

toyworld

May 2020 Volume 9 Issue 9

The business magazine with a passion for toys

THOMAS & FRIENDS



75 YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP



You got it, girlfriend

As the UK continues to stay at home, toy companies are working hard to supply kids with the latest toys and games to keep them engaged and occupied whilst off school. Girls dolls and collectibles remains a sought-after product category and Toy World spoke to suppliers in this sector to find out what's new and how they are coping as lockdown persists.

Toys and the value of play have become more important than ever since the outbreak of Covid-19. Girls dolls and collectibles remains a popular category that has seen many new additions since the start of 2020, as well as innovative new trends taking the industry by storm.

Since launching in 2016, Swiss brand I'm a Girly's main mission has been to create 'sustainability with style', as well as representing other key trends in the girls' category. "Currently, it is all about having a surprise element," explains marketing and communications manager, Karin Brönnimann. "This could be during the unpacking stage or through a magical transformation; either way dolls and collectibles must have a surprise feature, and, at the same time, be sustainable and foster creativity."

Having enjoyed a successful end to 2019, which involved hosting a styling party with the Beckham family,

Karin reveals more about how the brand has been designed to reflect current trends and be relevant to today's consumers. "This summer, we are launching our 'I'm a Wow' 14-inch dolls that combine all the

previously mentioned trends. Created by children from our target demographic, the dolls reflect children's immense creativity, plus they are made from recyclable materials and of course encompass the all-important surprise element. The colour-changing hair and pattern-revealing outfits are activated over and over again by daylight, meaning that the range offers sustainable surprise without waste."

Whilst unboxing and the surprise element remain a key trend for this year, there is still plenty more to get excited about in the girls' dolls and collectibles category. This summer, Moose Toys is launching a new collectible brand, Oh! My GIF, to complement the ever-expanding digital trend. "Children are consuming content and engaging on digital platforms more than ever, yet the joyful simplicity of physical toys remains a constant in their lives, so a need to blend these two worlds has never been more appropriate," explains Emily MacLennan, European sales and marketing director at Moose Toys. "This is a trend Moose has been championing for a while now and will continue to embrace. The Oh! My GIF brand was inspired by digital GIFs and meme culture. GIFs have become the new emojis and are almost a language for social expression, resonating with kids and tweens. Oh! My GIF is essentially GIFs gone live, offering the humour and movement you'd expect from a digital GIF, along with the surprise, delight and fidget factor from a truly unique collectible toy." Remaining positive, planned brand launches are set to go ahead in order to keep the toy market fresh. "We are launching another brand later this year," added Emily, "but our lips are sealed for now!"

During the lockdown period, companies have been seeking alternative ways to get products in front of children. Taking to social media and utilising online

platforms to unveil product launches has enabled brands to go forward with marketing projects. "In the current climate, online retail and digital marketing has proved to be incredibly important in how we as brands communicate with our consumers," said Emily. With most of the world's children now at home and digital screen time significantly increased, there is currently a huge opportunity for brands to speak to an engaged audience across platforms that now have an even wider reach. Emily adds, "Families are also spending more time together, so not only do we have increased opportunities to reach kids – but parents as well."

I'm a Girly is also considering ways to host its celebratory events and product launches through an online platform. "We usually love to organise events where children can play with our products directly," explains Karin, "But because of the current situation, we have had to adapt and bring the celebrations to the digital world. We are using social media more than ever and continue to find new ways to bring the joy of I'm a Girly to online platforms. For example, we plan to host our usual events online, such as our Kids4Kids design sessions, where kids actively influence the design of the range."

"Covid-19 has certainly posed unprecedented challenges", echoes Emily, "but everyone here at Moose is optimistic about the autumn/winter season. We have a really strong portfolio of products coming through and exciting marketing plans to back them up, so once stores are open, we will be ready and waiting to support our retailers to ensure our brand launches are a huge success."

Over the next few pages, Toy World brings you the latest from the girls' dolls and collectibles category set to delight and entertain kids at home over the coming months.





CHANGE HAIR



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At the core of the I'm a Girly brand are the Kids4Kids design teams which co-create all of the I'm a Girly products. From the dolls' facial and physical features to outfits and accessories, everything is created together with boys and girls aged 8-14 to ensure only contemporary toys are produced, which meet the demands of today's fashion-conscious kids. Three product lines ensure broad appeal from ages 3-14 years, offering a trendy twist on a traditional product to bridge the gap between childhood and teenage years.

The I'm a Girly fashion dolls are 48 cm tall (18") and are available in seven options with different skin and hair shades, from cotton candy pink hair and fair skin with freckles, to olive and dark skin tones with long, curly hair. With over 150 accessories, plus interchangeable wigs in many different colours, there's a doll to suit every child. The doll's packaging can also be repurposed as a wardrobe.

The I'm a Stylist styling heads offer endless styling possibilities. The 33 cm (13") tall styling heads are available in three different models and come with magnetic eyelashes, earrings, interchangeable wigs, face gems and hair accessories. Additional

interchangeable wigs are also available. Accessory boxes and a photo studio can be crafted out of the packaging.

For summer, the brand is launching its third product line – I'm a Wow 14" dolls. Aimed at slightly younger kids, there are three different I'm a Wow dolls to collect. When touched by sunlight, the doll's hair changes colour in an instant. Additional accessories and outfits are available, some with a secret pattern reveal. The dolls' bodies are made of recyclable plastic and kids can create decorative accessories from the packaging.

Alongside styling events for children, I'm a Girly regularly runs contests through social media and encourages its fans to share their doll styling creations using #imagirlybrand.