



**HiT entertainment**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **HIT ENTERTAINMENT APPOINTS FUNTASTIC AS AUSTRALIAN *THOMAS & FRIENDS TRACKMASTER* DISTRIBUTOR**

**January 10, 2008, Hong Kong Toy Fair** – HIT Entertainment, one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights owners, has announced the appointment of Funtastic Limited as the *Thomas & Friends™ Trackmaster* Distribution Partner for Australia at this year's Hong Kong Toy Fair.

Funtastic will oversee one of the most exciting developments in the Thomas & Friends range of toys with the transition from the Thomas & Friends *Motor Road and Rail* track system to a brand new and innovative play system called *Trackmaster™*. The new Trackmaster system is due for launch in 2009.

Funtastic will also continue to distribute the Tomy Thomas & Friends Pre-School Range.

Funtastic has been instrumental in making Thomas and Friends the second largest Infant & Preschool property in Australia and the fourth largest property in the entire Australian toy market\*. Funtastic's stewardship has helped see a 20.2% increase in the value and a 42.4% growth in units of the Thomas & Friends brand in the Australian Infant & Preschool category in the past 12 months alone\*.

Thomas & Friends' phenomenal year in Australia culminated with more than 100,000 people seeing the recent Thomas & Friends Live Stage Show. HIT has also recently announced changes to its production and programming schedule including the signing of Pierce Brosnan as the new narrator and for the first time, Thomas & Friends will be shot in high-definition format.

A HIT licensee for over 10 years, Funtastic has been an important partner in the pre-school toys, homewares, apparel, accessories and footwear categories.

Peter Byrne, Executive Vice President Worldwide Consumer Products HIT Entertainment commented, "Funtastic has been an integral part of our success and growth in the Australian market and this appointment is reflective of Funtastic's enormous contribution. With an exciting new track system, we look forward to working with Funtastic in taking the Thomas & Friends brand to a whole new level."



Tony Oates, Funtastic Managing Director added, "The whole Funtastic team is incredibly proud to carry on our long history of marketing and distributing Thomas & Friends in the Australian marketplace. And we have some exciting plans in place to ensure Thomas continues to reign supreme with Australian pre-schoolers in 2008."

- Ends -

\* According to GFK Australia figures week ending 30 December 2007

For further press enquires please contact:

**HIT Entertainment**

Director PR & Communications

Nicole Price

Direct: +44 (0) 2075543613

Mobile: +44 (0) 7891 934488

Email: [nprice@hitentertainment.com](mailto:nprice@hitentertainment.com)

**About HIT Entertainment**

HIT Entertainment, owned by private equity investment group Apax Partners, is one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights-owners. HIT's portfolio includes properties, such as *Barney™*, *Bob the Builder™*, *Thomas & Friends™*, *Pingu™*, *Fireman Sam™*, *Angelina Ballerina™* and *Rainbow Magic™*. HIT represents *Fifi and the Flowertots™* in North America and Japan and acts as a worldwide representative for The Jim Henson Company's library of classic family brands and as representative for *The Wiggles®* in the UK. HIT also owns the Guinness World Records™ publishing and television property. Launched in 1989, HIT's lines of business span television and video production (including studios in the US and the UK), publishing, consumer products licensing and live events. With a catalogue of more than 1,000 hours of young children's programming, HIT sells its shows to more than 240 countries worldwide, in more than 40 different languages and has operations in the UK, US, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. In 2005, the Company joined Comcast Corporation, PBS and Sesame Workshop to launch PBS KIDS Sprout<sup>SM</sup>, a 24-hour digital cable channel and VOD service for preschoolers. In 2007, HIT and Chellomedia, the European content division of Liberty Global, Inc and its subsidiary ChelloZone, announced a joint venture to launch and distribute JimJam, an international pre-school TV channel (excludes the US, UK and China). For more information, visit [www.hitentertainment.com](http://www.hitentertainment.com).

**About Funtastic**

Not just one of Australia's largest toy companies, Funtastic is also an entrepreneurial marketer and distributor of consumer branded lifestyle merchandise with product spanning all aspects of family life – from children's toys, apparel and footwear to publishing, sporting goods, nursery, manchester, homewares and DVD, film entertainment and gaming.

The company's Madman division is responsible for major cinema releases like Kenny and driving the enormous interest in Japanese anime DVD sales.

While now encompassing so much more than its traditional toy roots, Funtastic's business remains firmly based in leading children's licenses and brands like Thomas & Friends, Bratz, Disney, LeapFrog, Wow Wee, WWE, Winnie the Pooh, and many, many more.