



Children's TECHNOLOGY Review™



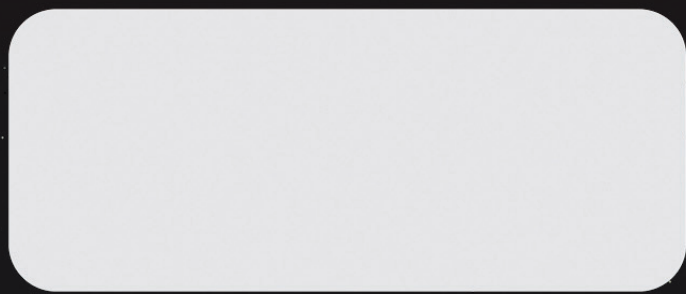
Spring 2005
Our 67th Issue
(Volume 13, No. 1)
Formerly
Children's Software Revue

LEGO Star Wars The Video Game (why it is different)



Contents

News	3
TV Toys, New Game Consoles, A New ESRB Rating, Research Update	
LittleClickers	5
Dust or Magic	6
The Advancement of Pen-Based UIs	
Reviews	
✓ Ages 3-6	8
✓ Ages 5-8	12
✓ Ages 8-12	14
✓ Ages 12-up	16
School Supplement	17
ISTE Books for Teachers	20
Parent's Video Game Advisor ..	21
✓ New Consoles	21
✓ PSP: A Closer Look	22
✓ Game Boy Advance	23
✓ Nintendo DS/PSP	24
✓ All Star Awards: Games ..	25
Mailbag & Magic	28
Subscribe to CTR	30
Directory	31



All Star Awards
(back cover)





We don't throw around five star ratings. In order to get one, a title needs to be the best in its category, have quality content, and empower a young mind. That's why we were so thrilled to find **corefx Three Level**.

corefx Three Level, 5.0 stars, Core Learning, Ltd., \$54.95, ages 5-up. Once you start doodling with this simple, powerful graphics program, you simply can't stop. Somebody finally listened to the masses and made a reasonably priced graphics program that any child can be successful with.

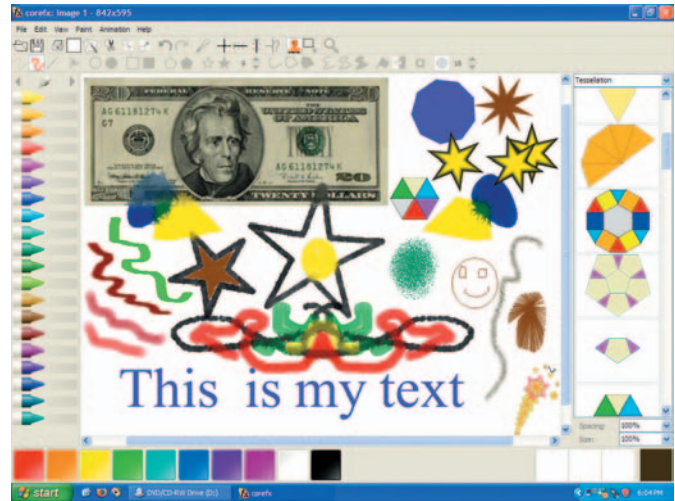
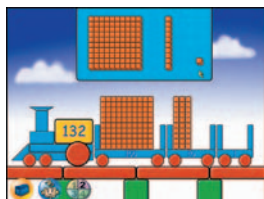
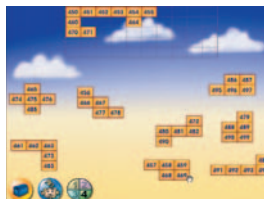


Take the drawing palate—you get 12 types of art tools, in any color or tip size. You can scribble with waxy crayons—the harder you press, the darker the line—or let the watercolors bleed into a silky parchment. Every feature on our creativity wish list was covered: unlimited levels of undo (or redo, if you want to put your mistake back), a nice collection of commercial free, resizable clip art, and the ability to easily add text to your work. The standard pull-down menus are

familiar, often duplicating the icon menus, increasing your chances of making things work.

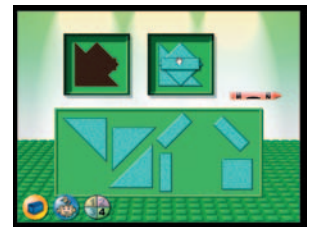
If you have children (or say, work with a room full of wriggling Kindergartners), you'll appreciate the ability to simplify the menus, with a beginners level. Advanced users will find features even Photoshop doesn't even have... like a tutorial on how to make animated graphics, and a quick redraw feature that can fast-forward through your project, one stroke at a time. Like a digital Swiss army knife, the program successfully opened a variety of file formats, so you can pull in a JPG straight out of your camera, add some text, and create a cover for your family DVD. Trial versions, that will work for 30 days and have print/save features disabled, can be downloaded at a variety of shareware sites. The program runs on newer Windows computers—there is no Mac version. All in all, this is the best consumer level drawing program on the market, for both children and adults.

Polygon Explores Mathematics, 4.8 stars, De Marque, Inc., \$51, ages 5-8. A case study in good educational software design, this collection of 20 math and logic games provides a playful introduction to a range of early math concepts. Like the 1987 classic "The Playroom" (Brøderbund), the program starts with child's room, with 20 items. Each leads to a four level activity. There is a train game, where a child must load the cars of a moving train with the answers to math equations, and several tangram puzzles, where children create patterns by dragging shapes onto templates. Two clock games require the matching of the hands of a clock to the correct time (digital and analog), and games of concentration are used to provide math practice. At any time, children can change levels or they can get



We filled the screen with just a few of the **corefx** visual effects.

help from a talking robot named Polygon. So why not five stars? The graphics are designed for smaller, older 800 x 600 screens, resulting in a black border on most modern computers. Also, there's limited "smarts" - namely record keeping or branching.



However, like a large shelf of well selected materials, the interface is refreshingly uncluttered, making it easy for even a preschooler to move in or out of an activity. This is a disk that every K-3 teacher should know about. Both English and French settings are available. Designed for De Marque by Synapse Multimedia.

LoPart, 4.4 stars, De Marque, Inc., \$56, ages 6-up. Art teachers and artists will want to know about this unique drawing program that lets you

Here's the main drawing screen, with a work in progress.

experiment with different visual effects not available in mainstream art programs, such as PhotoShop. Features include three brush tips, a palate of thousands of



colors, unlimited undo ability, and links to an online museum. Resulting projects can have a look of gouache, watercolor, felt pen, spray can, pastel, charcoal and wax crayon. Even a novice can create amazing art. Several aspects of the program are limited, including the screen size and ability to export work at higher resolutions. However, the interface is easy to learn and it is always easy to reverse any action. It is also possible to share projects in the online gallery. You can see samples, or download a copy for purchase (about 10 MB) at www.demarque.com.