



Best of the Year 2008 winners

Producer of the Year: Wildbrain

The soaring popularity of *Yo Gabba Gabba!*, which triggered 40 million downloads on Nick.com and the debut of a successful mass-market licensing program in 2008, largely propelled Wildbrain to the top of the heap. To keep the Gabba ball rolling into 2009 and beyond, Wildbrain plans to expand the show's reach and CP program internationally, introduce new toys from Spin Master, launch a line of books with Simon & Schuster, and start production on a *Yo Gabba Gabba!* feature film.

The San Francisco-based indie prodco, with arms in New York and L.A., will also be working closely with retail subsidiary Kidrobot to develop new TV series concepts based on its collectible toys and start production on a KR feature film with Paramount, tentatively titled *Vinyl World*. In the meantime, Wildbrain is shopping around a live-action/2-D animated series based on indie band The Aquabats, and plans to bow *Team Smithereen* online. The live-action/CGI short series about a bunch of hapless puppet stuntmen should help build buzz virally before the concept moves into TV territory.

Runner-up: Marvel Entertainment

Distributor of the Year: Cake Distribution

London-based Cake Distribution's focused and patient approach to the sales game earned a lot of votes this year "Because we don't have a big catalogue, we are able to massage shows a lot longer and stick with them," explains MD Ed Galton. The boutique distributor's patience and perseverance paid off in spades with Fresh TV's *Total Drama Island*, which is now seen on Cartoon Network channels across the globe. As well, *Skunk Fu!* from Irish prodco Cartoon Saloon has scored high-profile slots on CN and broadcast homes in more than 100 territories.

Cake has just added *Hareport* and *Raspberry Jazzberry Jam* to its portfolio and intends to unveil some new series at KidScreen Summit next month.

Runner-up: 4Kids Entertainment

Broadcaster of the Year: Cartoon Network US

With a new executive team in place, Cartoon Network US made good on its ambitious plan to increase ratings one night at a time, and successfully transitioned itself out of a ratings slump. First the net focused on a strong comedy lineup for Thursday nights, which led to a 68% year-over-year ratings increase with kids six to 11 in the month of November. Subsequently, the Friday night action-adventure lineup led by *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* grew ratings by 80% from the previous November.

In 2009, says president and CEO of Turner Animation, Kids and Young Adults Media, Stu Snyder, a roster of original TV movies will keep the momentum going and build on the action-adventure theme. On deck is live-action TV movie *Scooby-Doo: The Beginning*, a film Snyder says could spawn a series. The net is also working on expanding its development slate, translating comic book titles into made-for-

TV films with series potential. Snyder says the net is also close to announcing a series concept hatched through its new in-house animation hub, Cartoonstitute.

Runner-up: Nickelodeon International

Licensor of the Year: Cartoon Network Enterprises

CNE took home KidScreen's Best Licensor of the Year honors this year by riding Ben 10's global appeal and deftly launching into third-party representation on the back of winning property Bakugan. "There is no shortage of talent here and that goes a long way," says CNE VP of consumer products Christina Miller. "As for being an agent, we chose the right partners - Nelvana and Spin Master for Bakugan - and it's just been great."

With Ben 10, Miller believes the innate likeability of the character is something that CNE has capitalized on, never being complacent with the program. "It's like a long marriage; we don't want to stop surprising people. We are always looking at new ways to reach our core consumers." To that end, look for a major Ben 10 partnership with the National Basketball Association to coincide with the All-Star game in February 2009, and a new licensing program to roll out around CN original series The Secret Saturdays, led by global master toy partner Mattel.

Runner-up: HIT Entertainment

Licensee of the Year: Spin Master

It was the year of Bakugan for Toronto, Canada-based Spin Master, and the toyco looks to continue building on the brand's success into 2009. VP of global licensing Adam Beder says that significant promo and marketing plans around the property are in the works for the spring, along with the announcement of a video game partner. This should keep the momentum rolling as the toyco works on translating the property to the silver screen in a live-action feature in the works with Universal. And its newly formed content division has been making international noise - the company has high hopes to replicate the Bakugan model for another property. The current economic climate hasn't shaken Beder, who remains confident about the strength of Spin Master's licensed lines and ranges fuelled by brand licenses, such as mini-skateboard line Tech Deck, which tripled its sales this year.

Runner-up: Hasbro

Licensing Agent of the Year: Kidz Entertainment

CEO Anna Lisa McBride says much of 2008 was focused on integrating operations with Eastern European agency EEMC and moving into 15 countries in the region, including expanding into the Ukraine. So the year ahead, she notes, will be about optimizing the company's portfolio, especially spearheading a big consumer products push for Lego in Nordic and Eastern Europe and working on brand-new pickup In the Night Garden. Mounting a major promotional campaign for the upcoming third installment of the Ice Age franchise, Dawn of the Dinosaurs, is also priority. As for acquisitions, McBride says the company is always looking to bring new properties into the portfolio and is particularly interested in picking up rights to an older tween/teen girl IP to complement core girl brands Littlest Pet Shop and Bella Sara in the next 12 months.

Runner-up: The Licensing Shop