



upfront: kids' entertainment

# Easier Being Green

*Toy makers ride wave of eco awareness*

By Karyn M. Peterson

**T**hough Kermit the Frog might think otherwise... being green is actually a snap! So say a number of toy companies—Plan Toys, ImagiPlay, Mrs. Grossman's and Hosung among them—long involved in the eco movement and who are seeing renewed interest in their green products.

The category is also attracting lots of new toy makers, like Green Toys, Idbids, Sprig Toys, and E-Innovative, who have jumped at the opportunities presented by parents' heightened awareness of manufacturing's impact on the environment and, at least in part, due to their concerns about toy safety. That awareness has also inspired companies who produce a mixed toy assortment—like Tomy, HaPe and Cardinal Industries—to introduce new eco-friendly lines, and to devote more efforts to promoting them.

## Safety equals sales

Judging by retailer interest at this year's Toy Fair and subsequent orders, parents are starting to flock to stores looking for these new green choices.

"We had a great demand for the Anamalz range and our new E-Racer," says Robin Lehnert, marketing manager for HaPe Intl., Sherwood Park, Alberta. In addition to its own green toys made of bamboo, the company distributes the new wooden Animalz figures, which are crafted of organic maple.

Adds Barbera Aimes, founder of ImagiPlay, Boulder, Colo., "Because of the public's growing demand for environmentally friendly, sustainable products, the entire green industry has become a \$120 billion market ... Retailers are now profiting from doing the right thing as well." The award-winning company's wooden toys are crafted from sustainable rubberwood and packaged in small, family-run factories.



■ (Clockwise) Imagiplay's wooden Hedgehog baby rattle.