

Russian animators open up to co-production opps **p17**

Massive licensed live shows soar into US arenas **p31**

**Licensing Show**—Large licensors making big wagers in Las Vegas **p46**



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engaging the global children's entertainment industry

A publication of Brunico Communications Ltd. MAY/JUNE 2012



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**Cover** Our editorial cover features Nickelodeon's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles—the new generation—headed to screen and shelves later this year. International and event copies sport an ad for the Discovery Kids consumer products brand from licensing agent, Big Tent Entertainment.

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## Editorial

# Big bucks, no whammies!

If the consumer products success currently being enjoyed by Rovio's Angry Birds tells us anything, it's that the long-held industry axiom of "You just never know what will hit, do you?" isn't going to disappear anytime soon.



Those churlish chicks are certainly flying at retail, with IP owner Rovio reporting that consumer products royalties generated 30% of its US\$106 million in revenues last year. And anyone who's had to tally 10% of wholesale sales, knows the company's 200-odd licensees had to sell a lot of PO'd plush, t-shirts, toys—you name it—to reach that figure. But the thing is, no one really saw this

coming. At least not at this time last year. It was only after Licensing Show 2011 that licensees began lining up for Angry Birds. In fact, I had one toyco exec tell me he passed on the property. "Birds don't sell. Everyone knows that," he said, quickly followed by, "Boy, did I bet wrong on that one."

Conversely, I was chatting with a licensor a few weeks ago, who had just found out that one of his properties, which his company had been building over the last five years, did not test well at Walmart. That's five years of work and development, all possibly wiped out by one bad week at America's largest retailer. What could be more disheartening? But that's the nature of this business—everything is a gamble, isn't it?

In both cases, you'd have to imagine that the confidence, if not the egos, of the seasoned licensing execs involved took a bit of a knock. When so much of what you do depends on tempering your gut feelings with years of experience, how do you reconcile making a bad bet? This, of course, is the question I think plagues most people working in the industry, because no one has a flawless betting record. But they keep making wagers, often escalating in size. (See Senior Writer Gary Rusak's excellent piece "Big Bets," p. 26, for a look at three licensors joining the high rollers table in Vegas this year.) And that's what makes the licensing business so interesting; you never know who'll come out a winner and who'll be back at the tables betting on "the next big thing" for the second—or 10th—time.

Cheers,  
**Lana**

Watch for  
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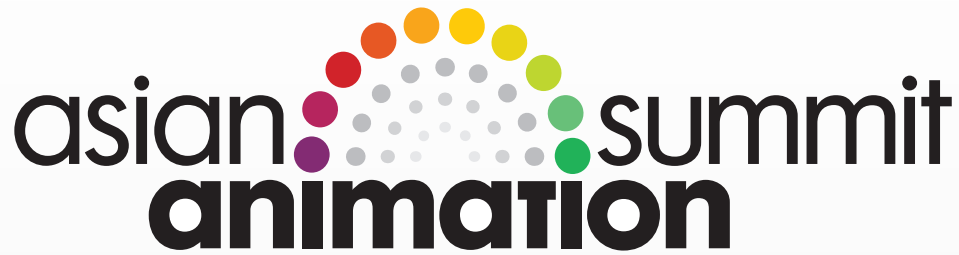


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## Scout for Asian content the smarter way.

Kidscreen, ABC Australia, KOCCA, MDeC and Screen Australia have partnered to launch a brand-new annual event that will showcase Asia's strongest kids animated projects looking for investors and partners.

Built around a curated screening program featuring concepts from Australia, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore that are in early stages of financing and development, the **Asian Animation Summit** is your best bet for finding new properties with global market potential.

**And the best part is...you may already be over there for ATF.**

Hosted by MDeC (Multimedia Development Corporation), the first AAS will take place in Malaysia on December 10 & 11, 2012. Asia Television Forum is set to run from December 5-7 in Singapore, giving you a chance to experience both events easily in one trip, with a weekend in between to chill out and explore.

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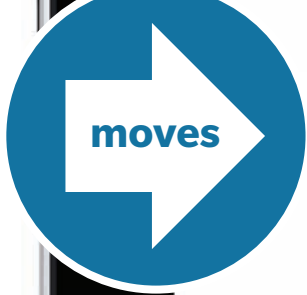
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# The List

Five things on our radar this month

# You Tube™

## 1 Digital reality

This spring, the first annual digital “newfronts” featured media companies such as Microsoft, Hulu and Google stealing advertisers’ attention away from the traditional broadcast television upfronts. A major part of the wooing process for the digital nets has included showing Madison Avenue that they’re adding exclusive high-quality original content to attract more traffic. So as these online portals open up content hubs of their own, a new production model is emerging—one that not only relies on making more with much tinier budgets, but also on the hope of an uncertain revenue-share model for producers. In May, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that although YouTube is investing US\$100 million in the creation of professionally produced channels, it’s giving each of them only a few million to get up-and-running, which is threatening to bring production wages down to US\$15 an hour. And Amazon is also looking to gain a foothold in cyberspace by producing original TV-type content. It’s offering just US\$55,000 and 5% royalties on ancillary sales to creators of greenlit series. We bet a lot of creatives are now wishing they’d studied computer science.



## 2 Bottoming out?

While Viacom disputes Nielsen findings that ratings for iconic cartoon *SpongeBob SquarePants* dropped 29% over Q1 last year, a “sea” change may be in store for the earnest ocean dweller. Is SpongeBob’s epic run really over? Nickelodeon has responded. Yes, the 13-year-old toon accounted for upwards of 40% of the net’s air-time last year, but Nick has since whittled that down to 16%. The mighty Sponge is also still tops with kids on Saturday mornings. See? He’s not all dried up yet.



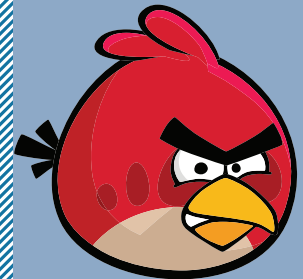
## 3 Transmedia success at last

*The Avengers* shattered box office records, grossing north of US\$200 million on its opening weekend. It’s also a notable payoff for Marvel sticking to the expansive five-year multi-property, multiplatform plan that some industry watchers questioned after one of the lead-up flicks, *Captain America*, failed to meet expectations. Is Marvel’s financial windfall also a victory for transmedia types everywhere? We’re reserving judgment until Ant-Man lands on-screen.



## 4 App central

In efforts to control more of your free time (or so it seems), Facebook is launching an App Center, accessible on the web and within its own apps for iOS and Android devices. It will list paid apps for iOS and Android, but isn’t in the sales business. The hub will reroute users to existing app stores. Of course, developers are required to have a Facebook login to get listed. Wonder what kind of Facebook friend Apple’s going to be?



## 5 (Not) angry shoppers

Rovio Entertainment reported 2011 net revenues of US\$106 million. While downloads of its *Angry Birds* apps continue apace, what’s most interesting about the multimillion-dollar haul is that 30% of that take came from consumer products sales. You have to sell a lot of PO’d plush to net more than US\$30 million in royalty revenues. But, you have to sell even more to meet the sky-high expectations Rovio’s now facing.

 To keep up with the news as it happens, check out [Kidscreen.com](http://Kidscreen.com) daily.



# Perfecting the art of the deal

Growing up, **Holly Stein's** mother had one rule—no Barbies. “Now here I am, working for Mattel,” she remarks. In fact, Stein thinks her current job may be the “ultimate revenge,” as a lot of what she does revolves around the toyco’s famous fashion doll.

**The gig** VP of licensing acquisitions at Mattel. Stein oversees licensing acquisitions for both Mattel and preschool-focused Fisher-Price. She quips that her daily agenda might best be set by consulting a Magic 8 Ball, adding she could move from a meeting about Barbie with a fashion designer, to a meeting about Hot Wheels and racing, to Disney Princesses—all within a few hours.

**Breaking into the business** After graduating from California State University with a major in marketing and communications, Stein landed at a public relations firm working on the Vidal Sassoon account. She eventually parlayed that experience into a position at ad agency Saatchi and Saatchi, where she helped connect clients with the entertainment industry. While working on a promotion tied to the re-release of Disney’s *Fantasia*, Stein got her first taste of the licensing world.

“I was quick to understand the entertainment industry wasn’t about glamor and glitz,” says Stein. “What interested me more was the art of the deal and what happens behind the scenes.” With that realization, she went on to land a job at Warner Bros. Consumer Products. As a licensor, Stein learned the importance of nurturing relationships with different types of manufacturers. “I needed to understand how people in the housewares industry operated, as opposed to people in the gift-wares industry, or people in the accessories and home furnishing business,” she says.

**Honing skills** Over the next eight years, Stein had a hand in cutting deals for the growing division in almost every category, except toys and apparel. “That was where I really went to school, at Warner Bros.,” she says. That baptism-by-fire made her a perfect fit for HIT Entertainment’s fledgling US consumer products division. She joined the company just as Bob the Builder and Thomas were being introduced in North America. “Because it was a new, small company, I got to touch every aspect of the business. So it wasn’t just the licensing piece; it was the marketing, advertising, PR and retail pieces,” says Stein. While at HIT, she made contacts at Fisher-Price, Barney’s toy licensee at the time. Those connections ultimately led to her current position at Mattel.

**Breaking the no-Barbie rule** And what of Stein’s childhood Barbie ban? Long before she landed at Mattel, her mother had a change of heart about the iconic doll. On Stein’s 25th birthday, she was surprised to open one gift in particular—a brand-new Malibu Barbie. “[My mom] realized that Barbie allows a little girl to have dreams and aspirations about being everything from a princess to a politician,” says Stein. And for the next several birthdays, she received Barbies from her mom.

**On leadership** “It’s the people you’re leading who are going to determine whether or not you’re successful,” says Stein. She also makes a point of keeping an open mind, and believes that new opportunities can come from anywhere. True to her word, Stein and her team will be at Licensing Show looking for new properties and opportunities across all Mattel brands. —Kate Calder

## Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



### Patricia de Wilde

SVP of consumer products, Zodiak Kids

**1. In my carry-on** you’ll find face cream samples, nuts and raisins, a grain-filled cushion, newspapers, an eye mask and ear plugs.

**2. My go-to gadgets** are an iPod and Bose noise-cancelling headset.



**3. On the fly** never forget those ugly in-flight socks! They help you make it through that next jet-lagged day.

**4. Preferred in-air tunes** French singer Camille, French rapper Hocus Pocus and D’Angelo.

**5. Best in-flight food** Air France’s Business Class meal and the bibimbap on Korean Air.

**6. Best power-lunch** The Kong in Paris’s Louis Vuitton building and breakfast at the Parker Meridian in New York.

**7. Window or aisle?** Aisle—I need to do my in-flight gym routine up and down the aisle!

## The BIG idea Where’s your next creative breakthrough coming from?



What fuels imagination and creativity? That is the question at the core of *Imagine: How Creativity Works* by Jonah Lehrer, a contributing editor at *Wired*. He argues that society’s understanding of where ideas come from has been fundamentally flawed for centuries. By combining neuroscience and anecdotal evidence from creative innovators like Bob Dylan, Yo Yo Ma, and Pixar filmmakers, Lehrer attempts to sketch a new understanding of the creative process.

“At any given moment, our brain is automatically forming new associations as it continually connects an everyday X to an unexpected Y,” he writes. In the process of dismissing the long-held theory that imagination is a “biological gift,” Lehrer gives those toiling in creative fields much to consider. —Gary Rusak

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# Amazon takes on kids content

## Online retail giant to commission children's series and open projects to public perusal

**A**dd one more alternative avenue for would-be kids television creators to get their projects off the ground. US e-commerce behemoth Amazon, which launched a feature film development initiative last year, has expanded its content remit to take on kids and primetime comedy series.

Amazon Studios, the online retailer's content development division, is a forum-like hub that uses audience feedback on uploaded pitch materials and pilots. Since November 2010, the site has received more than 700 test movies and 7,000 scripts, putting 15 of those movie projects into development. Additionally, a US\$1-million prize was handed out to the best test movie, *Twelve Princesses*. And at the beginning of May, Amazon hatched a similar plan for television series.

Kids content creators are invited to submit their projects to [amazon-studios.com](#) in the form of a five-page description of the concept, along with an 11-minute pilot script. Within 45 days, the development team at Amazon will possibly extend an option on the project for US\$10,000. (Rejected proposals are free to stay on the site to obtain further feedback from the online community.) Amazon Studios is planning to option one promising new project each month and add it to the development slate, at which point it will be audience-tested. Ideas that make it to full-blown series will receive a US\$55,000 payment and up to 5% of Amazon's net receipts from toy and t-shirt licensing and other royalties and bonuses.

Leading Amazon Studios is Roy Price, who ran series development, current programming and TV animation at Disney for several years. And heading up the kids side of the business is Tara Sorenson, previously VP of development and current series for National Geographic Kids Entertainment. Sorenson is based at Amazon's L.A. prodco, People's Production Company.

"Ten years ago, it would have been impossible to do a pilot and have 15,000 people watch it and tell you what they think," says Price. "That would all have to happen before you committed to a show. But now we can do that [by putting it online], and that's pretty much our development process," he says.

Price's team is open to pitches for any genre and style when it comes to its kids slate, but the retailer is targeting two specific demos—children ages six to 11 and the two to fives. (Shows targeting preschoolers are required to have an educational component or curriculum.) Still in the early stages of wading through proposals, at press time Price and his team were just starting to pick out promising contenders and hadn't nailed down a production timeline or set any delivery dates.

While the studio's movie options will be produced for theatrical and DVD release, Price says the company hasn't settled on a definite plan for TV series distribution yet. "We aren't religious on a certain model, but we're primarily oriented around distributing it on Amazon," he says. —Kate Calder

# On the circuit

Notes for the industry travel diary

**July 12-15**  
**Comic-Con International**  
**San Diego**

[www.comic-con.org](#)



The four-day event continues its run as the largest comic book and popular arts convention in North America. A virtual oasis for all things science fiction and fantasy, the event remains just as important for fanboys as for major Hollywood studios marketing their next big blockbuster-in-the-making. Featuring panels, seminars, workshops, previews, awards ceremonies, autograph sessions and the always popular costume contest, the San Diego Convention Center will no doubt be buzzing once again.

**August 5-9**  
**SIGGRAPH**  
**Los Angeles, California**

[www.siggraph.org](#)



Now in its 39th year, the International Conference on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques is a five-day educational conference and commercial exhibition that is expected to draw more than 20,000 professionals from five continents to the Los Angeles Convention Center. If your computer graphics field encompasses research, science, art, animation, gaming, education or the web, then this is a must-attend event. Fun fact—the SIGGRAPH Computer Animation Festival held during the conference is an official qualifying event for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Best Animated Short Film award.

**September 11-14**  
**Cartoon Forum**  
**Toulouse, France**

[www.cartoon-media.eu](#)



This European co-production forum for TV and new-platform animation attracts more than 700 participants and 250 buyers from 30 countries annually. Moving to Toulouse, France for an extended stay this year, the event's scenic backdrop always provides the ideal setting to inspire the producers, financiers and broadcasters who attend. Featured elements include networking, pitch sessions for 60 animation projects, awards, sightseeing, dinners and cocktails—and the odd bout of cave disco.

► A full listing of Industry Events is available at [kidscreen.com/events](#)

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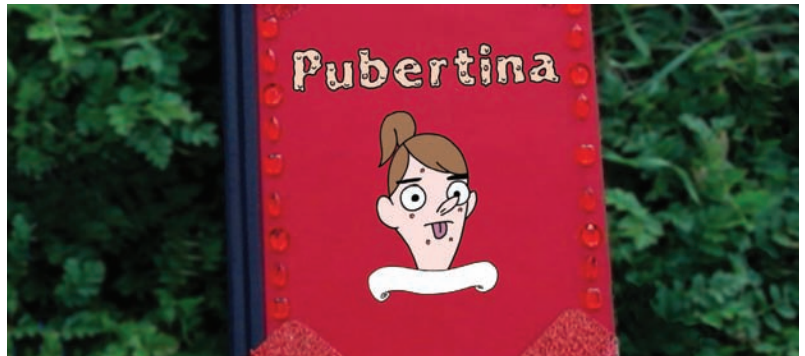
## Shut Up! Cartoons debuts with a roster of fresh, funny animation talent

**What** Shut Up! Cartoons, a new YouTube channel stocked with 18 original short-form and highly irreverent animated series targeting 12- to 24-year-olds. The channel is owned by Alloy Media and part of SMOSH, which has the third most subscriptions among YouTube channels. At launch, Shut Up! debuted just three series and still attracted 7.7 million video views. It also finished as one of YouTube's 20 most-popular channels in its first two weeks online.

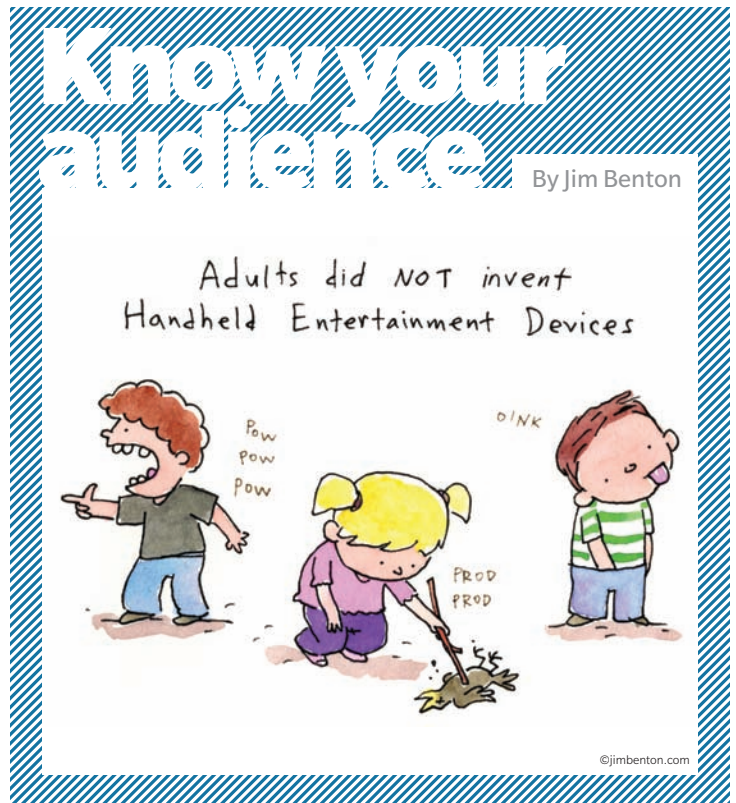
**Fresh talent** Though most of the content is too mature for the core kids set, the channel provides a cross-section of raw up-and-coming animation and comedic talent. Last year the SMOSH team did a massive outreach to animation schools, festivals and its online audience, putting out an open call for pitches. Among the commissions were *Do's and Don'ts: A Children's Guide to Social Survival*, by newbie writer Ryan Naumann, and *Pubertina* by CalArts student Emily Brundige. Throughout the year, the site will also launch toon series by seasoned creators with animation credentials that include work on *Hoodwinked!*, *Pinky and the Brain*, *Pee-Wee's Playhouse* and Nickelodeon's *CatDog*.

**Creative freedom** "There were no barriers to entering," says Barry Blumberg, SMOSH president and Alloy Digital EVP, who's also the long-time former chief of Disney Television Animation. "We are open to any style, whatever the creators think would work best for their property." SMOSH's creative team, led by co-founders and comedy writers Anthony Padilla and Ian Hecox, was on-hand to keep the tone relevant. And head of production Lenora Hume, a former Disney and HIT production exec, facilitated operational hurdles, like connecting people with studios and tools. However, the creators were given virtually complete control over their projects. "In traditional media, you might have 100 people helping to realize someone's vision, but in this case, it was more about seeing how much you could take on yourself," says Blumberg.

**Next moves** Shut Up! will continue to strategically roll out its 18 series throughout the year, and Blumberg says he's already heard from animators who initially questioned the breadth of the digital space. "Of the few shows that have been put up, they've all done at least half a million [views] an episode, which is a great number for a TV show on any network." He says that as a media company involved in making TV shows, movies, online content, merchandise and games, the goal is to develop talent that will continue a relationship with SMOSH. Right now, he's looking to draw an older-skewing audience with Shut Up!, but says that he's also looking into opportunities to develop digital content for younger kids and moms in the future. —Kate Calder



Adult-skewing *Pubertina* (top) and *Do's & Don'ts* were among the first three toons to launch on Shut Up!, helping to attract 7.7 million views in the channel's first few weeks on YouTube



In a recent move, Disney Studios chairman **Rich Ross** resigned on April 22 after the studio suffered a US\$200-million loss from box-office bomb *John Carter* and low revenues for last year's *Mars Needs Moms*. Ross joined Disney Channel in 1996 as a programming and production exec and eventually took over the film studio in 2009. At press time, Disney chief Bob Iger had yet to name Ross's successor.

In other Disney news, and on the heels of the US debut of 24/7 net Disney Junior, **Karen Miller [A]** has been bumped up to executive director of worldwide programming strategy, acquisitions

SVP and CMO. Reporting to Disney Channels Worldwide's president and CCO Gary Marsh, Loomis will be tasked with leading the marketing strategies for Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior channels and brands worldwide.

Elsewhere in marketing, Nickelodeon has bumped **Jim Mollica** up to SVP of consumer marketing for Nickelodeon Group. In his new role, Mollica will be responsible for developing consumer marketing campaigns for Nick's programs across all media platforms, reporting to CMO Pam Kaufman. His most recent position was Nickelodeon Group VP of digital marketing. As such, he developed

his remit on June 18 and will be responsible for scheduling content and planning media across Nickelodeon's linear and non-linear networks.

Back in the US, Turner Broadcasting System's Animation, Young Adults and Kids Media (AYAKM) group has promoted **Jason DeMarco [B]** to VP of strategic marketing and promotions for Cartoon Network and Adult Swim. In his new Atlanta-based role, DeMarco will be tasked with creating and executing promotional marketing programs that grow each network both on- and off-channel. He will also be responsible for supervising AYAKM special events and

torney, have launched Global Pursuit (including its subsidiary Global Pursuit North America). The foursome will collectively lead the Gamania Digital Entertainment and Brand Reality JV with a staff in Asia, the US and Europe. The new consumer products licensing, marketing and brand equity company will build and promote new IPs and existing brands globally in the areas of media, entertainment, fashion, music and home décor.

Over at NBCUniversal International, the company has acquired a 51% controlling stake in global children's channel KidsCo, while partner Corus Entertainment also upped its stake to 43.8%. The new arrangement was struck

maintain his previous role as research manager for Marathon Media.

Also at Marathon, **Patricia de Wilde** has been promoted to SVP of consumer products. In her new role, de Wilde will be tasked with managing Marathon's international kids brands (Totally Spies!, Redakai, Gormiti) and third-party IPs (Where's Wally?, The Saddle Club, Ddee).

On the toy retailing front, Malibu, California-based toymaker Jakks Pacific has promoted veteran toy industry executive **Carmine Russo** to president of its international division. Russo joined Jakks Pacific International as SVP in 2002, after Jakks acquired Toymax,

## people



and co-productions at Disney Channels Worldwide, including Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior. Miller will be tasked with executing the development of all scheduling strategies and be responsible for global acquisitions, sourcing live-action and animated series and movies for Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior, and guiding co-production opportunities. Prior to Disney, Miller oversaw the development, production and distribution of Atlantyca Entertainment's animated series *Geronimo Stilton* and did an 18-year stint at Warner Bros., last serving as VP of property acquisitions for consumer products.

Disney Channels Worldwide has also upped **Richard Loomis** to the newly created position of

and led social media strategies for Nickelodeon, TeenNick, NickToons, and hit series *iCarly*, *Big Time Rush*, *Victorious* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*.

On the Nick US production side, 15-year Nick veteran **Jenna Boyd** has been promoted to SVP of animation development, while **Brian Wright** moves up to SVP of live-action development. Boyd will be tasked with overseeing all new animated series and Nick's comedy shorts program. Wright, meanwhile, is now responsible for overseeing all live-action development and pilot production for Nickelodeon, Nick at Nite, TeenNick and international co-productions.

At Nickelodeon UK, broadcasting veteran **Tim Patterson** has been tapped as the channel's new VP of scheduling. Patterson starts

trade marketing activity, including the Cartoon Network and Adult Swim advertising upfront programs. He began his career at CN as a senior writer and producer for Toonami.

Moving over to animation, Tokyo, Japan's Toei Animation has appointed Toei veteran **Hiroyuki Kinoshita** as CEO of Toei Animation Enterprises and COO of Toei Animation and Toei Animation Europe. The company has also named **Iriya Azuma** as director of its global licensing business.

Looking at evolving company developments, **Albert Liu**, CEO of Gamania Digital Entertainment, **Sanvy Hsieh**, Gamania director, **Cynthia Money [C]**, Moon-scoop's former president of consumer products and marketing worldwide, and **Jann Stanley**, a global intellectual property at-

after the pair purchased Toronto, Canada-based Cookie Jar Entertainment's minority stake in KidsCo. After five years, Cookie Jar is exiting the joint-venture to expand its business outside the partnership. **Hendrik McDermott** has been tapped to lead KidsCo operations as MD.

Back in the UK, Zodiac Kids has launched a Paris-based international research department called The Research Lab, upping **François Vallerian** to VP of marketing research. The Research Lab plans to offer market information to its international sales and licensing teams, and to all Zodiac Kids prodcos, including Marathon Media, Tele Images Productions, The Foundation and Zodiac Active. Vallerian will also

where Russo was COO. He was most recently EVP of Jakks Pacific International, a position he held since 2009.

Over at Sesame Workshop, former Nick exec **Tom Ascheim [D]** has been tapped to fill its newly created position of chief strategy officer, and he also becomes EVP of Sesame Learning.

And finally, after 37 years in the children's entertainment industry, including a 15-year stint at HIT Entertainment and seven years at children's IP specialist Ludorum, **Charlie Caminada** is retiring from the biz. He plans to step down from his latest position as COO and co-founder of Ludorum at the company's annual general meeting on June 28. He will be attending Licensing Show in Las Vegas one last time, though.

▶ For more People Moves, head over to [kidscreen.com/category/people-moves](http://kidscreen.com/category/people-moves)

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Russian feature film animation like Wizard Animation's *The Snow Queen* is garnering global attention

# The Russian evolution

BY KATE CALDER

**New funding sources, co-production treaties and more space devoted to kids programming on local channels are helping Russian prodcos look outside their border and make a push into international markets**

**T**his June, for the first time ever, a delegation of 15 Russian animation studios are headed to the picturesque lakeside city of Annecy to set up camp at French cartoon market MIFA and let the international industry know they now have what it takes—the quality and the financing—to become a go-to territory for co-productions. The Russian Animated Film Association (RAEA), a newly created association established to promote Russian animation and help foster project development, is leading the way.



The Riki Group is re-working its hit series *Kikoriki* for an international audience

Several factors are making the future of Russian studios appear brighter. Children's programming now has more spots on TV in Russia, the quality of animated features coming out of Moscow and St. Petersburg is gaining notoriety, and a handful of treaties (including ones with France, Canada, Italy, Bulgaria and Germany) have paved the way for the country's studios keen on forging global co-productions. But what's really catapulting the Russian animation industry onto the world stage is new state funding, which over the last few years has put an average of US\$50 million annually into animated projects produced in the country.

"Last year, funding for animation grew by more than 250%, and this year it has increased by another 150%," says Ilya Popov, The Riki Group CEO and head of RAFA. So far, more than 30 animation companies and 100 individual animation professionals have joined the association. Popov expects that number to grow to 70 companies and 300 individuals by the end of this year, and she plans to eventually include organizations connected to the industry, including distributors, interactive firms and broadcasters.

### Making the scene

Among the companies at Anney will be Moscow-based Wizard Animation. Business development director Olga Sinelshchikova says the studio, which employs 150, has received funding for its stereoscopic 3D animated feature *The Snow Queen*. Set for release in early 2013, the company is shopping the pic at the Cannes Film Festival and will be taking it to Anney. Besides *The Snow Queen*, Sinelshchikova says Wizard will also be vying for more funding to make several animated TV projects, including one international

co-production that it will sink its teeth into this year and four other series in development. She expects to announce at least one partnership at MIPCOM in October. "Our strategy for international sales is to find strong partners, territory by territory, in order to establish long-term relationships," says Sinelshchikova.

Pennsylvania-based Michael Mennies, director of international at St. Petersburg's The Riki Group, has been working directly with Russian production companies for more than 15 years. He's seen the evolution of Russian animation, especially in the feature film market. But in the TV space, he says Soviet-era series *Goodnight Kids!* (*Spokoynoy nochi, malyshei!*)—which airs nightly at 8 p.m. and pulls in up to seven million viewers per airing for pubcaster Russia 1—has been a stalwart platform for launching toons. The program has a unique six-minute slot embedded within each episode that's used to air new shows. In fact, The Riki Group's flagship cartoon *Kikoriki* (*Smesharki*) made its debut there in 2004. The company is now re-jigging the program for the international market.

"There is a delicate balance between staying loyal to the brand and recognizing that the international market might want something different," says Mennies. Besides its unusual six-minute format that's been tailored for *Goodnight Kids!*, *Kikoriki*'s pacing is slower than similar international shows and it's been scripted to reach a broad age range, because of *Goodnight Kids!*' co-viewing audience. So Mennies is working with a US writing team to tighten up scripts, customize storylines and humor to serve a core kid audience, and remove local references.

Creating Russian shows that can be formatted for distribution internationally is just one tack The Riki Group is taking. The other is developing international shows from the ground up. *Qumi Qumi*, a 26 x 11-minute Flash-animated series, is one such project Mennies is helping develop directly for the global market. With the help of state funding, the company is producing a pilot, in time for MIP Jr. in October.

### Partnering strategies

"My advice to companies outside of Russia is that it's helpful to find a local partner to help navigate the territory," says Mennies. Nickelodeon, for one, looked to The Riki Group as a partner when it entered Russia in 2010 with a localized 24-hour cable channel and a block on terrestrial broadcaster TNT. (TNT reaches 102 million people and, as of December 2011, had an 11.9% market share of kids age four to 15.) Nickelodeon also acquired channel distribution, digital media and program sales rights for *Kikoriki* across Central and Eastern Europe (excluding Russia), the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

"As we started building up our presence in Russia, we spent some time understanding who the local players are," says Nicholas Walters, head of Nickelodeon/Viacom Russia. He says besides airing *Kikoriki* outside of Russia, the Nickelodeon programming sales team helps distribute the show internationally. (And last year,



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Nick appointed The Riki Group as its exclusive licensing agency in the Russian market.)

"We'd like to be part of the story of helping the thriving Russian animation market develop," says Walters. Nickelodeon has a track record of working with local content producers to develop strong shows, and Walters points to series like *House of Anubis* (Studio 100) and Rainbow's *Winx Club* as projects that were hatched in smaller local markets and then introduced internationally.

Walters says collaborating with TNT to create a complementary programming schedule has helped to drive viewers to the pay channel. Roughly 3.7% of the Russian population tuned into Nickelodeon last year, according to French ratings firm Eurodata. But Walters says since 2010, the channel has doubled the viewing time of its nearest pay-TV competitor.



Developing Flash-animated series *Qumi* from scratch, The Riki Group has a global audience in mind

### Russian airwaves

Previously closed off to international content, the volume of children's programming in the Russian market has increased tenfold in recent years. Besides Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon, which both operate pay-TV channels in the territory, Disney recently announced that it's launching a free-to-air channel that will reach 40 million households via a 49% stake in Seven TV (a broadcast channel owned by Russian media firm UTH). The launch is slated for this year and will include Disney programming plus original Russian content.

"Digitization has brought international channels to Russia, which stimulates market competition," says Tatiyana Tsyvareva, editor-in-chief at Carousel, a 24-hour children's


channel that terrestrial broadcaster Channel One (Russia 1) launched in December 2010. It's available as part of free-TV packages across cable, satellite and broadcast digital networks. "Competition inevitably benefits the audience, as TV producers strive to bring viewers the best, highest-quality content."

She explains that acquired content comprises less than 50% of Carousel's schedule and includes international cartoons and features. The majority of the channel's airtime, however, is devoted to classic Russian animation and new originals from local producers.

Though the availability of children's programming has increased in Russia, opening up a market for animation production, the domestic broadcast scene is not without its challenges. While Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network currently have Russian feeds, and Carousel offers free digital kids programming, RAFA's Popov says kids and families are largely still watching free-to-air terrestrial programming. Additionally, the territory has no laws limiting the presence of foreign content, so Russian shows—which make up the bulk of kidsnet programming in the country—have to compete for timeslots against all-ages foreign acquisitions.

But obtaining backing from a local broadcaster is an important part of any co-production equation, so RAFA is also working with Russian broadcasters to create a national program that will actively solicit channel involvement in projects at an early stage of development. "RAFA's objective is the development of a mature market in which conditions exist to ensure that all players are developing the animation market," says Popov. She says plans also include lobbying for a partial relaxation of current legislation that bans advertising during all children's terrestrial programming, which affects license fees. "If broadcasters have the ability to sell advertising, they'll be able to pay more for animation, which will have a positive impact on studios," says Popov. The association also plans to use the power of its membership to work together on initiatives to combat piracy, an issue that plagues the territory.

### Keeping up with demand

Though the domestic broadcast scene is still developing, Popov says the significant increase in locally produced original series over the last decade has nevertheless created a demand for Russian animation. In fact, she says several of the larger studios now outsource their more labor-intensive production to Asia, India and smaller studios located outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, where rates are lower. Unlike other fledgling animation territories that have built up industry cred through service work, Russia's reputation has gotten a boost from its feature film production activity over the past few years. Service work, however, isn't out of the question and Popov says a number of RAFA members are planning to develop service units. She adds that one of Russia's largest studios, Soyuzmultfilm, is in discussions to create a shared production facility. "The idea is to give private studios access to service and resources to create their projects," says Popov. 

Work in progress Animated TV Series Calimero - All Rights Reserved - Gaumont-Alphanim, CalimeroTM under licence by Calibra BV - All rights reserved. Authors of the character Calimero: Nino Pagot, Tom Pagot and Grazia Colnaghi. Drawn and graphic: Nino and Tom Pagot.



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Doc McStuffins has been raking in the viewers for Disney Junior's new 24/7 US channel

## A whole new channel

### Disney Junior US makes the most of its connection with moms

**The challenge** On the heels of rebranding its morning Disney Playhouse block on Disney Junior last year, the House of Mouse launched a full-scale 24-hour Disney Junior channel this past March, replacing the company's SoapNet channel in the US cable spectrum. Despite the existence of preschool nets Nick Jr. and Sprout, SVP and GM of Disney Junior Worldwide Nancy Kanter contends that not only was there room in the US broadcast landscape for an exclusive preschool channel, but also, parents were asking that shows from the Disney Channel block be made more available. "All the pieces aligned—the landscape, the content, the interest from families to have shows on throughout the day—so we took the plunge," says Kanter.

**The programming** Keeping in tune with the daily routine of young children, the new channel's morning programming has more energetic and active shows. Disney went into its library to resurrect shelved Disney Channel series that moms said they'd like to see again, such as *Higglytown Heroes*, *Rolie Polie Olie* and *Jojo's Circus*. Midday and late afternoon are reserved for the latest new original shows that anchor the Disney Junior block, including *Doc McStuffins*, *Jake and the Neverland Pirates* and *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse*. After 5 p.m., the channel offers quieter, gentler shows like *Gaspard and Lisa* and *Guess How Much I Love You* that help kids wind down and start getting ready for bed.

**Engaging moms** Leading up to the launch, Kanter says Disney made a point of using social media to reach out to moms. "We try to have a conversation with moms because it's such a direct way to get their attention and understand what they want," she says.

A year out from the full launch, Disney Junior's Facebook page began rolling out special clips of new content. It also engaged moms by asking them choose and vote for their favorite of several ads for the channel, which each one picturing a different Disney character. The winner, featuring Minnie Mouse alongside a little girl, was then placed in *People* magazine, which has an average US print circulation of roughly 3.5 million copies.

**Digital initiatives** Comcast subscribers will also have access to WATCH Disney Junior, an authenticated live simulcast of Disney Junior made available across a variety of platforms and devices including desktops, smartphones and tablets. The service will also give Comcast subscribers priority access to on-demand episodes online. "It's really handy when you can pass back your mobile phone or iPad when you're in the car to let kids watch a bite of something," says Kanter. She also expects that more cable operators will be interested in following Disney and Comcast with similar applications.

**Next moves** Kanter says three new series in production are set to find homes on both the Disney Junior block and 24-hour channel. Animated series *Oki's Oasis*, produced by DHX Media's Wildbrain Entertainment, stars Mandy Moore as the voice of Oki the cat sheriff and will bow worldwide in 2013. *Sofia the First*, an animated television movie for 2012 will be followed by a TV series in 2013. The concept features an ordinary young girl who finds herself whisked into the world of royalty and castles when her mother marries a king. The channel will also bow *The Happy Hugglemonsters* (produced by Doc McStuffins creator Dublin, Ireland-based Brown Bag Films and Walker Productions) is based on a book series about five-year-old Henry, the middle child in a family of fun-loving monsters. —Kate Calder



### An interstitial is...

Disney Junior has created a series of shorts called *A Poem Is* featuring celebrities such as Whoopi Goldberg and Katie Holmes reciting classic children's poems as voice-overs for iconic Disney films like *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Lady and the Tramp*. The shorts appear as interstitials throughout the day, and Kanter says they "communicate that you are watching Disney."

The channel has also commissioned *Quiet Is* (above), series of 10x two-minute paper cutout and clay stop-motion animated shorts scheduled to air during bedtime programming. Produced by Edinburgh, Scotland-based animation studio Ko Lik, each ep depicts a quiet moment from a child's nighttime routine, such as putting slippers under the bed or tucking in a teddy bear.

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# Four to 10s in France favor free-to-air

French kids get their fill of Gulli and France 3, as well as primetime fare on TF1



Beyblade Metal Masters is tops with four to 10s on Gulli

French kids ages four to 10 get most of their age-appropriate content from free-to-air children's channel Gulli and France 3's kids block. This group, however, has a big appetite for co-viewing. In fact, the channel that gets the most kid eyeballs across genres is TF1, leading the pack with a 21.3% market share.

Although the channel has a popular children's block in Tfou, Eurodata TV research manager Johanna Karsenty says the channel's main draw for this demo is its generalist evening schedule, which families are watching together. Among the top five broadcasts for children in March were animated films *Madagascar* and *Shrek*, *Survivor* and the Rugby World Cup. And kids are also sitting down to watch decidedly adult dramas like *Grey's Anatomy* and *House* with their parents, as well as game shows *The Price is Right* and *Wheel of Fortune*.

Trailing TF1 in overall market share by at least 9% is Gulli, the only free-to-air dedicated children's channel in France, whose programming dominated the top-15 regular shows

among children four to 10 from July to December 2011. The channel skews slightly towards boys, which make up 59.3% of its kid audience. Gulli's top-performing show from July to December was *Beyblade Metal Masters*, which drew 296,600 viewers ages four to 10, giving it a 34.3% market share. Rounding out the top-three shows were *Power Rangers Samurai* and *Dexter's Laboratory*.

Trailing Gulli with a 10.1% market share is M6, which has two kids blocks, M6 Kid and Disney Kids Club. *Cars*, *Handy Manny*, *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* and *Barbapapa* are the broadcaster's best-performing kids shows, though none of these rank in the top-15 kids shows across channels. Co-viewing is what really adds to the channel's market share for this age group. In February, the best-performing shows overall for four to 10s were family sitcom *Scenes de Menages*, the news (*Le 1945*) and US drama *NCIS*.

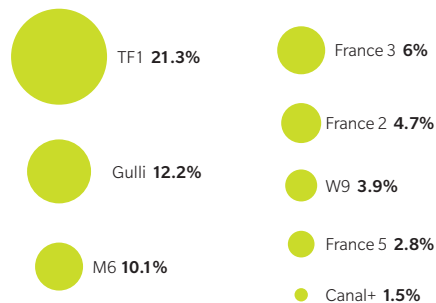
France Télévisions owns a minority share in Gulli, but the pubcaster divides its kids programming between France 3, France 4 and France 5. Of those, France 3's programming hits the sweet spot with this age group, which include four series among the top-15 kids programs in France from July to December—*Looney Tunes* (245,000 viewers ages four to 10), *The Little Prince* (221,900), *Tom and Jerry* and *Batman*. France 2, which doesn't air dedicated kids shows, still attracts the four to 10s with family fare. France 5 focuses on preschool programming, while France 4 skews a bit older—both channels rank lower in market share for this particular demo.

Of the other channels, W9 owes it high marketshare with this kid demo to that worldwide sure thing, *The Simpsons*. NRJ12's Disney Break block, meanwhile, garners good results with shows like *Hannah Montana* and *The Wizards of Waverly Place*, and NT1 offers up anime series such as *Naruto* and *Yu-Gi-Oh!* —Kate Calder

## Market share Children 4 to 10

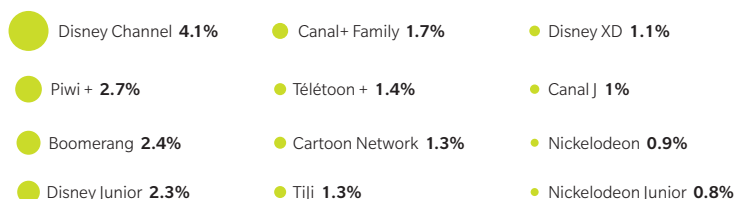
### Free-to-air Channels

(Covering 58 million people, March 2012)



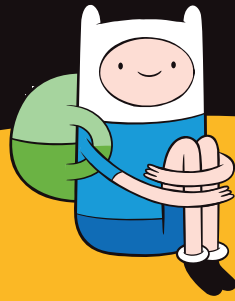
### Multichannel Children 4 to 10

(Covering 36 million people, August 2011 to February 2012)



Eurodata TV Worldwide is a French company specializing in TV audience ratings research and market intelligence that offers TV data as well as expertise and insight into the performance of TV shows in more than 90 countries. Ratings information is provided directly by research institutes in each country, which, like Eurodata's parent company Médiamétrie, measure daily television audience ratings. For more information, contact sales manager Jacques Balducci (jbalducci@eurodatatv.com, 33-1-4758-9434).





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# Ha! Ha! Hairies

Cartoonito's first pan-Euro commission is ready to get preschoolers laughing



Well before it bowed on Turner's nascent UK preschool channel Cartoonito in April, Welsh prodco Adastr Creative's latest outing *Ha! Ha! Hairies* had caught the attention of the industry. Not only is the show the channel's first pan-EMEA commission, but it followed on the heels of Adastr's *Grandpa in my Pocket*, which proved through its success on CBeebies that preschoolers would watch a live-action sitcom—a genre previously untackled by the British public broadcaster. "We feel strongly that live action should be a part of programming for preschoolers," says director Mellie Buse, who developed and wrote the show along with partner Jan Page. It's now steadily rolling out across Cartoonito's recently expanded airspace.

## On-air



**Hairy hilarity** Inspired by the long tradition of silent comedy, the 52 X 12-minute series follows six childlike live-action characters who comprise the Ha! Ha! Hairies, a fun-loving family that inhabits Hairyland. Besides its expressive pantomime style that speaks to a young audience, Buse and Page amped up the series' comic appeal by making the world, well, really hairy. Buse explains the physical environment is not only funny, it's also soft and cuddly to kids. Each episode sees the happy-go-lucky family miming, gesturing and dancing its way through a story arc. The scenes are narrated by two fairies off-camera, who are seen by viewers in animated sequences appearing at the beginning and end of every episode.

"We designed the whole concept around the idea that we wanted this to be a global live-action show, which we think is precisely what Cartoonito was looking for," says Buse. She says the series' slapstick comedy works universally, and the animated fairies are also easy to dub into other languages.

**Hairies go worldwide** "It has definitely generated curiosity from buyers in other markets because they are interested in what Turner's strategy is going to be for preschool," says Josh Scherba, SVP of distribution at Toronto, Canada-based DHX Media, which acquired worldwide TV, home entertainment and North American licensing rights to the series. He adds its high dose of physical comedy makes it even more attractive to territories that usually stick to animation when it comes to making international acquisitions. Scherba says DHX's first priority is to sell the series into Asia-Pacific, including Australia, and then focus on moving free-TV rights in Europe. (Turner's exclusive window expires in 2013.)

**Promo push** Leading up to the launch, Turner took charge on raising awareness for the new series. It started with a simultaneous marketing and PR push in all regions via advertising spots, press announcements and program highlights sent to consumer media outlets, including bringing several journalists from across Europe to the production studio in Wales. Turner's promo played up the comedy and theatrical elements of the show, even sending wigs and hairy-themed items to radio presenters and journalists to get them talking about the series' sense of fun. A range of digital marketing activities targeted at moms included distributing clips, polls and updates via social media. One effort, for example, is asking Facebook users to upload funny hairstyles to their profiles.

**Next moves** Buse and Page have ideas at the ready for expanding the Hairy world if they get the go-ahead for a second season. Buse says the show lends itself perfectly to a stage show. "It has massive musical theater potential because it's packed with gesture, mime and physical comedy," she says. "You have to be careful to cater shows to the right audience and *Ha! Ha! Hairies* has the potential to become a big arena show." —Kate Calder



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# Pipeline

An early peek at shows on the development track



preschool

**Wiki the Kiwi** This sweet comedy series focuses on the relationship and slapstick antics of best friends with big differences—Wiki, a kiwi bird who can't fly, and Brian the Bat, who isn't a bird, but can soar. Wiki has an inventive nature and lives with his family under a pine tree, while Brian has a hard time flying in a straight line. The nocturnal duo comes out to play and have adventures when the sun sets and everything goes a bit topsy turvy.

**Co-producers:** Thunderbird Films (Vancouver, Canada), Flux Animation (New Zealand), Telegael (Ireland)

**Style:** CGI, with a tactile look of stitched-together plush toys. The aesthetic was developed based on a "Wiki" doll crafted by Flux founder Brent Chambers' mother, which also served as a working template for the 3D models.

**Format:** 78 x seven minutes

**Budget:** Estimated between US\$6 million and US\$7 million for the series

**Status:** Scripting is just getting underway and full production is set to begin later on this year, delivering in fall 2013. The series has been presold to TVNZ (New Zealand), ABC TV (Australia), Knowledge Network (Canada) and BBC Canada so far.

**Jerry and the Raiders** Jerry is a curious seven-year-old whose life gets turned upside down when his two action figures, The Galactic Raiders, magically come to life. Convinced that every ordinary "situation" is a mysterious threat, their sworn mission is to uncover these unknown elements of everyday life and take heroic action. For example, they think a spider web is trying to entrap them and that holes in lettuce leaves, caused by slugs, are the work of evil aliens. Jerry's life spins out of control in a series of comical reconnaissance adventures in this co-pro, which also includes plans for an online experience and apps that feature elements of augmented reality.

**Studio:** CCI Entertainment (Toronto, Canada), First Star International and Fake Entertainment (both Montreal, Canada)

**Style:** a mix of 3D motion-capture and video-game technology

**Format:** 26 x 11 minutes

**Budget:** Ball-parked at roughly US\$280,000 per half hour

**Status:** The series is currently in production, and delivery to Canadian pubcasters TVO (Ontario) and SRC (Quebec) should begin by year's end. CCI is overseeing production, financing and distribution, as well as English voice recording in Toronto. The rest of the animation production is taking place at Fake Studios, with First Star handling story editing.



kids  
4 to 8

# Brits get a break

## Long-awaited tax relief on the horizon for UK animators

**UK** animation companies have a bit more spring in their step thanks to a new tax break announced in the territory's March budget. The tax break will be similar in style to one already in place for the British film sector. It will allow UK animation companies to file for a tax return for up to 25% on domestic animation production costs.

The Chancellor's budget speech vowed to keep Aardman's renowned *Wallace & Gromit* produced on UK soil, a testament to the efforts of the studio's head of broadcast and development, Miles Bullough. He got attention from the British press and piqued public awareness of an industry in crisis by announcing that he would be forced to outsource production of the popular UK toon. Bullough joined industry org Animation UK, led by London-based Blue Zoo's Oli Hyatt.



Aardman's Miles Bullough hopes new tax breaks will put the UK on level playing field

Over a two-year period Animation UK lobbied for fairer trading conditions and commissioned a comprehensive report on the sector. The study found that 40% of animation companies in the UK either just broke even or lost money in 2011, and 28% had gone out of business in the last three years. It also revealed that fewer domestic broadcast slots and competition from territories that could offset production costs by way of tax credits had created an unlevel playing field for independent UK animation houses.

Bullough tells *Kidscreen* that the proposed tax relief will mean both *Wallace & Gromit* and upcoming Aardman preschool series *Ploog* can now be produced on British soil, rather than having to team up with a cheaper offshore studio.

Bullough says incorporating the tax break into actual savings will take several months. The treasury is just coming to the end of a weeks-long consultation process to iron out details and draft legislation. It will then have get a pass from the European Union and be evaluated and vetted by industry stakeholders. He expects the entire process will take up to six months, but says the final result for UK animators will be "game changing."

—Kate Calder

## NowTrending—Media

What's bubbling up in kid content culture



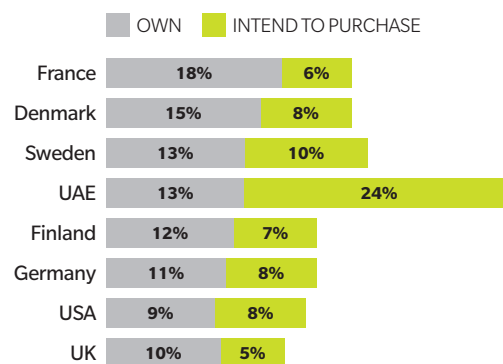
Aardman extended its Shaun offshoot game property *Championsheeps* into shorts that will air during the Olympics

### Championsheeps peak for London 2012

Aardman's Shaun the Sheep offshoot *Championsheeps* launched in late 2010 as a suite of online games and is now set to air as a series of 21 x one-minute episodes on CBBC this summer, just in time for the London Olympics. The original online games feature Shaun and friends as they're left alone on the farm for a day, where they hold their own epic competition.

### Smart TV ownership

Smart TV ownership levels are highest in France and Scandinavia, while intention to purchase is particularly high in the UAE. Other YouGov research reveals that of Brits who currently own a smart TV, 35% said the majority of their TV viewing is on-demand, while 51% of parents with preschoolers do the same.



Source: YouGov, February 2012

### Filipino kids among most connected

Kids in the Philippines are quickly going to be among the most connected in Australasia, according to Cartoon Network's recently released *New Generations 2012* study. The study found that 65% of Filipino children ages seven to 14 have their own mobile phone, a 71% increase from the 38% who owned a mobile phone three years ago. In comparison, only 42% of kids in Australia have their own phone and 22% in Taiwan. The study also found that more than half of Filipino kids in urban centers live in internet-enabled homes, and 16% of those households now have tablet devices.

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# A really BIG show



DreamWorks' *How to Train Your Dragon* arena show flew into the US in May

Once the sole domain of rock gods, pop idols and sporting events, giant arenas are opening up as venues for outsized, elaborate licensed stage shows, creating a new revenue stream for kids IP owners

BY GARY RUSAK

**W**ith top arena tours from the likes of U2 and Bon Jovi each grossing more than US\$200 million in just one calendar year, and the top-10 acts raking in a cumulative US\$1.2 billion, it was only a matter of time before the owners of global properties began to stage massive arena efforts. In the past, IP owners tended to license out theatrical rights, but this new model places owners into something akin to a co-producer role, giving them more control over the content and management of the show. DreamWorks, Warner Bros. and Twentieth Century Fox, in fact, are all at various stages of mounting major arena shows that are looking to generate revenues similar to those raked in by major musical acts, albeit with lower ticket prices. (The lower per-ticket price is mitigated by performing multi-day runs in one arena, as opposed to the one or two nights that a major headlining musical act might stage.)

This new crop of arena shows are true co-productions with licensors having direct input into the scripts and staging of the shows, while their production partners flesh out the details and bring their logistical and design expertise to bear on the overall production. With each show taking at least 24 months to develop, the productions are expensive and complicated, but a successful arena run can pad the bottom line with a continuous source of revenue and keep the property fresh in the public's mind, which, of course, pays dividends across other channels like film, TV and consumer products.



Scrat, one of Ice Age's most recognized characters, has a primo part in the property's new arena show

### Dragons take flight

"As a studio, there are many different ways for us to deliver entertainment and experience," says Eric Stevens, head of live entertainment at DreamWorks Animation. "This is not a license at all; we are producing it. This is as much about brand extension as it is about delivering a brand-new experience."

The new experience Stevens refers to is the *How To Train Your Dragon* arena show that debuted at the Hisbesne Arena in Melbourne, Australia in March before moving on to week-long stretch in Sydney and Brisbane and hitting the US in May. The venues capable of handling this elaborate

spectacle typically have at least 5,000 seats with the bigger accommodating as many as 15,000 fans. The show is not having a problem packing them in.

DreamWorks partnered with Global Creatures, the production company behind the *Walking with Dinosaurs* arena show. (It launched in Australia in January 2007 and toured North America for three years ending until 2010.) The pair has developed a two-hour event inspired by the feature film that brought in nearly US\$500 million in box office receipts in 2010.

"We looked at what Global Creatures did with *Walking with Dinosaurs* and thought, 'Wow, imagine if we could bring a DreamWorks narrative to that,'" says Stevens. The partnership also calls for Global Creatures to craft the gigantic animatronic dragons.

The new production recreates the mythical land of Vikings and dragons depicted in the film by bringing to life more than 24 different dragons, including favorites from the movie like Nadder and Gronkle. The impressive creations have wing spans of up to 45 feet and are joined on-stage by full troupes of flying acrobats, while special effects are projected onto a canvas the size of nine full movie screens. The narrative is similar to the film, featuring Viking teen Hiccup, who doesn't quite want to fit in with his tribe of dragon slayers and winds up befriending feline-like dragon Toothless instead.

Ticket prices for the two-hour-long production start at roughly US\$50 apiece.

"For this show we are delivering a very unique palette of artistic interpretation," says Stevens. "Our goal is for the audience to say, 'You have to see what these guys can do indoors.'"

The arena show also gives the property a chance to live outside of the movie theater and keeps the narrative fresh in the minds of fans while the much-anticipated sequel heads into production for a 2014 release date.

Also not to be forgotten are the arenas' ready-made concession areas that open up another retail channel for DreamWorks and its pre-existing licensees to sell branded consumer products. The outlets at US venues are selling apparel and other branded SKUs including t-shirts (in both kids and adult sizes, priced between US\$30 and US\$35), plastic figures, plush toys (from master toy licensee Spin Master), a souvenir program (US\$25), plus a few miscellaneous items like light-powered toys, lanyards and mugs.

Stevens says that big productions are a new business avenue being taken seriously by DreamWorks as it looks to build its many brands with new extensions. He admits that not every brand has the visual scope and narrative texture to become the subject of an arena show. In the case of building a major production, the IP has to be big and rich enough to warrant a two-hour live event that delivers a great deal of sizzle. Not every property is arena-friendly—no one's lining up for the *She's the Man* arena show, for example. However, Stevens sees the live event business as being core to the company moving forward.



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**Batman Live!** has already entertained 500,000 show-goers in the UK and South America. US audiences get their turn in September.

### A new Ice Age

Twentieth Century Fox is also banking on transmuting the success of a movie franchise into a lucrative touring live show. With *Ice Age Live! A Mammoth Adventure*, the company has partnered up with Netherlands-based Stage Entertainment Touring Productions and Cirque du Soleil's Guy Caron to bring the Ice Age experience to the arena stage.

"There is an incredible fondness for the characters and the stories," says Jeffrey Godsick, president of Fox Consumer Products. "It is our goal to create opportunities for the public to fully immerse themselves in the stories they love so much."

Perhaps the centerpiece of the event is the Manny the Mammoth figure that measures more than 11 feet in height. The show will launch at London's Wembley Stadium on November 2 for what is slated to be a five-year global tour.

"It's going to be beyond anything that anybody could possibly expect," says Godsick. "This is much more than ice dancing or acrobats. It's going to have action, comedy and amazement."

The content of the show will draw upon all the major characters from the movie franchise, but won't simply regurgitate past storylines. Instead, it will offer new plot and character combinations. Tickets will retail for around US\$40 apiece, with full family package deals starting at around US\$200.

### Batman bows stateside

Not to be outdone on the studio front is Warner Bros., which is working on *Batman Live*, another big arena spectacular slated for North American debut this fall. It is the first full-arena show to feature the Caped Crusader. The show, which has already played to half a million people in the UK and South America, is on track to land in the US in September and is being produced by Warner Bros. Consumer Products, DC Entertainment and Nick Grace of Water Lane Productions. Grace also co-produced the arena tour of *Mama Mia*, which travelled the globe for more than seven years.

"When the audience comes into an arena, they expect an event," says Grace, speaking from Rio de Janeiro, where he was overseeing *Batman Live*'s Brazilian run. "We certainly have an event for them."

The production, which took more than three years to develop, features a cast of 42 actors, a bevy of circus-trained acrobats, a 3D Gotham landscape, a 100-foot-wide stage, a 105-foot-tall video screen and an original symphonic score performed by 92 musicians and recorded at London's famed Abbey Road Studios.

"We designed the stage to be like a 3D comic book come to life," says Grace. "All the designs and illustrations are hand-drawn and, of course, we have our own Batmobile. You have to have a Batmobile."


The set-up can work in arenas both big and small, will usually have a five-day run in each location, and is expected to spend the next two years touring major cities in North America, starting in Anaheim, California's Honda Center on September 5.

The show itself is a two-hour event with one 20-minute intermission and, like all arena shows of this nature, is designed to appeal to an entire family demographic, reflected in ticket prices that start at around US\$25 each and go up from there.

Grace believes he has found the middle-ground between the hokey 1960s Wham! Blam! Batman and the darker incarnation that has been a big-screen box-office draw since *Batman Begins* swooped into theaters in 2005.

"It is still totally faithful to Batman," says Grace. "We really take advantage of all the super villains in the mythology like The Joker, Penguin, Poison Ivy and Harlequin—they are all there."

The story delves into the origin of Batman sidekick Robin and was developed in tandem with WBCP and DC brass.

"They had complete involvement," says Grace, speaking to the nature of the co-production partnership. "From script to costume design, they have 75 years of experience with the Batman universe, and we wanted to make sure we were totally faithful to it." 

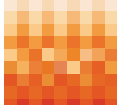


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Image: League of Super Evil

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# New licensing trade show launches in Russia



Smeshariki from The Riki Group was the first post-Soviet licensing success in Russia

**W**ith a population of 141 million, Russia can claim to be the 11th largest consumer market in the world. And in a climate where European economies are struggling with sluggish growth, if not constriction, Russia boasted retail sales growth of 7.2% in 2011, up from 6.3% in 2010. The country seems ripe with potential and has been on the radar of eager licensors for some time, but there's been no clear evidence that it was ready to foster a full-fledged market for licensed goods. Enter the Licensing@Russia trade show. The inaugural event took place at the Moscow Crocus Expo International Exhibition Center between March 14 and 16. Its organizers are currently readying a second edition of the event for 2013, and its success so far is a good indicator of how the Russian market is opening up.

The business-to-business event was organized by Russian company Magnum Opus and drew more than 1,500 attendees, including representatives from 350 different brands. "There were mainly key decision-makers from important companies and agencies," says Zeljko William Krnjak, a LIMA representative for new Europe and co-organizer of the event.

"As a B2B event it was not necessarily our goal to have masses of delegates. We wanted to attract a relevant targeted audience from businesses involved in licensing, and we were successful in that regard."

High-profile companies such as Disney, DreamWorks, Hasbro, Warner Bros., Nike, FremantleMedia and eOne Entertainment all sent representatives.

"Disney had a very large presentation and that attracted a very big crowd, naturally," says Clara Bodin, new business development director for Stockholm, Sweden-based Plus Licens, one of the few licensing agencies with offices in Russia in operation since 1994.

The purpose of the event was to introduce the Russian manufacturing market to the world of licensing. So far, while a few successful programs like the one built around Twentieth Century Fox property Ice Age have resonated with the country's consumers, the licensing community has been limited in scope in the region.

"In general, the most popular brands in Russia are national brands," says Krnjak, suggesting that popular animated character Smeshariki from The Riki Group is currently the most successful character license in the country. "However, that may well change," he says. "New properties have been introduced and it may not be long before they make a visible impression."

Bodin says that some international brands, such as Transformers and Angry Birds, are beginning to gain traction in the country, and that local property Masha the Bear is also starting to make a name for itself. But there are still major hurdles that need to be overcome so that the full potential of the Russian market can be realized.

"It's a highly complex market," she says. "One clear barrier is that the licensing documentation is still in English only. Russian companies are not willing to pay the cost of translations... There are also notable differences between US law and Russian law that can result in delays and misinterpretations."

Generally, both Krnjak and Bodin agree that the Russian market can be navigated with particular caution paid to protecting IP through the Russian legal system before entering the market to stave off the rabid counterfeiting that takes place. Categories currently having the most success in the licensing market are publishing, grocery, novelty, back-to-school and toys—apparel and accessories are just getting off the ground. It also should be noted that a fractured retail landscape is another barrier to establishing proper distribution throughout the massive country.

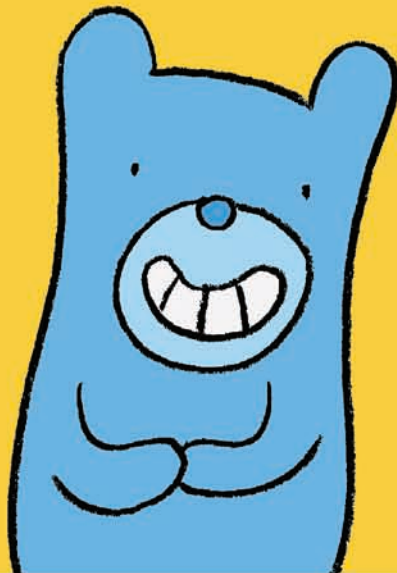
Krnjak also says he was happy with the results of the inaugural event and lauded the many corporate connections that were developed.

"The international licensing community knows the importance of this part of the world," he says. "But it needs more time to really understand how important it is for owners and representatives of properties to have a direct presence here."

The second annual Licensing@Russia show and conference will take place next year in Moscow from March 12 to 14. —Gary Rusak

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Glow-in-the-dark (left), augmented reality (middle) and message-based IP (right) are hot right now

# Trends to watch

We've been trend-spotting and picked up on a few things licensees are adding to their tool kits to spice up product design this year

## Glow-in-the-dark

Certainly something easy to spot, even with the lights off, is glow-in-the-dark. From t-shirts to the toy aisle, it seems that everything under the sun is being designed to suck up those rays and reflect them right back at you.

"The essence of glow-in-the-dark is the magic that is inherent in it," says Stacy Gabrielle, manager of public relations and social media for Easton, Pennsylvania-based Crayola. "It really captures the magic of kids on a summer evening trapping fireflies."

To that end, Crayola is introducing the Digital Light Designer this September. Retailing for US\$49.99, the kit lets kids create with colored LEDs on a 360-degree domed drawing surface. Using a digital light stylus, they can select a color and line width and draw free-hand while switching between eight different colors.

"Their pictures can really come to life," says Gabrielle. "Whatever they draw on the dome can then be enhanced in the animation mode."

Additionally, there are also a variety of animated games, mazes, races and connect the dots modes to explore. "Retailers are really excited about this product," Gabrielle adds.

## Augmented reality

It's been on the radar of digital promo agencies for a few years, and various executions have been tried out on more than one kid-targeted website. But augmented reality now seems poised to infiltrate the physical world—even in the most seemingly tech-free product categories.

After more than 100 years of making puzzles, German manufacturer Ravensburger is adding a technological twist to its stalwart 1,000-piece puzzle line. "We wanted to integrate technology without technology interfering with the product," says CEO Thomas Kaepler.

The solution was unveiled at the Nuremberg Toy Fair earlier this year.

Puzzlers are prompted by on-pack messaging to download a free app to their iPhone. When that iPhone is placed in front of a specially designed puzzle, the augmented reality kicks into gear.

"Placing a phone up to the Paris puzzle, for example, prompts the app to take you to the top of the Eiffel Tower, and then give you a 360-degree view of the city," says Kaepler. "It will also provide information on Parisian landmarks like the Louvre."

Currently, there are four augmented reality puzzles in the line. Each one sells for US\$19.99 and includes the free app download. "We won't limit distribution of this to specialty," says Kaepler, adding that it will be at mass retail before the summer. "It was so cool we wanted to get it to market right away."

## Message-based IP

With both Mattel and MGA Entertainment releasing bald dolls this year in support of people battling cancer, the concept of message-based IP appears to really be catching on. A forerunner of this trend is the design-led brand So So Happy. After witnessing her son's experiences with bullying, Art Impressions CEO Cindy Bailey created the positivity-driven property.

"The brand is all about spreading love and believing in yourself," she says. What started in 2010 as a limited range of designs has evolved into a colorful array of more than 80 different characters and a kids lifestyle brand that now adorns t-shirts, hoodies, stickers and buttons.

"It was a non-conventional approach to building a brand," admits Bailey, adding that "10% of all the proceeds go to charity organizations that are dealing with the issue of bullying."

With prestigious retail partners such as Fred Segal, Monkey King and Giant Robot, and new licensee Gem Awake Sportswear in tow, the brand is gaining momentum. Expect to hear more about it over the next 24 months. "We already have 26 animated shorts ready, and we are considering a lot of different options, including a theatrical show," says Bailey. —Gary Rusak

# Galloping to market

With an established UK program in tow, HIT Entertainment's Mike the Knight gets set to ride into the US licensing landscape

**W**hile it's never easy to launch a brand-new IP, HIT Entertainment has had some early success with its medieval-themed preschool property Mike the Knight. It's now looking to duplicate that achievement in the US market.

"The landscape is quite crowded, but we were lucky to secure a great broadcaster," says Stacey Reiner, VP of HIT Global Brands in the US, referring to Nickelodeon, which bowed the series in February. Its US premiere drew 1.4 million viewers and won the timeslot with kids two to 11. And Nick joins TF1 (France), Treehouse (Canada) and CBeebies (UK) as notable broadcast partners on a growing list of TV sales for the series.

"I think it's probably difficult for a smaller producer to launch a new IP, but the partners we have are really opening up a lot of doors," says Reiner.

Jon Owen, SVP of HIT Global Brands, agrees that the initial response from broadcasters has raised the Mattel-owned company's expectations for the entire franchise.

"There was a very high level of preschool expertise [involved in the creation of the show]," he says, noting that the production team had experience on series like *Lunar Jim* and *Bob the Builder* under their belts. "That is why it's resonating from a broadcast point of view."

Another key component is that the series mines an underdeveloped play pattern in the preschool realm. While HBO is currently having ratings success with the decidedly adult, medieval-themed *Game of Thrones*, the notion of depicting that historical period on-screen for a preschool audience is new.

"It's a timeless subject matter," says Owen. "You have dragons and trolls and quests, and you just have to ask yourself why it hasn't ever been done before. It just seems so obvious."

Reiner agrees that the medieval theme sparked initial interest in the concept before one frame of the series was ever completed. "Medieval play resonates with children," she explains. "It transports whoever sees it to a different age of dragons and castles."

The landscape also allows its producers to imbue the series with a unique social-emotional curriculum that also sets it apart from other preschool fare on the market. "We encourage children to champion their responsibilities, the way Mike does," says Owen, adding that the focus on the quest narrative and chivalry are not common components of preschool programs. "It's also quite funny," he says. "There is a great deal of comedy in there, too."



Mike the Knight's new quest is to establish a healthy US consumer products program

While Character Options has snatched up UK master toy rights, and Simon & Schuster has inked a global five-year publishing deal, the CP ball should start to roll stateside in earnest after Licensing Show.

"Obviously, toys will be a big driver everywhere," says Reiner. "But I think you will see costume role-play and apparel also being major players."

Reiner says she will be looking for partners who can take advantage of the vibrant colors and patterns that fill the Mike the Knight stylebook.

"I have already had a lot of proposals for softlines and toys," she says. The company is now planning a full rollout to US mass retailers in fall 2013, looking for "A+" partners who can innovate product lines over a number of years.

"HIT is known for evergreens, and we believe this is another one," she says. "It is our biggest focus right now."

—Gary Rusak

# Random House boosts its portfolio with master Nick deal

**Who** Chris Angelilli, VP, editor in chief and executive director of licensed publishing at Random House Children's Books, is always looking to grow the company's successful licensing division that already works with a stellar roster featuring Disney, Mattel (for Barbie books), Thomas & Friends, Sesame Street, DC Comics and Dinosaur Train. "Every single day we are looking for new properties," he says. "We have definitely found that character-based licensed properties lend themselves best to publishing, so that is what we are keeping our eyes on."

**What** The reliance on character-based licenses got a boost in March when RHCB announced it had taken over the master publishing license for Nickelodeon. The news came as a surprise, as the license had previously been held for years by Simon & Schuster, which is also a subsidiary of Nick's parent company Viacom. However, the corporate intrigue does nothing to dampen Angelilli's enthusiasm.

"We are very excited to have this opportunity to broaden our portfolio with those brands," he says. "We have been waiting a long time for this, and the timing is fantastic."

Beginning in spring 2013, the Nickelodeon program will expand to include a variety of new formats, including hardcover and paperback picture books, storybooks, levelled readers, chapter books, junior novels and board books. Expect to see SpongeBob, Dora and Bubble Guppies titles in the initial product rollout.

**Latest Innovation** While Random House reads the extensive lineup of well-known Nick properties, Angelilli is anticipating one of its newer IPs will become a major revenue generator for the licensee.

"We are confident that Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is going to be the next big program," he says. "We are getting a head start on our expanded rights with the release of chapter books and enhanced e-books for the fall." He calls the property's new animation "edgier, but not too edgy," and believes it will be a perfect fit for many different book formats aimed at core kids. Angelilli is also looking forward to RHCB's upcoming Winx Club program, which will correspond with the launch of the property's animated series on Nick US in 2013.



**What's Next** Angelilli says that while RHCB is busy designing robust programs for the Nick license, it won't interfere with his plans to scout out new IP at Licensing Show in Las Vegas this month. "We pretty much hit all the shows," he says, stressing that new preschool entertainment properties with the backing of a major network are particularly attractive for the company, owing to the economics behind coloring books. "The great thing about a coloring book is that kids color them in and then need another one. Nothing will ever replace the crayon."

**Contact** Chris Angelilli, VP, editor in chief and executive director of licensed publishing, Random House Children's Books (212-782-9000, cangelilli@randomhouse.com) —Gary Rusak

## Amazon turning to traditional storefronts?



Amazon's Kindle Fire is likely to be on display at the e-commerce giant's rumored bricks-and-mortar outlets

**I**t might seem counterintuitive for a retailer that lives online so successfully to voluntarily pursue the real-life hassles and risks of operating bricks-and-mortar locations. However, Amazon is rumored to be entering the world of traditional retail in the very near future.

"This is getting a lot of attention," says Stephen Mader, senior analyst at Cambridge, Massachusetts-based market research firm Kantar Retail. "Nothing is 100% confirmed, but we do expect Amazon to open a showcase store in Seattle in the future."

The potential physical store for the online retail giant comes in the wake of a storefront opening for another internet behemoth in Australia earlier this year. The Google store is being used to showcase the Android mobile phone platform and other Google products. Interactive displays, for example, let Aussie customers access Gmail and Google maps.

"For a lot of these technology-based companies, it's not necessarily to sell products," says Mader. "It's more about extending their brands and brand engagement. It's about creating a physical location for the spirit of the brand."

Mader says that while he expects a potential Amazon store to showcase the retailer's own Kindle e-reader, he

believes it would be even more advantageous as a sort of brand information kiosk and physical manifestation of the online service.

"The stores will be a place where shoppers can experience all the things that a Kindle Fire can do, for instance," he says. "It is a place where customers can interact with a knowledgeable source about everything that Amazon does, too."

As such, he expects that the stores are more of a marketing play than a retail one, and will not likely measure their success by traditional retail metrics.

"It's going to be about engagement," Mader says. "They don't come from a retail background, and they won't be striving to make a margin number across the store or a revenue number across a number of stores. They have a different goal."

That goal is to drive traffic to Amazon's online portal and then measure the relative success or failure through overall sales. Mader believes the locations will be situated in high-traffic areas in major urban centers and that Amazon might also benefit from the dropping rental rates at many North American malls. In the future, he envisions Amazon retail outlets working as pick-up centers for goods purchased online, but Mader doesn't see that as a motivating source just yet. —Gary Rusak





Having racked up US\$2.8 billion at retail in the last decade, AGP's Care Bears are celebrating their 30th with a retro look and feel

# Care Bears come out of hibernation

American Greetings Properties believes it's time to care again. And to mark the 30th anniversary of Care Bears, AGP has inked a deal with Hasbro-owned network The Hub to bring the emotional icons back to broadcast with a brand-new 26 x half-hour CGI series entitled *Care Bears: Welcome to Care-a-Lot*, bowing on June 2.

"The kids who grew up in the '80s are now old enough to have their own kids," says Gabrielle Oliff, VP of brand and marketing for AGP. "With the anniversary, it made sense to revisit the brand."

The core elements of Care Bears will remain intact. The property's message of sensitivity and emotional awareness won't change at all, but the latest design iteration purposely recalls the original characters, rather than those pictured on products during the Care Bears' last robust retail outing in 2008.

"They have been chubby and they have been skinny, but the 2012 version will have the look of the original," says Oliff. "It's basically a cleaned up modern version of the 1982 ones."

The new series is also intended to age up the audience slightly from core preschool to a five to seven demo and will also feature a brand-new character, Wonderheart Bear.

"Wonderheart is basically the baby of the group," says Oliff. "Her whole thing is to ask 'I wonder why?' It's a character we think some of the younger demographic will identify with."

Far from being primarily a nostalgia play, in the past 10 years, licensed Care Bears products have generated US\$2.8 billion in global retail sales. Currently, the only licensing deal inked related specifically to the 30th anniversary is with Hasbro for toys destined for US mass retail outlets in 2013. But Oliff says deals for many different lines, including products for older tweens and collectors, are being negotiated. During the most recent relaunch (2008), the franchise's roster of licensees topped out at more than 300 different companies.

"We'll be looking to expand what we do have and grow it in the US and across the globe," she says. "We are looking for accessory and digital partners, including apps."

The assortment will likely be earmarked for mass-market retail channels, with a smaller selection headed to specialty this fall. —Gary Rusak

## BookBet Captain Underpants is Back



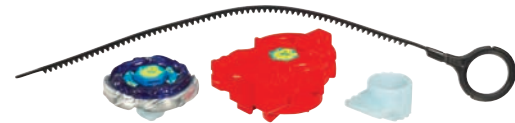
Launched in 1997, author Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants series has sold more than 50 million copies in North America. On August 28, publisher Scholastic will release the ninth title in the series, *Captain Underpants and the Terrifying Return of Tippy Tinkletrousers*. The book is aimed at kids seven and up, and hardcover copies will retail for US\$9.99. The new tale takes the heroes, George and Harold, back to their kindergarten days when they had to square off against sixth-grade bully Kipper Krupp, the nephew of the school's principal. Of course, the story predates the invention of Captain Underpants, so the two buddies have to rely on their wits to defeat their foe. The 10th book in the series, *Captain Underpants and the Revolting Revenge of Radioactive Robo-Boxers*, is already slated for a January 2013 release. Each book will receive an English-language first printing of one million copies. —Gary Rusak

# Top Toys

Germany (YTD March)



**1** **LEGO Star Wars 2012 asst.**  
(Lego)



**2** **Beyblade Metal Fusion**  
(Hasbro)



**3** **Simba Filly Horses**  
(Simba)



**4** **LEGO Star Wars - Anakin's Jedi Interceptor**  
(Lego)



**5** **Cars 2 - 2 pack**  
(Mattel)

Source: NPD EuroToys EPoS panel, 73% retailer coverage

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# The Global Family

BY ERIN MILLER, WITH FILES FROM CARLOS GARCIA

Nick discovers that family dynamics around the world thrive on connectedness and are open about finances

**In** 2010, Kaleidoscope reported on Nickelodeon's benchmark study, *The Family GPS*, a comprehensive look at what shapes today's American families. Understanding the family dynamic everywhere our audience lives is a primary goal of ours, so we've recently extended the study to include families worldwide through the launch of *The Family GPS: The Global Family*. Carlos Garcia, senior director for Nickelodeon International Research, in partnership with Nick research teams around the world, led this study based on findings from 20 countries worldwide. In this edition of Kaleidoscope, we offer a sneak peek, revealing that families around the world are markedly different from previous generations, yet they're more culturally similar than ever before in terms of family cohesion, communication and closeness.

There is an increasing fluidity in household structures globally, creating a strong sense of connectedness within families, regardless of shape or size. The connectedness kids are experiencing within the family unit gives them a sense of happiness, security, understanding and curiosity about the world around them. Kids and parents are much closer than in the past, and many parents consider their kids to be among their best friends. This strong sense of friendship between parent and child is especially pronounced in Poland (82%) and Brazil (83%). Mexico (65%), Korea (55%), the UK (53%) and Germany (52%) are above average, compared to approximately one in three in the Netherlands (32%), Belgium (36%) and Spain (35%).

This increasing family closeness also extends to grandparents too, who are providing more emotional and practical support to their grandchildren. Across all countries, 60% of grandparents are considered very close. Kids in China are particularly close to their grandparents, with roughly 75% feeling very or extremely close. And regardless of how often kids see their grandparents, many kids feel they would like to see them even more.

Kids globally are much more grounded in their sense of the future than we may think. When it comes to aspirations for the future, the differences are small for kids. Universally,

they strive for happiness and finding ways of being fulfilled in life, rather than money. Education is key, as both parents and kids recognize its importance in ensuring a better, more secure future. Despite the global average indicating that parents' expectations of what's important in life doesn't differ by gender, kids' perspectives revealed clear gender differences. Girls place more importance on doing well at school, having close friends, looking good, helping people in the community, having kids and getting married. Making money is the only aspect of growing up that boys consider more important than girls.

Understanding today's decision-making dynamic is key when considering how to engage and reach consumers and families. Knowing how tight-knit today's families are—leading to more open communication than ever before—it's no surprise that three quarters of all parents talk to their kids about family finances. This can be a challenging part of maintaining family closeness, as kids are increasingly exposed to their parents' financial concerns. Naturally, older kids are more likely to share these conversations with parents. However, these talks are also taking place with kids as young as eight and nine years old. As a result, the decision-making process within families everywhere is evolving into a more collaborative, democratic system.

So to sum up, parents consider their kids to be among their best friends. Happiness is the most important thing in life. Families are open about finances. And media connections bring families together. These are the attributes of the new global family. **k**

**For more information, contact [Kaleidoscope@nick.com](mailto:Kaleidoscope@nick.com)**

(Source: Nickelodeon Family GPS; *The Global Family*, 2011)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope captures key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provides an understanding of attitudes and behaviors and reports on trends and buzz.

## Muse of the Month

# A perfect screen-to-screen balance

10-year-old Gabriel from Arizona explores and interacts online and then winds down with TV



**G**abe wanted a tortoise. So, he did what many kids his age do these days. He Googled it. “I looked up what they eat and how they live and I got a house ready for it.”

Via sites like Google, eHow, Netflix and YouTube, Gabe taught himself not only the ins and outs of Tortoises 101, but also how to do the “Thriller” dance (Michael lives!), grow crystals and pop an ollie on his skateboard. Because he has to click to experience it, interactive technology encourages Gabe to lean forward, engage, find his passions and master skills.

By contrast, Gabe uses broadcast TV to help him cuddle in the comforts of childhood, which is also important. He doesn’t watch much (the family doesn’t have cable—a growing trend), but when he does, he often chooses shows that don’t challenge him intellectually and allow him to share the sofa with mom or dad. He likes long-running animated PBS series *Arthur*, he says, because “it’s meant for little kids, so I understand it more.”

From a child development standpoint, Gabe’s behavior makes perfect sense. To best do the work of growing up, he needs to control the pace at which he blazes his own trail. And, when he’s done learning, he can kick back, relax, watch some TV and play with his thriving tortoise, Shelly.

Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful, and inspiring experiences for kids and families. To be further inspired by Gabe and by Insight Kids, visit [www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/](http://www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/).



## Cool or Not? The collectible figure edition



Littlest Pet Shop

	5-year-olds (120)	6-year-olds (117)	7-year-olds (124)		5-year-olds (130)	6-year-olds (130)	7-year-olds (130)
	19.2%	19.7%	17.7%	<b>Totally un-cool *</b>	3.8%	3.1%	4.6%
	18.3%	26.5%	22.6%	<b>Not cool *</b>	6.2%	7.7%	6.9%
	27.5%	27.4%	24.2%	<b>Kinda cool *</b>	13.1%	15.4%	20%
	11.7%	11.1%	16.9%	<b>Very cool *</b>	30%	25.4%	17.7%
	23.3%	15.4%	18.5%	<b>Totally way cool *</b>	46.9%	48.5%	50.8%
	7%	8.6%	3.9%	<b>Don't know what it is</b>	0%	0.8%	0%



Lego

\* Excludes “Don’t know what it is” responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay’s *Moms of 5 to 7 year olds Trend Tracker*. These one-of-a-kind research reports provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids’ likes, dislikes and trends gathered through surveys of US moms with kids ages five to seven. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or [bob@kidsay.com](mailto:bob@kidsay.com)).

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# Big bets

Launching a licensing program is always a gamble. Despite the research, time and effort that goes into building a modern brand plan, no licensor can say it has mastered the art of creating sure-fire retail hits. But they keep trying. This year, we're taking an in-depth look at three high-rollers bound for Vegas.

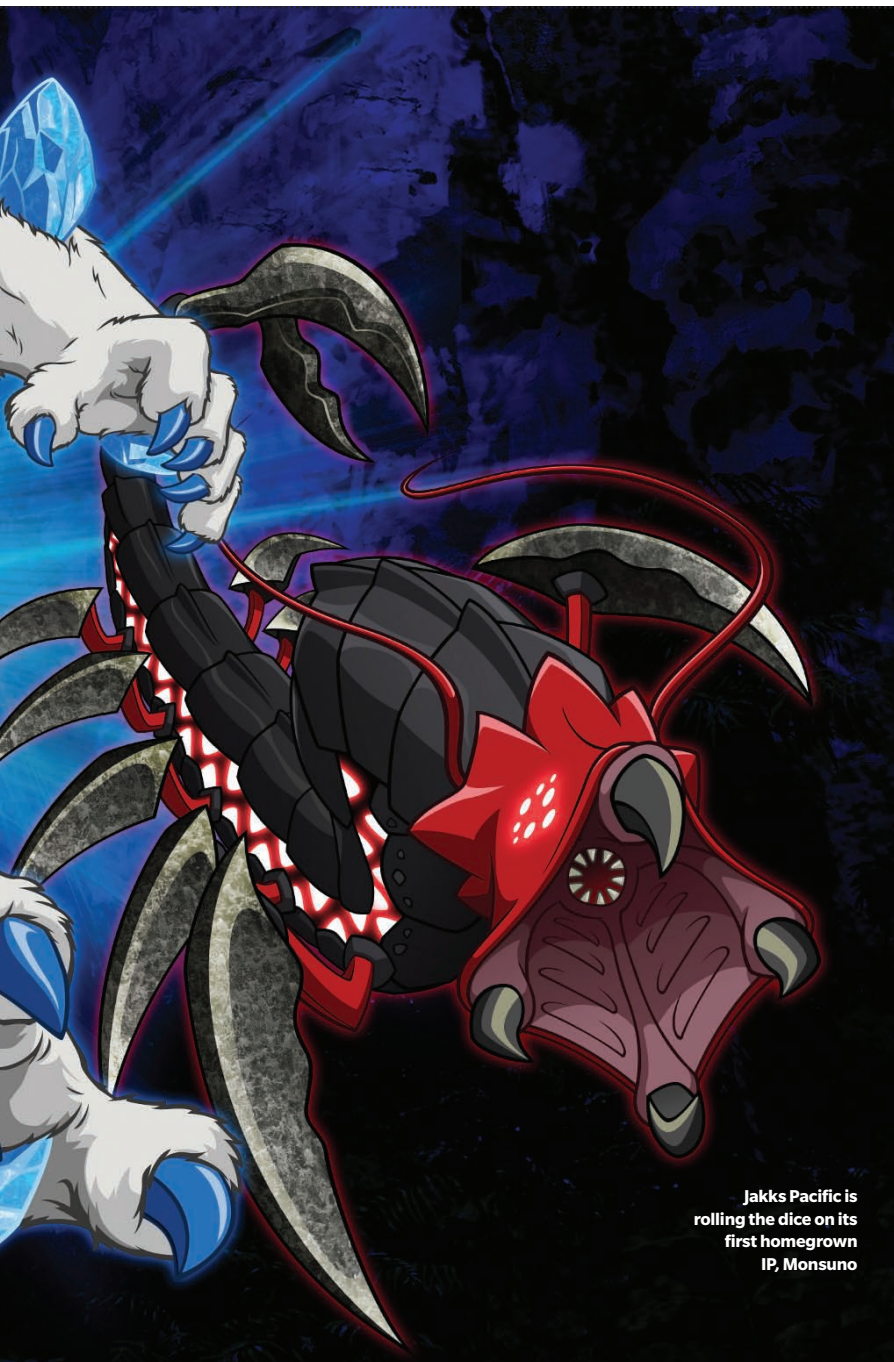
BY GARY RUSAK



# It's

impossible to predict with unerring accuracy what property will strike a chord with its targeted demo. After all, consumers are the ultimate arbiters of what IPs win and lose after they enter the retail market. And for all the carefully cultivated winners, how many surprise hits (Angry Birds) and unexpected misses like 2009's boys IP Chaotic have popped up on the licensing landscape in the past decade? Ultimately, licensors and their partners have to chant, "No snake eyes," roll the dice, and hope for the best.

Appropriately for this high-risk business, its predominate annual get-together takes place in Las Vegas, a desert oasis built upon the proceeds of countless lost wagers. At Licensing Show this year in the hotly contested boys action space, it looks like licensors and licensees—which, in the case of the all-important toy category, are increasingly one in the same—are making fewer but much larger bets than they have in the past. We're going to take a look at three of the big ones set to take over the show floor this year, assess their strategies and get analysts to weigh in on just what's at stake.



Jakks Pacific is rolling the dice on its first homegrown IP, Monsuno

## The insurgent: Monsuno

The value of new boys action IP Monsuno to Malibu, California-based toyco Jakks Pacific cannot be overstated. The company has been fighting an uphill battle to ward off aggressive takeover bids for more than two years. And while buoyed by a good long-term and lucrative licensing relationship with Disney, it seems that the toymaker needs more to survive in its current form.

"I think over time, a toy company learns that the value from producing toys sits with the license holder," says Edward Woo, senior research analyst for the Irvine, California-based Ascendant Capital Markets who covers the industry. "When you see that you are writing a check to a licensor every month, it hurts."

Woo explains that all licensees need to protect themselves from the sudden loss of big moneymaking licenses—witness the turmoil faced by Oak Brook, Illinois-based RC2 upon losing the rights to Thomas the Tank Engine wooden toys when Mattel acquired the property's owner Hit Entertainment at the beginning of the year. "No one wants to wake up one morning and find out that you won't be able to sell your biggest hit anymore," Woo contends.

With this climate in mind, Jakks endeavored to develop its own multi-platform property, with all the associated risks and potential rewards, for the first time in 2009. And it has high hopes for the resulting Monsuno—the company is hungry to harvest the spoils of a homegrown hit.

"Jakks is in a fight for its life right now," states Gerrick Johnson, a BMO Capital Market analyst who tracks the toy industry, referencing the fallout of a stale takeover bid made just last September by L.A.-based venture capital firm Oaktree Investments. "It hasn't had a big property in a long time," he adds. "This is definitely something it's looking forward to turn around."

**Three years ago**, the upper brass at Jakks gave EVP Jeremy Padawer, who would become co-inventor, co-creator and executive producer of Monsuno and its related TV series, a mandate to expand the company's IP holdings beyond toy-only brands like Spynet. After an exhaustive search, he discovered the toy tech that spurred the creation of the entire IP.

"It was inspiring," says Padawer, describing the mechanism that drives the toys and forms the heart of the play pattern for Monsuno. In short, the spinning toys call to mind a combination of Bakugan, Beyblade and Pokémon. Players are in competition with each other through opposing spinning figures. When the spinners collide, a fully articulated figure emerges. A variety of gameplay relates to the TV series that is derived from the simple concept. "We worked from there to create the shorts treatment and develop the story and mythology," he adds.

Armed with the concept, Jakks entered into a partnership with three other companies to handle categories outside its core toy expertise. So Japan and L.A.-based Denstu

Entertainment is producing a 52 x half-hour anime-inspired series, while TV distribution and licensing falls to FremantleMedia Enterprises. Topps is looking after developing the property's other driver, a core trading card game.

"There hasn't been a strong new boys action-adventure property for several years," contends Sander Schwartz, president of FME children's and family group. "There is always a demand in the marketplace for a strong compelling action-adventure show."

With this heavy-hitting foursome behind it, the *Monsuno* series scored a global broadcast deal with Nickelodeon-owned channels for the first run of eps, which will roll out over the next two years. While some critics might suggest that it's a stretch to gamble on an anime-based property to spawn the next big global hit—the genre has been luke warm in US consumer products circles in recent years—Schwartz disagrees with pigeonholing the concept.

"The show is a true hybrid," he says. "It's Western storytelling told in an anime style." Notably, the episodes have a classic three-act structure that owes more to Western animation tradition than anime.

**While it's still too early** to gauge the success of the series—it just bowed in the US on NickToons in March—analysts approve of the partnership's strategy and execution thus far.

"I think they should be applauded for taking this bold step," says Steve Reece, a toy and games brand marketing consultant based in the UK. "There are some really interesting features about it, particularly a good range of characters. From an execution standpoint I'd rate it as good to very good."

"The toys are pretty cool," notes Johnson, who independently estimates that Jakks needs a hit that rakes in between US\$200 million and US\$300 million to maintain its independence. He suggests that the goal is not unattainable given the state of the market at the moment. While he says certain anime-based programs are either finished (Redakai) or winding down (Beyblade) in the US, he adds there might just be room for another one.

"Each time you think it's finished, a new anime property comes along and lights it up again," Johnson says. "It would stand to reason that they have a wide-open tract to do something that those other properties have done."

Sean McGowan, senior analyst, leisure and lifestyle at New York's Needham & Company, believes that all the components are in place to make the IP a winner for all partners involved, especially Jakks.

"They have done everything they could to make this a good opportunity," he says. "They have good partners, good play value, and the show looks as good as any other... You could say it has all the elements of a hit." He adds that while the boys six to 12 demo is always a highly competitive space, at the present time there is an open window of opportunity in the market.

"Bakugan is gone, so there is a market there," he says. "Of course that doesn't mean it will work, but it doesn't mean it's going to fail either."

## The sleeper: Battleship

While there is some evidence that retail and consumer willingness to support big licensing programs tied to tent-pole movies is on the wane, the data collected so far hasn't confirmed it as fact.

There's speculation that revenues from blockbuster-driven licensing will suffer significantly because the movies themselves are not as toyetic as they were in summers past. Not everyone agrees, though. "I don't think it's a trend," says Ascendant's Woo. "It's just the cyclical nature of movies."

However, BMO's Johnson believes that the performance of movie-related licensing programs over the past few years suggest, a bigger change is afoot. "The vast major-

ity of movie-related toys have underperformed against expectations over the last two years," he says. "*Cars 2*, *Toy Story 3*, *Thor*, *Captain America*, *Kung Fu Panda 2*—everything has underperformed except *The Smurfs*. But when expectations were raised for that during the DVD release, everyone got excited and shipped more product and it just didn't move."

Johnson outlines the major stumbling blocks; a glut of theatrical releases in the summer months fighting for limited shelf space within a relatively short timeframe to make sales. All of these factors have contributed to the dwindling of movie-related licensing returns, he says, summing it up as a "crowded space without a lot of innovation."

Of course, a few underperforming programs won't stop would-be kid-friendly blockbuster films from flooding the multiplexes this summer, nor their related merchandise from filling the mass-market retail channels with expansive full-category assaults, along with their attendant high expectations.



Hasbro has enlisted a battalion of Hollywood talent to float *Battleship*, which it is wagering will become its next Transformers-sized franchise

**And it's into this environment** that Hasbro is setting sail with *Battleship*, an SFX-laden feature film with an estimated US\$200-million production budget and a consumer products program based on its classic board game IP. Along with the launch of TV net The Hub in 2010, it's really the next phase of Hasbro's strategy to turn itself into a full-fledged entertainment company that can build successful franchises culled from its own warehouse of properties. The strategy certainly worked with Transformers, now a multi-billion dollar concern that essentially established Hasbro's entertainment and production arm. However, many are wondering if it will work for this summer's *Battleship*.



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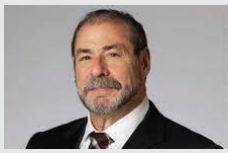
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## A CP veteran weighs in

Neil Friedman is no stranger to evaluating big consumer products bets. As former president of Toys 'R' Us, Mattel Brands and MCA/Universal Merchandising, his resumé speaks for itself. Currently a member of the TIA and LIMA boards, and part-time consultant to Toys 'R' Us, Friedman is very much engaged with the industry and offered his expertise in evaluating this year's Licensing Show crop.

### Monsuno

Friedman is bullish on Monsuno, saying that Jakks, FremantleMedia and the other partners have hit the mark in developing a new IP that has all the elements of a hit. "It's a well thought out system," he says. "The game play is really cool, and the initial launch was very strong. They have done a very good job putting together the whole program."

### Battleship

As for Hasbro's Battleship, Friedman has yet to see the movie, but he does believe that retailers are "always looking for big movies" to support, and what he has seen of *Battleship* indicates that it could be a hit, although likely not as big as *Transformers*. "The action scenes I've seen are pretty awesome," he says. "I think it has a chance."

### Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

He also sees space in the market for a big action-figure driver and feels that Nickelodeon's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles might be the perfect property to stimulate sales in the category. "It's a very good year to launch an action figure," he says. "With Viacom totally behind it, and with the quality of animation they have, it's a really big opportunity. The product from Playmates looks good and I think it has a good chance of success." —Gary Rusak

"Battleship is a gigantic question mark," asserts McGowan, questioning the brand's ability to sell retail products outside of the board game aisle.

UK analyst Reece also has questions about the transformation of Battleship from board game into a full silver-screen and retail proposition. "Transformers had a heritage," he says. "It was truly global, and I just don't know if Battleship has the same [recognition]. It's not a problem exactly, but it could be a risk."

For his part, Hasbro SVP of global licensing Simon Waters contends that it was a natural move to bring the classic board game IP into the realm of content production. "It's a classic good vs. evil story, a perennial mythology that has amazing equity and recognition worldwide," he says. "I think the beauty in it is that it was creatively challenging to take what is essentially an analogue experience into a whole new realm."

**"Over the last two years, the vast majority of movie-related toys have underperformed against expectations."**

—Gerrick Johnson, BMO Capital Market analyst

The film, released in some parts of Europe and China in late April, had grossed US\$215 million internationally before it hit US screens on May 18 (two days after we went to press on this issue). Directed by Peter Berg with an A-list cast that includes *True Blood*'s Alexander Skarsgard and Liam Neeson, Waters says that the movie truly reflects the "blind reveal" play pattern inherent to the board game.

"In the game, you don't know where your enemy is, and that is effectively the essence of the film," says Waters. "It's a human story, putting ordinary humans in extraordinary circumstances."

**Of course the question is** whether or not that story will translate into sales of action figures and then become a widespread licensing phenomenon beyond the toy aisle. To its credit, Hasbro has brought in creative concepts that will bolster the program and potentially bring the sales necessary to meet the high expectations surrounding the brand.

The initial line was focused on apparel for young men and boys. "We have taken this brand fashion-forward," says Waters. "Right now, naval and camouflage is really on-trend, and we have strong partners like Jay-Z's Rocawear. For example, we have taken the editorial from the film and mixed it with Jay-Z's lyrics." In fact, one of the Rocawear Battleship t-shirts plays on one of the rapper's most famous phrases—emblazoned on the shirt is the edgy slogan "99 Problems But My Ship Ain't One."

The innovative twist in the apparel category is arguably the most headline-catching brand extension of Battleship, but perhaps the most lucrative one will be for Hasbro's own

building block product—Kre-O. The construction toy has had Transformer versions, and this summer will have a number of Battleship-branded products at mass retail.

"Kre-O will allow kids to build the fleets that they see in the films," says Waters. A partial line has been released in advance of the film and includes the Kre-O Battleship Ocean Attack set and the Kre-O Battleship USS Missouri set, with items priced between US\$7.99 and US\$69.99. Additional sets will be released in the fall. Famously, Lego has successfully attached blockbuster movie brands like Star Wars and Harry Potter to its regular product lines, and Kre-O is looking to capture some of that market.

"It looks like Battleship will be a big boost for the Kre-O brand," says Reece. "For Hasbro that is building layer upon layer on their own IP," he says, adding that this is an ideal situation for any brand owner.

Lutz Muller, founder and president of Vermont-based retail consulting firm Klosters Trading Corporation, remains skeptical of the movie's box office and general licensing success, but concedes that he is "reasonably optimistic" about the affect the movie will have on Hasbro's Kre-O brand.

For its part, Hasbro is not commenting on its expectations for the movie either at the box office or at retail. Waters says Battleship is being positioned as a multi-year program, and that owing

to the inherent value of the IP, the company is looking to build out an extensive licensing program with broad-based categories that will fill shelves this summer as well as during the expected DVD and home entertainment release during the holiday season.

"We have a really robust licensing program," he says. "And we will be looking to add categories to this franchise in the future."

## The comeback: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

One path that many a licensor has travelled to mitigate the risk in mounting a mass-market licensing program is to dust off a property that's already resonated with one generation of kids and revive it for the current one. Such is the case with Nickelodeon-owned Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. An out-of-the-blue comic-based phenomenon when it first hit the scene in the mid-1980s, the brand had been languishing before Nickelodeon purchased all TMNT rights in 2009 for US\$60 million and put the full force of its corporate parent, Viacom, behind the property.

"When you have a product that has a history of success it just gives you more confidence that it will have success now," says Woo. Reece agrees. He says a previous track record and the nostalgia factor has been known to get the ball rolling on licensing programs and retail penetration for revival properties.

"One major factor in success is heritage," he says. "If you have been successful in the market before, even if that has

faded somewhat, you can go to retailers and point to the past sales figures and say, "This brand works."

While an IP's past success might be an Ace up the licensor's sleeve, it doesn't guarantee a winning hand—the current licensing landscape is littered with failed revivals.

"Mattel brought He-Man back in 2005 and it did absolutely nothing," Johnson says. "[Previous success] helps, but there are no guarantees. When [Warner Bros.] brought ThunderCats back, I thought it was really cool, but it didn't do much at retail, either."



Nickelodeon is banking on the TMNT revival, including new TV and movie outings, to kickstart its boys action licensing business

However, with all the firepower of conglomerate Viacom behind it, the expectations for the Turtles' rebirth are nothing short of sky high. "It's one of the most important relaunchees in [our] history," says Manuel Torres, SVP and MD of global toys, video games and consumer electronics at Nickelodeon. "I would say in the next 12 to 18 months, this could be a top-three boys property globally."

**A successful relaunch** is largely dependent on the strength of the re-imagined content that's typically the engine driving consumer products program. To this end, Nickelodeon has been working on a new TV series that will bow on the kidsnet with much fanfare this fall.

The network and series' producer, Rich Magallanes, SVP of current series at Nickelodeon Animation is working to

take the most recognizable aspects of TMNT and give them a Nickelodeon twist. "It's CG meets anime," he says, describing the look of the new series. "It has a real comic book vibe and feel, and is really like nothing else out there right now."

The producers decided to alter the design of the main characters to make them more like "high school athletes" and less like "guys on steroids," as well as reflecting more of the teenage camaraderie that typifies a Nick property. The supporting cast has also had a bit of a makeover, most notably with spiritual leader Splinter doffing his frail Yoda-like personality to embrace a more genuine Ninja/sensei look. Magallanes adds, "We are playing the Ninja aspect for real now—it's going to be genuine and reflect real Ninja moves." (26 half-hour eps are in production, and the series will follow a year-long story arc.) And with Viacom's film studio Paramount working on a big-screen version helmed by *Transformers* director Michael Bay, the full-scale Turtle entertainment assault is on.

**As for consumer products**

plans, TMNT's original master toy partner Playmates is back, readying a program that it is hoping will rejuvenate the flagging action figure category. (According to NPD Group stats, that category's sales in 2011 were down by 12% in the US.)

"I don't think there is any company in the industry that understands the action figure business like Playmates," argues Torres. "Together we are making sure there is going to be something new and fresh on the shelves."

The key innovation of Playmates' TMNT program is that it's boosting the height of traditional action figures from 3¼ inches to 4¼ inches and 4¾ inch models. "It's going to be different from what is out there," says Torres. "The figures will be fully articulated with hands that can actually grasp objects."

Product will start trickling into US mass-market retailers at the end of this summer. And while no specific retail promos could be announced at press time, Torres says that the big outlets—think Walmart and Target—have gotten behind TMNT.

In the meantime, Nickelodeon is plotting a multi-year consumer products rollout, starting with the key categories—toys and publishing. Random House will handle licensed books and published activity products, while IDW Publishing has snapped up comic book rights.

Analysts were introduced to the initial toy line at New York Toy Fair in February. And without any retail sales yet to track, it seems that TMNT 2.0 is getting a tentative thumbs up.

"If you look at the components of the property, it has what boys love," says Reece. "It has quirky humor and toned-down violence. But in the end, it will come down to the quality of the initial programming and the movie."

Needham's McGowan agrees that TMNT has a good shot at ruling terra firma yet again. "It looks to have all the elements of a classic revival," he says. "Nick is doing it all, they own the property and that means a lot more than just renting it. It is set up to do well. Of course, if they don't execute well, it won't."

# Making their mark

Another Licensing Show is on the way, and another group of hopefuls are gearing up to wow 'em on the exhibition floor. Read on for a sneak-peek at some promising properties to watch. BY DAWN WILENSKY

LICENSING  
SHOW 2012

Super-powered  
barnyard animals  
make up The Farm Team



## Newcomer Evolution rolls out slate

Ex-MGM exec Travis Rutherford is heading up new brand management firm Evolution, and has a trio of entertainment-driven properties set to debut at the show. The first, preschool-skewing *Taffy Saltwater*, comes from the mind of *Maggie and the Ferocious Beast* creator Michael Paraskevas. Evolution is working on a half-hour series with a broadcast goal of fall 2012, and mass-market retail exposure slated for summer 2014. He's on the lookout for a master toy licensee along with partners for apparel, accessories, swimwear and beach products. At the opposite end of the spectrum is boy-targeted *Monstroids*, a half-hour action comedy series for six- to 12-year-olds. Populated by monster/machine hybrid characters, the series plans to follow the Monsuno model, says Rutherford, president of licensing and retail. He's seeking a master toy licensee to become a financial participant in the entire property. If all goes according to plan, a retail program should roll out for summer/back-to-school 2014. Finally, barnyard animals with super powers is the story behind CG-animated *The Farm Team* (pictured). In development as a TV series, the comedic property should debut online, supported by a publishing program, and then plans to secure a broadcaster for fall 2013. Social expression, apparel, accessories, collectibles, novelty and plush should make up the rest of a specialty retail program set to launch in late 2013.

## Wildbrain puts new spin on user-generated IP

L.A.-based Wildbrain Entertainment, a division of DHX Media, is bowing UMIGO—what it calls a first-of-its-kind transmedia music property that features animated videos and consumer products with interactive digital components, and a TV series targeting kids ages two to eight. “UMIGO (U Make it Go) will test the boundaries of even the most creative imaginations, while providing a solid foundation for improving S.T.E.M. learning on multiple platforms,” says Michael Polis, president of Wildbrain Entertainment and EVP of branded entertainment and products at DHX Media. The property’s driver, a TV series in the works for PBS Kids, was actually created by Polis, who got the inspiration from his twin sons’ penchant for doing weekend DIY projects. Currently, the company is on the lookout for partners in apps, music videos, board games, online games and books to join the launch program.

## Tooning into international plans

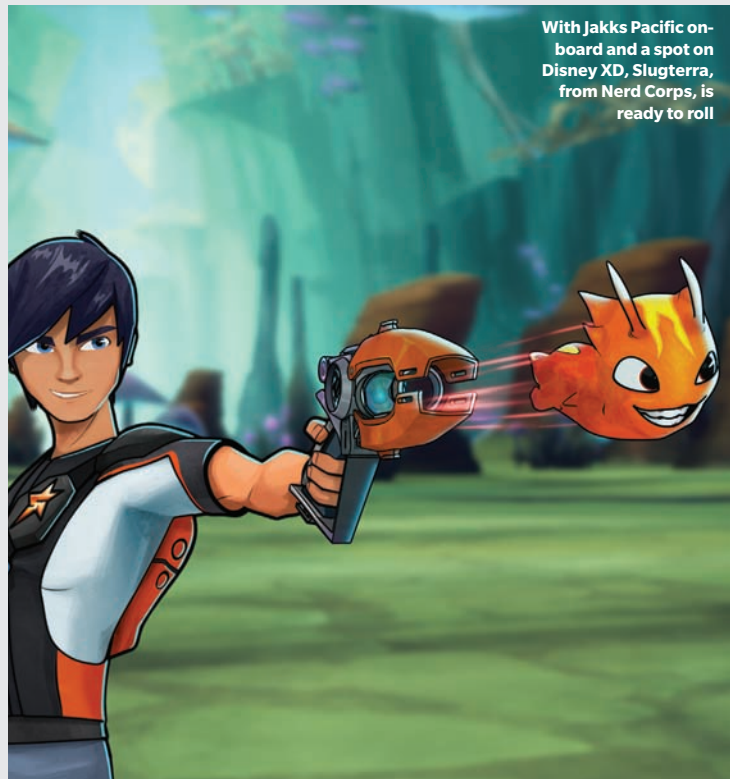
UK-based Turner CN Enterprises is putting preschool channel Cartoonito at the center of its stand this year. Launched this past fall across EMEA, Cartoonito currently reaches 125 million households in 112 territories. In the spotlight will be Turner-owned brands like *LazyTown*, along with the third-party properties it represents. These include Endemol’s *Bananas in Pyjamas*, which has its first wave of toys from master toy licensee Golden Bear headed to UK retailers this fall; *Vodka Captial’s Jelly Jam*, and brand new live-action series *Ha! Ha! Hairies* (see “Just Launched,” p. 26) produced by UK-based Adastra Creative.

## Zodiak Kids divisions go bi-continental

Zodiak Kids in London hopes preschoolers will make time for its new Nick Jr. show *Tickety Toc* due in the US later this year. The British-produced CGI preschool series makes its foray into the world of consumer products with toys, publishing, DVDs and apparel planned for a Q4 rollout stateside in 2013. And important for its sister division Zodiak Kids in Paris is Ddee, created as a graphic property in Korea in 2004 and now headed to TV in July on Korean pubcaster EBS. The IP owner presented the preschool property to the French CP industry in April and received very positive feedback. The hunt is on for a master toy partner, but publishing products will be the first to market in France by mid-2013, followed by international markets later that year.

## FME outlines plans for new properties

Along with working on boys action property *Monsuno* (See “Big Bets,” p. 46), FremantleMedia Enterprises will be introducing *Tree Fu Tom* with its UK broadcast partner CBeebies. A phased consumer products approach is planned for the CG-animated fantasy-adventure series for four to sixes. FME is closing in on toys, publishing, apparel and DVD deals to drive the program. For phase two, FME is also seeking partners across outdoor/sports, interactive games, stationery, dress up, novelty, puzzles and tableware.



With Jakks Pacific on-board and a spot on Disney XD, *Sluggterra*, from Nerd Corps, is ready to roll

## Slugging it out in boys action

With a primo broadcast spot on Disney XD’s US channel planned for this fall and a master toy deal with Jakks Pacific just locked down, Vancouver, Canada-based Nerd Corps Entertainment is feeling anything but low-key about its new boys action property *Sluggterra*. The company’s recently appointed head of licensing Juli Boylan is putting her years of studio CP experience to work on building out the largely mass-market program. Targeting boys six to 11, the plan is to launch the program with the Jakks toys in March 2013, backed by a yet-to-be-revealed publishing partner and iOS games created in-house at Nerd Corps. In Vegas, she’ll be on the lookout for apparel, sleepwear and back-to-school licensees to roll out product for fall 2013. And as Disney XD has picked up the series globally, Boylan’s also scouting for agents in key international territories. With its unique shooting and collectibles-based game play, the property is positioned to innovate in the super-competitive boys action category, where industry analysts are conceding there’s room for an upstart right now (see our lead feature “Big Bets,” p. 46).

## There’s nothing *Despicable* about this upcoming sequel

Universal Licensing & Partnerships intends to get as many minions into the hands of their fans as possible for the CP program supporting *Despicable Me 2*. Headed to theaters on July 3, 2013, the animated feature film will be supported by master licensees Thinkway Toys (toys) and Hybrid Apparel (t-shirts). Show attendees will also be phoning home about E.T., if Universal has its way. Celebrating its 30th anniversary with the first-ever Blu-ray release for holiday 2012, *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* has Ripple Junction (apparel), NECA (collectibles) and HarperCollins (publishing) lending support at retail.

Encouraged by a successful Amazon outing, Sprout is looking for more Chica the chicken partners



## First-timer isn't chicken about original programming

The path to licensing has been filled with small but smart steps for 24/7 US preschool net PBS Kids Sprout. And a groundswell of interest in Chica the chicken (pictured), featured on Sprout original *The Sunny Side Up Show*, led to a successful test of a plush item on Amazon.com last year. With the rollout of an entire series devoted to the precocious poultry, *The Chica Show*, slated to launch around Thanksgiving, plush licensee Fiesta will follow up with two or three additional Chica SKUs later this year. The Philadelphia-based broadcaster also plans to dabble in e-publishing, as well as launch an online store (shopsprout.com) filled with a selection of items based on its key properties by year's end. "As a first-time exhibitor, I am so excited to share some really compelling testimonials and strategic plans about the company so we can keep the positive momentum going," says Jim Multari, VP of marketing at Sprout.

## Marvel keeps assembling licensees

After saving the world and conquering the global box office in early May, *The Avengers* are headed to the small screen in 2013 with the debut of a second season of *The Avengers: The Earth's Mightiest Heroes* on Disney XD and another unnamed series. On the retail end, *Avengers Assemble* is the franchise umbrella under which licensees, including Marvel Publishing, Disney Interactive and Gazillion (digital), and retail partners will continue to develop integrated consumer products programs to support the effort. *Ultimate Spider-Man*, already on Disney XD in the US, expands internationally this fall to all territories where the channel has carriage, including the UK, France and Canada. New Spidey video games, comics, books and digital initiatives are planned with Activision, Marvel Publishing, Disney Interactive and Gazillion, respectively. Heightened interest in the female demo will also lead to a broader mix for girls, tween and juniors from licensees Mighty Fine and OPI.

## Pocoyo attracts new partners

It's been a very busy six months for Spain's Zinkia Entertainment as the prodco has secured key US partners and flushed out categories for flagship preschool series *Pocoyo*, which has seen success on Nick Jr. stateside. Currently, the Madrid-based company is in negotiations with 10 core licensees as it builds the foundation for a US mass-market product rollout. Random House, however, will be first out of the gate with four titles being released under the Golden Books banner in August. Spring 2013 will also bring a line of children's apparel from Bentex Group.

## Rangers rallies to celebrate 20th

Saban Brands continues to reinvigorate *The Power Rangers* with new programming and a growing licensee list being built with an eye towards celebrating the property's 20th anniversary in 2013. At the heart of the effort is Elie Dekel, president of the L.A.-based company, who has strong ties to the boys action property, having been part of the team that launched it in 1993. With a strong broadcast partner in Nickelodeon, the show has become the top boys property on the cable network, not only with its core demo of six to 11s, but also with super fans ages 12 to 20. The next season of the series, *Power Rangers Megaforce*, is set to premiere in early 2013 with the return of many historic Rangers. "We are planting seeds at [Licensing Show] and working with our partners on a variety of grassroots efforts and immersive experiences for fans of the classic property," says Dekel.

## Build-a-Bear Workshop paws retail strategy

The Build-A-Bear brand is going beyond the retail workshop with an ambitious strategy revolving around "taking the fun of the brand and expressing it in other retail environments," says Amy Heyward, co-president of A Squared Elxsi Entertainment, BAB's L.A.-based licensing agent. Master toy licensee Playmates Toys is readying a line of small bears (4-inch to 5-inch) and playsets for back-to-school 2012, while 505 Games plans to launch an iOS app in September, followed by a Nintendo 3DS game for holiday 2012. A first-ever infant version of BAB is also in development and will be shown to potential partners in Vegas.

## UK preschool hit sets sights on new markets

Everything's Rosie over at V&S Entertainment as the UK-based company mines the preschool property that is already a favorite in its home territory and Spain. Expansion is planned over the next six to 12 months in Italy, France, Portugal, South Africa and South America. Some high-profile agents in a number of European markets have already been signed as part of a wider global strategy with the latest—Exim Licensing—repping Everything's Rosie in South America. First-tier categories such as toys, plush and apparel from 30 licensees have proven successful in the UK and will be complemented by stationery, back-to-school, confectionery, arts & crafts, apps and interactive games.

### Guru Studio debuts timely preschool series

A boy, his friend Olive and an imaginary piece of modeling dough named Squidgy enjoy adventures throughout history in *Justin Time*. The animated preschool series from Canadian prodco Guru Studio has been picked up by US net Sprout and is entering the licensing market for the first time. To kick things off, a publishing deal has already been signed with San Francisco, California-based Immedium, and the first title is heading to US retailers in September. To build the program, Guru is targeting categories including home furnishings, games, puzzles and dress-up, with plans to land Justin goods on retail shelves by mid-2013.

### Classics readied for multiple platforms

Classic Media has expanded its portfolio, welcoming ex-Chorion preschool IPs Olivia and Noddy into the fold. The new acquisitions are a major focus right now for the London/New York-based company. Author Ian Falconer has a new book title, *Olivia and the Fairy Princesses*, being published this fall, and it will be the centerpiece of a tentpole program driven by products from Olivia's new master toy partner Just Play. The first step in Noddy's new three-year brand plan includes upping exposure in fan-laden France with toyco Lansay creating a preschool line for Q3. Elsewhere in Classic's family space, the company is prepping for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of Where's Waldo (Where's Wally, internationally). A new Android app from Gameloft will be followed by an iOS title and Waldo's first-ever Facebook game (both from developer Ludia) in early fall. The 25th anniversary will also be celebrated with new products from anchor partners TechnoSource and Concept One, and expansion into France, Spain and Korea this fall.

### Nelvana keeps on truckin' with new series

Construction is underway on building a licensing program for *Trucktown*, a new CG-animated preschool series from Toronto, Canada's Nelvana Enterprises. Targeting boys, the show is based on the bestselling book series from Jon Scieszka. "We've just begun a limited number of conversations with preferred licensing partners, focusing on the master toy category to start. We're very early in the development and commercial curves for *Trucktown*, but we expect product to be on-shelf in North America in late 2014/early 2015," says Andrew Kerr, Nelvana's head of consumer products for the Americas and Australasia.

### Beanstalk plans marquee rollout for virtual world

The tween-centric online world of MovieStarPlanet is taking the spotlight at New York-based Beanstalk's booth. The agency is looking for US licensees in apparel, accessories, toys, back-to-school, health & beauty, textiles and consumer electronics. Licensed product will be heavily supported online, with virtual versions of the physical products made available to the site's members. The first items for the virtual world, which allows kids to create with their own personalized MovieStar and explore a world of film, fashion, fame and friendship, are slated to head to mass-market retailers in the UK and Nordic territories in August.

### Fox intros new animated features

At this year's show, Twentieth Century Fox is laying the groundwork for its next tentpole animated feature *Leafmen*, a comedy-adventure from the creators of *Rio* and *Ice Age* that's set to hit US theaters in March 2013. Licensing arm Fox Consumer Products is currently seeking partners for publishing, interactive, food & beverage, apparel, accessories, toys, games, gifts, novelty and social expressions for a spring 2013 product rollout across all channels. The same consumer products categories are planned for a *Rio* follow-up. The sequel to 2011's song-filled avian extravaganza called *Rio 2*, has a spring/summer 2014 release date. Fox is planning for corresponding products to hit the US market within the same timeframe.



Aussie smash *Dance Academy*, currently rating with TeenNick viewers is being prepped for a US softlines program in 2013

### SMC to make US impact with global IPs

Feeling that the US program for DQ Entertainment/ZDF animated series *The Jungle Book* should be inclusive, not exclusive, SMC Entertainment SVP of licensing Lisa Streff is talking with a broad range of interested retailers about the potential of the reborn classic. While its US broadcast home remains under wraps, Streff reveals that the show will air on a national broadcaster this summer. North American home entertainment partner Phase 4 is following up with DVD release and then a digital distribution push in early 2013. Isaac Morris has signed on as master apparel licensee and will be releasing product along with Komar (sleepwear) in spring 2013. Imported TeenNick show *H2O: Just Add Water*, from Jonathan M. Shiff Productions and ZDF, has a US apparel partner lined up for a mid-tier/specialty program slated to start this fall. TV newcomer *Dance Academy* (pictured), another Aussie show airing on TeenNick, is being prepped for a program to launch in 2013, with apparel, dancewear and room décor set to drive the property at retail.



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## Exim Licensing Group: Phoenix Rising

Reinvention and innovation fuel 30 years of success,  
and forge a clear path for future growth

**I**N 1982, Argentina was in the midst of a devastating debt crisis and the incendiary Falklands War with Britain. With his country and business in flames, no access to capital and two small children to support, Dr. Elias Hofman settled himself into a new “office” at the famous Mignon’s Café—the second table on the right, in front of the window—and ruminated over ways to rise from the ashes.

Not many people would have chosen to launch a company in this environment, but that’s

exactly what Hofman did, with a Lettera 88 typewriter and a network of contacts as his sole business tools. Exim Licensing Group originated as a trading company importing and exporting toys and premiums for local retailers, and later switched to a licensing model during a brief prohibition on toy imports in Argentina.

“At Exim, we have become a leading company by believing that it is necessary to reinvent ourselves every day,” says Hofman. “Many people intend change, and then end up doing



the same thing. When I launched Exim, all agents were basically local—it was not the path of growth. A different approach was necessary.”

That belief has allowed Exim to maintain a level of entrepreneurial agility that has carried it through three decades of market peaks and valleys. Now, as it celebrates its 30th anniversary, the company prepares for its next decade of growth by adhering to the same visionary strategy that fueled its early success—differentiating through people, a pan-regional business model, and a pioneering approach.

### Putting people first

From the outset, Hofman sought to make Exim unique by way of a commitment to putting people first—at both the client and employee level. His first operating principle for client service? “Never promise a client what cannot be done, and never fail to deliver what was promised,” he says. “We still live by that today, and it’s an ethic that we respect, not only externally but also within the organization.”

On the internal side of things, Exim has always been more of a family than a group of employees, with Hofman at the helm. In fact, his first employee was his daughter Judith, who now serves as SVP of Licensing and Promotions. Son Jonathan, currently CEO of Exim Argentina and Exim Entertainment, followed later on. And many of the senior partners have been with the company for more than 20 years, a testament to Exim’s people-first strategy.

As it looks ahead to the next stage of growth, Exim plans to fortify its ranks in key areas. “One of our main assets is our team of executives and collaborators. In Latin America, we often have easier access to human resources than working capital, and we will continue to invest heavily in this area,” says EVP Celso Rafael. The company recently hired a Marketing Manager specialized in retail development to bolster its Brazil-based retail promotions team.

Next up, Exim is on the hunt for creative talent to strengthen its technology and social media services. “The current storm represented by social media, which is changing the way people communicate and interact, cannot be ignored,” says Diego Barrasi, SVP of Marketing. “We are currently look-

ing to reinforce our Exim Technology division from a talent perspective to really explore the great variety of opportunities offered in this area.”

Refreshing and enhancing the skillset of existing employees is also a strategic focus, and Exim plans to continue investing in training initiatives. The agency currently runs training programs at all levels of its business—from marketing to sales, and across every product category—so all executives gain a deeper understanding of each stage of the process, as well as their category of focus.

“Training is key, as there is no room for amateurs in this industry—you either prove that you can help your partners establish and position their brands, or you’re out,” says Rafael.

### Pan-regional licensing: A sustainable model

Now recognized as a paragon of pan-regional licensing strategy and structure, Exim began its territory expansion efforts in the early years with a main office in Argentina and a second in Uruguay. “At the time, Uruguay was a \$100 flight away—it allowed us to explore the idea of managing a remote office and learn from our mistakes, correcting and gaining experience as we went along,” says Hofman. That experience led to offices in Chile, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

Each new office marked a period of growth and expansion for Exim. Licensors flocked to the agency to gain access to a territory that had previously only been accessible on a deal-by-deal basis. The pan-regional model was tested by the Mexican Peso Crisis of 1994, which reverberated in the Southern Cone (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Brazil. “It affected the entire region, and we essentially had to start over,” Hofman recalls. “We had problems at the regional level, but our partners and shareholders continued to support us and we kept growing.”

Exim’s business model would once again be tested by the Argentine crisis of 2001—a period of economic and political strife that sent the country into a tailspin. Against that backdrop, many business leaders would have retrenched, scaled back or even closed up shop. Instead, Hofman established a North American foothold

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by opening a new headquarters and business division—Exim Licensing USA—in Miami, Florida. “We kept fighting, and we did not stop,” he says.

Hofman’s tenacity and commitment to a pan-regional model that he continued to see as the way forward engendered respect and loyalty in existing partners—and it also attracted new ones. “Personally, I’ve always admired Elias Hofman for his dedication, persistence and work ethic,” says Carla Silva, VP of Global Licensing for American Greetings Properties, licensor of the Strawberry Shortcake, Holly Hobbie & Friends and Care Bears brands.

American Greetings is Exim’s longest-running partner, dating back to the early ‘80s and the production of a Strawberry Shortcake live show. Silva points to Exim’s pan-regional model as one of the agency’s main points of difference. “Exim has local offices in many of the countries in their territory, which helps

us recognize the special business needs of each and create programs for our brands that are tailored to consumers there,” she says.

While competitors may build agencies following the same model, what they cannot replicate are the relationships and connections Exim has built—and that strength continues to attract new licensors looking to break into or grow their presence in the Latin American market. Five years ago, Exim began working with Hello Kitty licensor Sanrio on several independent projects. But the two companies forged a true partnership in 2011 when Sanrio implemented a new South American strategy. It was important to Sanrio to work with an agency partner that could understand its brand strategy and build upon the licensing program already underway in the region.

“Our relationship with Exim has been exactly the type of partnership we envisioned—they bring to the



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**American Greeting's Strawberry Shortcake was the first property to really feel the power of Exim's pan-regional model**

table an extensive knowledge of Latin American markets, and this has enabled us to work hand-in-hand to develop unique strategies for each country," says Chris Daniels, COO of Sanrio Brazil. "With Exim having local offices and dedicated management teams in each of the key markets, we've been able to grow our business by expanding into new categories and business segments—such as food & beverage and promotions—that we otherwise would not have reached on our own."

### **Pioneering approach**

Exim has grown its business by developing a keen eye for identifying industry needs, and creating and expanding business divisions to serve those needs. One early example is the company's shift to a licensing agency model to stay afloat during the Argentine prohibition on toy exports. And in the past decade, Exim has focused its efforts on identifying burgeoning trends early in their cycle and building divisions and teams around them. Examples include the company's promotions and premiums division; Exim Trading, which handles product development for direct-to-retail programs; and Exim Technology, which manages the development of digital and social media programs.

"No matter the maturity level of your business, it is always important and necessary to continue investing in the development of business units, and we have basically two options here," says Rafael. "The first is to continue growing at the same pace, with our own resources; and the second is to partner with third parties to accelerate growth." While both options are basically sound, each comes with pros and cons, which Exim is currently weighing. Rafael says the company is

in no hurry—the important thing is to do it right, a strategy that has served Exim well over the past 30 years.

For now, Exim is focused on fortifying, expanding and innovating within some of its largest and strongest divisions, namely entertainment and technology. "More than anything else, we want to be seen by our partners as an important generator of business opportunities, especially now, when for the first time in many years, Latin America is presenting all of the necessary elements for steady business development and growth," says Rafael. "The time has come, and we cannot miss the opportunity."

### **The world's a stage**

In 2001, Exim noticed that the market was ripe for ticketed live shows and started requesting those rights separately from licensors, many of which did not have a live-show division or any experience in that area of business. Existing licensed live shows in the territory, like Disney on Ice, were scarce and limited to large markets. Exim's idea was to create live shows in a format that would fit into theaters rather than large arenas, which meant that the shows could be produced cost-effectively and toured to more markets.

"We found a niche for producing smaller ticketed shows in smaller Latin American cities that couldn't afford the larger touring shows," says Jonathan Hoffman, CEO of Exim Argentina, which also serves as headquarters for the entertainment division. "We were the first company doing that throughout the region—and securing the rights to do so from licensors." Since 2001, Exim has produced upwards of 20 touring shows that have run in more than 16 countries in Latin America, for brands including Barney, The Backyardigans,



Strawberry Shortcake, Lazytown, Doki, El Chavo and Yo Gabba Gabba! And along the way, the company has met challenges with its trademark tenacity. “We had our ups and downs, but mainly due to situations beyond our control. Like the H1N1 scare of 2009, which hit us during our prime summer season when we had four shows opening, and greatly affected our revenue,” says Hofman. “But since then, things have improved to the point that this coming winter, we will once again be at peak revenue.”

Exim maintains its leadership in this space by continually hunting for properties that have growth potential in Latin America and offering its entertainment division’s services alongside licensing and promotions. Hofman points to the Hello Kitty ticketed show, produced in close collaboration with Sanrio, as a good current example. The show opens in Argentina this month and will tour throughout Latin America over the next 18 months.

Beyond ticketed shows, Exim is now producing meet & greets and smaller multi-character shows that leverage its strong retail relationships with shopping centers and department stores. “With this, we are covering an even broader area of demand and supporting exposure of our characters and brands to increase revenue in traditional streams for our licensor partners,” says Hofman.

Last February, Exim performed a marketing test of a new entertainment concept called Family Fest in Argentina, where it launches most of its live shows. Running for two days over a weekend, Family Fest was a collection of nine stage shows produced in partnership with free-TV broadcaster Telefe, and families gained entry with a daily pass-  
port similar to the ones that theme parks use. The first show concept of its kind in Latin America, Exim is now formalizing the model with licensors to

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convert the test into a business, with more Family Fest events coming this year in Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay and Brazil.

### Technology breaks through

In the technology arena, one of the things Exim is focused on is developing internal systems and processes. To that end, it has pioneered a software program called the Exim Business System. The initial idea was to come up with a sales tracking system providing access to information such as forecasts. It sounds simple, but the software also needed to support the administration of a business that is multilingual, multi-currency and multi-country, not to mention the various policies and formats that come with that.

The development process, from writing the program to its first operating version (which went live in late 2010), took about a year. “We have advanced it to incorporate all of our licensors’ information, and sales managers are able to complete proposals generated directly in the system, letting all divisions within our business have access to and approve deals,” says Rafael. “We already have the system working in Brazil, and most of its modules are functioning well. But the final integration with our other countries will take another six to nine months.”

At this stage, EBS is an Exim-only system, but the company is already planning for the next phase,

which will allow for licensor access. “Very commonly, we’re asked to provide contracts and licensee information that licensors should have, but that can’t always be produced in a timely fashion,” says Rafael. “We’re working on a web-based version of EBS that will allow licensors to sign in and access our databases for instant access to information on contracts and licensees from anywhere in the world, but that will take some time to develop.”

E-commerce will also be a future focus, and Exim is currently evaluating opportunities to increase sales channels for its roster of licensors. While short on details, Rafael hints at the development of an online licensing portal.

### The next 30 years:

#### Transforming challenges into opportunities

“My dear friend Eduardo Stanislavsky taught me—among other things—that the only ceiling is the imagination,” says Elias Hofman. Stanislavsky was President and Founder of Cromy, an Argentina-based manufacturer of licensed playing cards, posters, stickers and other accessories, and the person who introduced Hofman to American Greetings.

As it focuses on the next 30 years, Exim will continue to look beyond the ceiling and explore the realm of imagination. But the company’s strategy remains

Getting underway this month in Argentina, Exim’s Hello Kitty live-show tour exemplifies the agency’s ability to build brands in more LatAm markets than anyone else





rooted in a realistic outlook on the industry and its challenges. Exim believes consolidation will continue to define the boys landscape in the years to come, and is planning for this trend accordingly. It has already had considerable success representing Televisa's Rebelde Way in the US Hispanic market, and has recently picked up licensing rights to El Chavo as well.

The company asserts that deals such as this one will be the way forward. "We anticipate lots of changes to our industry in the next couple of years, with companies leaving the business or merging to survive," says Rafael. "Boutique licensing companies will stay alive by exploring niche areas, and the market will be dominated by more structured agencies."

In the eyes of its client roster, Exim already does and will continue to dominate the Latin American licensing market. "To be competitive in the entertainment and licensing industry, the challenge is to

provide content and marketing messages in new and engaging ways on these platforms," says Gabriela Arenas, VP of Consumer Products for HIT Entertainment. "With its knowledge of the Latin American market and ability to stay on top of trends, Exim will be able to continue delivering creative licensing and marketing programs for its clients well into the future."

American Greetings' Carla Silva agrees. "Exim has always been very proactive and visionary in its business outlook," she says. "This will help the company continue to grow by constantly looking ahead in order to create opportunities, rather than waiting for them."

One poignant example of Exim's proactive strategy in action is its move into developing proprietary intellectual properties, which reduces its reliance on licensors and opens up new revenue streams. "We think the time has come for Exim to develop its own

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Europe and Asia are the next ports of expansion for Bondiband, Exim's first proprietary IP

IPs and capitalize on the creative expertise we've been accumulating over the past couple of years," says Jonathan Hofman. "The strategy is simple: Create content that is appealing to the target age group, and consider the merchandising possibilities to be explored and developed from day one."

The first project to come out of Exim's production pipeline is *Bondiband*, a 52 x 11-minute action-comedy series co-production with Ledafilms and Mondo TV chronicling the high-octane adventures of six young musicians-turned-superheroes. The series has been sold to Latin American broadcasters including Disney XD, Banderiantes, Televisa and Telem Amazonas, Telefe Argentina, Canal 12 Uruguay, RCN Colombia and Venevision Venezuela, and Exim is exploring opportunities in Europe and Asia. On the licensing front, the company is working on appointing licensing agents in these two key territories, and has recently recruited Eric Belloso to handle Bondiband in EMEA and Asia from his home

base in Spain. "The US market is also one of our main goals for Bondiband, but we are still deciding if we are going to explore it directly or through a partnership."

At press time, Exim remained tight-lipped about its next development project, not wanting to steal its own Licensing Show thunder. However, Hofman confirmed it would be a concept focused on the preschool audience. He says the company is highly committed to this fledgling business division, so we can expect to see more investment and output there in the future.

Hofman asserts that partnership and collaboration—externally and internally—will continue to define the way forward for this long-standing yet nimble agency. "I started alone. But success like ours is not built alone; it is done with people who think and work in tandem," he reflects. "Exim was—and still is—a mix of ideas, efforts, partners, friends and collaborators, and I thank all who helped me get to today." •

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# AGENTS OF PROFIT



Licensing agents and consultants help turn properties into profit and can create the vital partnerships that energize brands. You just have to find the right one.



**A** healthy licensing deal grows businesses. It's as simple as that.

Licensing breathes life into creative and turns it into things you can feel, experience and meaningfully interact with. And when a rights holder and licensee work towards the same goals, it opens new doors and gives both partners access to opportunities they might not have had otherwise.

Licensing agents and consultants are the stewards of those partnerships. A good agent finds and marries the most suitable partners, and then ushers them towards growth opportunities.

The question is: How do you find the ideal agent? And, when you do, how do you get the most out of your relationship with them?

It's not as hard as you might think.

## Finding the Perfect Match

It starts by asking questions. Lots of questions.

LIMA is an excellent source for finding leads on agents, but it's often helpful to go to retail, look for the best products on-shelf and make a list of the companies that helped get them there.

Once you have a few prospects in mind, ask for references and approach other licensors to find out who they would recommend. Word of mouth about an agent is extremely important, as are other acknowledgements from the industry.

"You have to ask for referrals," advises David Diesendruck, President of Redibra Servicos de Marketing in Sao Paulo, Brazil. "See how many years a company has been in business, and what awards it has won."

Redibra, for example, was named Licensor of the Year in Brazil last year. Such industry accolades are a good indicator because they are only earned through successful executions.

"Also, look at the individual and what kind of profile they have in the industry," adds Cheryl Stoebenau, President of CAS Marketing in New York. "Are they active in the industry? What have they done?"

For her part, Stoebenau has been on the board of directors for LIMA for six years and has been co-chair of the org's charity for seven—helping raise close to

US\$4 million for the Brain Tumor Foundation. Profile like that is valuable currency for an agent.

Lastly, when you're shopping for a representative, it helps to look for agents who have wide industry experience. Toronto's The Licensing Shop, for example, is run by Steve and Nancy Fowler, both of whom have worked extensively outside of agencies.

"One thing that is unique about The Licensing Shop," observes TLS President Steve Fowler, "is that Nancy and I have been on all sides of the business. We have been licensors, we have been licensees, and we have been agents. We know what makes a good agent because we have been licensors. We know what makes a good agent because we have been licensees."

Once you're in the room together, there are other signs to look for when interviewing an agent. One of the most important is the number and type of clients they represent.

Stoebenau, who focuses on representing manufacturers, tries to keep her roster reined in and only has about eight clients currently, including big names like Children's Apparel Network, Jay Franco & Sons and Berkshire Fashions.

Similarly, Fowler says The Licensing Shop is selective about the brands it takes on. TLS has represented Sesame Street in Canada for five years, and Fowler

## REDIBRA SERVICOS DE MARKETING

### Case in Point: Top Executions

#### Poultry in Motion

With limited distribution networks, it can be challenging for a property to break in on TV or theatrical in Brazil. But new media is a strong alternative. For proof, look no further than Brazilian sensation Galinha Pintadinha (roughly translated as Spotted Chicken). This YouTube phenomenon is approaching half a billion (yup, that's billion with a 'B') hits and growing.

Explains David Diesendruck, President of Redibra, "Two young guys created this basic animation with popular Brazilian kids music and placed it on YouTube—that's the only screen they made it available on. Today, they have more than 400 million views. You can't make up those numbers. We have about 30 licensees and it is becoming one of the strongest preschool properties in Brazil. That's amazing news because it's really opening a big door for us. We don't have to depend on the TV screen or theatrical."

#### Life Begins Here

Coke's got more than a new slogan. In Brazil (and only in Brazil, we might add) it also has some new and energetic clothing stores.

Observes Diesendruck, "We have a very successful program with Coca-Cola. We have an amazing apparel accessories business, and the only Coca-Cola clothing stores in the world are in Brazil. We opened 10 stores last year and we are going to have 10 more by the end of this one. It's a very unique program worldwide."

#### Making Contact

Redibra Servicos de Marketing  
redibra.com.br  
55-11-3383-1616





asserts they have to respect that partnership when they are approached.

"I don't want to have a whole roster of preschool properties," he notes, "because the economic climate is such that it's a challenge to get them placed at retail, and we want to be able to do a good job for all of our licensors. If I take on too many, it just becomes too challenging, too conflicting, so we turn down far more than we would ever accept."

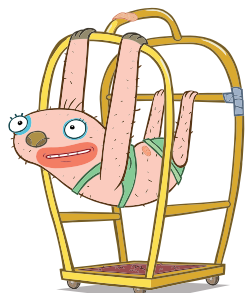
Diesendruck says the same holds true for Redibra. "We decline most of the properties that are offered to us because we don't want to take a property just for the sake of taking the property. Some of our competitors have 120 properties: 20 for preschool, 20 for boys, 20 for girls... What's the point of that? Licensors should be very careful about what properties an agency already has and if they are competing."

But that's really only the first half the equation. Diesendruck also advises prospective partners to dig deep into their potential agency's ability to execute once they have the account. He suggests asking the following questions: "What kind of infrastructure do they have? How many people do they have? Do they have people doing creative, retail and marketing? Do they have category managers? How many people do they have for back-office? Who is their team? You want to know how your property is going to be supported."



*Redibra President David Diesendruck is working with Cartoon Network on the huge Ben 10 franchise, calling it "the most successful boys property currently in Brazil."*

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Doris



Avra



Steve



Nancy



Mallory



Analiza



James



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## THE LICENSING SHOP

### Case in Point: Top Executions

#### Won't you tell me how to get...

Working with Sesame Street sounds like a can't-miss opportunity, but it comes with its own set of challenges. As a not-for-profit, the brand simply can't out-spend its competitors to create awareness. That means you have to get more creative.

"When we took the brand on five years ago, it had quite a few licensees, but it didn't have great retail presence in Canada," notes Licensing Shop President Steve Fowler. "In the last two years, we are up well over 100% in licensed products in Canada alone—we are in every retailer, every channel. We have fantastic promotions, and we are constantly broadening that base of really targeted licensees."

Beyond sales figures, what evidence does he have to support that? "Going back four years ago, you could not buy Elmo pajamas in Canada," observes Fowler. "Now you can find them pretty much everywhere, in all channels. And in all age groups from infant/toddler right up to adults."

#### The Naked Truth

At the other end of the licensing spectrum is a brand that's just beginning to pop. Toronto's 9 Story Entertainment will soon roll out several lines for its quirky boy-targeted series *Almost Naked Animals*.

"With *Almost Naked Animals*, we're really beating the odds," observes Fowler. "It's a boys comedy property, and comedy is really challenging to turn into consumer products. But we have three fantastic toy partners and two book publishers, and we're at the critical stage of launching it this fall. We're really proud that we pulled all the partners together, and we're poised for success."

#### Making Contact

The Licensing Shop  
www.thelicensingshop.com  
416-322-7300



*The Licensing Shop has worked with 9 Story Entertainment on several new Almost Naked Animals lines that will hit this fall. Says TLS President Steve Fowler, "Their expertise is developing amazing television shows. Our expertise is to take that and then translate it into consumer products."*

Lastly, and possibly most importantly, look for the spark, says Stoebenau. "When you interview a consultant or an agent, what are you looking for? If it were me, I would be looking for someone with passion for what they do.

"A lot of people out there just kind of throw things up against the wall—maybe some things will stick, and maybe they won't. My whole objective is to see my clients grow. I want to see their businesses flourish. I want them to say to me at the end of the year: 'Cheryl, I am so happy we're working with you, and for what we have achieved together.' And that is my whole thing: I want to see my client succeed."

#### Moving Forward

Once the partnership has been struck, the first steps for the agent is to get started on what Diesendruck calls "total immersion" in the client's brand, and gain a complete understanding of what the expectations are. The agent should understand the priorities, the capacity and the possible targets—whether they're measured in licensees, categories or retail channels.

"Based on those expectations, we start to build a business plan that reflects all of the goals, the strategies, the action plans and the timelines to get the brand going in our country," he says.

Diesendruck adds that the most important thing his clients can do to make sure the partnership is successful is empower him—inundate him with information, including style guides, lists of licensees, retail promos and



## Big in Brazil

With a population approaching 200 million and increasing clout on the world stage, Brazil has become an important stop for global entertainment properties.

We asked David Diesendruck, President of Redibra Servicos de Marketing in Sao Paulo, about some of the things non-Brazilians should know when it comes to licensing in the fifth most-populated market in the world.

### **TV presents some challenges, especially for preschool...**

In Brazil, our pay TV only has about a 15% penetration in households. That's very low when you are looking to launch a big licensing program. You need to have free TV, and it is pretty much not airing preschool because the advertising income for that genre is very small. In Brazil, very similar to Europe and the US, we have advertising regulations preventing most companies from advertising to kids under 12.

So basically, preschool is completely out for free TV with very few exceptions. And that is a huge challenge for us because with pay TV at only 15% penetration (although it is growing) it does not provide enough critical mass for us to launch a significant licensing program.

### **Then what about theatrical...?**

Brazil only has 3,000 screens, compared to the US, which has about 30,000. A popular movie in Brazil—a Spiderman, Shrek or Madagascar

—will bring in about five million people, which is really quite good. But in a country of 200 million, you are talking about 2.5% of the population. And theatrical has a very short window, so retailers and licensees will not do it unless it is something like a Spiderman or Avengers.

### **What's the first step when it comes to working with Brazilian partners?**

Because Brazil is an important market today for any brand, licensors should come down and meet face-to-face with the agencies. Go to their offices and meet their people, and see how they are structured.

Some licensors cut global deals, and the global deals have local distributors. So meet with the local distributors and ask them who they would like you to work with. Or schedule a meeting with a retailer and ask the same question. Who do you think we should work with now that Brazil has become an important strategic market in the world's economy?

Licensors should spend more time hiring the best agency, and not just making one phone call to ask for a PowerPoint presentation. That happens a lot. I understand that once you have a lot of markets to worry about, it can take time when you have to make decisions, but if this is a priority market—and Brazil has become a priority market—then you should spend more time here.



*Cheryl Stoebehan*

Premier Licensing Consultant to Manufacturers



| CASmarketing.com | 212.696.0008 |



## CAS MARKETING Case in Point: Top Executions

### Life's a Beach

Jay Franco & Sons is the perfect model to demonstrate how a company can thrive when all the facets of licensing work together. When president Cheryl Stoebenau and CAS Marketing began working with Jay Franco, it was primarily a seasonal company. (Think beach towels.) It has since grown into bedding, bath, beach and so much more—and has landed licenses that include Marvel, Disney, Sesame Street and Angry Birds.

The fact that Angry Birds is tracking so well is especially thrilling for Stoebenau. “Having a new property from a new medium succeed is excellent,” she says. “It’s good for the industry as a whole. I see my clients being more receptive to taking on new things. I see the retailers opening up and also being a little more receptive. We have had a period of about five years that was kind of dry. But I see it opening up. I’m very positive about the future.”

### A Little Extra

Sometimes the greatest indicator of success comes when someone else values your work enough to notice. Case in point, CAS Marketing client Added Extras was recently acquired by LF Beauty. Stoebenau began working with Added Extras about eight years ago when it was mainly bath and cosmetics. She helped forge partnerships that greatly extended the company’s range, and brought on licenses like Hello Kitty, Warner Bros. and Angry Birds, among others.

Admits Stoebenau, “I take pride in the fact that the licenses we acquired played a major role in the growth of this company and made it a very strong candidate for acquisition.”

### Making Contact

CAS Marketing  
www.casmarketing.com  
212-696-0008



*Galinha Pintadinha has racked up over 400 million hits on YouTube, which Redibra Servicos de Marketing has managed to turn into 30 licensees—without a broadcast outlet on-board.*

promo partners, and anything else that can help him understand the brand and where it needs to be.

“Provide me with as much information as possible regarding what is going on with the property worldwide,” he advises.

Once opened, it’s vital to keep those lines of communication humming and healthy so that opportunities don’t get missed.

“It’s important to be available to the consultant because timing is everything,” says Stoebenau, “If my client doesn’t talk to me on an ongoing basis and I have some great opportunities, someone else may take advantage of them. They need to give the consultants the time they need. And they must execute on the licenses that are acquired.”

There are also practical matters to consider when it comes to communications. With so much product sourced from China, Diesendruck points out that





timing can be tight, and delays in communication can snowball.

TLS's Fowler agrees that responsiveness is key, but he also points to the importance of a vibrant style guide and brand. "It's all about keeping things fresh," he observes. "You need to have fresh updates on a frequent basis to give inspiration to licensees for creating the products. Licensors really need a dedicated team to work with us in terms of the legal people, the finance people, the marketing people and the creative team. We provide a product development team to help approve product concepts and designs, but at the end of the day, the IP owner—the licensor—has to be happy and content, and that requires resources on their side to say: 'Yes, this meets the brand criteria.'

"Ultimately we have to reach the consumer," says Fowler, "and to reach the consumer we have to go to the retailer, and to get the retailer to put product on the shelf, we have to have licenses. So it is a partnership between all of us. It is not about any one particular partner. We all have to be involved in the process together—the agent, the licensee, the licensor and the retailer need to work cohesively to target the appropriate consumer." ●●



*CAS Marketing brought app smash Angry Birds to Jay Franco & Sons. Observes President Cheryl Stoebenau, "I see my clients being more receptive to taking new things. I also see the retailers opening up and being a little more receptive."*

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Childhood is **cannibals and psychotics vomiting in your mouth!** I wanted to be a teacher so I could have **summer vacations for the rest of my life.** A couple of wise people in the toy industry told me that **glow-in-the-dark** is something you do when you **run out of ideas.** Every property lives and dies on its own. **Augmented reality is a zero-billion-dollar entity.**

- In remembrance of the late, great outspoken children's author **Maurice Sendak**, who uttered these words to Art Spiegelman in 1993
- **Holly Stein**, Mattel VP of licensing acquisitions, on her early college career aspirations
- **Gerrick Johnson**, BMO Capital Market analyst, talks up one of the biggest product trends for 2012
- Former Toys 'R' Us president **Neil Friedman** asserting that the success of a new IP is not affected by past failures at retail
- **Ray Sharma**, from game developer XMG Studios, remarks on the currently unfulfilled mass-market potential of augmented reality




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