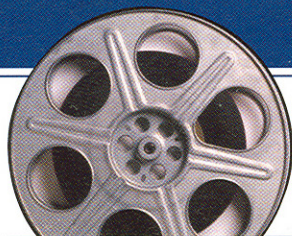


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The Biz

By Becky Ebenkamp and Todd Wasserman

Holly Hobbie's New Friends

HOLLY Hobbie, a property that hit the height of its popularity around 1980, will return this year with a direct-to-video launch from Nickelodeon and a line of toys from Mattel.

The American Greetings character is the latest retro property from the company to get a facelift in recent years, following on the heels of Strawberry Shortcake and the Care Bears, both of which are on or close to hitting the billion-dollar mark in sales on their second go-arounds.

Unlike those licensed characters, AG is taking a two-tiered approach with Holly

property had been eclipsed by American Greetings' Strawberry Shortcake.

Brown said the time was right to re-release the wholesome Holly Hobbie. "Especially with a more moralistic type of property like this, we couldn't be in a better

position," Brown said. A tie-in promotion with Land 'O Lakes is also in the works.

Holly Stein, vp of entertainment licensing at Mattel, said it was too soon to say what kind of products the company will eventually roll out, but agreed that the timing was right for a Holly relaunch. "I think our business is very cyclical and everything's going back to wholesome values," she said.

"I think wholesome is the new 'edgy.'"

Gary Caplan, a licensing consultant based in Studio City, Calif., predicted Holly Hobbie will do well. "I believe there is still room for at least one more strong retro property," he said. "Nickelodeon is a very powerful, influential licensor and American Greetings is a company for which I have a lot of respect. If you've got Nickelodeon and American Greetings together on this, you've got to pay attention."



Holly, gee!: The new Holly (right) and Reno's take cards.

Hobbie. Holly Hobbie Classic will be geared towards adults who remember the property from when they were kids and will be supported with collector-edition dolls, some of which are already going on sale.

Holly Hobbie & Friends, however, is aimed at kids 4-8. The difference between the two properties is striking: The Classic Holly looks like a relative of Raggedy Ann's. The new Holly looks like she hangs out with Bratz.

The latter will be featured in a direct-to-video DVD from Nick in association with fellow Viacom unit Paramount Home Video in spring 2006 and a TV special on Nick around the same time. "For it to become a successful property, it has to take on a life of its own," said Mike Brown, AG vp-licensing.

AG introduced Holly Hobbie in 1967. The line of dolls, named after the artist who invented them, were drawing \$1 billion in retail sales in 1980. But by mid-decade, the