

Domestic bliss

A suite that goes beyond the basics and helps turn your dream home into reality

When *Better Homes and Gardens*, one of America's best-selling magazines on home improvement, comes out with a CD-ROM, people are forced to sit back and take notice. For many years, BHG has defined the elegant American way of life, and the "Total Home Suite" draws from this experience.

The suite is really a package of three titles that can be used independent of each other. They are 'Healthy Cooking Deluxe', 'Decorating your Home' and 'Complete Guide to Gardening'. Together, these titles aim to go beyond the basics, and provide users with clear guidelines on how to bring the dream home into reality.

'Healthy Cooking Deluxe' promises to be the most popular of the three titles. Apart from the topical leverage it enjoys over the rest of the pack, this CD-ROM is packed with superb graphics (both stills and QuickTime videos) and informative sound clips. The list of recipes is extensive although perhaps a bit hackneyed; still for a user wanting to add some Western (okay, American!) cuisine to his repertoire, it can be quite helpful. Each recipe comes with a list of ingredients that can be grouped into a shopping list and printed. For the health-conscious, this CD-ROM offers detailed nutritional information and a feature to search for meals based on several nutritional factors. Some delectable extras include full-motion video culinary tips and an encyclopaedia on food and cooking.

If you are moving into a new home or planning to refurbish your present one, or if you simply like to dream, 'Decorating your Home' might suit you just fine. Tour the Design Gallery's 147 rooms, consider design options and detailed instructions on what makes them work from window and wall treatments to carpet and furnishing styles. Learn how the mere positioning of your sofa can drastically affect the

'social space' of your living room. Go 'live' in 360-degree virtual tours through professionally designed homes. This CD-ROM is definitely very slick and professional, but it is very culture-specific and runs the danger of being reduced to mere eye-candy (if you mind the notoriously outmoded American furniture styles) to the Indian user.

Fiscus fading? Hydrangeas wilting? Or you just want to know how to resurrect that dying plant you recently inherited? You should find all your answers in the 'Complete Guide to Gardening', which offers a database



of over 700 plants and a glossary, including lucid instructions on how to care for them. While many of the plants may not grow in your back garden, you could still take advantage of the tips and tools of the trade shared by experienced gardeners. An invaluable feature is the 'Fundamentals' section with authoritative advice on soil conditions, remedies for pests and diseases, and even design suggestions.

Overall, the 'Total Home Suite' is informative but there remain serious questions about its relevance to Indian conditions.

ROMIT MITRA

Rating: HH

Better Homes and Gardens Total Home Suite

Developer: Multicom Publishing

Price: Rs 850

Contact: Microware Computer Services

Manorama Knowledge Adventure (1999 Edition)

Price Rs 595

Sadly, with this seemingly hurried effort,



India's largest selling yearbook has failed in the execution of its 'interactive knowledge adventure' concept. The

World and India Maps, Trivia and Quiz flashcards leave you looking for more information and could do with much improvement. A spartan World Timeline features about 15 events for every two decades. The quality of images is very bad.

Rating: HH

E-mail: manager@manoramaemart.com

Digital Stamp Album of India

Price: Rs 999

This must-buy for the philatelist features stamps dating right from 1852 to 1998. Called 'ambassadors of the country', the stamps are listed in categories such as



Armed Forces, Aviation, Art, Flora, Gandhi, and Science and Technology, among others. What also makes the CD a collector's item is the brief on philately and the history of stamps. A sincere effort.

Rating: HHH

Phone: 022-2022922 Fax: 022-2855966

FrEquency99 Price: Rs 725

It is a great concept—to combine music and video and provide control to the user to change both by mixing beats and video screens available on the CD. It is an attempt to fuse a DJ and a VJ. Bravo! But the enthusiasm ends here.

The interface requires a manual to navigate (provided with the CD) and the quality of the visual imagery and the hip factor of the sound beat desperately try to imitate MTV and fail. It would be a long time before products like this replace Strobe lights and Juke boxes.

Rating: HH

Phone: 022-8729725 Fax: 8727446