



A Salute to The Simpsons

On the eve of its 400th episode and feature film debut, *License! Global* takes an in-depth look at The Simpsons' \$5 billion worldwide empire.

With the early success of “The Simpsons” television show, the licensing program also took off, spawning everything from T-shirts to toothbrushes. But despite having upwards of 600 licensees, Fox has built a carefully crafted licensing program in support of its First Family of Animation.

“In the beginning phase of The Simpsons, there was an overabundance of products and categories,” admits Twentieth Century Fox Licensing & Merchandising Executive Vice

President Elie Dekel. “Over time, though, it became apparent that the show could sustain itself and we developed a longer view of how the licensing program was managed.” At that point, he adds, “Fox became increasingly collaborative with the creators and their respective teams to help manage the licensing program from a strategy and creative perspective.”

Dekel explains that several years were spent regrouping to let early licenses run their course and to reestablish focus and channels of distribution. “In the

past few years, we’ve established a licensing program with a very strong degree of involvement from the show creators, and it’s really helped the product to excel in terms of bringing the property to life. I have never seen a property that is as collaborative and as carefully managed as The Simpsons—every product, relationship, and deal goes through a stringent review process.”

International Appeal

So, exactly how did Dekel and his team revive The Simpsons licensing program? First off, he explains, “we reestablished distribution—primarily specialty and mid-tier in the U.S., though more products are being moved into mass.” Internationally, adds Dekel, “the brand has matured and aged beautifully. It’s still one of the top-ranked properties in the UK and Australia, but it’s also gaining tremendous momentum in South America and Latin America.”

According to Dekel, the property plays differently in different markets. “In the UK, for instance, they have a very large children’s business, so our kids’ range is much broader than, say, the U.S., where the property targets teens and young adults. The UK also does a good deal of food licensing, which isn’t as strong in the U.S.”

And, speaking of food, UK-based licensee Kinnerton Confectionery has been part of The Simpsons family for 10-plus years. “Our records only go back 10 years

By **Alyson Grala**

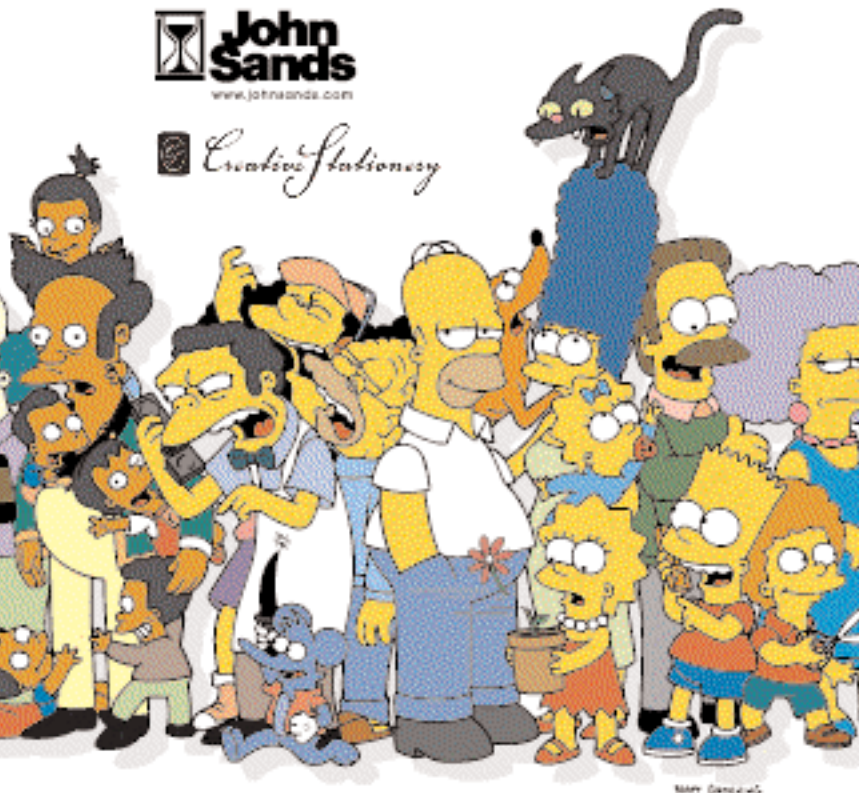
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here, but I am certain I signed the license at least 15 years ago," says Group Managing Director Clive Beecham, who adds, "but then again, I'm getting old and my memory is getting progressively worse."

Regardless of the date, "The Simpsons has always been an interesting property," says Beecham, "because at the beginning it was all about Bart, so the audience skewed younger, albeit it was very attitudinal. More recently, Homer is more popular than Bart, and this clearly (and uniquely) gives us an opportunity to target young and older men." Unlike most boys'/kids' properties, he adds, "it does not fall away at age 10. The TV exposure helps considerably, and occasionally the style guide comes up with some terrific graphics or slogans that just make people smile—there really is not enough of that out in the market."

But The Simpsons plays well with women, too. Stern Pinball Inc. President Gary Stern has found that more women are attracted to the company's Simpsons-branded pinball game than to its other product—pretty impressive seeing as Stern Pinball is the only manufacturer of pinball machines in the world and all of its titles are licensed. "We first licensed The Simpsons for pinball in the early '90s, when we were Data East Pinball. While we export about one-third of our games, that first model did especially well in the U.S.," says Stern. Fast-forward a decade and "we started to manufacture a totally new game, The Simpsons Pinball Party. We coordinated with Fox and The Simpsons folks who did the art for the game, as well as the actors who voiced the speech heard during gameplay. We then made an initial production run, totaling thousands, and it has subsequently been one of our largest and most successful titles."

Of course, The Simpsons remains exceptionally strong in the apparel business, says Fox's Dekel, especially young men's Ts. Also doing well in terms of this demographic is sleepwear. Briefly Stated has held the license since June 2004, and, according to Vice President of Licensing Alexandra Richmond, the company works hand-in-hand with Fox to touch both the diehard fan and the consumer who is just shopping for sleepwear or underwear. Fox, she says, "has been very supportive from a licensing perspective and provides some of the greatest most up-to-date development."



While fresh product is always of critical importance, says Richmond, the show is truly what drives the property, “and that comes down to the creators, Fox, and the humor of the characters. The Simpsons touches on pop culture perfectly, which the fan gets and watches over and over. The writers have a clever way of balancing between reality and surreality, with the character voices adding to the excellence.”

“The best items,” seconds Jennifer Staley, director of licensing at headwear, footwear, and bags licensee BioWorld, “are the ones that truly capture the personality of the show. If you look at an item and it registers on some level, especially if it makes you laugh, then we have all done our jobs well.”



Simpsons Down Under

According to Sam Avery, brand and licensing manager of Australia-based Hot Springs Pty Ltd, there's a reason the brand performs so well in this market—TV exposure. “The Simpsons’ is on free to air every night and, as for Pay TV, it airs on Fox 8 four times during the week and 10 times over the weekend,” he explains, adding that strong promotional drives at supermarkets and all retail levels, exposure across print media, and a strong merchandise program across soft and hard goods have also contributed to the brand's success.

In terms of licensee support, Avery explains, “Fox presents an annual summit in Melbourne, where we are informed of the new style guide arrivals and developments on the brand, both nationally and globally.” Plus, he adds, it's a great forum to network with licensing partners across the brand.

“We always work in conjunction with local Fox agent Haven Licensing throughout the product development process,” adds Eugene Gigliotti, director of licensee TGA Unlimited, a leading Australian toy company. “We began by selling 14,000 units of camping chairs featuring Homer and Duff beer for the adult leisure/outdoor market to Kmart, before expanding into electronics with a Simpsons TV/DVD unit.” Last year the company soft launched a refrigerator range featuring Duff, and this year the company plans to add Moe's Tavern. In addition, says Gigliotti, “we're developing a 6-foot pool table and upright electric dartboard with a built-in refrigerator. From here, we're expanding into electrical appliances with a Bart-branded toaster that

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produces a template of Bart on the bread, as well as popcorn, ice cream, and slushy makers with a Kwik-E-Mart theme.”

According to Gigliotti, the show's broad demographic appeal has allowed the company to develop a range of products from toys to electronics. And, he adds, “it's a testament to the brand that we're currently achieving an 85 percent sell-through on Simpsons merchandise even in what is a relatively small Australian retail market.”

Fellow Aussie-based Simpsons partner The Promotions Factory (TPF) also has seen success in the market. “Our Simpsons Figurine Collection was developed exclusively for Coles Supermarkets,” explains TPF Retail Promotions General Manager Girles Musker, adding, “The figurines were placed at checkout registers and priced at \$2 to encourage impulse buying and collectibility. We really wanted to make the figurines accessible to all ages, from young children to seasoned collectors.”

To promote the release, Musker says, TPF ran TV and radio commercials, as well as print ads. “We even ran a Simpsons lookalike competition with some hilarious participants. My personal favorite was the Groundskeeper Willie lookalike,” laughs Musker. “We have now sold more than 4 million figurines in Australia—impressive when you consider the population is only 20 million—and many more to New Zealand, the UK, Spain, Mexico, and Scandinavia. And, we're still looking for a partner to release the figurines in the U.S. But the backbone of our success has been the show, which is so well written that it appeals to a wide section of society. Every time you rewatch an episode you uncover a joke that you missed the first time around.”

Action Packed

McFarlane Toys first rolled out two Simpsons action-figure boxed sets in December 2005, and now is poised to release several movie-based lines. For Founder and CEO Todd McFarlane, the partnership was a perfect match. “We knew The Simpsons license was coming up, and, as a fan of The Simpsons since its very inception I knew our company would bring as much innovation to the character products as Matt Groening and his crew have done all these years.”

Fox clearly agreed, and McFarlane followed up the 2005 sets with a full product line in 2006. The company's line of products for The Simpsons Movie will combine incredible character detail with voice-chip technology, featuring exclusive dialogue from the film. Each figure, explains McFarlane, comes mounted to a customized base, and as an added feature, the “Movie Mayhem” line of figures comes with interlocking bases so the figures can be combined to create one large scene. The 6-inch figure line (suggested retails, \$12.99 to \$14.99) and boxed sets (\$14.99 to \$19.99) will roll out this summer at mass, along

Spanning the Globe

Of course, Australia is only part of The Simpsons global family of partners. Germany-based United Labels AG has been a Simpsons licensee since 1998, and, as Assistant CEO Ingrid Buehler notes, while German taste really is different than the UK and U.S. sensibilities, the show's appeal is universal. That said, Chile-based Comercial Action Sport Ltda partnered with Fox in April 2006, and according to Licensing Director Maricarmen Arteaga, the program has grown exponentially, "with the company expanding its range from shirts and sweatshirts to all kinds of clothes, shoes, backpacks, watches, MP3s and MP4s, digital cameras, mugs, skateboards, and even toys." A year's work and productivity, says Arteaga, is achieved in one season.

"We begin with ideas generated from creative group thinking, guided, of course, by art concepts delivered by Fox Studio. From these initial ideas group efforts continue to advance gradually, with regular stages of evaluation and correction. After months of hard work, we have the finished product. We also receive much support from Tycoon Enterprises, the company that supervises the creative efforts behind each of our new products."

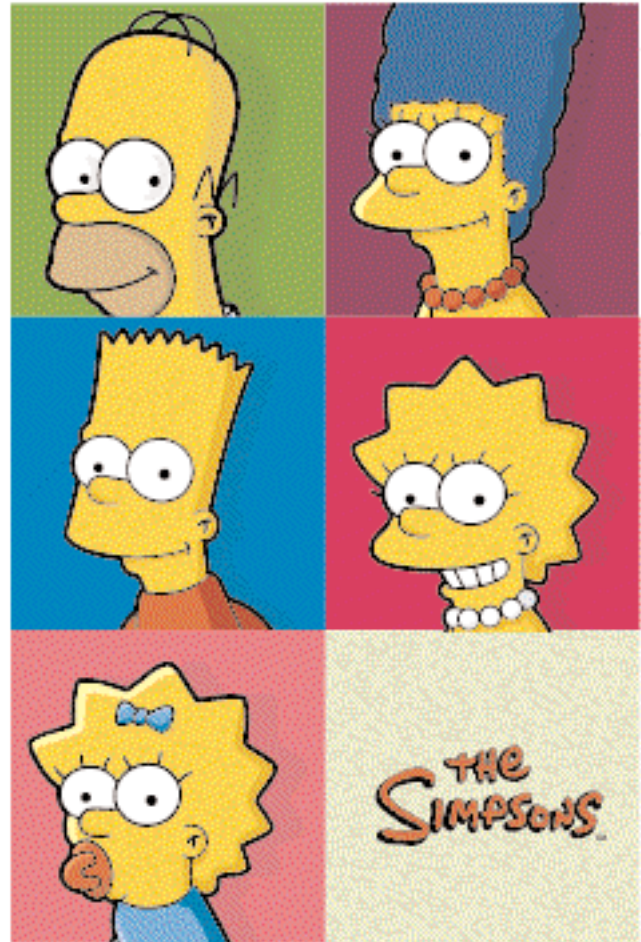
As for the success of The Simpsons licensing program, Arteaga explains, "A show with worldwide success and broadcast for more than 15 years will, of course, generate much interest in the merchandise related to it. To give an example, here in Chile, a local TV channel has been broadcasting two episodes daily for more than a year. The popularity of the show can be attributed to great characters, humor, and of the



with two additional products exclusive to the specialty market.

Interestingly, says Fox's Cohn, McFarlane's consumer base has been primarily collector-driven. "It's not a kids' business," she says, "but the movie very well could take it there."

According to McFarlane, since the development time on the figures runs around 10 to 12 months, it's difficult to coordinate with other licensees on cross-promotions. Going forward, he adds, "we'll switch back to licensing against the TV show, with a Halloween boxed set, as well as a second set scheduled for fall."



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fact that each episode can stand on its own. In other words, you don't have to follow the series to understand the next episode. All this, along with the upcoming feature-length movie, promise to bring new Simpsons lines great commercial success."

But while nearly every licensed property has Ts and toys, The Simpsons has forged at least one partnership that is all its own. "We granted a license to a group of tribesmen in the Kenyan village of Tabaka," says Dekel. "Okay, let's backup," he adds with a laugh. "Tabaka is known for its expert carvers of soapstone. A few years ago, somebody visited the village and left behind several Simpsons figurines. The tribesmen, with very basic tools, then began hand-carving soapstone sculptures of Simpsons characters. The results were breathtaking. We found out about this and, in short, helped them to become an official licensee of The Simpsons. And, it's really a testament to the breadth of this property and its cultural reach."

Store Stories

"Just as our licensing strategy differs by locale, the retail environment also differs depending upon the region," says Dekel. "In Latin America, you'll find Simpsons merchandise in department stores, and in markets like the UK, where food licensing is strong, you'll see the brand in grocery stores. It really comes down to a function of the local market."

Target Australia, for instance, has supported The Simpsons for more than 10 years and, according to Licensing Product Manager Lincon Boyd, "has seen the brand grow from a small product offer to a storewide merchandise footprint that includes children's clothing, underwear, and socks; toys; plush; board games; outdoor activities; DVDs; interactive games; consumer electronics;

Staying in the Game

While The Simpsons has remained a mostly specialty and mid-tier brand, one of its biggest successes in the games aisle is now out at mass, courtesy of Hasbro Games Division.

"The partnership first began around eight years ago, when Hasbro licensee USAopoly released a Simpsons-branded Monopoly game for the specialty market, followed shortly thereafter by Clue," says Twentieth Century Executive Director of Licensing Lora Cohn. In 2002, Hasbro took Clue and re-released it to mass, where the game received an incredibly positive consumer response. Hasbro then released similarly branded Life and Operation games, the latter of which was the first talking Operation game. Adds Fox's fellow Executive Director of Licensing Virginia King, "we're now working with Hasbro on a refreshed Clue game and updated versions of Sorry, both of which will release around the same time

confectionery; stationery; men's leisurewear; homewares; and even ladies' fashion accessories." In fact, he adds, "The Simpsons brand has grown to become one of Target's biggest licensed properties. Regular catalog features, in-store events, and online promotions have helped keep The Simpsons top of mind for customers, and having wanted items in-stock has been key." Over the years, continues Boyd, "children's clothing such as Ts, sleepwear, pajamas, dressing gowns, and swimwear have been among our top sellers." He also notes that DVDs, as well as toys and board games have always performed well. And, more recently, men's leisurewear, underwear, and footwear with a strong Homer Simpson flavor have been a hit, as have bar accessories.

Chile-based La Polar, meanwhile, has further bolstered the property's South American base. After carrying only T-shirts initially, the retailer has now expanded its offering to include a complete collection of clothes including jeans, pants, coats, Ts, sweatshirts, and sweaters, all of which are complemented with merchandise like notebooks, folders, and pencil bags.

Back on U.S. soil, Kmart carries everything from Simpsons figures to men's boxers. "The week of July 22," adds Tori Brosz, director of field marketing for Sears Holdings Corp.'s Kmart, "we will be supporting a Simpsons promotion within all Kmart locations. On average, we're devoting 17 feet of space at the front of stores to promote product assortments from various departments, including bedding, apparel, and entertainment. We also will have notebooks, portfolios, and school accessories—very appropriate for this back-to-school time frame."

Brosz also mentions that Kmart is working with Fox to develop an exclusive offering and other in-store activities. "The signage will be vivid and prominent to draw attention to the displays," she

as the movie. We also have a Trivial Pursuit DVD game in the works for fourth quarter."

In each case, explains Hasbro Games Division Senior Licensing Manager Bill Burtch, "we worked closely with Fox's product development team to make sure that the essence of both the game and the property were completely aligned. They have done an excellent job providing updated character designs and themes, many of which have been added to our refreshed Clue game."

While The Simpsons has become a classic property, he adds, "in the end, its continued popularity all comes down to Homer...audiences can relate to him, because there's a little bit of Homer in us all!"

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says, "and we will create a Simpsons micro-site within kmart.com to house additional features such as a movie trailer, games, and Simpsons product available online."

Yellow Fever

Then, of course, there is *The Simpsons Movie*, which bows July 27. It's a credit to the show's enormous popularity that it will be keeping company at the Cineplex this summer with such notables as *Spider-Man 3*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: World's End*, and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. But, The Simpsons' silver-screen strategy, as usual, is different.

"Most movie-based licensing programs are built to help support the opening of the movie and the DVD release," says Dekel, "but The Simpsons has been operating 365 days a year for 18 years. As wonderful as the movie is, serving as a celebration of this family we've come to know and love, it's just another milestone and celebration of The Simpsons. And, of course, we're excited about reinvigorating the fan base."



In what is yet another testament to the show's reach, for the month of July, and in honor of the film, all 7-Eleven convenience stores will be transformed into Kwikie Marts. Of course, nearly every Simpson licensee is also supporting the movie in one way or another, with McFarlane rolling out a line of *The Simpsons Movie* figures at mass, as well as two exclusive products for the specialty market. Samsung, meanwhile, is working with Fox to design a limited release The Simpsons Movie collectible phone and accompanying promotions.

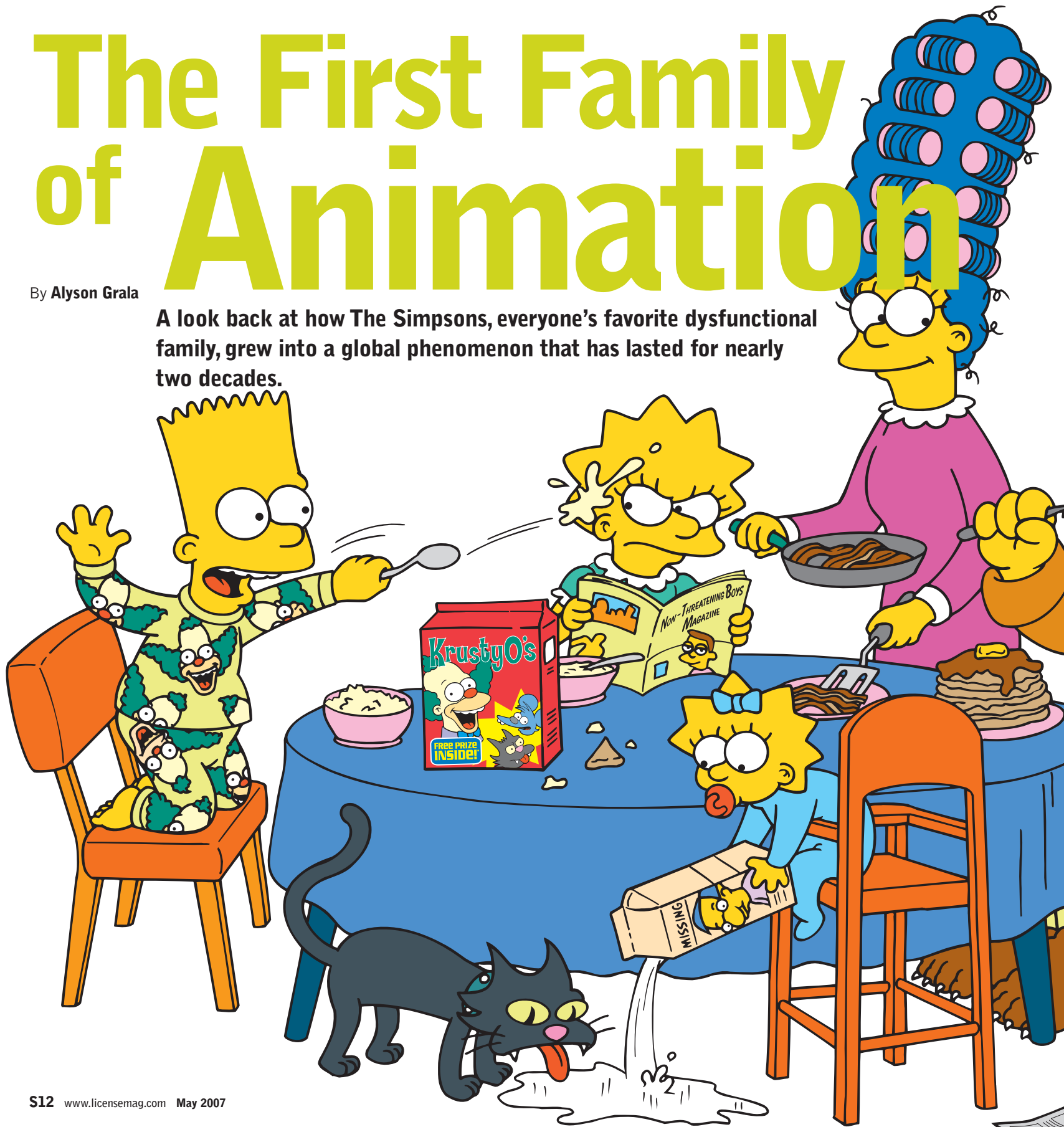
The brand also has some exciting non-movie-related initiatives in place, says Dekel, including a Simpsons theme park at Universal Theme Park in Los Angeles and an upcoming video game with EA, which was produced collaboratively with Gracie Films, Groening, and the show's writers.

Enthusiastically summing up the impact of Springfield's most famous yellow citizens is Briefly Stated's Richmond: "The Simpsons,' in its 18th season and with a feature film soon to release, is one of the best shows of all time!" And, from a marketing and licensing standpoint, who could argue with that? ©

The First Family of Animation

By Alyson Grala

A look back at how The Simpsons, everyone's favorite dysfunctional family, grew into a global phenomenon that has lasted for nearly two decades.



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episodes

and 17 years together...

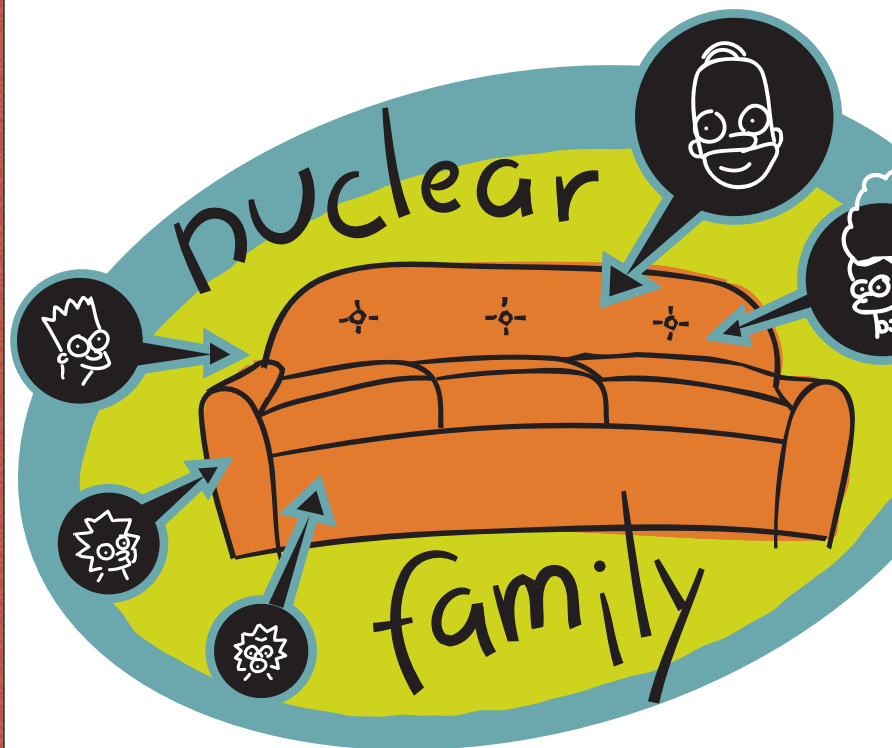
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class family living a Middle American lifestyle. Homer, a generally well-meaning buffoon, is a safety inspector at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant, while Marge is, for the most part, a stereotypical housewife dealing with 10-year-old troublemaker Bart, 8-year-old brainiac and left-wing activist Lisa, and baby Maggie who never speaks a word. Despite the fact that numerous yearly milestones (such as holidays or birthdays) clearly pass, the Simpson members do not age physically. (However, the animation itself has been updated over the years, so it's easy to spot an earlier episode.) The show also has a vast array of quirky supporting characters, including co-workers, teachers, family friends, extended relatives, and local celebrities. Originally, many of these characters were planned as one-shot jokes, or to fill a function in the town; a number of them gained expanded roles, and some have subsequently been the subjects of their own episodes.

Seismic Impact

The show, according to Twentieth Century Fox Licensing & Merchandising Executive Vice President Elie Dekel, was an early hit with audiences and critics alike, garnering a slew of accolades and awards, including the cover of Time magazine, which named "The Simpsons" the 20th century's best TV series; a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame; and a string of Emmy nods, including wins for five of the six main cast members in the Outstanding Voice-Over Performance category.

Despite the praise, the show was also involved in controversy from early on—Bart was rebellious and frequently escaped without

punishment, which led some parents' groups and conservative spokespeople to believe he provided a poor role model for children. Licensed T-shirts—particularly one featuring Bart with the legend “Underachiever (‘And proud of it, man!’)—and other merchandise were banned from public schools in several U.S. states. But, despite the opposition, Simpson fans were hooked, with merchandise sales during the first 14 months totaling \$2 billion worldwide.

Beyond bringing in revenue, “The Simpsons” also marked a TV milestone, says Dekel—it was the first animated program in primetime since the Flintstones era. During most of the 1980s, in fact, animated shows were seen as being for kids and the animation was too expensive to achieve a quality suitable for primetime television. “The Simpsons” changed this perception. The use of Korean animation studios handling the coloring and filming made the episodes cheaper, and the clear success of “The Simpsons,” combined with the lower production cost, made television networks take chances on other animated series. This led to a boom in new animated shows for primetime in the 1990s, such as “South Park,” “Family Guy,” “King of the Hill,” “Futurama” (another Groening-created cartoon), and “The Critic.” “South Park” even paid homage to “The Simpsons” with the episode, “Simpsons Already Did It.”

The series had an impact on live-action shows as well. “Malcolm in the Middle,” which debuted in January 2000 in the time slot right after “The Simpsons,” was largely inspired by the show, featuring sight gags and omitting the commonly used laugh track. While the show clearly had an impact on pop culture, it also served to revolutionize TV licensing. Never before had a television property amassed such devoted fans, willing to plunk down dollars for all things Simpsons. Its popularity with adults and kids alike is a testament to the show’s creator and its team of writers, animators, and voice actors.



In the opening title sequence, Maggie is listed as costing \$847.63, a figure once given as the amount of money required to raise a baby for one month in the U.S.



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The Writers:

“The Simpsons” has a writing team that consists of around 16 writers, all of whom start to propose episode ideas at the beginning of December, before each episode idea is eventually assigned to a main writer, who produces the first draft of the script. The final scripts are then developed during group rewriting sessions, during which the writers can add or remove jokes, insert scenes, and call for re-readings of lines by the show’s vocal performers. The leader of these sessions is George Meyer, who has been with the show since its inception. John Swartzwelder is the most prolific writer on “The Simpsons” staff, is credited with 60 episodes. Another notable writer was Conan O’ Brien, who wrote four scripts before he became the host of his own late-night show. British comedian Ricky Gervais is the only celebrity ever to have guest written an episode, although there have been other guest writers, such as Spike Feresten, a “Seinfeld” writer famous for “The Soup Nazi” episode. In total, production typically takes six months per episode.

The Cast:

Dan Castellaneta	Homer Simpson; his father, Abraham Simpson; and Krusty the Clown
Julie Kavner	Marge Simpson and her sisters, Patty and Selma
Nancy Cartwright	Bart and other schoolchildren
Yeardley Smith	Lisa Simpson
Hank Azaria	Moe, Chief Wiggum, and Apu
Harry Shearer	Mr. Burns, Mr. Smithers, Principal Skinner, Ned Flanders, and Dr. Hibbert



The Scenes



The Animators:

"The Simpsons" has been animated by many different studios over the past 18 years, both U.S.-based and international. Throughout the run of the animated shorts on "The Tracey Ullman Show," the animation was produced entirely domestically at Klasky Csupo. However, when the show received its own half-hour time slot, production was subcontracted to international studios, usually in South Korea. Character and background layout was handled by the domestic studio, while tweening, coloring, and filming were done by the international studios.

Throughout the years, different international studios have animated different episodes, even episodes within the same season. Klasky Csupo was the domestic animation studio during the first three seasons, before Gracie Films made a decision to switch the domestic production to Film Roman, which continues to animate the show. The last episode (in terms of production order) to be animated by Klasky Csupo was "Kamp Krusty." After season 13, production also was switched from traditional cel animation to digital ink and paint. The first episode to experiment with digital coloring was "Radioactive Man" in 1995, and again during season 12 with the episode, "Tennis the Menace." However, after seeing the results, Gracie Films decided to hold off for two more seasons.

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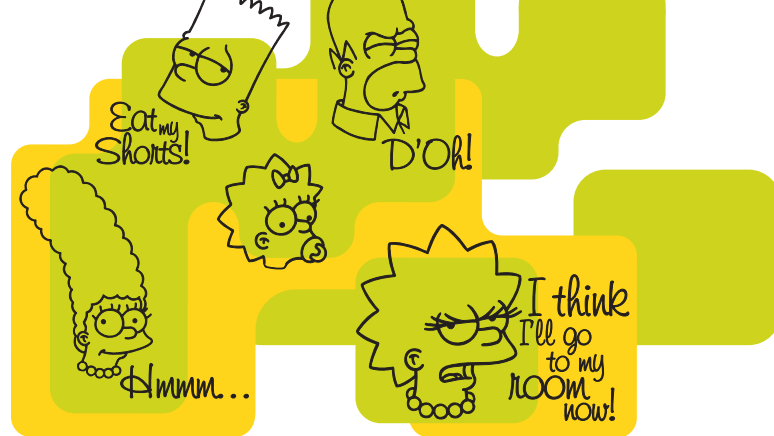
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Simpson-isms:

The Simpsons have perhaps most entered the public consciousness in the form of the numerous catchphrases that are repeated by characters of the show. Homer, when frustrated or making an obvious blunder, shouts out the famous catch phrase “D’oh!,” which has achieved such mainstream usage as to be featured in the Oxford English Dictionary. An interesting phenomenon occurred with Bart’s catchphrases. His now trademark “Ay Caramba!,” “Don’t have a cow, man,” and “Eat my shorts” were featured on T-shirts in the early days of the show’s run; however, the latter two phrases were rarely spoken on the show itself until after they became popular through merchandise, and the use of many of these catchphrases has declined in recent seasons.

Other notable catchphrases include Mr. Burns’ “Excellent...” and Nelson Muntz’s “Ha-ha!” Many main characters have catchphrases that serve to illuminate the nature of the speaker’s character. This is sometimes shown explicitly, as the characters’ thoughts are broadcast for the audience to hear. Homer’s “Mmmm...doughnuts” (or any other favorite food, for that matter) shows his weakness for pleasure, while Marge’s disapproving throat noise gives the audience a sense there’s something more lurking beneath her calm exterior. On the other hand, Maggie’s character is shown only through body language, and her falls were a common background noise in early episodes of the show. Lisa is perhaps the only speaking member of the core family with no catchphrase vocalization.

The contrast between the commercial world and real life is also a major theme put forward by the show’s catchphrases. Krusty the Clown often starts his TV shows with a cry of “Hey-hey, kids,” along with a distinctive laugh, which is a great contrast to his depressive off-screen personality. Similarly, has-been B-movie actor Troy McClure always introduced himself with the phrase “Hi, I’m Troy McClure, you may remember me from such films as (insert cheesy-sounding program titles).” Dr. Nick Riviera, meanwhile, seems unable to remove himself from the world of infomercials in which he appears, and always announces his entrances with “Hi, everybody!,” to which the characters respond, “Hi, Dr. Nick!” Running gags also are common in the show, such as Bart’s prank calls to Moe’s Tavern asking for someone with a suggestive name, such as “Amanda Huggankiss,” “Al Coholic,” or “Seymour Butts.” And, of course, it wouldn’t be “The Simpsons” without recurring, tongue-in-cheek references to its home Fox Network as sub-par.