

FUN 'N GAMES REVIEW

Fun 'N Games is a new 3DO product designed by Panasonic with everyone in mind. It is fashioned mostly for the kids in the household, with plenty of games and puzzles to keep them occupied. However, adults also will probably enjoy some of the games included in the package. Such games include a space adventure called Space Cadet, an alien-attack drama called Aquashark, and even a brain-teaser called the Sliding Puzzle.

The first level of play I took a look at was the painting section, which impressed me immediately. There are two levels of paint activities. The first is the usual Paint Zone, however there is nothing usual about it. I went into the coloring mode, expecting to find nothing more than a coloring book on CD. What I discovered, though, was a veritable art room just for kids! First are the essential drawing tools. Unlike other games which utilize only one or two different kinds of paint brushes, this one actually allows kids to use many different kinds of tools to create their own masterpiece. For example, they can choose to draw a straight line or just draw freehand, they can draw circles and squares, and they can even cut parts out of a picture and place them anywhere they like. There are spray cans to create a different effect, a shader to darken areas of the screen, and other tools I can't even begin to mention.

The variety of colors is just as impressive. You begin with a few choices of the standard crayon selections, but then, you are given numerous selections to choose from that resemble some of the worst ties you've ever given your father for Father's Day! There are tie-dyed colors, blue and gray shading colors, even (and this was one of my personal favorites) a brick choice. By using this particular choice, you could turn your easel into a brick wall, and then perhaps use the spray can tool to graffiti it yourself.

There is also a stamping option, with which you can choose once again from several different kinds of stamps, ranging from an armadillo to a weightlifter. With these choices, you can personalize your own drawing once you've finished with it. There is even an option in which you can choose from several different frames to place around your drawing, just like in the art galleries!

If you want, you can add effects to your painting. You can distort the stamp you chose, you can rotate it around its center, or even make it grow or shrink, depending on how large or small you would like it to be. If you make a mistake, there is an "OH NO" option. Click on this tiny icon, and in a Mr. Bill-like voice, you will hear the words, "Oh no!" This will erase whatever you have just done in case it was a mistake. Be careful, though, because this option will only erase the most previous move made.

There is also a coloring book option for someone who just doesn't know what to draw. Here, again, you are presented with several different black and white drawings that you must color in using your many colors and stamps. Once again, there is a large variety to choose from in this category.

If you grow tired of painting, or would rather open up a painting program more suitable for the 3-5 age group, use Paint Jr. This option is a smaller version of its big brother, in that it doesn't provide the child with nearly as many choices and options under every category as the regular paint program does. But, for a small child, the variety is just perfect.

After painting is finished, it's time to move on to music. In the Music section of the game, a child can either create their own music by playing notes and then playing them back, or they can choose to play traditional songs and add their own notes or sound effects to them. For example, one might play the Star-Spangled Banner and add sound effects such as bells, burping, or even instruments like violins and guitars to personalize the tune. Other selection include Happy Birthday and Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.

Here, too, there is an OH NO option, in case you accidentally hit a sour note in your otherwise beautiful harmony. Meanwhile, continue playing with sound effects like a baby's cry, a cat's meow, or even a whoopie cushion. The great thing about this is, the child is in complete control. Whatever the child decides he or she might like for their song, that's exactly what they get, and they learn how to read notes and music at the same time.

You can also use the Groove Disk to add pre-written drum rhythms to songs. These rhythms can range from the conga to the cha-cha-cha, and there are eighteen grooves to choose from.

Style is the next option on the agenda, and this is for the designer in all of us. The Style Zone begins with a boy or a girl (your choice) trying to figure out just what to wear. You must help by choosing the proper hairstyle, blouse or shirt, and skirt or pants for your own individual. But remember, they don't exactly have to go together, because it's only a game! The crazier the combinations, the more fun you will have. Give a guy a moustache, or give him an afro. Give a girl long, flowing hair, or even an Arabian look! It's your decision. You can even adjust the skin tone of the Fashion Model's skin, from black to green!

The other option under the Style section is Mix N Match. Under this category, you are not given any one specific individual to dress. Rather, you may coordinate the head of a character with the middle of their body and their legs. Once again, you can either do this by searching out the proper match, or just allowing a queen to be a weightlifter wearing a grass skirt. It's your decision.

The final frontier you will encounter in *Fun 'N Games* is the games. These are just as interesting as the rest of the games. You have your choice among space games, puzzles, and challenges. *Space Cadet* features your struggle battle waves of alien ships to rid the galaxy of its alien threat. *Aquashark* places you in the future (2402, to be exact), to destroy an alien named Aquasub, a transforming underwater lobster. *The Adventures of Max & Maxine* is a bit lighter, in which the object is to guide the mouse of your choice around cats, scorpions, and other threats, while eating all the cheese you possibly can. The Sliding Puzzle is a brain-teaser game in which you must arrange all puzzle pieces in their correct positions. Finally, in *Whereabouts*, you must match up pairs of crazy cards. Panasonic calls it "the electronic version of the classic card game Concentration™!"

In conclusion, I found *Fun 'N Games* to be fun, educational, and surprisingly entertaining. I believe that the permutations of choices in every section of the game not only allows for more variety, but also for many more hours of enjoyment. It is this vast combination of choices alone that make this the entertaining and educational game it is.