

November 2000

CONTACT : LESLIE HAYDEN
TEL : (416) 489-0387
Email: lesliehayden@home.com

STRAIGHT FROM SANTA'S BAG
WHAT'S HOT FOR THE HOLIDAYS FROM
THE CANADIAN TOY ASSOCIATION

Here's a look at some of this year's most exciting toys and games for kids of all ages:

CATEGORIES:

[Special Effects](#)
[Just for the Fun of It](#)
[Action-Packed Play](#)
[Dolls](#)
[Games](#)
[Pre-School](#)
[Baby](#)
[Crafts](#)
[Building](#)
[Books, CDs and More](#)

SPECIAL EFFECTS

The days of the couch potato are over!! **RADICA PLAY TV BASEBALL** will really get those armchair athletes moving. Now instead of watching, they can play ball - on TV! The breakthrough home video game that takes interactivity to a new level is finally available. **PLAY TV BASEBALL** is the innovative plug & play baseball TV game that gets you hitting and pitching as if you were really on the field. Plug the game into a TV or VCR, turn it on, pick up an actual bat and play ball. The bat has IR sensors to measure your swing, and a ball pad for total pitch control. No video game system is required. For baseball fans, it's year-round major league action in your home. But you have to get up off the couch to play. (The Canadian Group, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 746-3388)

LEGO's gone Hollywood. **LEGO® & STEVEN SPIELBERG MOVIE MAKER SET** includes a **LEGO PC** Movie Camera, LEGO Editing Software and an assortment of more than 400 **LEGO** bricks and special pieces to allow for special events and props. There's also a 104-page book of tips for making real movies. Kids first build their story, then capture the action using the PC movie camera. Next, they use the kid-friendly editing software with professional functionality to edit their footage and add music, sound effects, and text. Finally, break open the popcorn, it's movie time. Kids can play back their movies and even e-mail their masterpieces to friends and family. And a new generation of Steven Spielbergs is launched. (**LEGO** Canada Inc., Richmond Hill, ON, Tel: (905) 764-5346)

Who doesn't want to grow up to be a DJ? Now kids can get a headstart on their career plans with **RADIO DJ™**, a real broadcast studio in a box that lets you broadcast on any AM radio up to 30 feet away. Using a DJ mike and other sound controls, you can report the news, rap to the beat and play your favourite tunes with the built-in tape deck or CD connection. It can also be used as a karaoke machine or to record a copy of your broadcast on the receiving radio. Tune in - the next Wolfman Jack is on the air. (Dynatech Action Inc., Red Deer, AB, Tel: (403) 343-0455)

Ping-pong has always been hugely popular, but since it was introduced in the 2000 Olympic Games, there's more reason to work the paddle. Now, you can practice the sport in your living room. You don't need a partner or a table, just a TV. **The RADICA PLAY TV PING PONG** is another in the line of innovative plug & play games. Plug it into the TV or VCR, turn it on, pick up the actual paddle with IR sensors and prepare to play hard. Who knows, you may make it to the next Olympics. The game comes with two paddles if you want to challenge a friend or if you're solo, play against the on-screen champ. In either case, expect to work up a sweat-this game keeps you on your toes. No video game system is required. (The Canadian Group, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 746-3388)

Sure enough, in the 21st century, toys really do come alive. Hug, rock and pat the adorable plush alien creature **WUVLUV™** and she comes to life, talking and responding in ways to melt your heart. Plus, with a little love, she'll open her pouch to reveal a beautiful egg. Inside is a talking baby WuvLuv who interacts and sings with her mother who names her. There's much to be said for progress when it delivers love and magic in a box. (Rainbow Fun Inc, Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 795-1500)

From the manufacturers of Furby, comes **POO-CHI**, a revolutionary robotic pooch who's no ordinary Rover. He sings songs, plays games, dances on tiptoes, and with his adorable animated head, he responds to light, sound, touch and other **POO-CHI pals**. This little pooch uses advanced bio-rhythmic technology to create realistic emotional responses that adapt and change as you play with him. But here's the best part -- he doesn't chew shoes or require midnight walks. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

This is one pet you won't need to take to obedience school. A revolution in robotics, **ROCKET THE ROBO PUPPY** is a puppy who actually listens and responds to his owner's voice with life-like actions, emotions and sounds. Using voice recognition technology, kids simply imprint their voice by speaking into the Personal Puppy Trainer headset. Once he knows his name and his commands, Rocket will listen and respond, performing typical doggie tasks at his master's request. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

Tweens are multi-tasking and need help with organization as much as anyone. **PHUSION** is an electronic hand-held organizer, and a whole lot more that is designed to help tweens get their life together. It doubles as a digital camera that can shoot pictures of yourself thanks to a 180 degree rotating lens. Pictures can then be stored and e-mailed. Also, can be used to schedule classes and homework, as an alarm clock, and as a money manager. Plus, it comes with puzzles, trivia game, and foreign language translators. Phusion, which is PC connectable, ends the confusion. That means's no more excuses. (Vtech Electronics Canada Ltd., Richmond, BC, Tel: (604) 273-5131)

For pinball wizards, **FLIPPER ONE** is a tabletop version that has all the attractions of a larger standup model--and a few more. Arcade -style display scoreboard and electronic flippers keeps players riveted, while lively sound effects really revs them up. Flashing lights, and high power spinning bumpers for extra speed, great rebound and unpredictability, add up to high-voltage play. Cool enough for display in the home, playroom or office. (KSM, Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 403-0710)

Put your name in lights and take your message to the stars. The **E*WRITER™** **COMPUTERIZED FLYING DISC** lets you program words into the LED display that appears on the side of the disc. The single row of super bright LED lights blink randomly until the disc is launched. With a flick of your wrist, the disc flies through the night sky, and your message soars. The mind boggles at the possibilities. (GCDC Marketing Inc., Guelph, ON, Tel: (519) 824-8389)

Sports nuts now have a real nut to answer to. **SPORTS NUT**, a sports trivia game with attitude comes to you via Norm Nutman, a standing, talking, flag waving know-it-all who asks the questions--and doesn't like waiting around for answers. Hesitate and he may taunt, "Maybe you'd rather talk about your feeelings." He comes with over 800 questions, and with the purchase of Nut eLink, you can download new trivia every week. This guy is made for jocks. (The Canadian Group, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 746-3388)

According to research, playing music not only stimulates a child's brain, but also builds the foundation for early learning development, improving reading and math skills. Making beautiful classical music is child's play with The **MOZART MAGIC CUBE** from Embryonics, a learning toy that teaches how sounds combine to form true polyphonic music. Start with the flute and add the piano. Now drop the piano and bring in the violin. With the push of a button, children can compose and arrange millions of Mozart musical pieces featuring flute, French horn, violin, piano, harp or an entire orchestra. (Munchkin, Newmarket, ON, Tel: (905) 853-8971)

Here's a new innovation in the world of toys. **HITCLIPS** is a collectible micro personal music player. It's a tiny music system that features micro-sized pre-recorded chips with digital samplings of top songs from artists like Christina Aguilera and Sugar Ray. You slide the hit single samplers (that are no bigger than a thumb nail) into your teensy player, pop in your ear plug and groove. The micro-music mix is about one minute long and can be played in other clip players, like micro boombox and micro music player & alarm clock. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

LEGO is moving with the times. **LEGO@MYBOT™** is a new interactive toy that lets kids build their own futuristic creations and then program them, with technology developed in consultation with MIT. Kids make an airplane, a racecar, a robot or anything else they wish to imagine, then customize its actions by mixing and matching "smart" bricks. Each creation will make its own distinctive sound depending on which smart bricks are selected. When children play with their completed MyBot, they hear sound effects that vary according to how the toy is moved--the airplane whirrs when the plane climbs upward. Plus, the MyBot creates its own sounds nearly every 10 seconds, creating a new experience all the time. (**LEGO** Canada Inc., Richmond Hill, ON, Tel: (905) 764-5346)

JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT

Who needs gold and silver -- the hottest jewellery this season is made out of paper. But not just any paper. Old comic strips are being recycled into hand-rolled beads for a line of necklaces, chokers, cuffs and bracelets that are super cool. **COM-X JEWELLERY** features rolled up Garfield, Casper, Little LuLu, Baby Huey and Archie strips, among other favourites. Wear them for a laugh. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

Cartier is in for some competition. **KARMA KOOSH** is a line of braided jewellery for girls, made out of irresistible colourful rubber Kooshies. Each piece comes with a heart bearing a word to remember and a little jewellery purse. You'll never want to lose this karma. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

Here's a blast from the past that never fails to amuse generations of kids, and annoy adults. **THE SELF-INFLATING WHOOPEE CUSHION** is a new twist on an old classic. A sound riot, this whoopee cushion inflates automatically so the joke never has to end. What a gas! (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Now celebrating their 40th year on the market, those **AMAZING LIVE SEA-MONKEYS®** are ready to conquer space. Of course, they've done it before, having escorted Senator John Glenn into orbit in 1988. But finally, they have a shuttle of their own. The **AMAZING LIVE SEA-MONKEYS® SPACE SHUTTLE EXPEDITION** kit includes a NASA-Discovery shuttle-shaped tank with magnifier that has a built-in bubbler for oxygenating the tank and a light for nighttime space travel and viewing. The spaceship supply locker includes sea-monkey eggs, food and everything else necessary to launch an out-of-this world adventure. (Educational Insights, Carson, California, Tel (310) 884-2000)

Fore! Attention all golfers. For something completely different, check out the **GOLF BALL PAPER WEIGHT AND PUZZLE**. The trick is to get the golf ball to sit on the tee in the big water dome but sorry, your handicap won't help you here. A great conversation piece, and just as frustrating as the real thing. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

The fun and irresistible **BENDOS** are causing a real buzz in toy shops and now come in 75 different bendable colourful characters to collect and play, along with collectible trading cards. Harry Potter fans will love the just released **HOCUS POCUS WIZARD**. Ready for action are the New **BENDOS ACTION SETS** including **BULL DOZER**, **MEGA-PARACHUTE**, and **JET PLANE**, fully assembled vehicle sets complete with an exclusive Bendo and accessories. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Playing with a ball is ageless fun - if there's any doubt try the new **MINI WIGGLY GIGGLY BALL**. From toddlers to adults, you can't help but smile when the ball with the infectious laugh is put into play. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

ACTION PACKED PLAY

All wannabe pilots, prepare for take-off. The **LIBERATOR™** from the renowned **AIR HOGS™** is an air pressure plane that flies over 90 meters and performs incredible aerial stunts. The new advanced fuselage design includes the powerful R.A.I.D. air engine and the plane features a new quick wing release system. Pump up the plane at the docking station pump and look out. But first, check out the accompanying video on how to fly. (Spin Master Toys, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 364-6002)

X-treme action, X-ploding sounds and X-citing sound effects. The **MARVEL X-MEN® ELECTRONIC X-JET** is the coolest jet to land this season. Realistic electronic jet soaring sounds, lightening bolts, Wolverine claw activator and laser-blasting "light-up" mission shooters makes this action-packed, villain-defying vehicle a must-have in the never-ending fight against evil and injustice. (Grand Toys Ltd., Dorval, PQ, Tel: (514) 685-2180)

DRAGONBALL Z is currently one of TV's hottest kids' animated cartoon series. Now 12 new pose-able characters are available in 5" action figures, and with a sizeable cast of heroes and villains to battle good against evil, new characters in the series will be released every other month. But you can't save Earth without cool accessories, like **DRAGONBALL Z FLYING NIMBUS CLOUD**. The battery powered vehicle features special Gok and Gohan action figures which ride the cloud individually as it literally glides over flat surfaces. DBZ rules! (Irwin Toys, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 533-3521)

From the hit new YTV animated series **Wing Gundam™** comes the **DELUXE TRANSFORMING WING GUNDAM** that, along with other deluxe mobile suit action figures in the collection, take the art of metamorphosis to a new level. Each figure has 20 points of articulation and offers cool transformation and model-building action in one. Plus you build the Wing Gundam weapons, including beam saber, buster rifle and special shield. Take over the world at your own risk. (Bandai America Inc., Scarborough, ON, Tel: (416) 292-0800)

The generation raised on extreme sports can live life large on the tabletop with **FLICK TRIX™**, a line of realistic small gear powered by fancy finger moves. Flick Trix Snowboards do endless methods and include finger boots with rotating bindings to allow boards to spin 360 degrees. Go over the edge with Flick Trix Aggressive In-line that includes the poseable street skater champ Aaron Feinberg, real freestyle skates and connectable modular streetsets for serious in-line danger. Flix Trix Motocross gives you awesome supercross and freestyle action at your fingertips with a bike that sounds like the real thing. Kick up dirt. (Spin Master Toys, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 364-6002)

Dads are going to beg to play with Jr. when they see the space-age **POWER RANGERS LIGHTSPEED RESCUE DELUXE SUPERTRAIN MEGAZORD™**. When the Power Rangers need extra speed on land they call on the deluxe supertrain megazord. The five rescue trains transform into one supertrain, or one super impressive Megazord. If you think kids have more fun today, you're right. (Bandai America Inc., Scarborough, ON, Tel: (416) 292-0800)

The new monster machine from **AIR HOGS™** is an awesome truck that has four power suspension modes. **AFTERSHOCK™** uses a real air pressure piston engine and real metal fly wheel for super torque. The engineering adds up to a giant wheeler that can be raised to full suspension to drive over cars, and can power climb, smash down front and back and do the monster dash. (Spin Master Toys, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 364-6002)

He's strong, he's smart, he's brave...he's **MAX STEEL N-TEK PILOT** who flies into action as he battles Psycho. Max Steel comes equipped with an extreme flight suit and helmet. And he has a detachable jet pack with "pop out" wings and real firing missiles. He's the sort of guy you definitely want on your side. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

Now, the world's farthest flying football adds an exciting new player to its line-up. The new **VORTEX THUNDER JET** features a state-of-the-art 'jet engine' design. Its hollow interior and lighter weight coupled with an aerodynamic tail propels the ball over ultimate distances at maximum speed and allows the Thunder Jet to glide on air. It's poetry in motion. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

TRANSFORMING BLOK™ is a transformer that kids build from scratch with 195-pieces. Each far-out robot in the line, including **SPACE, SWAT, ICE, and SCUBA**, transforms into outrageous vehicles. Great play value. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St. Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

Toy soldiers have reached new heights. **THE ULTIMATE SOLDIER** poseable 1:6 scale action figures have such authentic uniform and weapon details that they appeal to collectors as much as kids. The British Paratrooper, complete with MK1 Helmet, 1944 Denison smock and British ankle boots, with weapons, is one of more than 50 unique action figures. Plus, there are 1:6 scale vehicles, tanks and helicopters to recreate battlescenes with uncanny accuracy. (Borgfeldt Canada Limited, Scarborough, ON, Tel: (416) 497-2004)

ACTION MAN, 12-inch figures loaded with realistic, cool adventure gear are number one sellers in Europe and are now are poised to wow Canadian kids. By Hasbro's count, over 80% of boys 4 to 10 in the UK own at least one Action Man. Each one of these macho guys, all into extreme sports, have working paraphernalia. Sky Diver Action Man has a real parachute while Skateboard Extreme Action Man has a souped up board with built-in firing disc axle. These guys have got what it takes to save the world. (Hasbro Canada Corp., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

What's Christmas without an electric train set? Big or small, your at-home conductor will love the **MEHANO TRAIN LINE**, an HO scale model electric train set, one of the most exciting on the market. This durable train runs for over 50 hours at a time and features such special items as "quick-click" oval shaped tracks, a power adaptor, crane car, carton houses, and a scenic layout. (KSM Kobal Sales, Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 403-0710)

For extreme cool tricks, check out **CYBERAIL™**, the only game of its kind where the wheel is designed to leave the rail. Place the wheel on the lower rail, and with some fast moves, the wheel will roll, flip, spin, fly and bounce. Website info on the package directs kids to a site for step-by-step instruction. Great for impressing the gang. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

For the person who has everything, what's left but a world famous **SHELBY SERIES 1 1998** sports car. Bburago of Italy, one of the most famous makers of scale die-case automobiles in the world, is introducing this silver 1:18 scale head-turner this year. With Bburag's trademark operational steering, intricate workmanship, even accurate tire treads, this car is as close to the real thing as possible. Also new is the **FORD FOCUS** in 1:24 scale and 1:43 scale. (Borgfeldt Canada Ltd, Scarborough, ON, Tel: (416) 497-2004)

DOLLS

The pop group S Club 7 has a hit TV series in which they conquer misadventures with their "we can do it" attitude. Their popularity has spawned a line of **S CLUB 7**

BASIC DOLLS. Each doll wears a bathing suit and comes with an outfit from the group's hit music video along with cool fashion accessories. And the line includes the technologically innovative super cool **S CLUB 7 SINGING DOLLS** featuring the girl members singing part of either their hit "Bring it Back" or the new "Reach." (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

It's about time! Girls now have their own superheroes. They're the **POWERPUFF GIRLS**, and these cartoon stars are the three sassiest kids to ever save the world before bedtime. They now range from pocket-size companions to large talking plush dolls. New play packs include **POKEY OAKS PLAYSET** with slide and real chalkboard to prove that school time is cool time; and **TREASURE JEWELS** that includes jewellery for kids because as Buttercup puts it, "Who says tough girls can't be glamorous?" (Rainbow Fun Inc, Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 795-1500)

CHOU CHOU is a gorgeous babydoll whose special body stuffing and innovative disc joints makes her feel like a real little infant. Little girls feel important and proud when they have a darling of their own, and with her adoring eyes and huggable body, **CHOU CHOU** gives back as much love as she receives. But parents be warned -this little angel will require very serious baby-sitting. (ZAPF Creations Inc., Richmond Hill, Tel: (905) 780-8681)

Look out Barbie watchers-the ultimate fashion leader has a brand new physique. **JEWEL GIRL BARBIE®** is the first Barbie to feature a more athletic build, an extremely bendable flexible waist that twists in any direction, and get ready for it...a sassy belly button, albeit a discreet one. Jewel Barbie comes with stick-on jewels, a bracelet for girls, and lots of mix-and-match fashion possibilities. The gal always had style, now she's got abs too. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel; (905) 501-0404)

Guess what hip car Barbie's driving this year? The **VOLKSWAGEN NEW BEETLE** of course. VW Beetle includes a girl-sized key with a miniature VW New Beetle key chain that actually opens the trunk. The car has a sunroof, a realistic dashboard, a bud vase and lots of flower stickers to decorate the car in your own style. It comes in four hot colours, pink, blue, red and yellow. And it looks excellent in any high-school parking lot. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

No batteries required, just lots of TLC. **BABY BORN** is a baby doll that comes with nine super accessories and has seven life-like functions. She drinks, uses her potty after being fed, squeaks with delight when you squeeze her arm, cries real tears, and of course, does that baby thing of wetting her nappy. But when they're yours, even that is sooo cute. (ZAPF Creations Inc., Richmond Hill, Tel: (905)780-8681)

Achoo! Poor little baby has a cold. But don't worry, with pretend chicken soup, medicines and lots of love, **L'IL SNIFFLES** will soon be all better. This classic soft-body doll has all the cute and cuddly warmth little ones just love to doctor, with just the right touch of technological magic. New 'soft-touch' sensors turn L'il Sniffles into a inter-active playmate that lets you know when she's under the weather, but then happily sings a song when cared for. The baby doll features dozens of randomised speech patterns, along with realistic coughs and sneezes, which respond to the nurturing and care of little mommy or daddy. (Irwin Toys, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 533-3521)

In this high-tech world, a wooden doll house is an irresistible throw-back to basics. But even these are moving with the times-a little bit. The **TERRACE DOLL HOUSE**,

a large scale wood abode, caters to the future renovator's dream with walls, windows and doors that can be moved around. The wood furnishings, with bold splashes of colour, include a home office complete with computer desk. It's a house made in heaven for the **DOLL FAMILY** who have solid wood heads and wire bodies that flex into any position. (Playwell Enterprises Ltd., Scarborough, Ont., Tel: (416) 439-0044)

From Slovak Republic and Czech Republic come a line of classic decorative wood toys made of pure, unprocessed beech, poplar and maple. **MAGICAL ANGEL** is a beautifully crafted, hand-painted wooden Christmas angel that is meant to stay with a family for generations. The line also includes big-eyed, appealing colorful **COWS**, with large moving heads, **PARROTS** and **LIONS** that add charm to any child's bookshelf display. (Evas Import, Etobicoke, ON, Tel: (416) 621-4750)

The Calin baby dolls from France are famous for their angelic faces. Now, for the first time, there's a **MINI CALIN HOLIDAY GIFT SET** that gives little ones their own beautiful angel with which to celebrate the season. The 8-inch soft beanbag bodied baby comes dressed in a holiday red jumper with matching cap, a white cape, winter booties, and has her own Christmas stocking and miniature teddy bear. Great for cuddling while dreaming of sugar plums. (Corolle, Westport, CT, Tel: (203) 222-1005)

The **COOKIES** collection of dolls is the result of a new partnership between a Belgian dollmaker and Educo educational toys of Alberta. The soft-bodied collectible play dolls have finely crafted clothing of European styling with distinctive hats and other accessories. These fashionable dolls come in their own monogrammed pinewood cupboard. Ooh la la. (Educo International Inc., Sherwood Park, AB, Tel: (780) 467-9772)

WOODKINS is a wooden version of a paper doll, and a designer's dream mannequin. Children can create endless outfits with the included fabrics, and for the final touch, give the doll one of four different heads to match her look and mood. Packaged in a vinyl carry tote with handle, Woodkins is perfect for travelling tots and to take along to dinner with the grown-ups. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

GAMES

On the occasion of the holiday release of the movie "Dr.Seuss - How The Grinch Stole Christmas", comes **WHOVILLE-OPOLY**, a fun family game that recreates the magical town of Whoville and its inhabitants. Buy property, collect Who presents and trade them for a Who tree, get stuck on Mt. Crumpit or win the Holiday Cheermeister award. But be careful, or you may encounter the nastiest, most contemptible beast of all - The Grinch. It's a hilarious game sure to show even the Grinchiest the true meaning of Christmas. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

BIBLEOPOLY is a biblical game of faith and fun. Players start at "In the Beginning" and journey through Bible Cities, "Meditation", "Community Celebrations" and more. Good deeds are always rewarded but sometimes "Faith" cards intervene. The object of the game is to be the first player to build a church in a Bible city, but you can only win by assisting your fellow players. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

"If you could pick one super power or special ability what would it be?" Getting to know friends and family better is the point of the new board game **WHO SAID THAT?** There are no right or wrong answers, and it's not what you know but how well you know the people you are playing with, that counts. The 180 questions may be answered differently every time so the game is always new. Here's one question from the game that's just right for this season: "What was your favorite toy when you were growing up?" (Finchetto Games Company, Kitchener, ON, Tel: (519) 571-0596.)

Mc WIZ 2000 is a new Canadian-invented board game without a board that's a fun test of knowledge for teens to grandparents. The game features 4,200 challenging questions in science, arts, sports, places & time, and "trash" which includes advertising, proverbs and expressions. Less trivia and more knowledge-based than other similar games, the questions appeal to the whole family. You don't need to be a Ph.D. to play **Mc Wiz 2000**, but you may wish you had paid a bit more attention in school. (McDistribution Plus, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, PQ, Tel: (819) 691-1252.)

Here's a flash from the past that's worth revisiting: **WOODEN MARBLES AND BLOCKS** is a stunning reproduction of a 1920s playset that is on display at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. This unique set of embossed wood blocks and coloured wood marbles is a great tactile experience that inspires wonderful abstract designs and patterns in the hands of young and old. The set comes in an ingenious box with an old-style illustration by famous advertising illustrator Norman Mills Price. (T.J. Whitney's Traditional Toys, Victoria, B.C. Tel: (250) 995-0055.)

EL NINO is three different card games in one that makes learning about geography and weather, both fun and effortless. With 192 country cards, 19 meteorological event cards, and seven continent cards, you really do cover the world. And if you don't win, no hard feelings, just blame it on El Nino. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1079)

The clue is "a foreign country". The right answer is in one of the 60 picture cards spread out on the table. Could it be found in the picture of a turkey? **THINK TWICE** makes you think really fast as you compete to mentally compute and physically pounce. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1079)

What can you spot in a blot? The new adult game **THINKBLOT** from the makers of Pictionary challenges players to find images within the wacky shapes formed by ink blots. Hidden within these blots are many intriguing images, limited only by the player's imagination and the power of persuasion. Finding the image isn't enough; players have to convince others to see what they see any way they can. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

Get a group of crossword lovers together and watch the tiles fly with **PICK TWO**. Each player builds their own personal crossword as fast they can, when the first one to use all their letters yells PICK TWO, everyone must draw two more tiles to add to their crossword, even if it means changing everything. Included in the same box is a second game called Just a Minute, which is a wordplay against time. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1079)

The time will fly by with **ALPHACADABRA**, the word play game that's perfect for taking on the road. A cross between battleship and Hangman, players first guess

where a word is located on their opponent's hidden sheet, and then guess the letters that make up the word. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1079)

Mensa members take note. To really impress friends and family, figure out **METAL PUZZLES** and then challenge others to try their hand at some magic. The 12 metal puzzles look as if they'd be easy to take apart, but good luck. The puzzles come with sorting tray and solution sheet. (Galt Toys, Scarborough, ON, Tel (416) 293-0312)

There's no sitting still for this board game. **WIGGLE AND GIGGLE** is a ball balancing physical game of fun that will have kids wiggling, giggling and even belly-laughing as they hop, jump and skip. Players spin to receive instructions where to place a foam ball while performing a funny action. Drop the ball and you lose. It's a challenging game of balance that keeps kids moving. (International Playthings Inc., Parsippany, NJ, Tel:(973) 316-2500)

Are some fish capable of climbing trees? (Yes, the walking perch of Sri Lanka) What happens to a toad when it vomits? (Its stomach comes out of its mouth) **BIOVIVA** is the funny and fascinating eco-trivia game that has been winning rave reviews around the globe, and is quickly becoming the worldwide reference board game about nature. A Destination Card is the player's passport to travel the world, laugh at some of nature's strangest scientific facts and learn to be environmentally friendly, collecting eco points along the way. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

This is the dream game for any ***NSYNC** fan. Loaded with juicy info on the band, ***NSYNC BACKSTAGE PASS GAME** gives fans a chance to elbow their way from the last row to the front, collect the members of the band, and with the right secret password, earn a backstage pass to win the game. It's a fun way to spend time with the hottest boys around. (RP Toys Ltd., Brampton, ON, Tel: (905) 789-8282)

Want to play detective? Here's what you need: a good team, cunning deduction and a little bit of luck. With that, you might just capture the elusive Mr. X who has long been wanted by the New York Police. The exciting board game **N.Y. CHASE** is based on the classic "Scotland Yard." One player is the evil Mister X in New York, and the rest are detectives who must work together and pit their wits against their foe. (Pierre Belvedere Inc., Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 286-2880)

Geography has never been so captivating. Youngsters will learn all about the world as they search for animals to photograph. **EXPLORE PHOTO SAFARI** has a map of the world as a boardgame and beautiful visual cards of animals which they must place in their natural surroundings. Visual, descriptive and geographical clues enforce learning without kids even knowing it. (Patix, Knowlton, PQ, Tel: (450) 242-2380)

Hockey fans are always spouting statistics. Now they can put their knowledge to the test with **THE ULTIMATE HOCKEY TRIVIA BOARD GAME**, a nostalgically packed game that features four categories, including a rookie category so novices can join in the fun. Focus is the NHL, but questions also include other leagues, international hockey, famous players, rules and more. Face-off! (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Got the party blues? **TRIBOND** is the fast-moving game of wits that will liven up a gathering. Teams guess the answers to three questions, then race to shout out the bond between the three answers. The clock is ticking...what do dancer, Cupid and comet have in common? (They're reindeer.) Or get everyone talking in a game of

MAD GAB where it's not what you say but what you hear that counts. And remember, it's "Erase Toothy Fin Hush." (RP Toys Ltd., Brampton, ON, Tel: (905) 789-8282)

The world's most popular game has gone Canadian. **MONOPOLY CANADIAN EDITION** lets you make a play for your own country, using pewter tokens that are familiar icons, such as a ski plane, winter boot, and a canoe. The game hasn't changed, but Canadianization includes Maple Leaf red dice and cards with messages relating to life in Canada. Provincial cards replace the traditional Chance cards while Federal cards replace the classic Community Chest cards. Most expensive street in the country: Vancouver's Robson at \$400 a hit. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

Get out your laptop and travel the world. **GEOSAFARI® LAPTOP** comes with its own laptop-like **ELA** and is an interactive game that challenges kids to more than 2,000 queries combined about earth, astronomy, sports, world history and geography. There are three different modes of play so kids may play solo, compete against an opponent or play in pairs or teams. With flashing lights and sounds to egg you on, this laptop makes it clear that knowledge is power. Like all good laptops, it travels well. (Educational Insights, Carson, California, (310) 884-2000)

Find the path to fun with **GoGetter2**, the brainteaser puzzle with multiple levels of difficulty to captivate kids to adults. The challenge is to move around the tiles to create paths between different images. There are 12 puzzles, all with several solutions, to provide dozens of adventures. Perfect for travel. (Pierre Belvedere Inc., Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 286-2880)

RUSH HOUR JUNIOR makes traffic jams fun for small kids. Moving around vehicles, the race is on to help a driver break out of gridlock before the ice-cream melts. Logical planning made fun. (Pierre Belvedere Inc., Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 286-2880)

Food for thought? **MORE 'SMORES** is a graham cracker card game to s'emble for happy campers of all ages. Players count points as they build their own delicious graham cracker treat. But watch what you eat! There are burnt marshmallows and chocolate-eating ants in the deck. Family fun that's sure to be a campsite favourite. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Travelling can involve a lot of waiting these days. Maybe that's why **POCKET FARKEL** is making headlines as one of the best family games to come along in years. Compactly packaged in a film canister, this fast-paced, high score dice game only takes two minutes to learn and is perfect for travel or other down times. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Snakes and ladders has been a favourite game for decades. Now Patrix, the producer of cunningly educational games, has released a new version of the classic, **FLIPS**, which adds strategy and challenge to make the ages-old snakes and ladder game even more fun and skillful. (Patrix, Knowlton, PQ, Tel: (450) 242-2380)

LEAPIN' LIZARDS™ is a new rock hopping peg game that puts strategic thinking into play. There are 40 different pathway cards, from beginners to experts, that fit over the game board so getting the lizard to the right rock is always a challenge. The game comes in a small storage box, making it a perfect past-time for travel. (Pierre Belvedere, Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 286-2880)

Drive a mile in a truck and see for yourself what the trucker's life is really like. **DESTINATION-THE BOARD GAME** is an extraordinarily accurate game about the challenges of trucking across North America. As players travel the highways, they contend with true-life situations and pressures. Developed by three Canadian truck owner-operators, the game is not only entertaining, it teaches actual regulations and eye-opening facts of trucking life. It will make you think differently about that tractor-trailer in your lane. (Cyndal Productions Inc., Salisbury, NB, Tel: (506) 756-0900)

KINGA GAMES are board games for 4- to 7-year-olds that teach kids about collaborating. In the new **DINO-REX**, players form a team to work together against the **T-REX** who wants to interrupt their search for the pieces of the skeleton. In **GARDEN BUGS**, players are busy insects who must rush to the flower garden before hungry spiders capture them. The games, created by two Canadian working moms, are printed on large colorful plastic and stored in vinyl bags. (Kinga Inc., St. Anne de Bellevue, PQ, Tel: (514) 457-4178)

RUMJONG™ is a new game that's part Mahjong and part gin rummy. As with Mahjong, it has its roots in ancient China and features 124 hand-carved exquisite tiles of different suits and symbols. The tiles are collected and discarded by the players as they try to build sets, much like gin rummy. The game can be played at a child's, beginner's or advanced level. A game of skill and cunning, players need strategy, luck and a poker face. (Neugame Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 402-1950)

PRE-SCHOOL

Teaching kids to tell time is fun and games, thanks to the new **ELECTRONIC TALKING CLOCK**. It features a digital clock inside a large, bright standard clock face with moveable hands for children to set in response to the clock's questions. Set the right time, and the clock has something to shout about. (Maison Joseph Battat, Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 341-6000)

The web meets Barney for a doop-dee-doo play experience that is definitely 21st century. **eSPECIALLY MY BARNEY** is a plush toy that parents can personalize and update often to create different play experiences. There are over 30 activities to download into Barney's memory, including stories, games and songs, from the special Barney Web site. Then pull out the computer cable cord and Barney's on his way for endless hours of interactive play. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

"I love you, you love me..." If you're a preschooler, you know the lyrics. Now toddlers can sing the hit song of their favorite dinosaur by just pressing the heart of the plush **SINGING I LOVE YOU BARNEY**. Let's face it, this big guy with the perma-grin is the undisputed master at getting kids clapping, singing, and having a great time. (Kids Motion, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 968-0002)

MAGIC PUZZLE gives kids a strong incentive to put the 50 piece puzzle together. Once the scene is assembled, they are rewarded when they rub 15 special magic pieces to reveal what is hidden behind the heat-sensitive ink. In **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**, a lot is happening in the busy countryside when weekenders arrive to play and relax. But the local animals are having adventures of their own, and with a gentle rub, they show a few surprises for the unsuspecting visitors before disappearing again. (Galt Toys, Scarborough, ON, Tel (416) 293-0312)

Open your own store, and learn all about transactions with the **ELECTRONIC CALCULATING CASH REGISTER**. The cash register has a real working calculator for simple arithmetic. It features electronic voice and sound, coins, paper money and credit cards--all you need is the merchandise and the staff. (Maison Joseph Battat Battat, Montreal, PQ, Tel: (514) 341-6000)

For the new millennium, Tonka is launching a new generation of tough fun vehicles with a twist. **TUCKER MY TALKIN' TRUCKBOT** is an interactive, electronic robo-truck with personality. It has 47 different fun phrases, and comes to life with moving jaw, eyes that light up and a head that turns. Kids can activate his arms, wheels and dump bed to produce a non-stop commentary about the work going on. A great friend for the sandbox. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905)238-3374)

EDUCO, the wire and bead toy makers, have launched a new line of interactive maze play centres with themes. **OCEAN ADVENTURE** has colorful graphics, wooden shapes and wires that suggest pirate treasure chests, a sunken shipwreck, a pod of whales and a maze of whirlpools and waves. It's **EDUCO's** first "knee-high" play table that stands at 20" height for kids from 2 to 7. Also new is **CITYSIDE STATION**, a tabletop maze that suggests a busy urban setting. Train and car beads, looping wire roadways, wooden shapes, and a tunnel keep minds and hands very busy. (Educo International Inc., Sherwood Park, AB, Tel: (780) 467-9772)

Ever since Tickle Me Elmo stormed the market, the characters from Sesame Street have been coming out with some unusual surprises on an annual basis. This season, the favourite red muppet is back as **LET'S PRETEND ELMO**. Pose an overall-clad Elmo in different positions, and he pretends to be..... a monster, puppy, airplane, race car driver, baby, and more while making fun sounds to match. Kids have a real play mate that will play on forever, with ten different plays. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

From the hit preschool TV show, Bear in the Big Blue House, comes **LOVE TO DANCE BEAR** who won't be dancing alone this season. When kids press his furry paw, he begins to salsa and sing his signature Bear Cha Cha Cha song. Kids won't be able to resist moving and grooving to his beat. In fact, count on the whole family to start cha-cha-cha -ing around the house. (Mattel Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 501-0404)

Forget playing doctor, now kids can play dentist for a change. The new **PLAY-DOH® DR. DRILL' N FILL PLAYSET** features a drill and other dental accessories so kids can play real dentist. They can mold teeth, examine them with tools, drill a hole into the supplied mouth, and fill it with silver-coloured PLAY-DOH compound. Next time you have a toothache, you can count on full service at home. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

Kittens, puppies, and farm animals are the stars of top-quality **WOOD AND PLASTIC CUBE PUZZLES** from Slovenia which come in a handy carry case. The pictures are directly printed on so there's no paper to pull off or harmful glue. Plus, the plastic cubes are lightweight and dishwasher safe so a young child can chew on them while deciding which cube should go where. (KSM, Mississauga, ON, (905) 403-0710)

From the land of Mercedes and Volkswagen comes **WADER SUPER TRUCKS**, big colourful vehicles that can survive the toughest play and support 50 kg. of weight. The line of these durable trucks from Germany include **GARBAGE TRUCKS** that can

load waste using two containers and **CEMENT TRUCKS** with a drum that kids can turn and a usable water pump. **BABY TRUCKS** by Wader have the same resilience, bold colors, workable parts, and rounded edges of the **SUPER TRUCKS** and can support the weight of a child. **BABY TRUCKS** also have real rubber tires. (KSM, Mississauga, ON, (905) 403-0710)

When is a truck not a truck? When it's a lot more! **STARTER UP STEVE™** from Might Mo's Jr.™ is a super fun, bright and sturdy programmable truck. It has a built-in control pad with friendly oversized buttons that lets kids program neat driving patterns and tricks. Drive the truck forward, to the left, backward or do wheelies. Steve can store up to 32 commands at once for tons of action fun. This truck with personality also talks, makes friendly sounds, has electronic lights and moving eyes and mouth. (Grand Toys Ltd., Dorval, PQ, Tel: (514) 685-2180)

MR. **SQUAWKY TALKY™** is a talking, squawking, flapping parrot who comes with a pair of phones equipped with infrared transmitters in their antennas for interactive play.

Squawky holds one phone while the preschooler holds the other, and together they can play games that help teach counting, math, and real phone numbers. If only all math teachers were this much fun. (Vtech Electronics Canada Ltd., Richmond, BC, Tel: (604) 273-5131)

For a barrel of fun, there's **POP UP PIRATE**. Push the pirate into his barrel, then take turns sliding a sword into the barrel slots. But beware --if the pirate pops up, you walk the plank. (RP Toys Ltd., Brampton, ON, Tel: (905) 789-8282)

Enthusiastic little fingers love to scribble huge art pieces but they also create huge messes. **CRAYOLA'S MY FIRST RINSE OFF MARKERS**, are easy clean up markers for kids aged 2 & up. Special rounded tips let miniscule Monets make bold strokes at any angle, while low mess ink rinses from skin and fabrics, so Mums and Dads can sit back and watch the imagination unfold. (Binney & Smith Canada, Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 513-9753)

BABY

Babies will be giggling and wiggling with the new **WIGGLY GIGGLER RATTLE**, bright fun durable rattlers that shake, stack and roll. This easy-to-grip toy is highly responsive to baby's movements and contains specially designed weights to keep the fun going. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

This bright and colourful mat is sure to get baby's feet moving. Designed for first walkers, **STEP-A-SOUND MAT** directs baby to walk on a path of brightly coloured footprints with tactile stimulating textures and funny sounds. When baby reaches the end of the path, a bubbling water splash sounds to delight the marathoner. (International Playthings Inc., Parsippany, NJ, Tel: (973) 316-2500)

The SASSY line of innovative baby toys from **KOOSHIES** keep babies learning and laughing, even on the go. These compact bright multi-colored playthings offer loads of sensory experiences and are perfect for the car-seat, stroller, or when visiting. The line includes the fun **DUNK & CLUNK CIRCUS RINGS** which has baby put rings in and out, **TOTE & TINKER ACTIVITY CENTRE** that has lots of great activities and sounds to keep babies captivated, **CIRCUS RINGS** which can be stacked, chewed

and rattled, and the bright **LEARNING BLOCKS**. (Kooshies Baby Products, Stoney Creek, ON, Tel: (905) 662-4281)

The classic rubber duckie is better than ever. **POLKA-DUCK LINKS** is a family of three ducks in bright yellow plastic that guarantee hours of bath-time fun. The ducks always float upright, magnetically link together, and won't mildew or trap water. (Kooshies Baby Products, Stoney Creek, ON, Tel: (905) 662-4281)

The crib has never been more interesting thanks to **PLAYSKOOL's** popular crib toy version of the **KICK START GYM**. Kicks activate music, silly sounds, lights and spinning objects. A world of great experiences is there for babies to discover as soon as they are ready to reach and touch. Older babies can press birds for gratifying responses. The gym has two electronic modes: soothing sequence of light and sound and baby-activated bursts of music, sound and motion. (Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

BARNEY FOR BABY is a line of playthings for babies that feature a super soft famous dinosaur in a paler shade of purple. **CLAK KEY RATTLE** has a sleepy baby Barney on a rattle with three stars, and **MUSICAL PULL DOWN** has young Barney snoozing on a yellow star that plays a lullabye. (Kids Motion, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 968-0002)

A new **PLUSH BARNEY** made just for hugging isn't simply soft, it's out-of-this-world soft. Made for babies, it is so extremely nice to the touch that anyone who wants a cushy companion to cuddle with when the lights go out, will love it to bits. (Kids Motion, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 968-0002)

CRAFTS

Welcome to the world of **BEADIMALS** - funny beaded creatures you make yourself. Beaded animals on flat lacing are all the rage in trendy shops. With everything you need in a Klutz bucket filled with over 800 brightly coloured pony beads, glittery lacings and metal clips, you're limited only by your imagination. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

BEADLINGS are itty-bitty creatures made of shimmering glass beads strung on wire. The Klutz book and bead kit includes everything you need to make beaded creatures and creations in the most popular categories: critters, creepy crawlers, flighty bugs, sea creatures and best friends. Easy-to-follow pictures makes this craft kit a joy. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Little girls can star in their own fairytale with deluxe **CINDERELLA, SNOW WHITE and SLEEPING BEAUTY** costumes and accessories that do any princess proud. You don't need a fairy godmother to transport kids into a wonderful world of magic, you just need the right gown. (Rubie's Costume Co. Canada, Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 470-0300)

All the rage with tweens, this **GELLY BAND BRACELET KIT** lets kids personalize their gelly bands in an easy, fun way. Colourful gel pens are packed in the kit along with dozens of latex-free rubber bands in an assortment of colours. Just write, doodle or express yourself to create a unique bracelet in minutes. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Kids love to make their own fashion accessories. And it just takes a little twisting and wrapping to make beautiful and functional jewelry and sculptures for brooches with **WIRE ART KITS**. Kits come in **HAIR CLIPS AND WRAPS, BRACELET, JEWELRY, MINI-KIDS, and HORSES**. Fun and easy to do, the results are always surprisingly original. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Turn on your light switches with a totally new look. With the Klutz bucketful of **LIGHT SWITCHES GONE CRAZY**, those little blank canvases scattered throughout the house can suddenly become artistic masterpieces. Packed with four blank switchplates and a slew of supplies to beautify them, like paints, foam and glow-in-the-dark wiggle eyes, as well an easy to follow instruction book, it's a bucket of art just waiting to happen. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Pompoms become pals with the new bucket of **POMPOMS GONE CRAZY** from Klutz Press. Pandas, penguins, piglets and a host of other critters magically come to life by gluing together pompoms of every colour and size and adding wiggle eyes. It's a kid-perfect craft of fun puffy projects. (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

All the world's a stage and no one hams it up better than kids. The new **THEATRE ARTS KIT** from Roylco contains everything they need to stage a production to rival Broadway. The kit includes a guide with staging techniques and scenery ideas, as well as all the makings of six costumes and sixteen masks. There's even a script written by a ten-year-old girl to start the creative juices flowing, tickets and poster bills. Let the show begin. (Roylco Ltd, Waterloo, ON, Tel: (519) 885-0451)

Unearth your own treasures and discover the joy of archeology with the **YOUNG ARCHEOLOGIST** collection. Inside an impressive handmade wooden box with a stunning zinc emblem, is a slab of smooth white clay. Curious archeologists have to carefully crack open the clay to find lead-free zinc reproductions of authentic artifacts buried inside. Some kits include accessories to transform cool looking treasures into pendants or keyrings. In every case, the box serves as a good-looking treasure chest. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1079)

EYEWITNESS KITS are learning experiences made fun. These exciting model projects let kids cast, paint and display three-dimensional casting of living or extinct animals, spaceships and trains. The kits also come with great illustrated educational booklets. This year's new kits includes **DINOWORKS** which includes everything to cast, paint, assemble and display an 11-inch Stegosaurus skeleton and learn about dinosaur digs, and **TRAIN** in which kids discover the story of steam engines as they put together models from the 19th and 20th century. (Monarch Books of Canada, Downsview, ON, Tel:(416) 663-8231)

CHRISTMAS WORKS is a complete holiday ornament making kit that includes everything you need to cast and paint your own decorations. The kit includes a reusable mold tray with six molds, casting material, paints and paint brush and ornament hangers. It's a great activity for getting the kids in the holiday spirit. All you need to add is seasonal background music and hot chocolate. (Monarch Books of Canada, Downsview, ON, Tel:(416) 663-8231)

ART KITS FOR CHILDREN were designed by an Oakville, Ontario artist. Every kit produces a work of art, such as a colourful beautiful box, that's as unique as the artist who makes it. Simple and easy, the kits offers hours of no-tech, high-creative

fun and at the same time teaches kids about colour theory and patterns. The artistic attention to detail includes beautifully coordinated decoupage papers, mirrors, satin ribbons and other fancy items. **TIC TAC TOE KIT** lets you make a funky tic tac toe box with its own game board lid and salt dough pieces for a real make-your-own fun touch. **PEAR NOEL KIT** is a Canadian twist on the traditional Santa. With Japanese papers, gold beads, and a mini green pear, this decorative hat is just perfect for display next to the stockings on the mantle, and the ideal place for hiding a note to Santa. (Fundamentals, Oakville, ON, Tel: (905) 338-3470)

With the new **3D ART KIT**, kids can create works of art that literally pop off the paper. Tubes of paint, floppy foam brushes, graphic shock paper, plastic panels and more are contained in this fun activity set guaranteed to stimulate the creation of awesome art. And when it's completed, there are even special 3D glasses to view it as it was meant to be seen. (Roylco Ltd, Waterloo, ON, Tel: (519) 885-0451)

Everyone's an interior decorator with the **HOME DÉCOR CRAFT KIT**. A child's room becomes an expression of their own creativity with this activity set that lets them decorate and personalize everything from paper baskets, door knobs, switch plate covers, lamps, vases and furniture, to making mobiles and wall paper sculptures. (Roylco Ltd, Waterloo, ON, Tel: (519) 885-0451)

What's more fun than a barrel of monkeys? How about a zoo in a bucket? **THE PAINTED ZOO** is a bucketful of wooden animal shapes just waiting to be brought to life with bright paints, wiggly eyes and a whole booklet of ideas. Get ready for technicolour tigers, polka-dotted pandas and zany zebras. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Painting-by-numbers re-invented. Wreabbit, the inventors of those incredible **3-D puzzles**, have another hit on their hands with their line of **PAINT-BY-NUMBERS IN 3D** which adds a new dimension to the time-honoured genre. Paint it, build it and frame it, everything is included in the easy-to-complete kit. Once painted and assembled, **PAINT 3D** takes on a third dimension and becomes a work of art ready for display. Available in 18 different models; for nature lovers there's a **BALD EAGLE, EXOTIC ORCHARDS, A HUMMINGBIRD** and more; sailors will love **THE FISHING SCENES** and new **SAILBOAT KIT**. (Wreabbit, St-Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 744-8444)

No one said putting together dinosaur skeletons was easy, but assembling a prehistoric creature does have its rewards. With the **B.C. BONES** museum quality wooden 3-D puzzle kit made from premium Baltic birch, model-makers are guaranteed impressive results. There are kits that range from small to floor size models, and every one is awe-inspiring. New this year is the pteranodon, the prehistoric crocodile, the suchomimus, the saber-toothed tiger and the woolly mammoth. (Touch the Sky, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 252-3200)

Just imagine discovering the 10,000 year-old remains of a woolly mammoth. Dig out this petrified pachyderm and assemble its bones like a pro. **COOL DIGS™ MAMMOTH ADVENTURE** is an excavation kit that really rocks. The skeleton is a perfect replica of a real mammoth skeleton buried deep in a sandstone block. Eyewear, tools, brushes and paints are included along with a fact and activity book and a bonus cool mammoth poster. (Earth Lore, Winnipeg, MB, Tel: 1-800-440-2630)

Kids have been enthralled by dinosaurs forever, and now the experience takes on a whole new dimension with the **I DIG DINOSAURS® SKELETON DIG ADVENTURE** excavation kit. Become a dinosaur hunter as you dig deep into the Dinostone block to discover the entire articulated skeleton buried inside and then snap the bones together to assemble the complete dinosaur, with movable parts. There are five fierce dinosaur kits to choose from. Also included is a dinosaur fact book to keep budding paleontologists in the know. (Earth Lore, Winnipeg, MB, Tel: 1-800-440-2630)

Now wanna-be astronauts of all ages can build their own space rocket and recreate the historic first landing on the moon with Wrebbit's new **APOLLO 11 - 3D PUZZLE**, the fully dimensional puzzle that builds models.

TUTANKHAMEN'S TOMB - 3D PUZZLE is a work of art itself with its beautiful motifs, hieroglyphics and magic formulas that will captivate lovers of Ancient Egypt. Also new from Wrebbit is the collection - **SPLENDOURS OF THE WORLD- 3D PUZZLES**, including "**A STREET IN VENICE**", "**A STREET IN BELGIUM**", "**FISHERMAN'S VILLAGE**" and "**MAIN-STREET- STOCKBRIDGE AT CHRISTMAS**", from Norman Rockwell's painting of the same name. **THE RESCUE COLLECTION - 3D PUZZLES** features a **HELICOPTER, AMBULANCE, TOW TRUCK and POLICE CAR**, each one easy to assemble and ready for action. (Wrebbit, St-Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 744-8444)

Kids have so much to say these days. Now they can say it their way with the **CRAYOLA CARD SHOP** craft kit which contains everything from coloured pencils, mini-stampers, glitter glue and stickers to card paper and cut-outs to let them make their own cards. With this card-making kit, they won't want to wait for a special occasion to express themselves. (Binney & Smith Canada, Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 513-9753)

Give the gift of creativity this holiday season with **CRAYOLA'S DELUXE ART CASE**. Filled to the brim with bright markers, crayons, pencils and paints, all contained in a portable case with organizing tray, this colourful array is sure to inspire all budding artists. And because there are no rules with Crayola, the possibilities are endless! (Binney & Smith Canada, Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 513-9753)

Should a child who is sitting on a new white carpet and yearns to draw, be handed a red marker? Absolutely, as long as it is from the new **CRAYOLA COLOR WONDER** system. This mess-free, stress-free line of colourful markers and fun colouring books from Crayola frees up kids to colour anywhere, anytime. The ink in the revolutionary no-mess Color Wonder markers show up only on Color Wonder paper. That means no purple cows on skin, clothes, carpet, furniture or even the most tempting walls. And for those travelling or visiting friends and family this holiday season, it means budding artists can create a frenzy of artistic masterpieces without causing panic in parents. (Binney & Smith Canada, Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 513-9753)

Remember black magic? It's back, better than ever. It doesn't matter what you draw - with **SCRATCH MAGIC**, you're guaranteed a dazzling creation. Just scratch the surface of this black coated board and spectacular glittering colours magically appear. Perfect for making greeting cards, paper jewelry, shimmering notes and anything else you want to add sparkle to. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Imagination really takes shape with **SCULPEY** polymer clay, the soft pliable clay that is easy to use, works and feels like ceramic clay and bakes hard in the oven. New

junior artist clayset lines include **SUNSHINE JEWELRY** to create beautiful and original clay jewelry in dazzling colours; **CLIP CRITTERS; FLEXIBLE FRIEND BOOKMARKS; FRIDGE CRITTERS; FUNNY FACES AND PUEBLO POTTERY**. (KJP Crafts, Nepean, ON, Tel; (613) 225-6926)

Sculpting just got easier with the new **SCULPEY PUSH MOLD**. These molds guarantee a perfect result each time, and because they are flexible and don't require a release agent, they're easy to get out of the mold. Simply push in the clay and pop out a design. **KRINGLE & SNOWMEN** make adorable holiday decorations; other themes include **MY PETS, BABY I LOVE YOU, FAMILY TIME, SEA LIFE, COUNTRY CHARMERS, MY SPORTS** and more. (KJP Crafts, Nepean, ON Tel; (613) 225-6926)

BUILDING

For budding architects comes an innovative new design of building pieces from Vecta Blocks. The possibilities are endless with **VECTA 1**, which contains 75 pieces to create amazing models, and the expanded **VECTA YOUNG ENGINEERS**, a tubfull of more than 750 colourful pieces, all of which can be interconnected from all six sides. Instruction booklets teach kids how to build enormous structures such as bridges and skyscrapers, but the sky's the limit with these versatile elements. (Vecta Blocks, St-Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 956-9300)

Imaginations roll with the new **BLOCK-N-ROLL™**, a marble maze construction block system. Kids build spectacular structures and watch their marbles roar through ramps, tunnels, cross-overs and drop-thrus. The system is made to fit with other construction blocks, and offers blister packs of special pieces for unlimited expansion. (Alary Games, Blainville, PQ, Tel: (450) 979-1200)

MEGA@BLOKS has taken building blocks for little hands to the next level. **MR.PIANO** is a fun working talking piano, and a whole lot more. Push on the big block keys to make piano, horn, or bass violin music, or build and sing along with the demo songs. The colorful upright piano encourages building, with 20 maxi bloks stored inside, ready for stacking on its top. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

If you build them, they will go. **RADIO CONTROL ACTION BUILDER** from **MEGA@BLOKS** lets kids build five different vehicles, from planes to submarines to cars by mixing and matching blocks and special parts, and race them with a remote control. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

MEGA@ BLOKS BUILD'N PLAY WORKBENCH makes building a blast. The 60 maxi mega bloks are stored in a big blue plastic container, and the top serves as the base of a great workstation of a child's design. Also, great to keep kids busy and happy is the big sturdy bright **TRUCK WITH FRONT CRANE** that comes filled with maxi bloks. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

MEGA@BLOKS SAFARI PARK PLAYSET is an ultra-sturdy building set featuring animals, a park ranger and car, and people to keep kids busy and stimulated. Lots of finishing touches make this a park any kid would want to spend time at. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

XTREME SPORTS SKATEPARK™ from **MEGA@BLOKS** is a radical 400 piece building set that lets kids create the coolest skatepark in town, and includes everything needed to make the place rock. Skateboards, motorbike, and six kids with distinct personalities to ride the boards make this one skatepark where the action never stops. The **XTREME SPORTS** line of kits come in different sizes and sports, including **SNOWZONE**. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

Snowed in? Here's a building project to make the hours fly by. The 3-foot long **USS KITTY HAWK** in the **MEGA@BLOKS PRO-BUILDER COLLECTOR SERIES** takes 1,700 pieces. But once it's built, you've got a solid home for the 8 F-14 jets that are included in the set. For kids who can't decide whether they want their action on land or in the air, there's **SEA RESCUE**, a 710-piece challenge for the engineering mind. You can build an impressive sea copter, a boat or a sea plane for endless acts of heroism. (Ritvik Toys Inc., St.Laurent, PQ, Tel: (514) 333-5555)

Kids can count down their own space exploration fun with the **BUILDER SPACE DISCOVERY PLAYSET** from Brio. New in Brio's line of wooden collectible build and play systems, this set features a shuttle spacecraft with heat shields, flight deck, fuel tank, launch pads and more, along with step by step instructions and pliers. It's space age fun. (BRIO Scanditoy Inc., London, ON, Tel: (519) 680-3080)

The **BRIO** wooden railway system is a classic favourite with children and parents alike. Now comes the new **TRACK AND STACK CITY SET**, a unique two level layout for transportation fun that includes a built-in elevator along with an engine, passenger wagons, passenger stations and platforms and all the other features to bring railway play to new heights. (BRIO Scanditoy Inc., London, ON, Tel: (519) 680-3080)

LEGO MINDSTORMS takes building to new frontiers with the **STAR WARS DARK SIDE DEVELOPER KIT** that has 578 pieces. From Destroyer Droid that charges forward to an Imperial Assault Walker that strides on four legs, kids can bring hundreds of their own Star Wars inspired inventions to life. Also new from **LEGO**, is **CHAMPIONSHIP CHALLENGE**, the ultimate soccer field in 274 pieces. The set includes net, balls, two colour-coded teams and movable goalies. Get ready for World Cup action. (LEGO Canada Inc., Richmond Hill, ON, Tel: (905) 764-5346)

BOOKS, CDS AND MORE

It's the Metropolitan Museum of Art brought to life - an exhibition in progress with **A BOOK OF ARTRAGEOUS PROJECTS**. This incredible collection takes you on a journey through the ages, from the art of the ancient Egyptians to modern day masterpieces. Between historical nuggets of information are materials and ideas to help the budding artist create great art of their own. Help Michelangelo finish the Sistine Chapel; take a photo without a camera; learn to mummify a favourite doll. It's all there, along with copper-coloured foil, light sensitive paper, paints, stickers and all materials essential for hands-on experience. A must for art lovers and those who love to create art. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

Everybody dreams but the key is to capture them on paper. **DREAM JOURNAL** helps to record dreams in a journal of beautiful nighttime black pages, with a special moonlight silver pen. Filled with inspirational sayings on dreams and imaginative

questions to prompt memories, this is much more than a diary - it's every journal keeper's dream. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

The security guard at The Museum of Art has a big problem. Some of the museum's priceless paintings have been replaced by cunning forgeries. Can you find the fakes? **ART FRAUD DETECTIVE** is a spot-the-difference puzzle, a mystery story and a reference book all in one. This beautiful hardcover book was created in association with the National Gallery in London, England and contains more than 35 paintings from its exhibition. With fascinating facts about paintings and tips on techniques of the Old Masters, this book is a terrific way to introduce novices to the world's greatest works of art. (Thomas Allen & Son Ltd., Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 475-9126)

Here's how to make memories: Get a **GIRLFRIENDS' BOOK**, gather a bunch of your pals together and fill in all the categories such as "My Best Traits", "My Most Embarrassing Moment" and of course, the obligatory "Boys - What About Them..." Each girl identifies her answers with special I.D. stickers that come with the book. Twenty years later, read through the 73-pages and howl. (Zibbers Inc., Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 787-8516)

Bedtime is the perfect time to study the stars. **BEDROOM ASTROLOGY** reveals the science and stories behind the seven star-studded constellations that have always fascinated children. The fun-to-read picture and activity book comes complete with stars that stick to the ceiling and glow in the dark, to make cool indoor star shows. From Klutz Press (Stewart House Publishing, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 598-1114)

With the innovative **MUSIC MAKER** kids of all ages can make note-perfect music from the get-go. All they have to do is slide a songsheet under the strings of the lap instrument and pluck the string above each printed note. Made in Belarus of quality hardwood, the Music Maker comes with 18 songsheets, a pick and a tuner. Playing the Music Maker is a terrific way to foster appreciation for the art of music making. (Touch the Sky, Toronto, ON, Tel: (416) 252-3200)

Playing cards are the universal language. Regardless of culture, language or age, many friendships have been built on a card game. **THE BOOK OF CARDS FOR KIDS** is an instruction book for kids, and a refresher course for adults, on how to play 35 popular card games. Packaged alongside is a big, bright, bold deck of oversized playing cards, especially designed to appeal to youngsters. Deal 'em! (Thomas Allen & Son Ltd., Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 475-9126)

From first moves to checkmate, **CHESS** is the perfect guide for both beginner and advanced players. Master one of the world's greatest games with this delightful chess set and inspiring book which offers clear diagrams and stunning illustrations to guide beginners through the basic rules and moves while puzzles, training exercises and strategy tips help the more experienced players to improve their game. Also includes a fully illustrated history of the game and special resource section. (Thomas Allen & Son Ltd., Markham, ON, Tel: (905) 475-9126)

A new concept in publishing, **FINDITQUICK.COM** is a series of spiral bound reference books on space, dinosaur fossils, music, robots, and sports that are linked to a website. Purchasers of these illustrated quick-fact books use a special Web access code to get the latest updates on hot topics, hot deals and lots more. **FINDITQUICK.COM** is designed to shorten web searches by directing kids to pre-

screened and age-appropriate sites that tell them what they want to know. (Goldenbooks.com, Golden Books Publishing, Cambridge, ON, Tel: (519) 623-3590)

BUDDY BRUSH is a new line of **CD-ROM** interactive musical painting games developed in Vancouver that has preschoolers humming and colouring all at once. In **BUDDY BRUSH AND THE PAINTED PLAYHOUSE**, kids mix paint on screen, paint with musical colours and solve musical puzzles. In **BUDDY BRUSH AND THE PAINTED CIRCUS**, they create clown faces, paint costumes and props, and build a circus show along to original and historical circus music. Each CD comes with activity colouring books and carrying case. Parental participation is not required, but it's hard to resist picking up that paintbrush. (Ideas that Play Entertainment Inc., Vancouver, BC, Tel: (604) 682-2626)

TONKA® DIG'N RIGS™ CD-ROM PLAYSET puts kids in the driver's seat. The sturdy playset that looks like a bulldozer's dashboard -- complete with steering wheel, ignition key, horn and control levers -- fits over most standard keyboards. With their hands on the controls, kids steer construction vehicles to four job sites and get to work swinging the wrecking ball, picking up materials, digging holes and loading. Also includes four games that flex a child's logical thinking and hand-eye coordination. (Hasbro Interactive, Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

THE NEW ACTION MAN CD-ROM pits the best-selling action figure for boys against the evil Dr. X who has kidnapped Action Man's dog and taken other animals hostage. These easy-to-follow action games take players to five islands where they must help the Greatest Hero of Them All save the world by doing what he does best -- cliff climbing, bungee jumping, street lugeing, and more. (Hasbro Interactive, Hasbro Canada Inc., Mississauga, ON, Tel: (905) 238-3374)

102 DALMATIANS is slated to be the blockbuster of the season. The movie is spawning a line of books featuring photos of those adorable pups. The collection includes a **READ-ALOUD STORYBOOK** that captures the fast-paced fun in this all new adventure, a giant shaped board book for the youngest Dalmatian lover, and naturally a counting book --**LIFT-THE-FLAP NUMBERS**. (HB Fenn, Bolton, ON, Tel: (905) 951-6600)

MUSICAL SOUP CDs and cassettes from Embroynics is a line of music that includes Mozart WombSong Collection, WombSong Serenades, and Mozart for Toddlers. The collection of developmentally appropriate music selections has been designed specifically for little ears as nourishment for the mind. The **VIDEO SOUP** titles Nature Babies and Mozart Nature Symphonies introduce kids to the beauty of nature and the animal world against a backdrop of stimulating music. (Munchkin, Newmarket, ON, Tel: (905) 853-8971)

The wonderful thing about **CAILLOU**, who is now the star of his own animated TV show, is that he grows up in books alongside his readers. He's a charming baby in a series of chewable, non-toxic, bright books with simple, colourful pictures. The baby collection includes **CAILLOU COLORS** and **CAILLOU ANIMALS**. In the new **CAILLOU** collection for children two and up, he's a playmate who introduces toddlers to new words and stimulating concepts. There are sturdy flap books and situation books that relate to a little one's world, like **CAILLOU SAYS NO** in which he learns to be assertive.

In the new Backpack Collection, Caillou is 4-years-old and invites kids to discover a

broader universe along with him. His TV fans will be delighted to find his many adventures in book form. The dozen titles in the series includes **CAILLOU LEARNS HE'S GETTING OLDER** in which he discovers a little dead bird and starts to ask questions about death, and **CAILLOU GOES ON AN ADVENTURE** in which he has fun going around the block. (HB Fenn, Bolton, ON, Tel: (905) 951-6600)

Babies love looking at faces, especially their own and those of people they love. Now babies and their families can star in their own photo storybook, alongside Winnie the Pooh. **POOH LOVES CHRISTMAS!** is one in a line of original Disney keepsake photo storybooks that makes early reading absolutely irresistible. (HB Fenn, Bolton, ON, Tel: (905) 951-6600)

Gather round the hearth. **DISNEY'S CHRISTMAS STORYBOOK** makes for cozy storytelling with 18-easy-to-read illustrated stories for the season featuring favorite Disney characters, including Woody, Buzz, Ariel, Cinderella, the Dalmations and more. Also from Disney, a treasury of classic nursery rhymes and fairytales, playfully adapted for Pooh and friends. Kids will adore Little Red Riding Piglet and more in **ONCE UPON A TIME WITH WINNIE THE POOH** (HB Fenn, Bolton, ON, Tel: (905) 951-6600)

ROLIE POLIE OLIE board books are full of zany fun and games for preschoolers. There are shaped board books, cling sticker books, and lots more, all featuring the robotic characters from the popular TV series of the same name. Colourful and joyous, no one can make kids giggle better than Rolie. (HB Fenn, Bolton, ON, Tel: (905) 951-6600)

Note : Please contact companies directly for samples or photos.