



**HiT entertainment**

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## **HIT ENTERTAINMENT APPOINTS TOMY AS MASTER TOY LICENSEE FOR THOMAS & FRIENDS WITH LAUNCH OF NEW, INNOVATIVE PLAY SYSTEM TRACKMASTER™**

**5 November 2007, London** – HIT Entertainment, one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights owners, has today announced the renewal and extension of TOMY as Master Toy Licensee for the classic pre-school property Thomas & Friends™ across Europe. The new deal with TOMY reflects the Company's long history with Thomas & Friends and will see TOMY transition the *Motor Road and Rail* track system to a brand new and innovative play system *Trackmaster*™ due for launch in Autumn/Winter 2008.

TOMY has licensed Thomas & Friends for almost 12 years and continues to drive unique product innovation across the pre-school and track system sectors. In 2005, TOMY launched the Steam Along Thomas Set and the Thomas Aquadraw, the latter winning the **Pre-School Toy of the Year Award** from the Toy Retailers Association. The following year, the Thomas Aquadraw was voted **Best New Non-UK Toy Design** at the 2006 Max It Awards by the British Toy and Hobby Association.

Thomas & Friends has continued another phenomenal year of double-digit growth in the first half of 2007, maintaining its number one spot in the pre-school toy licensing charts according to NPD. 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.

Peter Byrne, Executive Vice President Worldwide Consumer Products HIT Entertainment commented, "We are delighted to be continuing our relationship with TOMY who will be bringing new innovation to the category with the all important *Trackmaster* launch. The year ahead presents enormous licensing opportunities for our partners on Thomas with new programming, new characters and destinations and the opening of Europe's first *Thomas Land* in the UK in early 2008."

Robert Mann, CEO Tomy added, "At Tomy, we are extremely proud of our successful partnership on Thomas which stretches back over 12 incredible years. Now recognized as the biggest license in the UK industry, we're thrilled to be such a major part of Thomas' future. The introduction of Trackmaster and continued innovation across our own Thomas pre-school developed line will continue the strong momentum in building the Thomas business across all territories in



Europe”.

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**About HIT Entertainment**

HIT Entertainment, owned by private equity investment group Apax Partners since June 2005, is one of the world's leading independent children's entertainment producers and rights-owners. HIT's portfolio includes properties, such as *Bob the Builder*<sup>™</sup>, *Thomas & Friends*<sup>™</sup>, *Pingu*<sup>™</sup>, *Fireman Sam*<sup>™</sup>, and *Angelina Ballerina*<sup>™</sup>. HIT acts as a representative for *The Wiggles*<sup>®</sup> in the UK, US and Canada and as worldwide representative for The Jim Henson Company's library of classic family brands. HIT also owns the Guinness World Records<sup>™</sup> 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. For more information, visit [www.hitentertainment.com](http://www.hitentertainment.com).