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MARQUEE BRANDS the Sky's the Limit

Marquee Brands is approaching IP acquisition with a clear focus, aiming for high-end brands that translate to diverse distribution channels.



Plus:

- Leading Licensees 2017
- The World of Bioworld
- Toei Animation Powers Up



License Global

LEADING LICENSEES ISSUE

AUGUST 2017

GOOD YEAR

GOOD YEAR



CASUAL

GOOD YEAR

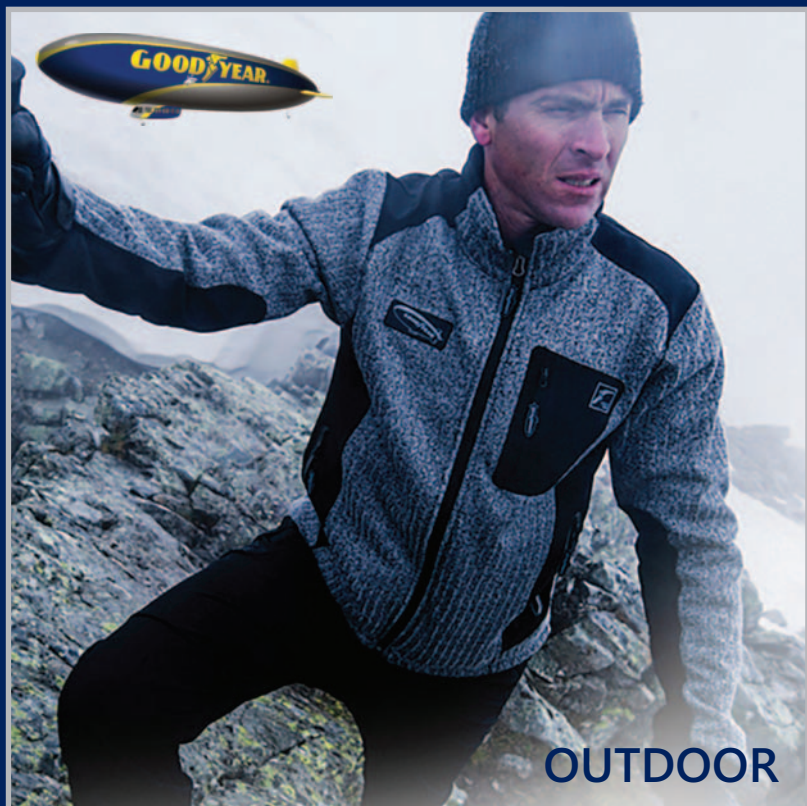


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IMG

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MARKET REPORT: EUROPE

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Marquee Brands is a brand management company that is approaching IP acquisition with a clear focus, aiming for high-end brands that translate to diverse distribution channels.

Leading 150 Licensees 2017

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Marquee Brands

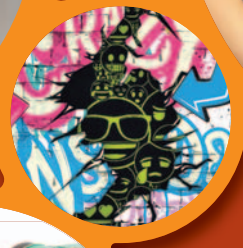
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EVERYBODY IS BUYING EVERYBODY

Business changes—that's the nature of the beast. But this year, businesses are snapping up competing or complementary companies left and right, in deals that will surely have impact for years to come.

Consolidation and acquisition are arguably the hottest trend of 2017 across all direct and peripheral lines of retail.

The apex of this, of course, is Amazon's June purchase of upscale grocer Whole Foods, valued at \$13.7 billion—a coup for the world's No. 1 retailer and a true shake up in the world of food retailing, sure to disrupt the business on every level.

But this spring and summer has seen many, many other retailers, brands and licensees join forces to combat a changing marketplace and consumer landscape.

On the heels of Amazon's mammoth buy was the less splashy deal, but a headline none-the-less: Walmart's acquisition of men's clothing company Bonobos, which has a strong, organically built e-tailing and shop-in-shop component. Walmart snapped up the 10-year-old Internet brand for \$310 million in cash.

The buy was a strategic move for Walmart in its bid to keep pace with Amazon, and follows its other e-tail purchase, ModCloth, in March. Walmart acquired the assets and operations of ModCloth, which operates exclusively as an e-commerce retailer of women's fashion and accessories, for an undisclosed sum.

Both the ModCloth and Bonobos purchases are intended to fuel Walmart's Jet.com business, the mega-retailer's answer to Amazon, which it acquired in 2016.

More recently in July, QVC took full ownership of mobile and e-commerce retailer HSN, in a bid to bring together the two largest TV-based retailers in the U.S. The deal is valued at \$2.1 billion.

But it's not just retailers who are consolidating. Brands are getting in on the action too.

On July 25, Michael Kors Holdings announced its purchase of luxury footwear brand Jimmy Choo for \$1.2 billion. The buy is intended to shore up Michael Kors' flagging core brand sales, as well as open up new categories and markets for Jimmy Choo. This type of deal is becoming commonplace among luxury fashion brands as others have been consolidating left and right this year, including Coach, which purchased Kate Spade in May for \$2.4 billion, and LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton's April buy of Christian Dior for a staggering \$13.1 billion.

Also in July, Cirque du Soleil, which is an entertainment company backed by private equity, set its sights on Blue Man Productions, a fellow live entertainment organization famed for its Blue Man Group. The purchase further widens Cirque du Soleil's global

portfolio and diversifies its brand beyond its core circus-esque performances.

Licensees and brand management companies are also hot on the trend, with moves that are both surprising and practical.

In June, brand management company Marquee Brands, in a co-deal with one of the world's largest licensees, Global Brands Group, purchased fashion house BCBG Max Azria Group. Read more about this deal in our cover story on page 24.

Well-established licensee Mad Engine took over the Neff Headwear business in May from Marlin Equity Partners. The move brings Neff founder Shawn Neff into Mad Engine's C-suite, further diversifying the company's business portfolio.

Similarly in May, Funko agreed to acquire California-based Loungefly, a fashion accessories company, for undisclosed terms. The deal will continue to transition Funko's booming collectibles and novelties business into fashion and adjacent categories.

Meanwhile, in March, Delta Apparel sold off the vintage-inspired, licensed t-shirt business Junk Food Clothing to JMJD Ventures for \$28 million. Delta bought Junk Food in 2005, but offloaded the business to "reduce our reliance on licensed properties" and lower its debt levels, says Robert W. Humphreys, chief executive officer, Delta Apparel.

And Rubie's Costume Co., a leading costume and dress-up manufacturer, in an effort to strengthen its business from end-to-end, purchased BuySeasons, a fulfillment company.

I'm sure there are many other deals absent from this list, but the message is clear: while retail may be shifting and evolving, and companies consolidating and changing hands, business is still growing, albeit in new (and sometimes perplexing) ways. The companies that band together and join forces to bolster expertise are positioning themselves well for longevity. And at the end of the day, that's what we want, right? Stuff to buy and a place to buy it. ©



by **AMANDA CIOLETTI**
executive editor

THIS SPRING AND SUMMER HAS SEEN MANY, MANY OTHER RETAILERS, BRANDS AND LICENSEES JOIN FORCES TO COMBAT A CHANGING MARKETPLACE AND CONSUMER LANDSCAPE.

SCHOOL KIDS GET TO SHOPPING

NPD predicts that the back-to-school season—the second largest shopping season of the year—will charge up retail this summer, giving apparel sales a nice boost.

Compiled by

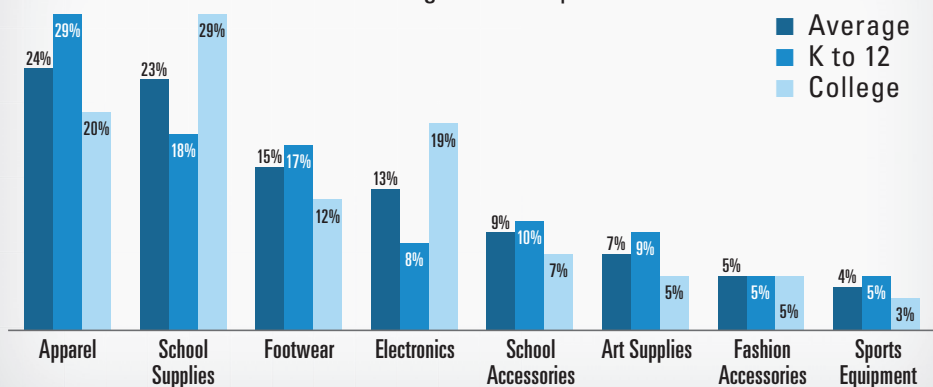


The back-to-school season is the second most important time in the retail calendar, behind the holiday season, says retail research and analysis organization, The NPD Group.

Similar to the holiday shopping season, back-to-school shopping is beginning earlier and lasting longer—this year, 28 percent of consumers told NPD that they plan to start earlier than they did last year. In 2016, across all industries, 20 percent of consumers began back-to-school shopping before May, with 8 percent completing their shopping during this early period. There were plenty of late-season shoppers too—14 percent of consumers didn't finish their school shopping until after October.

IN THE 2017 SEASON, APPAREL IS EXPECTED TO HAVE THE SECOND HIGHEST AVERAGE SPEND, NOT FAR BEHIND ELECTRONICS.

Dollar Distribution Across Industries
Among Total Respondents

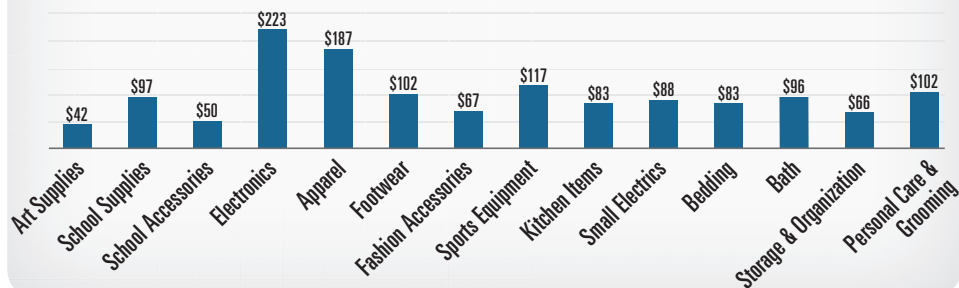


Three-quarters of back-to-school shoppers bought apparel for K-12 students during the 2016 shopping season. Apparel captured 24 percent of total back-to-school purchases in 2016, and this was even higher among K-12 (29 percent).

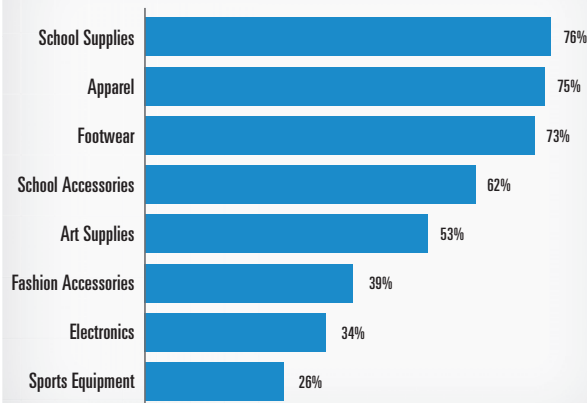
In the 2017 season, apparel is expected to have the second highest average spend, not far behind electronics. Almost 60 percent of consumers plan on spending more on apparel for the 2017-2018 school year.

“Despite the lack of passion for fashion among young people, these categories are important to back-to-school shoppers and spells opportunity that can expand beyond apparel and into the fashion of dorm décor,” says Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst, NPD. ©

Average Respondents Expect to Spend During 2017 Back-to-School Season



Percent Purchased During 2016 BTS Season



Source: The NPD Group/ LAB Series: Back-to-School May 2017

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First Licensing Expo China Features Retail Tour, Awards, Seminars, More

The inaugural Licensing Expo China took place in Shanghai, July 18-20, at the National Exhibition and Convention Center. The event, which is organized by UBM Licensing and sponsored by the International Licensing Industry Merchandisers' Association, was co-located with Children Baby Maternity Expo (CBME) China, the world's largest trade fair for baby products and services, and Cool Kids Fashion Shanghai, a trade fair for kids' fashion.

The new trade show connected some of the most influential art, fashion, entertainment, character and corporate brand owners and agents with consumer goods manufacturers, licensees and retailers from all product categories across China.

This year, the show featured more than 250 brands and properties from China and overseas including Click! Licensing Asia, Fantawild Animation, Beijing Dream Castle Culture Co., Animation International (Shanghai), Hasbro Trading (China) Co., Medialink (Shanghai) Co., Mattel, Soap Studio Company, China Brands Group and Familyout, among many others.

Licensing Expo China kicked off with a Retail Tour on July 17 (prior to show opening), that brought together executives from the U.S., Europe, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and China as they visited some of Shanghai's major retailers like Babymax, a 300-store retail chain for children and baby maternity products, and Lotus, a major Chinese hypermarket chain that carries a wide range of products, including full grocery lines and general merchandise. The tour also journeyed to downtown Shanghai to visit the Joy City Shopping Mall, and visited licensed retail stores such as Paul Frank, NBA Store, DC Comics Super Heroes Store, Mein Friends and the CAT Store, among others.

Throughout Licensing Expo China, a series of forums, lectures and workshops dedicated to highlighting and bringing knowledge to important issues surrounding the licensing business in Asia took place. The education series opened the event with a keynote address by Kermid Rahman, vice president and general manager, consumer products and interactive,

The Walt Disney Company, titled "The Power of Disney's Franchise Licensing Business."

Other topics on the agenda included an overview of opportunities within licensing, hosted by Charles Riotto, president, LIMA; a panel on the Chinese film market, that featured executives from DreamWorks, DMG Motion Picture Group and International Entertainment; a conversation about game licensing with Rovio's Vincent Ye, vice president; a panel that touched on licensing lifestyle properties in the country with executives from China

CHINA LICENSING EXPO 2018
JULY 25-27

Brands Group, Brandgenuity, SEMK Products, and Enzo e Partners; a workshop that dived into how licensors choose properties for international markets that featured insights from executives at Mattel and ZenWorks; and much, much more.

Licensing Expo China also hosted the first China Licensing Awards, July 18. Held in conjunction with LIMA, the awards recognized the outstanding achievements of companies with licensing properties in China.

The winners were: Alpha Group Co. for Best China Property for "Super Wings," as well as Best Character/Film/Television/Entertainment Property; McDonald's for Best Licensed Promotion for *Angry Birds Movie*; Saban Brands for Best Corporate Brand/Fashion/Lifestyle Program for Paul Frank; Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf for Best Location-Based or Experiential Initiative for Goat Steps; CBC Original Culture (Shanghai) for Best Licensee for its work with Paul Frank; and TMall.com for Best Retailer for its work with Barbie.

Licensing Expo China 2018 will take place July 25-27, again in Shanghai.



LICENSING EXPO CHINA RETAIL TOUR



THE WINNERS OF THE INAUGURAL CHINA LICENSING AWARDS



KERMID RAHMAN

vice president and general manager,
consumer products and interactive,
The Walt Disney Company

STEVEN EKSTRACT

group publisher, License Global

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Licensing Expo Facilitates International Trade in Vegas

Licensing Expo took its international profile to a new level this year with the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Buyer Program Select, which helped U.S. companies at the event facilitate the expansion of their brands into international markets.

Both international buyers looking for U.S. brands to bring back to their home markets and American companies looking to bring their brands overseas were invited to visit the first-ever International Buyers Lounge to meet with representatives from the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration.

IBP Select is a joint government/industry effort that brings thousands of international buyers to the U.S. for business-to-business matchmaking with American firms exhibiting at major industry trade shows, like Licensing Expo. Every year, the IBP facilitates billions of dollars of new business between U.S. and international companies.



At Licensing Expo, IBP Select hosted representatives from Canada, Mexico and Ecuador, and also worked to connect U.S. companies with hundreds of other international markets. The organization has about 100 export assistance centers throughout the U.S. and 78 offices at embassies and consulates overseas.

“Licensing Expo 2017 was exciting and a world-class trade show,” says Andrea DaSilva, global media and entertainment team leader, U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration. “ITA was thrilled to host the first-ever International Buyers Lounge to meet licensors and develop new clients at the show. We are already working with show organizers for the 2018 event ... and we look forward to expanding our presence next year.”

ITA will return to Licensing Expo 2018, which will take place May 22-24, to again host the International Buyers Lounge.

Joester Loria Picks Up 1-800-Flowers Brands

1-800-Flowers.com, a floral and gourmet foods gift retailer and distribution company, has appointed The Joester Loria Group to serve as its exclusive licensing agent in the U.S. and Canada.

Under the agreement, JLG will create a strategic merchandising and licensing program for each of the key 1-800-Flowers brands including Harry & David (gourmet fruit and items), The Popcorn Factory (popcorn and specialty treats), Cheryl's (cookies and baked gifts), Wolferman's (English muffins and breakfast treats), Moose Munch (gourmet popcorn) and 1-800-Flowers.

In addition to lifestyle product extensions, the licensing agency will also aim to secure branded food extensions for Harry & David, Cheryl's and Wolferman's, as well as gardening and floral category extensions for 1-800-Flowers.

“We are excited to partner with 1-800-Flowers in extending its portfolio of premium brands,” says Debra Joester, president and chief executive officer, JLG. “Each brand offers a unique history of product innovation, consumer awareness and premium positioning, and provides the platform for quality food extensions and lifestyle products.”

Brandgenuity to Rep Welch's in the U.K.

Beverage brand Welch's has selected Brandgenuity to serve as its exclusive licensing agency in the U.K.

Brandgenuity will now work to extend the juice brand into a variety of categories including frozen foods, refrigerated and shelf-stable foods, vitamins and supplements, beverages and food services.

Products will be targeted at a range of retailers such as major grocers, convenience stores and discounters.

“This is just the perfect time to be expanding Welch's in the U.K.,” says Teri Niadna, managing director, Brandgenuity Europe. “Moms are seeking healthier alternatives, and value real food. Plus, the functional benefits of grapes are aligned with current health trends. We look forward to building upon this great brand licensing program.”

Welch's products are currently sold in approximately 40 countries around the globe. The brand's existing licensing program includes 25 licensees across various categories.

“Successful licensing in international markets depends on having the right resources on the ground in the relevant countries and territories,” says Glenn Hendricks, head of global licensing, Welch's. “We are thrilled that Brandgenuity will bring its local market knowledge to our expansion efforts in the U.K.”

BEN 10

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Amazon Debuts Shoppable Social Platform

Amazon has launched a new, shoppable social media platform on its U.S. iOS app that lets consumers connect with each other, discover new products and then buy those products immediately.

I know what you're thinking, does the world really need another social media platform? Turns out the answer is yes, as Amazon Spark provides a critical link between consumers and retail that is lacking on other sites.

In 2014, to combat this exact "pain point," Instagram, which doesn't even allow links in posts, rolled out Like2Buy, a plug-in for retailers developed by Curalate that generates links to retail sites, making Instagram posts shoppable.

Snapchat actually reversed its no-link policy just this month, to combat similar user complaints, and other sites such as Facebook and Pinterest have always allowed hyperlinks in posts. But even still, for retailers and brand owners, turning user-generated content into hard sales has been a tough nut to crack.

Enter Amazon Spark, described as a "cross between Instagram and Pinterest with a touch of e-commerce," which solves that problem, albeit for one retailer specifically.

U.S. Amazon Prime customers who have Apple iOS devices can find Spark in the Programs and Features section of the existing "Amazon" app, where they indicate their interests to generate a feed of personalized content from other Amazon customers.

Customers can then purchase items they see in the photos in their feed by simply tapping on the product link in the image, which will take them to the product in the Amazon Marketplace.

In a nod to traditional social media, customers can also get feedback on products from other shoppers in the app, and respond to content with "smiles."

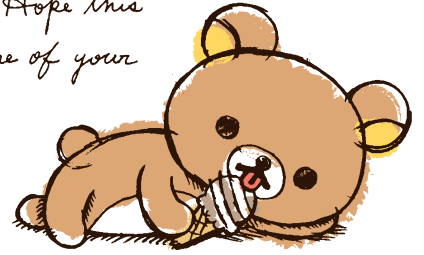
To give the platform an initial content boost, Amazon has invited publishers, including paid influencers and bloggers, to post on Spark.

No word yet on whether or when the platform will roll out to other devices or regions.





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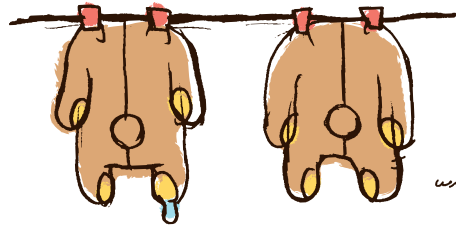


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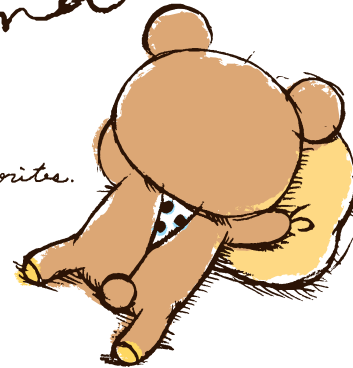


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Making MAGIC

MAGIC Las Vegas takes place Aug. 14-16 at the Las Vegas and Mandalay Bay convention centers, and will host the retail industry for the most comprehensive fashion marketplace in the U.S.

At MAGIC and across its 13 shows—FN Platform, WWDMAGIC, The Tents, Project, Project Women's, The Collective, Stitch, PoolTradeShow, WSA@MAGIC, Curve Las Vegas, Children's Club MAGIC, Sourcing at MAGIC and Footwear Sourcing at MAGIC—find the latest in apparel, footwear, accessories and manufacturing, from contemporary luxury brands to the upcoming trends in fast fashion.

The licensing industry will be highlighted at MAGIC in two panel conversations, both

moderated by *License Global's* group publisher, Steven Ekstract.

The first conversation, taking place Aug. 14, will center on lifestyle licensing and discuss how brands build their product assortment through strategic licensing deals. The conversation will feature Pooneh Mohajer, founder and chief executive officer, and Simone Legno, co-founder and chief creative officer, Tokidoki. Additional panelists will be added closer to the event.

On Aug. 15, Marquee Brands' Michael DeVirgilio, president, and Cory Baker, chief operating officer, will discuss the strategy behind brands Ben Sherman, Bruno Magli, Body Glove and the newly-acquired BCBG Max Azria Group.

MAGIC

CET Moves Taiwan's Creative Culture Forward

Launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Culture, the Taiwan International Cultural and Creative Industry Expo provides unique merchandise, trade platforms and bridges the gap between production, sales and distribution.

The event, which took place in April, spanned three major Taipei venues—Songshan Cultural and Creative Park, Huashan 1914 Creative Park and the Expo Dome. In the run-up to the big event, CET also organized a series of events and satellite activities in nearby areas surrounding the venues that further emphasized the CET 2017 theme, The City is the Exhibition Hall and the Exhibition Hall is Life.

According to the Ministry of Culture, 379 shops around Taiwan were mobilized in support of CET around Taiwan, with 229 in Taipei itself, as well as an expanded effort to involve all corners of the island to promote and develop the country's cultural and creative industries and ultimately facilitate local cultural tourism and provide citizens with more diverse cultural and creative experiences.

CET was also further enhanced this year by a new app that, in addition to providing information on events, activities and exhibition venues, offered discounts and exclusive memberships.

Nine walking routes around Taipei, New Taipei City, Yilan and Taichung were also established, with some offering exclusive routes led by tour guides.



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CREATIVE EXPO TAIWAN

KCLF Brings Asia Content to the World

The 16th annual Korea Character Licensing Fair took place July 12-16 in Seoul, South Korea at the Coex center.

The annual event brings together some of Korea's greatest cultural and entertainment offerings from its 320 exhibitors for viewing by more than 120,000 visitors, buyers and participating companies.

KCLF's 2017 theme centered on the five senses, and catered to content that can be watched, eaten or enjoyed.

A key trend on the KCLF show floor was the enormous growth of multi-channel networks, with major Korean companies Keynine and Brosco participating in this year's event.

Dates for KCLF 2018 have not yet been set, so be sure to visit CharacterFair.kr for future details.





GLAMOUR EDITOR'S PICK

FROM THE EDITORS OF *GLAMOUR*

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Licensing Opportunities Available for Apparel and Fashion Accessories
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MARKET REPORT: | EUROPE

As Brand Licensing Europe (Oct. 10–12) approaches, here's a snapshot of the current economic situation in some of the most influential European markets: Germany, the U.K., France, Italy and Spain.

by SEAN MCGRATH

Europe has experienced political and economic instability in recent years, the likes of which has not been witnessed since World War II. The financial crisis of 2008 exposed unsustainable fiscal policies around the globe, and it was not long after that that a new crisis began to emerge—one that would shake the foundations of the European Union. In 2009, it came to light that Greece's debt amounted to 113 percent of its GDP. In the three years that followed, the reach of the European sovereign debt crisis widened to include Portugal, Italy, Ireland and Spain.

At the state level, this turbulence endures, and is further compounded by a range of political and macro-economic factors. From the U.K.'s decision to sever ties with the European Union and a real risk of Italy following suit, to a ferocious federal election in France, a political stalemate in Spain and a marked increase in terror attacks across the continent, the European bloc continues to face tremendous challenges.

On top of the political turmoil, the humanitarian crises in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have led to an influx of migrants seeking refuge inside the European Economic Area, and economists are still wrestling with what impact this will have in the coming months and years.

Yet despite this fragile environment, Europe is currently outperforming economic expectations and, in fact, is headlining global economic growth figures in 2017.

GDP data indicates that the European economy expanded 0.6 percent year-on-year in Q1, the best result in two years. Q2 data suggests the trajectory is set to continue into the second half of the year, with the composite Purchasing Managers' Index (an indicator of the economic health of the manufacturing sector) pointing toward the best quarter in more than six years.

Purchasing Power

Private consumption remains surprisingly resilient across the European economic area as a whole, bolstered by improving labor markets, low interest borrowing and a loosening of fiscal policy.

In 2016, private consumption expanded at its fastest pace since the financial crisis. While rising inflation is expected to temper purchasing power this year, private consumption across the continent remains relatively healthy.

Unemployment figures are also lending themselves to a positive economic outlook. Unemployment across the EU is expected to fall to 8 percent this year and 7.7 percent in 2018, which would be the lowest level since late 2008.

Germany

Germany is the largest economy in Europe by a significant margin and the fourth largest in the world, behind only the U.S., China and Japan. The nation saw GDP growth of 1.9 percent in 2016, making it the fastest-growing economy among the G7 states (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the U.K. and the U.S.)

Supported by robust employment levels, strong private consumption, a healthy construction sector and steady exports, Germany is expected to maintain its momentum throughout 2017.

Despite largely positive data, there is a downside in the form of policy uncertainty. In September, Germans will take to the polls to elect a new government.



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GERMANY KEY STATS				
KEY INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018 (ESTIMATED)
GDP Growth (YOY %)	1.7	1.9	1.6	1.9
Inflation (YOY %)	0.1	0.4	1.7	1.4
Unemployment (%)	4.6	4.1	4	3.9

Source: European Commission

Chancellor Angela Merkel's open arms policy on refugees proved hugely unpopular and opened the doors to the rise of far-right politics. This, combined with Brexit and Donald Trump's ascension to president of the U.S., put populism front and center in Germany.

However, in the wake of Emmanuel Macron's decisive presidential victory in France, Merkel's conservative coalition—the Christian Democratic Union and the Christian Social Union—is leading in the polls by a significant margin, and the markets don't seem overly concerned about the prospect of a far-right government.

United Kingdom

The economic picture in the U.K. has become almost entirely defined by Brexit, and until negotiations with the EU are complete, this is unlikely to change.

While some of the pessimistic, short-term predictions have been silenced with a surprisingly resilient economy, there are many signals that may be cause for concern.

The value of the sterling plummeted to a 31-year low in the hours following the referendum and has not recovered since. A year later and the pound is down roughly 10 percent against the dollar.

U.K. retailers are heavily dependent on imported goods, and an unwillingness to absorb these increasing import costs against a backdrop of stagnating wages has led to a



U.K. KEY STATS				
KEY INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018 (ESTIMATED)
GDP Growth (YOY %)	2.2	1.8	1.8	1.3
Inflation (YOY %)	0	0.7	2.6	2.6
Unemployment (%)	5.3	4.8	5	5.4

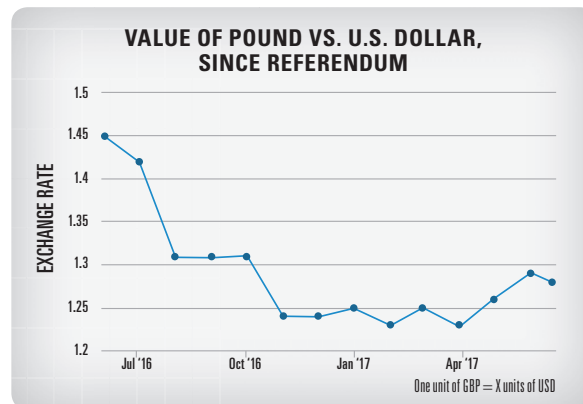
Source: European Commission

sharp increase in inflation. The inflation rate ballooned to 2.9 percent in May, the highest spike in four years, and well above the Bank of England's target of 2 percent.

This in turn is affecting private consumption. GfK's Consumer Confidence Barometer shows the sharpest fall in consumer confidence in 21 years.

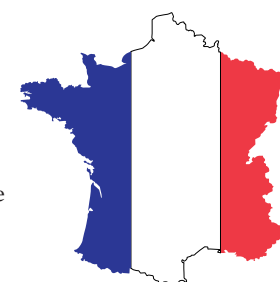
The European Commission expects business investment in the U.K. to stagnate as uncertainty continues to plague the economic landscape. However, the depreciation of the sterling will continue to fuel the export market, and the EC believes that the labor market will remain largely resilient this year.

Data just released shows that Britain's annual inflation rate actually slowed to 2.6 percent in June; still above the Bank of England's target, but a small ray of hope nonetheless, given expectations.



France

France's economy has been growing steadily since the 2008 financial crisis. The country saw GDP growth last year of 1.1 percent, and the rate of job creation increased by 70,000 in Q4 2016, the fastest rate since 2007. Modest but



steady economic progress has been mirrored in the retail industry, which grew by 2 percent in both 2015 and 2016.

A series of geopolitical and macro-economic events have affected France's economy since the financial crisis.

In the months leading up to the recent federal election, consumer confidence was severely weakened. However, Macron's victory, combined with a landslide majority in Parliament, seems to have had a stabilizing effect on the markets, and pundits are hopeful that this confidence will trickle down to private consumption.

Economic activity is forecast to continue a gentle upward trajectory this year, with an uptick in



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FRANCE KEY STATS				
KEY INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018 (ESTIMATED)
GDP Growth (YOY %)	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.7
Inflation (YOY %)	0.1	0.3	1.4	1.3
Unemployment (%)	10.4	10.1	9.9	9.6

Source: European Commission

exports fueling growth. Unemployment is expected to continue a gradual decline, and it is anticipated that the country's deficit will fall from 3.4 percent of GDP in 2016 to 3 percent in 2017. As with most major European economies, rising inflation will likely have a dampening effect on private consumption growth.

Italy

Italy is another country on the precipice of political and economic upheaval. The nation's center-right parties saw a strong turnout in June's local elections, giving an indication of how the national election, expected next spring, might play out.

The Five Star Movement, a populist party trying to force a referendum on membership in the EU, is polling well. There have been hints that the Five Star Movement might be willing to form an alliance with the fiercely anti-Euro Northern League, which makes the possibility of a Eurosceptic government a distinct possibility.

GDP is projected to grow by 1 percent in 2017 and 0.8 percent in 2018. This growth will be driven by rising global demand and the recent depreciation of the Euro. Business investment is strengthening, but public investment remains woefully low.

Private consumption remains robust but is projected to slow this year, due to weak job creation and growing inflation rates.



ITALY KEY STATS				
KEY INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018 (ESTIMATED)
GDP Growth (YOY %)	0.8	0.9	0.9	1.1
Inflation (YOY %)	0.1	-0.1	1.5	1.3
Unemployment (%)	11.9	11.7	11.5	11.3

Source: European Commission

Spain

Spain spent the better part of 2016 in a political stalemate, with a caretaker government unable to legislate in any meaningful sense.

The nation was on the verge of a third general election when the 10-month political deadlock came to an end with the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party agreeing to abstain in a confidence vote.

Despite the political turmoil, economic activity continues to exceed expectations. Spain closed out 2016 with a 3.2 percent year-on-year growth in GDP, well ahead of the European average.

Unemployment is set to continue declining at a slow but stable pace. Growth will likely ease in 2017 as private consumption is put under similar pressures seen across the European Economic Area.



SPAIN KEY STATS				
KEY INDICATORS	2015	2016	2017	2018 (ESTIMATED)
GDP Growth (YOY %)	3.2	3.2	2.8	2.4
Inflation (YOY %)	-0.6	-0.3	2	1.4
Unemployment (%)	22.1	19.6	17.6	15.9

Source: European Commission

Economic Recovery in the Future?

In the face of uncertain times, the overall outlook for the European Economic Area is surprisingly upbeat, but there are still hot spots of political and macroeconomic instability. In the Netherlands, a government has yet to be formed following recent elections; the U.K.'s Brexit negotiations continue to drive market uncertainty; and Italy's upcoming election is causing concern among other leading economies.

But for the most part, political uncertainty is subsiding across the European region. French President Macron has a decisive mandate to push through comprehensive economic reforms. In addition, Chancellor Merkel's coalition is the front-runner in polls for Germany's upcoming election. With support for populism subsiding across the bloc, investment and consumer confidence is slowly returning to the market.

Be sure to register now to attend Brand Licensing Europe, taking place Oct. 10-12 at Olympia in London, to get ahead of the curve in the consumer products market. ©

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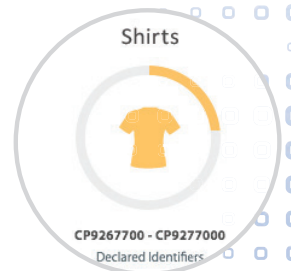
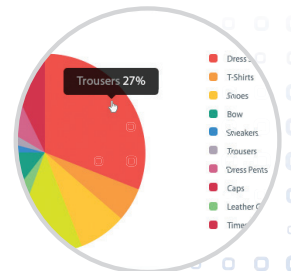
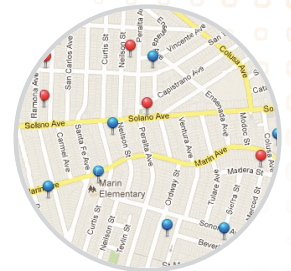
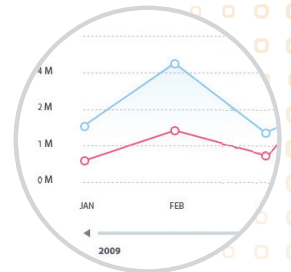
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MARQUEE BRANDS

THE Sky's Limit

Marquee Brands is a brand management company that is approaching IP acquisition with a clear focus, aiming for high-end brands that translate to diverse distribution channels. **by AMANDA CIOLETTI**



A lot can be done in three years, just look to Marquee Brands. Formed in 2014 by global private equity investment firm Neuberger Berman, Marquee Brands is a familiar platform in the licensed business space, albeit one with a new take on brand acquisition and management.

“Building on a successful investment business derived from yielding royalties, intellectual property and related assets, Neuberger Berman Private Equity launched Marquee Brands in 2014. We were striving to offer our investors a unique, private-market strategy with the potential for yield, upside and strong downside protections—characteristics that we think Marquee offers our investors through the contractual nature of brand licensing,” says Samuel Porat, managing director, Neuberger Berman. Porat oversees the various royalty and yield strategies for Neuberger Berman’s investors in which Marquee is a part of. Also involved with Marquee from Neuberger Berman is Zack Sigel, managing director, who functions as Marquee’s head of mergers and acquisitions, overseeing a dedicated M&A team for Marquee

SAMUEL PORAT, *managing director, Neuberger Berman;*
MICHAEL DEVIRGILIO, *president, Marquee Brands;*
ZACK SIGEL, *managing director, Neuberger Berman;*
CORY M. BAKER, *chief operating officer, Marquee Brands; and*
WARREN CLAMEN, *chief financial officer, Marquee Brands*

at Neuberger. Warren Clamen serves as chief financial officer for Marquee and sits on its board of directors.

Under the leadership and expertise of president Michael DeVirgilio, former president, licensing and international, Kenneth Cole Productions, and chief operating officer Cory M. Baker, founder of Julian Wolf, a brand management and business development agency, and served as vice president of business affairs at Iconix, Marquee set out to target and acquire high-quality global brands from a diverse cross-section of consumer segments.

“The idea was that if we were going to create something different, better or otherwise new in the existing landscape of brand management companies, we needed to organize from top down with a different approach,” says Baker.

“With Michael’s international business background and product knowledge base and my law, brand licensing and marketing experience, we were able to come together and look at brand management as a global challenge instead of as a country-by-country or simply domestic business, which other IP brand management companies tend to focus on.”

Marquee evaluates its acquisitions based on three basic pillars: heritage, global opportunity and growth and a bit of the intangible—will the brand benefit from Marquee management?

“We want to acquire high-quality brands and ensure that those brands are built on a fundamental investment thesis,” says DeVirgilio. “No. 1—Does the brand have heritage and DNA? We tend to only want to look at brands that have a real story to tell about its past or a special something that is valuable that consumers can connect with. No. 2—We look at brands that are bigger than their current business for one reason or another. Businesses ebb and flow, so we tend to look at a business’ high water mark to determine if we can get the brand back to that. And No. 3—Will the brand benefit from our process?”

The company’s foundational principles took shape early on with its first major buy in January 2015—Italian luxury label Bruno Magli.

The strategic acquisition was foundational for the company in that it established the true nature of Marquee as one that looks to brands with deep heritage yet that may be under-leveraged for one reason or another.

With Bruno Magli, a predominantly men’s fashion house that leans on its 80-plus years of fashion experience, Marquee entered brand management with a bang.

“When Bruno Magli became available for purchase, we looked at it as exactly the gem it is,” says Baker. “It has eight decades of heritage, lots of opportunity and blue sky.”

The Magli brand certainly had high consumer awareness, but its marketing strategy offered room for growth, a recipe perfect for Marquee execution. At the time of its acquisition, the brand was in the U.S.

with men’s shoes, in Europe with women’s footwear and in Asia with a mix of both men’s and women’s shoe offerings, with some handbags on offer in South Korea, says Marquee. In the short period since it has been under brand management, Bruno Magli has now grown to include a full lifestyle product range available around the world that now includes small leather goods, a men’s tailored apparel business, accessories including briefcases and luggage, men’s hosiery and a fragrance that will launch this fall/holiday season, in addition to growing its men’s and women’s footwear business. Marquee also launched the brand’s first-ever e-commerce site.

Last year, Marquee further broadened the brand’s reach through two new partnerships in Asia with Sitoy Retailing in China and Bruno Magli Partners in Japan. Sitoy opened the first Bruno Magli shop-in-shop in the SOGO department store at Causeway Bay in Hong Kong, with 15 more branded stores in the cards for the rest of China. And last fall, Bruno Magli Partners launched e-commerce for Japan, with plans for additional stores set to open this year.

Supporting these initiatives and the brand in total, was an extensive global ad campaign that tapped actress Lucy Liu.

Bruno Magli opened the doors to its first dedicated U.S. store in the Brickell City Center mall in Miami, Fla., and more are set to open in Italy (Milan), Asia and the Middle East before the end of the year.

“We’ve brought Bruno Magli into a dozen or so new global markets and brought on a distribution partner that is based in Milan, Italy, that also executes global sales from its showroom, all something the brand did not have before,” says DeVirgilio. “We’ve done a lot of development to bring the brand up to a modern day operating structure, and with the jet fuel of brand



building that we do, we have really raised the bar.”

With the foundation in place, Marquee’s subsequent acquisitions for brands Ben Sherman, Body Glove and, most recently, BCBG Max Azria, have further set the company up for success in the sector in a relatively short period of time.

In the summer of 2015, Marquee announced its second major purchase, London apparel brand Ben Sherman, purchased from Oxford Industries.

It’s a buy that fits well with Marquee’s heritage directive.

Established in 1963, the British label is known around the world for its distinctive, colorful and on-trend, high-quality men’s apparel.

In Ben Sherman, Marquee saw an immediate win.

“This is a brand that crossed some of the largest and most successful territories—Canada, Australia, Germany and the U.S.—but has largely been focused as a U.K. brand. It has great authenticity and has maintained its heritage, but the opportunity from a growth perspective is in ensuring that we focus this brand as a global play,” says Baker.

Marquee aims to transform the Ben Sherman business by growing its core men’s shirts and bottoms, but also its lifestyle categories, which include shoes, sunglasses and accessories.

“The lifestyle categories have historically performed very successfully,” says Baker. “But they were largely in and out programs instead of ongoing revenue streams and business lines. So, when we formalized those product categories under license with some of the world’s best manufacturers, we saw incremental growth that proved that the customer was looking, and in some cases waiting for, Ben Sherman to deliver the right product for the right quality.”

Retail is also growing for Ben Sherman under Marquee

management, as well. Last year, the company broadened distribution for the Ben Sherman Kids collection, branching it out from its sole U.K. specialty availability to key North America retailers and built a presence on BenSherman.com. This year, the Ben Sherman brand has further expanded to Macy’s in the U.S., as well as close to 200 additional doors around the world including Myer in Australia and Debenhams in the U.K. It currently has 58 dedicated retail stores, and Marquee expects that footprint to double over the next several years.

But diversification is also a mandate for Marquee, which is where Body Glove fits in to the company’s growing portfolio.

A longtime outdoor sports brand, established in California in 1953, Body Glove ticked all the boxes for a high performing brand for the Marquee platform... except it wasn’t for sale.

As the story goes, says DeVirgilio, Marquee was doing a retail visit and happened to strike up a conversation about the Body Glove brand, to which the retailer offered to make an introduction to the Meistrell family, original founders of the company. Six or so months later, a deal was struck, but not before much discussion and trust building was established with the brand’s owners.

“We had to build up a confidence with the Meistrells that we would treat their brand as they would, since it’s a family brand with legacy,” he says.

The Meistrell family still remains a part of the brand, and, although Marquee’s headquarters are in New York City, it has established an office in Redondo Beach, Calif., to keep the brand close to its roots.

“Body Glove presents us with both the opportunity to and responsibility for Marquee to be stewards for the future of this American treasure,” says Baker. “Whether it’s the California vibe or the excitement of outdoor sports, Body Glove has never been beholden to styles and trends and remains an evergreen brand with its best years ahead.”

For Body Glove, a lifestyle brand that is 50 percent equipment, the plans are to continue what’s already been established on a larger scale.

“The family had done an exceptional job of bringing on partners in hard and soft goods, as well as global partners, and we see more opportunity,” says Baker.

Particularly in the Middle East, which Marquee says is ripe for active outdoor brands that focus on water sports and adventure, attributes that Body Glove certainly speaks to. Marquee is currently in talks with retailers about enhancing the brand’s retail footprint there, as well as in Europe. Currently, Body Glove operates more than 200 stores in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia.

Marquee also will continue to build “sleepers” categories for the brand, including women’s and children’s





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activewear and equipment, opening up new channels of distribution for both Body Glove as well as for Marquee.

“Diversification for us is more than just a category, it’s also about channel of distribution. While Bruno Magli certainly remains a luxury distribution for us, and Ben Sherman is more of a better department store/men’s distribution, Body Glove allows us to have new stores, new channels and new retail partners,” says Baker.

The most recent purchase for Marquee made headlines across the fashion world, BCBG Max Azria Group, which includes the brands BCBGMAXAZRIA, BCBGeneration and Herve Leger. In June, Marquee announced its intention to purchase the BCBG brand in a co-deal with one of the world’s largest licensees, Global Brands Group. Marquee will own all rights to the BCBG IP, while GBG will continue to market, promote, sell and distribute BCBG products and operate its wholesale business, select retail and its e-commerce platform. The move comes after BCBG filed for Chapter 11 reorganization in February. The brand is currently sold in more than 346 boutiques and shop-in-shops in the U.S., as well as 845 U.S. wholesale doors and can be found in 37 countries around the world.

“Every single retailer that we spoke with about the BCBG brand has been very clear in that it is an important piece of business for them,” says DeVirgilio. “We have been very excited about the support from retail that we have gotten for this brand.”

“The retailers know this brand’s value and know it is important to them, and it is certainly important to the customer,” says Baker. “Our research shows that customers are extremely loyal to the brand, coming back again and again. And while we still need some time to really understand what our overall strategy is going to be, I can tell you that from the outset that the BCBG Max Azria brand and the BCBGeneration brand are two very distinct customers, and we plan on doing a much better job of distinguishing that DNA from an aesthetic, a price point and a channel of distribution, so that we can ensure that the right customer is being approached with the right product.”

For BCBG and Marquee’s other owned brands, the

future is in growth of high-quality brands through licensing, and certainly at retail, whatever shape retail takes. And through Neuberger Berman and its global network, Marquee remains positioned to grow its access even further.

“With access to approximately 2,000 employees and a global footprint in more than 20 countries, Neuberger helps Marquee’s international focus,” says Zack Sigel, managing director, Neuberger Berman. “Having completed half our transactions to-date outside the U.S., and with nearly a 50/50 balance in domestic and foreign sales, Marquee is truly a globally focused licensing business. Additionally, Marquee is striving to differentiate ourselves by the types of brands we are acquiring. All of our brands have a strong history and heritage, a true brand identity and significant global growth potential. Finally, in a rapidly changing retail environment, our emphasis has been on a new type of licensing that is built around a true partnership between brand management, our licensees and our retailers. We are committed to investing in our brands and delivering a unique offering to retailers. We believe this is the best way to grow our licensees’ business and deliver an authentic experience to the customer.”

With so much ground covered in just three short years, much like the blue sky Baker sees for Bruno Magli, the same can be said for Marquee.

“What’s on deck for the future of Marquee is more of the same,” says Baker. “It’s ensuring that we use a licensing platform for what it’s meant to be used for, and that is ensuring that the best possible manufacturers are making the best possible products for the best possible brands. That’s the recipe for success for us. Whether it’s Ben Sherman, Bruno Magli, Body Glove or soon BCBG, it’s really the same recipe that we apply to each one.” ©



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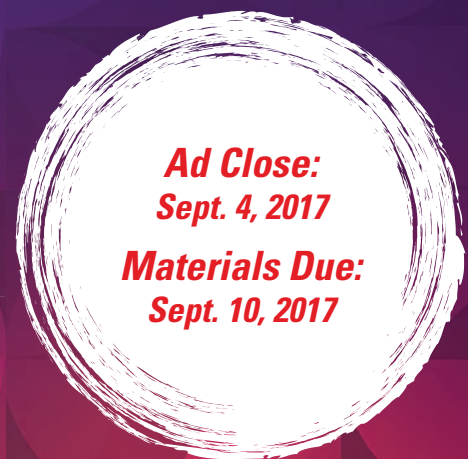
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THE WORLD OF BIOWORLD®

One of the globe's top licensees continues to deliver innovative products to a worldwide market.

by **AMANDA CIOLETTI**



RAJ MALIK
chief executive officer

In the world of licensed consumer products, you're only as strong as your partners. Enter Bioworld, a company with a lot of muscle.

Bioworld is a leader in licensed and branded apparel and accessories with the capabilities to elevate product manufacturing and distribution from a simple transactionary experience into a total brand story that helps keep the business of consumer products moving forward.

Bioworld was founded in Dallas, Texas, in the year 2000. Since, the company has grown its business from licensed headwear into 12 different product category divisions spanning men's, women's and kid's within apparel and accessories. This allows Bioworld to bring new successes to its partners in the evolving retail landscape on a narrowing global stage.

Headquartered in the U.S. with a presence in Europe, China, India and Canada, Bioworld's global presence has facilitated its growth through the strength of its products and the internal team that creates them.

"At Bioworld, we put together cohesive brand statements with every partner we work

with," says Raj Malik, chief executive officer, Bioworld. "Our multi-discipline talent is the high-performance engine of our business."

With more than 100 creatives on staff, Bioworld can devote a dedicated "brand ambassador" to not only each category, but also each brand partner, allowing the company to ensure that they are bringing the most complete and innovative product assortments to retail.

According to Bioworld, the brands that the company represents are leaders in their respective businesses. From major film studios like Warner Bros. and Disney to top gaming companies like Nintendo and Activision, Bioworld has one of the biggest license portfolios in the business.

"A combination of the right value, innovation and delivery has enabled us to be the preferred partner across every channel of distribution," Malik says.

A key factor in Bioworld's success is its retail relationships, something they have been building since the company's inception.

"I can confidently say that we have incredible partnerships at every level of retail, and we pride ourselves on those relationships," says Malik.

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Entering first into the specialty retail channel of distribution, Bioworld now has complete penetration through all tiers of retail.

“In the beginning, it was difficult to create a place for licensed accessories in the marketplace because none of the retailers had dedicated space,” recalls Malik. “It was the specialty stores that took a leap of faith that carried the licensed accessories business forward. Fast forward to 2017, and Bioworld now works with all of the top retailers in the industry.”

Bioworld says that its relationship with retail is only as strong as the company’s product development, and that is the true advantage it brings to market.

“We all know that retail is quite challenging and complex, so we have to be focused on innovation with every product we create,” says Malik. “We set very high standards in terms of the products that we take to market, and we make sure that each one is relevant to the retailer and consumer we are targeting.

“I look at it very simply: we have to convert on the customers that come to the stores. We have to offer products with the right combination of value and innovation,” Malik continues.

To that end, Bioworld is first-to-market in both translating trends to branded products and delivering technological product innovations, investing heavily into development and strengthening its supply chain.

“Innovation and systematic analysis are the DNA of our company,” says Malik. “We have a creative staff that is out in the field every day doing research all over the world at the ground level as well as in the retail marketplace. We are always looking for that next category that will be interesting at retail.”

Recently, the company launched a new licensed technology brand called Foundmi, which is a 3D molded character GPS key chain that uses an accompanying smart device app and proprietary software—the first licensed product of its kind in the market. Threadpixel is another example of Bioworld’s innovative approach to the technology sector. This is a patented 3D digital embroidery technique that “brings the graphics to life” on apparel. And these are just a couple examples of the many patented proprietary technologies Bioworld has in development. The

company is constantly rolling out products with new and fresh applications.

“We firmly believe in investing in technology, not only in product development, but also in our supply chain, logistics, data analysis, consumer behaviors, etc. We need to evolve as quickly as today’s ever-changing customer,” says Malik.

Bioworld is also in the midst of strengthening its presence in key global markets.

“In the eyes of the consumer, there are no territory boundaries,” says Malik. “Consumers are shopping the world to find the products they desire, and Bioworld is fulfilling this demand at the global level. We’re partnering with our retail partners (who have global businesses as well) and offering specific product lines to reach consumers around the world. We’ve worked hard to build an infrastructure that can support the specific demands of the global market. A key factor is our dedicated teams in each area.”

Bioworld has established offices in India, China, Canada and most recently the U.K., which Malik says allows the company to develop and strengthen its relationships with European retailers and learn more about the unique attributes and subtle nuances of the EMEA market. The company’s Canada and India offices similarly serve local markets, and through its logistics team in China, Bioworld has a shipping hub for the entire world.

Over the next several years as consumers and retail continue to evolve, Bioworld will remain committed to “disrupting the industry,” says Malik, by providing complete brand statements and through the combination of strategy and creative execution in every major market.

“We will continue to grow by building our portfolio of licensed brands, adding new categories and increasing our geographic and channel footprint,” he says.

But at the end of the day, what is most important to Bioworld is to remain authentic.

“Consumers today want more. They want their products to be unique, individualized and relevant themselves. Consumers today are looking to build relationships with the brands and products they purchase. They want experiences, not transactions,” says Malik.

“We pride ourselves on creating the right product for each brand partner we work with. If we’re not experts in the eyes of the true fans of the brands, we lose creditability.” ©



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* The 150 Leading Licensees report is a combination of reader surveys and *License Global* industry intelligence and covers all major categories. It is not intended to be a comprehensive industry survey.

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Categories: Accessories and intimate apparel



ABG Accessories

www.abgnyc.com

Jolene Cappadona, vice president, licensing

T: 908-558-1200 ext. 144

E: jolene@abgnyc.com

Categories: Headwear, cold weather accessories, rainwear, baby accessories and patented products featuring Stompeez and Flipeez

Founded in 1965 as Elegant Headwear by Julius Templer, the headwear and handwear manufacturer has today evolved to become ABG Accessories, with Templer's son, Joseph, at the helm.

ABG Accessories is a leader in its category for many reasons—design, quality and knowledge of the product based on its lengthy experience.

The company prides itself on making great products at a great price, and rises to the challenge of helping retailers meet their margins.

In addition to its many licensed ranges, ABG Accessories also looks to innovation to shore up its product offerings, including its patented brands Flipeez, Brelleez, Stompeez and more. Its on-trend products, designed by its in-house creative team, also help keep ABG ahead of the market.

The Betesh Group

www.beteshgroup.com

Categories: Homewares and electrics, bedding and accessories

Blues Clothing

www.blues-clothing.com

Categories: Outerwear, apparel, swimwear, nightwear and underwear

Blueprint Collections

www.blueprintcollections.co.uk

Category: Stationery

Caleres

www.caleres.com

Categories: Footwear

CandyRiffic

www.candyrific.com

Categories: Toys and games, novelties and confectionery

The Carat Shop

www.thecaratshop.co.uk

Categories: Jewelry and accessories

Card.com

www.card.com

Categories: Branded financial service programs

Cartamundi

www.cartamundi.com

Categories: Games

Ceaco

www.ceaco.com

Categories: Toys and games, novelties and puzzles

Centum Books

www.centumbooksltd.co.uk

Categories: Publishing

Changes

www.changesonline.com

Categories: Apparel

Character Options

www.character-online.com

Categories: Toys and collectibles

Bioworld Merchandising

www.bioworldcorp.com

Jennifer Staley, vice president, licensing

T: 888-831-2138

E: jennifers@bioworldmerch.com

Categories: Men's, junior's and youth apparel; headwear; sleepwear; small accessories; socks; bags; Internet of Things (technology); jewelry; and casual footwear

Bioworld Merchandising is one of the industry leaders of licensed merchandise for some of the biggest entertainment brands in the world. It is one of the most trusted partners in the industry, relied upon to bring its brand partners new success. Bioworld specializes in the brand management, design, sale and distribution of the world's greatest brands.

Brand partners are looking to generate excitement, reach and build momentum with their brands across the apparel and accessory categories, and they trust Bioworld to be that partner. Bioworld tells a complete story from head to toe across men's, women's and kids, covering 12 different product categories, from apparel to accessories.

Bioworld sets a high standard for the industry in terms of product quality and differentiation. Every product should be exactly what the consumer expects. Its products are authentic interpretations of the brands fans love.

In the eyes of the consumer, there are no territory boundaries. Consumers are shopping the world to find the products they desire, and Bioworld is fulfilling this demand at the global level. Its infrastructure allows Bioworld to offer specific product lines to retailers in the U.S., Canada, EMEA, Asia and Latin America.

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www.bioworldcorp.com



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(Email) HPD@moret.com • (Website) www.moret.com

Character World

www.characterworld.com

Categories: Home textiles and bedding

Children's Apparel Network

www.childrensapparelnetwork.com

Categories: Children's and infant apparel

Cooneen by Design

www.cooneenbydesign.com

Categories: Nightwear and underwear

Corsair International

www.corsair.co.uk

Categories: Health and beauty

Coty

www.coty.com

Categories: Health and beauty

Crocs

www.crocs.com

Categories: Footwear

Cudlie Accessories

www.cudlieny.com

Categories: Infant and toddler apparel, accessories, hard and soft goods

Cryptozoic Entertainment

www.cryptozoic.com

Categories: Games, collectibles and novelties

Danilo Promotions

www.danilo.com

Categories: Greeting cards and calendars

Dark Horse Comics

www.darkhorse.com

Categories: Publishing

DecoPac

www.decopac.com

Categories: Confectionery décor

Delta Children's Products

www.deltachildren.com

Categories: Furniture and baby gear

Disguise

www.disguise.com

Categories: Costumes and accessories

Egmont U.K.

www.egmont.co.uk

Categories: Publishing

Concept One Accessories

www.concept1.com

Bernie Hafif, vice president, licensing and acquisitions

T: 212-868-2590 ext. 111

E: bernie@concept1.com

Categories: Accessories including headwear, cold weather accessories, luggage, bags, belts, wallets, pins, patches, buttons and lanyards

Concept One Accessories is a premier resource for licensed fashion and entertainment accessories. Its well-rounded portfolio and expansive product offering establish Concept One as the go-to resource for accessories across all channels of distribution.

Concept One holds licenses with top licensors and leading brands including Disney, Warner Bros., Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network,

Twentieth Century Fox, Ubisoft, Sony, Activision, SEGA, Bungie, Microsoft, Budweiser, Corona, Ford, Chevy, Coca-Cola, Mountain Dew, Sean John, FUL, RBX, U.S. Polo Association, Van Heusen, Izod, Macbeth Collection and more.



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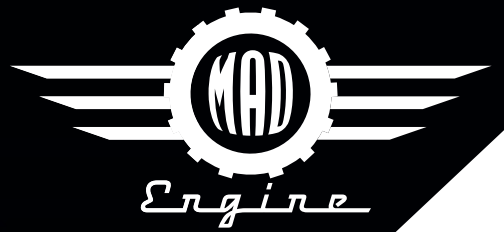
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FOR SALES INQUIRIES: [INFO@MADENGINE.COM](mailto:info@madengine.com)



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FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT OUR VP SALES TRAVIS MATSDORF: TRAVIS@NEFFHEADWEAR.COM
FOR MARKETING INQUIRIES CONTACT VP MARKETING CHIP NEFF: CHIP@NEFFHEADWEAR.COM



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LRG is a branded division of Mad Engine. For Sales Inquiries: Lauren.Dipaola@L-R-G.com

Electronic Arts

www.ea.com

Categories: Video games

Elope

www.elope.com

Categories: Apparel, accessories and costumes

Essential Brands

www.essentialbrands.com

Categories: Apparel, accessories, homewares and private label programs

Fantasia Accessories

www.fantasia.com

Categories: Handbags and accessories

Fashions U.K.

www.fashions-uk.com

Categories: Apparel and footwear

Fast Forward

www.fastforwardny.com

Categories: Backpacks, lunch kits, beverage bottles, handbags, luggage, accessories, small leather goods and stationery

Fifth Sun

www.fifthsun.com

Categories: Apparel

Fisher-Price

www.fisher-price.com

Categories: Baby gear, toys and games

Forever Collectibles

www.forevercollectibles.com

Categories: Accessories, toys and gifting

FAB Starpoint

www.fabny.com

James Stocker, senior vice president, licensing

T: 212-947-9001 ext. 167

E: james.stocker@fabny.com

Categories: Handbags, backpacks, luggage, stationery, gifting, homewares and cold weather accessories

FAB Starpoint, a division of FAB NY, focuses on categories such as back-to-school, luggage and travel,

handbags, cold weather, gifts and home décor geared toward the youth and adult accessory markets.

The company has built partnerships with all major licensors including Hello Kitty, Disney, Marvel, Lucasfilm, Nickelodeon, Hasbro, Pokémon, Warner Bros. and many others.

FAB's brands include Mojo Life, which is a backpack brand inspired by music, fashion and pop culture, that was launched in 2011. Since, Mojo Life has partnered with some of the industry's top properties to launch a back-to-college collection of co-brands with properties such as *Deadpool*, "Pac-Man" and "SpongeBob," to name a few. Other FAB proprietary brands include Canada Weather Gear, an all-weather, performance and utility backpack brand; and dELiA*s Girl, which is marketed to upscale tweens.

In 2010, FAB founder Steve Russo launched the Danielle Nicole brand alongside its founder and creative director, Danielle DiFerdinando. The line caters to a price conscious contemporary consumer with key price points ranging from \$68–\$199. In 2016, FAB and Danielle Nicole partnered with Disney's Princess franchise to create a co-branded line that appeals to the nostalgic and whimsical side of the contemporary consumer. The line currently sells at retailers such as TopShop, Asos, HSN, Bloomingdale's, Nordstrom, Fred Segal and more. As a follow up, a capsule collection, "Rugrats" by Danielle Nicole, will be released this month, with more co-branding opportunities to come.





PRESENTS

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A Division of Elegant Headwear Co., Inc.
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STOMPEEZ.com
Info@ABGNVC.com

Franco Manufacturing

www.franco-mfg.com

Categories: Homewares and bedding

Freeze

www.freeze-showroom.com

Categories: Apparel

Funko

www.funko.com

Categories: Collectibles, novelties and apparel

GB Eye

www.gbeye.com

Categories: Posters and gifting

Giochi Preziosi

www.giochipreziosi.it

Categories: Toys and games

Global Brands Group

www.globalbrandsgroup.com

Categories: Apparel, accessories, footwear, health and beauty and more

Golden Bear Toys

www.goldenbeartoys.com

Categories: Toys

Golden West Food Group

www.gwfg.com

Categories: Food and beverage

Grosvenor Consumer Products

www.grosvenor.eu.com

Categories: Health and beauty

Hallmark

www.hallmark.com

Categories: Gifting, homewares, special occasion and stationery

Hasbro

www.hasbro.com

Categories: Toys and games

Her Universe

www.heruniverse.com

Categories: Apparel, accessories and homewares

High IntenCity

www.highintencity.com

Categories: Accessories

High Point Design

www.moret.com

Morris Chehebar, vice president, sales and licensing

T: 646-484-3848

E: mchehebar@moret.com

Categories: Hosiery, including socks, novelty socks, knee-high socks, boot socks, athletic socks, tights, leggings, leg warmers, slipper socks, Fuzzy Babbas and more

For nearly 40 years, High Point Design, a division of The Moret Group, has serviced hosiery buyers throughout North America with best-in-class products, capitalizing on its proprietary innovations.

With a dedicated team of in-house professionals that include merchandisers, account specialists and retail planners, High Point services its key retail relationships with unmatched execution and program management.

High Point Design shops the globe bi-annually, seeking out new fashion trends in the women's, men's, boys' and girls' categories, developing market reports for each that are custom tailored for its retail partners.

Within High Point Design's portfolio are many of the country's top entertainment licenses, which the licensee brings to life through its creativity, fashion intelligence and deep research to establish the DNA of the license, which particularly shines in the company's licensed character segment of the business.

As a division of The Moret Group, and with headquarters in New York City's fashion garment district, High Point Design is a nimble company backed by the stability of, and access to, the infrastructure of a very large corporation.





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Hot Toys

www.hottoys.com.hk

Categories: Gifting and collectibles

Huffy

www.huffybikes.com

Categories: Bicycles

Hybrid

www.hybridapparel.com

Categories: Apparel and accessories

IDW Publishing

www.idwpublishing.com

Categories: Publishing

Innovative Designs

www.innovativenyc.com

Categories: Stationery and arts and crafts

Isaac Morris Limited

www.isaacmorris.com

Categories: Apparel and accessories

Jakks Pacific

www.jakks.com

Categories: Toys and games

Jay Franco and Sons

www.jfranco.com

Categories: Homewares and bedding

Jazwares

www.jazwares.com

Categories: Toys and games and novelties

Jellifish Kids

www.jellifishkids.com

Categories: Apparel, toys and gaming

Jelsert

www.jelsert.com

Categories: Food and beverage

J!nx

www.jinx.com

Categories: Apparel and accessories

Just Funky

www.justfunky.com

Categories: Homewares and novelties

Kaufmann Export

www.kaufmann-neuheiten.de

Categories: Automotive accessories

KeepMe Group

www.keeptmegroup.com

Categories: Health and beauty

Kids II

www.kidsii.com

Categories: Baby gear and toys

KidzTech Toys Manufacturing

www.kidztech.net

Categories: Toys and games and novelties

Kinnerton Confectionery

www.kinnerton.com

Categories: Confectionery

Kurt S. Adler

www.kurtadler.com

Categories: Holiday décor

LEGO

www.lego.com

Categories: Toys and games

Leomil Group

www.leomilgroup.com

Categories: Footwear

Majesty Brands

www.majestybrands.com

Categories: Accessories

Mattel

www.play.mattel.com

Categories: Toys and games

Merlin Entertainment

www.merlinentertainments.biz

Categories: Toys and games, novelties, leisure entertainment and live entertainment

Mezco

www.mezcotoyz.com

Categories: Collectibles and novelties

McFarlane Toys

www.mcfarlane.com

Categories: Collectibles, novelties, toys and publishing

Millennium Apparel Group

www.magbrands.com

Categories: Apparel

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www.falltoypreview.org

Misirli

www.misirli.co.uk

Categories: Nightwear, underwear, socks and hosiery

MiWorld Accessories

www.miworldaccessories.com

Categories: Apparel, health and beauty, FMCG and gifting

MJC International

www.gomjc.com

Categories: Apparel, sleepwear, underwear and loungewear

Monogram International

www.monogramdirect.com

Categories: Accessories, gifting, collectibles, homewares, stationery, toys and games and novelties

NECA

www.necaonline.com

Categories: Toys and games and novelties

Neon Tuesday

www.neontuesday.com

Categories: Apparel and accessories

New Era Cap

www.neweracap.com

Categories: Accessories and hats

New York Accessory Group

www.nyagroup.com

Categories: Apparel, accessories and health and beauty

The Northwest Company

www.thenorthwest.com

Categories: Home textiles

Nouveau Eyewear

www.nouveaueyewear.com

Categories: Accessories



Mad Engine

www.madengine.com

Lorne Bloch, vice president, licensing

T: 858-525-1096

E: lorne@madengine.com

Categories: Men's, junior's, boy's, girl's, toddler and infant accessories, loungewear and licensed and private label apparel

Founded in 1987, Mad Engine is celebrating 30 years in 2017. In its three decades, the company has grown into one of the leading licensed apparel wholesalers in the world.

Mad Engine's footprint spans the globe, with multiple locations dedicated to customer service, manufacturing, distribution and quality assurance.

As a vertical operation, Mad Engine is well equipped to meet the needs of every customer, from independent boutiques to mass market retailers. With an ever-expanding roster of more than 150 licenses and a talented team of artists and designers, Mad Engine strives to deliver innovative product in every category to thousands of customers throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Mad Engine recently acquired Lifted Research Group and Neff. These acquisitions mark Mad Engine's entry into the branded apparel arena.

NTD Apparel

www.ntdapparel.com

Categories: Apparel and accessories

Olaes Enterprises

www.odmart.com

Categories: Apparel

Paul Dennicci

www.dennicci.co.uk

Categories: Apparel

Parragon

www.parragon.com

Categories: Publishing

Penguin Random House

www.penguinrandomhouse.com

Categories: Publishing

Ping Solutions

www.pingsolutions.com

Categories: Food and beverage

Planet Sox (A division of Global Brands Group)

www.planetsox.com

Categories: Hosiery

Playmates Toys

www.playmatestoys.com

Categories: Toys

Pro & Pacific Co.

www.propacific-toys.com.tw

Categories: Toys

Provaliant

www.provaliantgroup.com

Categories: Gifting, collectibles, toys and games and novelties

Pyramid International

www.pyramidinternational.com

Categories: Posters, calendars and stationery

Ravensburger

www.ravensburger.us

Categories: Puzzles, games and arts and crafts

Ripple Junction

www.store.ripplejunction.com

Scott Andersen, vice president

T: 513-559-3900

E: scott@ripplejunction.com

Categories: Men's and junior's t-shirts, fleece, cut-and-sew apparel, headwear, socks, bags and small accessories

Twenty-five years ago, two dudes at a Grateful Dead show were listening to the band perform "Ripple," when one said to the other: "If we create some great t-shirts, we can probably earn enough to travel with the band for a while."

And thus, the pop-culture-obsessed juggernaut known as Ripple Junction was born. What started as an idea at a Dead show has, over the last 25 years, grown into one of the premier licensees, manufacturers and retailers of officially licensed apparel. Playing fair with licensors and retailers has allowed the company to expand its license portfolio to include hundreds of brands from the film, music, games and TV categories. A small sample of recent Ripple Junction property favorites include "Bob's Burgers," "Rick and Morty," "Riverdale," "Doctor Who," WWE and a host of anime shows and comics.

As its business has grown over the years, so have its product offerings. It launched with shirts, but now Ripple Junction has added jackets, fleece, cut-and-sew apparel, hats, pins, socks and mugs to its product portfolio. And the offering will only continue to grow over the years to come as it fulfills its commitment to constantly bring joy to pop culture fans.

Always looking to the future, Ripple Junction is positioning itself to lead the officially licensed apparel business from the front, pioneering new ways to delight both B2B and B2C customers as it continues to be the supplier of products that WOW!



Roy Lowe & Sons

www.roylowe.co.uk

Categories: Apparel

Rubie's Costume Co.

www.rubies.com

Categories: Costumes and accessories

Safilo

www.safilogroup.com

Categories: Eyewear

Sahinler

www.sahinler.fr

Categories: Apparel, accessories and homewares

SAVVi

www.savvistuff.com

Categories: Stationery and novelties

Scholastic

www.scholastic.com

Categories: Publishing

Sentiments

www.sentimentsinc.us

Categories: Home textile and pet products including beds, toys, and feeders for dogs and cats.

SG Companies

www.thesgcompanies.com

Categories: Apparel and footwear

SHR Jewelry Group

www.shrjewelrygroup.com

Categories: Accessories

Sakar International

www.sakar.com; www.vivitar.com

**Liza Abrams, senior vice president,
global licensing and marketing**

T: 732-248-1306

E: labrams@sakar.com

Categories: Youth electronics, health and wellness/grooming, optics, digital imaging, audio/mobile accessories, karaoke and musical instruments



Sakar International is a leading provider of consumer electronics and accessories. Founded in 1977, Sakar's core categories include audio and mobile accessories, digital imaging and optics, karaoke, youth electronics, musical instruments and health and wellness. Sakar also owns several brands including Vivitar and Altec Lansing, both of which are distributed globally.

Sakar has a broad portfolio of licenses on the youth entertainment side including all of the major studios and global toy companies across their brands as well as newer licensors, lifestyle kids' brands and adult corporate and consumer electronics brands. Some of newer licensed lines the company will be launching this year include *LEGO Ninjago*, Hatchimals, "Beat Bugs" and Discovery Kids, to name just a few.

Sakar's strength is in its inventory power, global reach, deep distribution networks, brand portfolio and consumer electronics category assortment, as well as its award-winning packaging and display innovations. The company is also known for being nimble, for its speed to market, and for providing value and great quality to its customers.

With headquarters in Edison, N.J., showrooms in New York City and offices around the world, Sakar is truly global. Its product managers and key creatives travel constantly, attending trade shows, shopping retailers around the world and following fashions to ensure that its products, technologies, packaging and displays are on-trend.

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Sideshow Collectibles

www.sideshowtoy.com

Categories: Collectibles and novelties

Spray Ground

www.sprayground.com

Categories: Accessories

Stor

www.storline.es

Categories: Homewares

TCG Toys

www.tcgtoys.com

Categories: Toys and games and novelties

Thermos

www.thermos.com

Categories: Homewares

Time 100

www.time100.cn

Categories: Apparel and accessories

Silver Buffalo

www.silver-buffalo.com

Greg Alprin, executive vice president

T: 212-268-4754

E: galprin@silver-buffalo.com

Categories: Drinkware, hydration, tabletop dinnerware, barware, sports bottles, coffee accessories, melamine, throws, canvas wall art, wood wall art, metal and tin wall art, wall wobblers, key rings, lanyards, buttons, magnets, journals, notebooks and note pads

Born in 2006, Silver Buffalo is a trend-setting manufacturer and distributor of licensed home décor and housewares.

Silver Buffalo is a creative think tank working in collaboration with some of the world's top entertainment companies and most recognized consumer brands to develop unique, creative and ground-breaking products.

Its team prides itself on innovating exciting product that connects with the child or fan in all of us to bring memories to life.

Silver Buffalo's products can be found at national retail stores, online or at independent specialty stores nationwide.

Partnerships include Twentieth Century Fox, Anheuser-Busch, Gruppo Campari, Campbell's, DC Comics, Disney, DreamWorks, Ford, General Motors, Live Nation, Lucasfilm, Marvel, Mattel, Miramax, Nickelodeon, Paramount Pictures, Pepsi, The Pokémon Company, Sanrio, Sazerac, Smithsonian, Sony Pictures, Universal, Warner Bros. and World Wrestling Entertainment.

Highlight properties include *Harry Potter*, *Star Wars*, Disney Princess, DC Comics, Pokémon, Hello Kitty, *Despicable Me*, *Trolls*, "Rugrats," "Ren & Stimpy," "Hey Arnold!," *Justice League*, *Wonder Woman*, "Paw Patrol," "Looney Tunes," *Lilo & Stitch*, "Scooby Doo," "Kingdom Hearts," *Spider-Man*, JoJo Siwa, Marilyn Monroe, *Nightmare Before Christmas*, Gudetama, Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, WWE, *Anchorman*, *Mean Girls*, *Clueless*, *Jaws*, *Bad Santa*, *A Christmas Story*, *A Christmas Vacation*, *Elf*, *Chucky*, *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween*, *Hellraiser*, *Scream*, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Pulp Fiction*, *Clerks*, *The Godfather*, Budweiser, Bud Light, Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Fireball, Wild Turkey, Nirvana, AC/DC, Wu Tang Clan, Foo Fighters, Notorious BIG, Sublime, Kiss, Def Leppard and The Beastie Boys.





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Trevco

www.trevcoinc.com

Trevor George, president

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E: tgeorge@trevcoinc.com

Categories: Apparel, homewares, wall art and accessories

Trevco was founded in 1990 as a manufacturer and distributor of licensed apparel and home items. It sells across all channels of retail including direct-to-consumer through its dedicated retail site Popfunk.com, as well as on Amazon.com, where Trevco is the 1,000th largest seller in the world and growing, and most recently Walmart.

Trevco is an expert at on-demand printing using digital and sublimation technology and has been using the platform since 2006. It currently offers more than 25,000 designs across 700 properties from 80 licensors. Trevco call this its “Long Tail” business model, which refers to the economics of abundance—instead of a limited selection offered by brick-and-mortar retailers, Trevco is able to offer an endless variety of choices for unlimited tastes.

Trevco can print small orders, one piece at a time through its on-demand fulfillment, or print large orders using traditional screen printing—it never has to say “no” to an order, greatly increasing the potential for sales, and by extension royalties. Licensors recognize the value this unique business model presents to them, and that’s why today Trevco Sportswear holds rights to more properties than almost anyone in the business.



Titan Books

www.titanbooks.com

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TOEI ANIMATION

A look into how Toei Animation is developing its North American licensing programs for anime franchises “Dragon Ball,” “Sailor Moon,” “One Piece” and “Digimon.”

by ERICA GARBER

Over the course of two decades, a diverse range of anime properties have not only dominated the Japanese marketplace, but have invaded North America. As these new series have been introduced to consumers throughout the U.S. and Canada, companies like Toei Animation have cashed in on the genre’s popularity and the evergreen appeal of its own anime franchises, for which the company has in turn debuted a raft of merchandising programs that coincide with rebooted series and anniversary milestones.

Kicking off Toei Animation’s diverse North America lineup is “Dragon Ball,” which was first introduced as a manga series in 1984. Today, the anime franchise boasts 670 episodes and 20 movies. “Dragon Ball” follows the adventures of Goku from childhood through adulthood as he trains in martial arts and explores the world in search of the seven orbs, known as the Dragon Balls.

Most recently, Toei Animation has launched “Dragon Ball Super,” the first new story arc in 18 years for the franchise. The new series follows the aftermath of Goku’s battle with Majin Buu as he attempts to maintain Earth’s fragile peace.

The new series is currently airing on Adult Swim in the U.S. and is now the top-rated show on the network.

In addition to the anime franchise’s master toy partner Bandai (which will be launching its new “Dragon Ball Super” toy line this fall), Toei Animation has secured a robust assortment of licensing partners in 2017 to further extend the franchise.

On the apparel front, the company has signed Bioworld, JCorp and Great Eastern Entertainment for



new merchandise collections. Through the agreements, Bioworld has developed a line of apparel and accessories including t-shirts, tops, bottoms, skirts, dresses, leggings, sweaters, hoodies, vests, jackets, athleisure, novelty apparel and more for “Dragon Ball Super” and “Dragon Ball Z.”

Meanwhile, JCorp, a Canadian-based supplier, will launch a collection of “Dragon Ball Z”-themed apparel, and Great Eastern Entertainment has signed on to create branded apparel collections for “Dragon Ball Super” and “Dragon Ball Z,” with products ranging from t-shirts and tank tops to pajama onesies and lounge pants, among other apparel items.

Other new licensees include:

- Everything Legwear for socks;
- Fun.com for Halloween costumes;
- Just Funky for auto accessories, home décor, game table sets, blankets, kitchenware, cookware and drinkware;
- Surreal Entertainment for home goods, auto accessories, coin banks, game dice and desktop accessories;
- Rabbit Tanaka for wall décor, lighting, clocks, dart boards, pool cue sticks and banks;
- Trends International for posters;
- Calendar Holdings for calendars;



- DigitalSoaps for “Dragon Ball Z”-themed soaps;
- IDW Publishing for tile-laying and dice games;
- Funko for Pop! Vinyl figures; and
- Just Toys for plush clips, plush figures and mini posters.

Additionally, at the recent Electronic Entertainment Expo, which took place June 13-15, Bandai Namco Entertainment announced a new video game based on the “Dragon Ball” franchise, titled “Dragon Ball Fighter Z.” The new game, developed by Arc Systems Works, combines classic 2D fighting visuals with 3D character models. Within the game, players will train and master various characters in order to participate in a host of three-on-three battles.

The “Dragon Ball” franchise is continually expanding within the North American market, and Toei Animation is still seeking additional mass market partners to further secure its presence in the region.

“Due to its unmitigated success and global reach, the ‘Dragon Ball’ franchise transcends conventional demographics and has fans from both genders and of all ages,” says Lisa Yamatoya, senior manager, film and merchandising, Toei Animation. “From die-hard collectors to a whole new generation of young fans who discover it for the first time, this evergreen property is sure to be as successful in the next 30 years as it was in the first.”

In addition to “Dragon Ball,” Toei Animation’s roster currently includes many anime brands that have amassed significant fans in the past several decades and are experiencing renewed appeal in North America due to reboots, new episodes and the ongoing trend toward ‘90s nostalgia. These include “One Piece,” “Sailor Moon” and “Digimon.”

“One Piece” first aired in Japan in 1999 and is still airing today with nearly 800 episodes. Following its success in Japan, the TV property was released in the U.S. in 2004. The series follows the adventures of Luffy, who gains the properties of rubber after eating a Devil Fruit, and his crew, named the Straw Hat Pirates, as they explore the Grand Line for the world’s ultimate treasure—the One Piece.

According to Jennifer Yang, senior manager of licensing at Toei Animation, “One Piece” is experiencing a resurgence thanks to recently released un-edited versions of the series airing now on U.S. streaming services, which has proven to be very popular among fans. (Previously, the pirate-themed show was considered too violent for the North American kids’ market and only edited episodes were broadcast on children’s channels.

Un-edited versions of the series were broadcast on



Adult Swim, Cartoon Network’s adult-oriented programming block.)

Current licensees on board to support “One Piece” in North America include Great Eastern Entertainment (multiple categories), Bandai Namco (games) and Funko (figures), among many others. Toei Animation is currently seeking to expand the property into a raft of soft and hard good categories.

In the upcoming year, the company will continue to focus on the property with new English-dubbed episodes as well as promotions at conventions.

Another major anime property for Toei Animation, “Sailor Moon,” began airing in Japan in the early ‘90s and in the U.S. later in the decade. The series follows the adventures of a young schoolgirl as she transforms into the titular character to lead her comrades (the Sailor Soldiers) in battles against villains to prevent the destruction of the universe. Toei Animation also produced “Sailor Moon Crystal,” which was released to commemorate the original series’ 20th anniversary and served as a more faithful adaptation of the manga series on which the animation was based.

Select partners for the “Sailor Moon” franchise include Hybrid Apparel (apparel), Great Eastern Entertainment (multiple categories), Everything Legwear (socks), Accutime (watches), Monogram (key chains), Funko (figures), Just Funky (drinkware), Infinifan (watches), E-Pop (accessories) and more.

In the upcoming year, Toei Animation will work on securing licensing partners in the makeup and underwear categories, as well as promoting the series at conventions. Additionally, the second “Sailor Moon S”-inspired movie will be released with English dubbing soon, which Yang says she hopes will help drive even more promotional, merchandising and retail opportunities for the brand.

Finally, “Digimon Adventure” began airing in 1999 and focuses on the Digimon creatures, which are monsters who live in a parallel universe that originated from Earth’s various communication networks. The Digimon are raised by humans, which they team up with to defeat evil Digimon and human villains that are trying to destroy the digital world. Most recently, Toei Animation has released a theatrical series, called *Digimon Adventure Tri*, which serves as a sequel to the first season of “Digimon Adventure.”

For “Digimon,” Toei Animation has tapped licensees like Bioworld (apparel), Zag Toys (figures and plush), Squishable (plush), Just Funky (drinkware) and Bandai Namco (video games), among others. However, Toei Animation only recently began to license out the classic “Digimon” series and is currently looking at opportunities across a variety of categories. ©

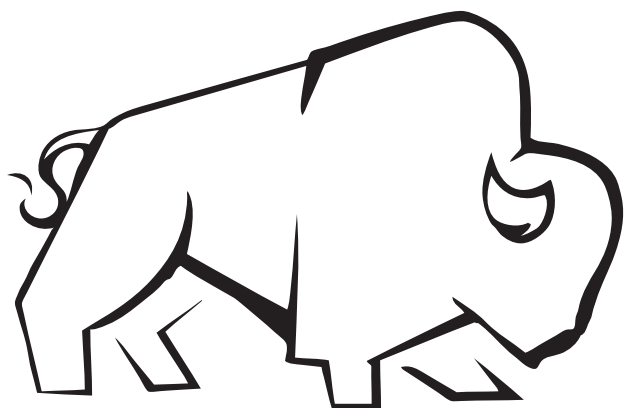


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A UNIQUE BREED

Silver Buffalo's focus on product innovation and trend-driven design helps it stand out among homewares licensees.

by NICOLE SILBERSTEIN

Hard goods licensee Silver Buffalo has seen exponential growth in the last five years, and according to co-founder and executive vice president Greg Alprin, it's all because of one thing—innovation.

“We really push the limits. We don't just do easy things, we don't just work within style guides,” says Alprin. “We invest heavily in design to make our products stand out, so when someone sees them, they speak to them.”

That spirit of innovation and invention has helped the company grow from a niche, male-oriented, specialty manufacturer into one of the largest makers of licensed drinkware and home décor in the U.S. market, with retail accounts ranging from Walmart to Spencer's and Amazon.

Alprin launched the company in 2003, alongside owner and president Eric Silver, with a focus on the men's gifting market. But Silver and Alprin quickly saw an opportunity in entertainment-based gifting for teens and young adults.

“At that time, most of the character stuff you saw was either geared toward children or higher-end collectibles,” Alprin explains. “We felt that there was this big, wide-open white space in taking entertainment licenses, but designing them to appeal to an older high school kid or recent college grad. Our strength was really in our design and capturing a market that we felt wasn't being catered to at all.”

In 2007, Alprin and Silver spun off the company, which at that time was operating as a division of the China-based

JWE, and re-launched it as a standalone business under the new name Silver Buffalo. And the rest, as they say, is history.

That nimble attitude—being able to pivot and capitalize on trends—is a core component of Silver Buffalo's DNA. In fact, even though the company operates in the hard goods space, their approach to design and product launches is more akin to that of a fashion company.

“We don't really look at ourselves as a hard goods company, even though everything we make typically is within décor or tabletop,” says Alprin. “We look at current trends, and we take the approach of a high street designer, every season we have to top ourselves.”

Silver Buffalo's current product portfolio consists of drinkware (making up about 60 percent) and wall décor, but within that crowded space they work hard to make sure their product is different.

“If we want to launch a new line of plastics, we develop those silhouettes ourselves. We're not just going out to factories and taking what they're making and throwing our art on it. In many cases, we literally design that product from scratch. What we feel is the way to longevity, and really what has led our business, is our innovation in product and not just being a 'me too,’” says Alprin.

A recent example of this is the company's line of stainless steel drinkware at Walmart. Silver Buffalo worked with the retailer to develop a unique product from the bottom, up, with a proprietary design owned



GREG ALPRIN
executive vice president

mipjunior

25
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jointly by Walmart and Silver Buffalo. The first range was so successful, they ended up adding two more products to the line, now on shelves across the U.S.

Alprin also points to the company's line of heat-reveal ceramic mugs as another example of how Silver Buffalo pushes the envelope.

"Heat-reveal ceramic mugs have been in the market for probably 20 years, but they've always been done one certain way, which to me just looked kind of goofy," says Alprin. "I would never spend the time developing something I feel is goofy, so I looked at how we could do it better. I worked very closely with our factories, throwing out crazy ideas, and we tossed that around until we got to a place that was achievable. And we now have, by far, the best heat-reveal ceramic mugs in the market. It's recognized across the board, and retailers are coming to us, asking us to make their proprietary heat-reveals mugs, because ours just flat-out stand out above the rest. That's the way we've continually grown our business."

As far as current trends in the marketplace, Silver Buffalo is right where it needs to be. Not only does



it boast some of the hottest licenses of the moment—from Marvel's superheroes to leading adult brands like Budweiser to nostalgic music brands like Sublime and Wu-Tang—but it is also well positioned to capitalize on the growing eco-consciousness of consumers. The reusable water bottle market is expected to grow 4.2 percent in the next five years, potentially reaching more than \$10 billion by 2024, according to Transparency Market Research.

But Silver Buffalo isn't resting on its laurels while its market grows. In addition to continually pushing on the product development front and working hard to maintain its valued retail partnerships, the licensee does a lot of work to promote its products directly to consumers once they're on shelf, primarily through social media.

"Social media is an instantaneous vehicle to promote anything," says Alprin. "In years past, if you wanted to get coverage of your product, you had to rely on print media and only the very lucky people with big bank accounts could go out with a product on television. Nowadays, with influencers and celebrity product placement, or TV and film product placement, you can reach far more people instantaneously than you ever could in print media, advertising or on television."

To Alprin, this kind of influencer-based marketing is a necessity for any manufacturer in today's market, and yet another example of how Silver Buffalo remains relevant and successful amidst today's tough retail landscape.

"This just goes back to innovation. It's not just product innovation, it's innovation in all areas from media development to retail," he says. "You can't just sit back and act like it's 1993. If you want to be successful, you have to change with the times, otherwise you're going to get left behind."

That seems unlikely to happen to a company that has proven its agility and responsiveness time and time again over the past 15 years.

"To be a leader, you have to be an innovator," reiterates Alprin. "We don't stop innovating. We are constantly pushing the lines of what is possible." ©





HOW AUTHENTICATION *Labels Can Save You*

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