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bout two years ago, we bought Putt-Putt Joins the Parade which was released in November 1992. We did not like it and brought it back. The graphics were low resolution, the animation was slow, and the music had that electronic synthesized sound used so often in early home video games. The software just did not have it. After reviewing Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo, we were delighted at the improvement over earlier Putt-Putt stories. The software is well done and very entertaining.

The story centers on opening day at the Cartown Zoo. A little motor car named Putt-Putt and his pet dog, Pep, help a large 4x4 named Outback Al the zoo-keeper, get ready to open the Cartown Zoo. However, before the zoo can open, Putt-Putt has to find six missing baby animals so they can return to their own zoo habitat and be reunited with their parents. Baby Jambo the elephant, Sammy the seal, Kenya the lion cub, Masai the giraffe, Zanzibar the baby hippo, and Skeeter the snake are missing and could be anywhere in one of the zoo's three habitats: Arcticland, Grasslands, or Jungle Land.

Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo is part of Humongous Entertainment's Junior Adventures™ series -- a collection of nonviolent, multimedia adventures designed to entertain children ages 3 to 8 with characters and storylines that bring them into an imaginary world. Unlike other traditional computerized storybooks that require the child to literally turn pages to proceed through the story, Humongous Entertainment's Junior

Adventures unfold through the child's own actions. The interface is fully mouse driven and kids have total control of the animated world on the screen. There is no reading required making it great for pre-readers. Children direct the story as they make decisions about where to go, who to talk to, and what to do next to achieve the goals they set for themselves. Every action and decision the child makes affects the story. Each adventure is open-ended and designed for exploration. Kids point and click to discover clues, solve puzzles, and collect information at their own pace in any direction or order they choose. In *Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo*, there are more than 500 secret click points in 30 different screen locations. All Junior Adventures help develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as build self esteem in a storybook environment geared to having fun and learning. Children see how their decisions and actions affect what happens in the interactive world around them.

Finding the missing baby animal is not enough to reunite it with its parents. Each animal has gotten itself into some sort of predicament making it impossible for the baby to return home. For example, Sammy the seal has somehow gotten trapped in a dried up river bed that has been cut off from the main river. *Putt-Putt* has to figure out a way to either get Sammy back to the main river or restore water to the dried up river bed.

here are many things to do in *Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo*. Bret Barrett, "Zoo" co-project leader at Humongous Entertainment, said, "We designed *Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo* so kids can play in a variety of ways and always have a good time." Small interactive side ventures can be found throughout the story. There is a Paint Shack where you can paint and repaint *Putt-Putt* different colors, an opportunity to go down river rapids on a raft, play animal tag with increasing levels of complexity and play ice hockey with a polar bear. With a camera *Putt-Putt* gets from the Zoo Gift Shop, kids can take, save, and print pictures of the Cartown Zoo animals. A speaker is in front of each animal exhibit and clicking on it gives information

about the animal and its habitat.

Each Junior Activities product is packaged with a "Junior Adventurer's Handbook" which is an activity book that includes traditional educational content such as reading, writing, and math. It also uses higher-order thinking skills such as problem solving and deductive reasoning. Each package includes a box of crayons and colorful stickers of Putt-Putt and all of Humongous Entertainment's roster of characters.

The activity book that comes with Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo includes many learning games that children can enjoy with the whole family. A few of the things to do are match bodies and heads of animals, babies with parents, shadows with figures, animals with their homes, and footprints to animals. There is also an activity to tell which animal does not match the group it is in, connect the dots, find the hidden objects, and help an animal through a maze.

The graphics and sound of Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo are of high quality. Immediately apparent is the quality of the graphics with large size figures and bright refreshing colors. It is not a situation where we measure the size of the figures in pixels but in inches. Everything is clear to the eye. The views of individual scenes show different perspectives making it more movie like and adding to the realism. For example, when speaking to the elephant, Jambo, three visual perspectives are used. First, Putt-Putt and Jambo are shown straight ahead looking at each other. Second, the view is from slightly behind and over Putt-Putt's shoulder looking up to the Jambo. The third view is from slightly behind and over Jambo's shoulder looking down at Putt-Putt. The animation, which is feature-film quality, employs traditional hand-drawn animation techniques and contains more than 25,000 frames of high resolution hand drawn animation.

An emotionally rewarding feature of the game is that we see the missing baby animals reunited with their parents. The parents despair and the babies desperation are replaced by relief and security. We see happy united families in their zoo home. We asked our son, Aran, if he enjoyed seeing this and he replied, "Yes!" It made him feel happy. Of all the computer software our nine month old son, Brian, has been exposed, Putt-Putt Saves the Zoo is the one that caught his attention. He really laughs at parts of Putt-Putt like when the Zebra blows raspberries during the game of animal tag.

Keeping in mind that Putt-Putt is a car, go ahead and Putt-Putt for the fun of it -- it's Humongous fun.

#### Pros

- Very intuitive, easy to use mouse driven point-and-click interface
- Non linear game play
- Helps to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- There are many side activities to do
- An activity book is included
- The graphics and sound are all excellent

#### Cons

- none

#### Publisher Info

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