

# Catch of the Day

A sea of niche categories keeps plush fresh for today's kids

## Toys Only Gift Buyers See

WHAT DO RICH FROG INDUSTRIES, Jack Rabbit Creations, Petra Toys and Noted\* have in common? For starters, they won't be exhibiting at a Toy Fair near you, though each of these distributors offers a wide variety of irresistible and mostly handcrafted playthings—from wooden toys to plush to paper crafts and beyond—that can enhance any toy store's selection. Each company, instead, focuses its trade outreach on the gift market, where museum and gift...



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# Ones to Watch

Popular gift companies court toy retailers

By Karyn M. Peterson

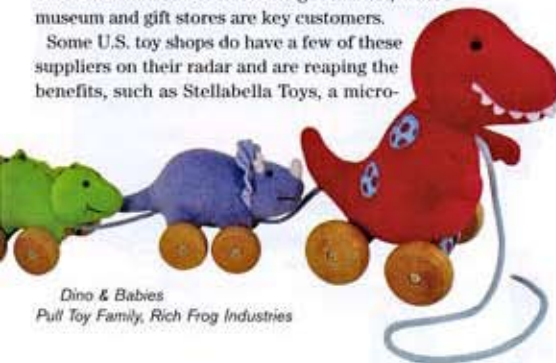
What do Rich Frog Industries, Jack Rabbit Creations, Petra Toys and Noted\* have in common? For starters, they won't be exhibiting at a Toy Fair near you, though each of these distributors offers a wide variety of irresistible and mostly handcrafted playthings—from wooden toys to plush to paper crafts and beyond—that can enhance any toy store's selection. Each company, instead, focuses its trade outreach on the gift market, where museum and gift stores are key customers.

Some U.S. toy shops do have a few of these suppliers on their radar and are reaping the benefits, such as Stellabella Toys, a micro-

### All in the family

Both Rich Frog and Jack Rabbit began in the mid-1990s as little companies created by husband and wife teams, run with the help of family members and friends according to mission statements that guide them to this day, even as each has expanded.

"Rich Frog Industries was established in 1994 by Sarah and Maarten van Ryckevorsel," director of marketing John Gallagher tells PLAYTHINGS. He says Sarah and Maarten's shared love of art and good design (she is an artist, he holds a masters degree in art history) "is apparent in every product we make" though the driving force is "all about kids... The first question is always, What would a child enjoy?" he says. "As childhood seems to be getting shorter and kids are growing up faster, we want to make well designed, quality toys that kids can love and play with throughout their early years." Rich Frog's hot products include the new Gone Fishin' Tub Game (floating terrycloth sea or river critters with a foam-filled fishing pole) and plush stacking toys, while fast movers at toy shops are interactive items (plush-and-wooden pull toys, wind-up toys and the plush My First Cell Phone) as well as mini plush.



Dino & Babies  
Pull Toy Family, Rich Frog Industries

chain of two stores in Cambridge, Mass., which has products both from Rich Frog, Burlington, Vt., and the Atlanta-based Jack Rabbit Creations. "One of the reasons why I like them is they allow us to bring some of that gift mentality to the floor, which is hard to do," says Stellabella owner Rick Henry of the companies. "They package their things so well that we're able to get them out on a toy floor and they don't get lost."