

MUSIC

Music proves learning can be fun

By Fred Koch

I can't believe how quickly this summer zoomed by. Year after year, I suffer from "endless summer" assumption. As summer comes, I behave as though it will last forever; the result is that many of the summer projects on my list are still there when school rolls around. It's too late to finish up those projects. Now, it's time for a new school year. With "back to school" as our theme, I thought I would introduce you to some great new music—all with an educational focus.

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MR. QUIZMEE ASKS ABOUT ANIMALS, Quizzenkids Productions, \$14.95, www.mrquizmee.com; ages 7 and up.

This CD is in heavy rotation with my 8-year-old son, Matthew. He plays it in his room, he brings it in the car when we're out and about and he's even given one to his pal Andrew as a birthday present. To me, that's a great endorsement.

"Mr. Quizmee" is not exactly a music CD because of its interactive question-and-answer format, but music and special effects do play a very supportive role. So what is "Mr. Quizmee" all about? Basically, the CD is more than an hour's worth of animal questions, with dozens and dozens of questions waiting to be answered. The setting is the Quizzenkids Pavilion where Mr. Quizmee leads the fun with his assistant, Miss Bright, a large cast of supporting characters and a group of excited, ready-to-play-and-learn kids. There's some friendly banter back and forth before a question is posed. After each question, the kids are invited to shout out answers and then hear the correct answers.

The content is divided into categories: birds, reptiles and amphibians; insects and arachnids; and mammals. You get the feeling you are listening to a game show with enthusiastic kids and supportive characters. But the real value is the educational content. All the questions are animal related and based on math, science, language, geography and history. How do geckos walk on the ceiling? What does a camel store in its hump? How many feet do six pairs of lovebirds have? And one my son brought to my attention: Did you know that there are more chickens on the earth than people? The point is to get kids engaged in learning, and as cliché as it sounds, learning can be fun.

"Mr. Quizmee Asks About Animals" has already gathered a few prestigious awards, including the National Parenting Center's Seal of Approval. Dr. Toy named it one of her 2004 Best Vacation Children's Products, saying: "This is a wonderful way for the whole family to sing, play and learn together." I agree.