

## I love the '80s toys: Classic toys make a comeback

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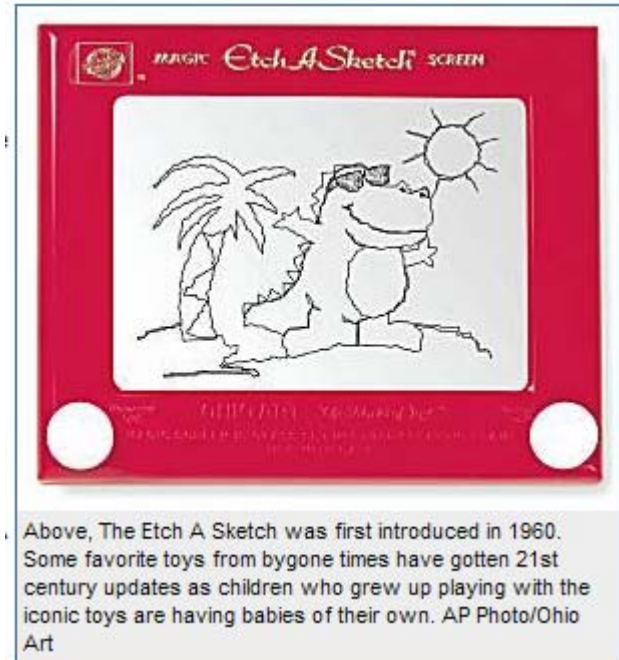
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The Cabbage Patch Kids are skate punks. Strawberry Shortcake is wearing fitted jeans. And your Monopoly game piece might be a Starbucks cup.

Some favorite toys from the 1980s have gotten 21st century updates as children who grew up playing with the iconic toys are having babies of their own. Boomer-era grandparents can also get nostalgic, with LEGOs designed for imaginary trips to Mars and an Etch A Sketch for the mobile phone.

The desire to share favorite playthings with a new generation may be driving a trend of classic toys resurging on the market, but "nostalgia will only get you so far," said toy analyst Chris Byrne. "The brands have to keep revitalizing and revamping to be relevant to today's kids."



Above, The Etch A Sketch was first introduced in 1960. Some favorite toys from bygone times have gotten 21st century updates as children who grew up playing with the iconic toys are having babies of their own. AP Photo/Ohio Art

Here's a look at some oldies-but-goodies that have been updated for the children of 2007:

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### **Barbie, Mattel Inc.**

1959: Named after inventor Ruth Handler's daughter Barbara, Barbie was introduced to the nation as a teenage fashion model sporting a ponytail, black-and-white bathing suit and full line of fashion accessories.

2007: Barbie has exhausted more than 100 careers, from princess to astronaut, and is now available in the Barbie Girls line as more than just a doll. The Barbie Girl is also an MP3 player and a "key" to unlock exclusive online play features.

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### **Cabbage Patch Kids, 4Kids Entertainment**

1983: The ideal tag-along buddies, each doll was unique and came with its own birth certificate and backstory.

2007: The one-of-a kind dolls are hipper and have moved ahead in their interests. "A doll today might carry a skateboard, as opposed to skates," said Al Khan, CEO of 4Kids Entertainment. Also available are Lil' Sprouts, 4-inch dolls that come with playsets allowing them to attend parties or ride ponies, for example.

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### **Care Bears, American Greetings**

1981: A lovable troupe of rainbow-colored bears whose decorative bellies radiated the power of sharing and caring.

2007: The core values remain the same, but the gang has a few new members. The bears received a makeover after their relaunch in 2002, and their differentiation is moving beyond the belly badge. Increased distinctive features include bears of varying heights and accessories: Sunshine Bear has a cap and Share Bear has a purse, for example.

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### **Etch A Sketch, Ohio Art Co.**

1960: The simple screen with two knobs allowed budding artists take a gray line in the direction of their choosing. Invented by a French factory worker, it's going strong 150 million pieces later.

2007: Color versions, a "plug-and-play" screen with a hand-held controller and screens in heart-shaped containers are a few of the newer incarnations of Etch A Sketch, which will also be coming out with in a mobile version for cell phones.

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### **Hot Wheels, Mattel Inc.**

1968: The die-cast racecars impressed a generation of boys needing speed and quickly went on to become coveted collectables.

2007: In anticipation of the brand's 40th anniversary next year, the model cars are going back to their heritage with sleeker versions of classic cars, trucks and playsets. The gravity-defying track sets and skateboards that have been added over the years remain on the market.

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### **LEGO, The LEGO Group**

1949: Rectangle and square interlocking blocks let young architects build their dream structures \_ and smashing them afterwards was always part of the fun.

2007: Most every cultural and historical phenomenon has made its way into LEGO form, including this year's relaunch of the Space line, now as Mars Mission. This season the classic line of homes, vehicles and animals is back, albeit with motors and sensors.

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### **Monopoly, Hasbro Inc.**

1935: The monocled capitalist who represents this game of real estate mastery has long been a household figure.

2007: No longer fighting over the boot or the iron, players of "Monopoly Here and Now" can move Toyota Prius, Starbucks mug or cell phone playing pieces to acquire new properties, like famous ball parks. And old Monopoly money is out; in the "Electronic Banking Edition," players make transactions with a debit card.

### **My Little Pony, Hasbro Inc.**

1983: The original six pastel ponies frolicked their way into the little girls' hearts.

2007: The herd has grown to dozens of named ponies in an updated color palate and modern themed playsets.

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### **Pound Puppies, Pound Puppies Inc.**

1985: Creator Mike Bowling came up with the concept for the palm-sized puppies when watching his own daughter interact with a baby doll. "I was amazed at how she treated an inanimate object with such love," he said. "I thought, there are two things people love: babies and pets."

2007: Those plush pets are back, in a softer material that ups the hugability factor. The puppies also come packaged with a 36-minute DVD of the pilot episode of the '80s cartoon.

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### **Strawberry Shortcake, American Greetings**

1980: The fresh-faced girl with a wardrobe that spans the spectrum from rose to fuchsia lived with her confectionarily christened friends in the fanciful Strawberryland.

2007: "The attributes that make her Strawberry Shortcake, innocence and empowerment to little girls, are timeless," said Tamara Knepper of American Greetings. It's just that now, she's more likely to be wearing a pair of fitted jeans with a sweatshirt around her waist than a knee-length dress of patterned fabric.

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### **Transformers, Hasbro Inc.**

1984: One of the first two-in-one toys, the car-turned-robot action figures were "more than meets the eye."

2007: The recent Paramount movie pushed the shape-shifting robots back into the public imagination, although the toys have had an ardent fan base for the last 25 years, said Hasbro spokeswoman Audrey Desimone. The new robots have a modern design flair and transform into cars that could be seen racing down the highway today.

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