

Retro games: Why the younger generation are embracing vintage toys

Toys and games that were once popular in the 80s and 90s are back in vogue, with Aussie parents embracing the chance to recapture their childhood with the next generation.

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What's old is new again.

In a retro throwback, parents are buying their kids the toys and games that defined their own childhoods.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (TMNT), Cabbage Patch dolls, My Little Ponies, Monopoly and Trolls are all back in vogue, thanks to a nostalgic cycle experts say rolls around every 15-20 years.

The success of movie franchises is also fuelling the historic gaming, gadget and figurine market juggernaut.

“This is reflective in the amount of different (retro) products coming into stores,” the Australian Toy Association (ATA)’s executive manager Alice Sanderson said.

“More and more nostalgic brands are getting pushed forward.”



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles is one of many properties spiking in sales thanks to a revival of the nostalgic toy market. Picture: Casey's Toys

Casey's Toys, a chain that's been operating since the 80s, said brands like He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, Sylvanian Families and Voltron were returning to store shelves.

Director Gary Sher said the cycle of popularity with each generation was interesting to watch.

"We had Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles walking around in the shopping centre by our opening for (our) store (more than 40 years ago)," Mr Sher said.

"And we're still selling those products today, which is quite amazing."



Some toys like Sylvanian Families are returning thanks to parental nostalgia, while other properties are helped by the release of new feature films. Picture: Tony Gough

The resurgence in interest for TMNT figures stems from the successful movie reboot *Mutant Mayhem*, much like Barbie did last year.

"TMNT has finally come full circle," vice president of business for Playmates Toys, which produces TMNT products, Karl Aaronian said.

"Original fans are now parents who have continuing love for the green team and they are exposing their kids to Turtles old and new".



Pokemon is the number one license in Australia, in part thanks to the card game's popularity. Picture: Tony Gough

The surge in popularity of 90s brand Pokemon during Covid lockdowns, as children discovered the card game, has not waned. It remains the number one licence in the country.

And Disney Lorcana, a card game released in 2023 featuring classic Disney characters, was so popular in the US that Australian retailers have only just started receiving stock.

Overall for 2023, Transformers was the top-dollar property for action figures, according to consumer research firm Circana Australia. Hot Wheels Singles Cars was the top-selling toy, and Disney100 was the top-dollar adding license, followed by TMNT. Care Bears has grown 42 per cent in value since 2019.



Isabel Coltman, 6, Dane Coltman, 43, Anastasia Manousakis, 34 and Anthony Coltman, 4, have a collection of many toys from their parents' childhoods. Picture: Tony Gough

Anastasia Manousakis, 34, from South Kingsville in Melbourne, loves that her kids Anthony and Isabel are enjoying toys like Sylvanian Families.

“They are now at a stage where I can leave them in the playroom and I can go and make dinner,” she said, “and they can work a situation out completely on their own.”

Ms Manousakis’s partner, Dane Coltman, uses card games like Pokemon to connect with the kids.



The Coltman Family own toys like Sylvanian Families, My Little Ponies, Care Bears and have a collection Pokemon cards. Picture: Tony Gough

Puzzles and games, like Connect 4, are also helping her son who has autism.

“I particularly have an emotional attachment to Connect 4, being that that was something I played nightly with my grandmother,” she said.

“And a lot of this therapy was based around playing with toys, because it promotes so much social engagement as well. Eye contact, communication ... and he (Anthony) has come so incredibly far.”



Ms Manousakis said card games and puzzles help educate her kids while still allowing them to have fun. Picture: Tony Gough

RETRO TOY RESURGENCE

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

The 80s superheroes had a massive popularity spike in late 2023, after the release of the franchise's animated film *Mutant Mayhem*.

He-Man

Netflix's release of two He-Man TV shows in 2022 and January 2024 saw sales of the brand's action figures boom.

Transformers

The release of its latest blockbuster, *Rise of the Beasts*, made the toys the top dollar action figure property in 2023.



Trolls is one of several wildly popular brands going off the shelves at Casey's Toys. Picture: Casey's Toys

Trolls

The Trolls film franchise — including the latest hit starring Anna Kendrick and Justin Timberlake — brought the 50s toys back into the mainstream. The toys have been selling out of local shops.

Monopoly

Monopoly has moved from the dining table to the mobile phone, with the game *Monopoly Go* making billions of dollars since its launch last year.

Hello Kitty

The brand is marking its 50th years in 2024, releasing a line of anniversary toys, accessories and games for fans.

OTHER POPULAR NOSTALGIC TOY BRANDS

Sonic the Hedgehog

Super Mario Bros.

Barbie

Furby

Littlest Pet Shop

Voltron

Pound Puppies

Care Bears

Cabbage Patch Kids

Tamagotchi

Polly Pocket

Garbage Pail Kids

Sylvanian Families

Rubik's cube

Pokemon

My Little Pony

Hot Wheels

Retro video game consoles