others and, for the price, the story could be longer, but these are minor faults in an otherwise fun, intuitive product. **JC**

All the entertaining qualities of Disney's animated films, with basic reading lessons thrown in.

○ £39.99

○ Disney Interactive: 0171 605 2738



Pooh and the Honey Tree

Enjoyment	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: 486SX/25MHz IBM-compatible PC, minimum 300Kb transfer, 8Mb of RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space, MS-DOS 6.0 or later, Windows 95 or 3.1, 256 VGA colour display, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card, double-speed CD-ROM drive, 8/16-bit permanent swap file.

family/multimedia news

Romrats is being promoted as the UK's first ever interactive CD-ROM children's software guide. It allows children to try and buy titles that are featured in the guide, and also provides them with support and assistance. For £19.95, members of the Romrat club will receive three CDs a year listing the titles available. *Red Rock Media: 0990 143053*



New on the horizon from Anglia Multimedia is **Virtual Safari**, software that is designed to bring the sights and sounds of the African bush to your PC. The game, which uses footage from Anglia TV's wildlife programmes, allows you to interact with the animals and their surroundings. It costs £39.99. *Anglia Multimedia: 01603 615151*



The new written test for learner drivers has caused a truckload of multimedia guides to come out into the shops. **The Official Driving Instructor from Europress, Open House Question Master for Learner Drivers, and the AA Driving School's Computerised Study Aid** all claim to be just the ticket for passing the test. *Europress Software: 01625 859333, AA Commercial Services: 01256 493352, Open House Marketing: 0161 833 8000.*

The Art of Singing, which is available from Notting Hill Electronic Publishers, won this year's award for Best Entertainment Title from the British Multimedia Association (BMA). The judges were impressed with the CD's depth of content and interactive nature. *Notting Hill Electronic Publishers: 0171 229 0591*

Jump Ahead is a new series of educational software for children as young as one-and-a-half. It supports the National Curriculum, and focuses on mathematics, reading, science and music. Designed to be both entertaining and educational, the tutorials are interspersed with music and song. *Random House: 0171 973 9000*



Dracula's Secret

Dracula's Secret is an interactive cartoon aimed at both children and parents. It offers high-quality cartoon illustrations combined with mind-bending puzzles.

You start out in a graveyard filled with lively characters and travel on to Transylvania through gloomy swamps and forests. The ultimate aim is to reach Dracula's castle, collecting as many useful articles as possible along the way.

Throughout the cartoon there are plenty of details to click on – from a cackling witch to suicidal trolls. Children will no doubt enjoy collecting the articles so they can bargain with the spooky characters on the way to Dracula's castle. However, even adults might have problems completing it; there's so much detail on screen that it's difficult to know what is valuable, and many essential tools are almost impossible to find.

Children with enquiring minds who enjoy solving puzzles will rise to the challenge of Dracula's Secret. Despite the taxing and sometimes frustrating nature of the game, this CD has a lot to offer: it is well thought out, and the attention to detail in the cartoons is excellent. The only drawbacks we encountered were the jerky movements of some of the characters, and the occasional difficulty in loading one screen after another. JC

Dracula's Secret is a beautifully executed game that would be more appealing – and a little less frustrating – if the 'cheat sheet' provided was more explicit.

○ £39.99

○ Corel CD Home: 0800 581028



Dracula's Secret

Enjoyment	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: 486DX/33MHz, 8Mb of RAM, 256-colour display, CD-ROM drive, Sound Blaster-compatible sound card, Windows 3.1 or later.

The Times

Now in its seventh year, the CD-ROM edition of *The Times* is a handy reference tool. It's only available on annual subscription, for which you receive, each quarter, a disc carrying the last three month's

worth of articles, photos and graphics that have appeared in the newspaper.

This year's 'new-look' edition boasts a redesigned interface to improve access to the contents. You can search using a single word, headline, date, photograph, or section in the paper. Although the layout of the screen is functional and initially rather daunting, you soon find your way about and learn how to use all the important features.

However, most people won't be buying this CD for the design, but for its factual content – every story from every section of *The Times* is included.

A CD-ROM is the perfect medium for storage of this kind of information, compressing vast amounts of data, yet allowing you quickly to access and print high-quality articles and photographs. One small gripe is that there could have been more pictures, and those that were included could have been larger. JC

This is an expensive product, but it is a valuable research tool for business or personal use.

○ Annual subscription which includes 4 discs: £206 (for schools and colleges); £351 (for private purchasers)

○ News Multimedia: 01525 852813

The Times

Enjoyment	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Ease of use	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Value for money	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Overall	★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Minimum requirements: 386SX, 4Mb of Ram, MS-DOS 3.0 or later, Windows 3.1 or later and SVGA screen.

THE TIMES

