

The game's up for the Playstation generation

Submitted by: Dee Carpenter Public Relations

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High street stores have reported a massive rise in sales of traditional family games like Monopoly, Scrabble and Cluedo and claim it's the grown-ups who are heralding the revival. Whether it's in an attempt to drag their children from the brink of techno oblivion, or to simply recapture their youth, nobody knows. But for one company, regarded as the makers of the best games on the planet, this backlash is no surprise

Operating from a converted piggery near Wimbish in Saffron Walden, the heart of the Cambridgeshire country-side, Geoffrey Parker Ltd. have achieved a world-wide reputation as creators of the most sumptuous board games. Some of their luxuriantly crafted favourites include Monopoly, Scrabble, Cluedo and even Snakes & Ladders.

A million miles from the plastic-fantastic creations found on the high street, these game boards are painstakingly produced by hand using a variety of hand dyed and treated leathers including buffalo, crocodile, ostrich, alligator, shagreen and occasionally lizard. Each specially prepared to be harder wearing, to help cope with all that gaming can throw at it. Pieces are moulded in 18 carat gold, sterling silver, platinum or carved from exotic woods. No expense is spared to produce the quality games demanded by their clientele.

Founded in 1958 by the current chairman's father and company name sake Geoffrey Parker began producing leather bound miniature poetry books and only moved into gaming when he was asked to produce a leather chess board by the chairman of Dunhill. The rest is history, reproducing gaming classics for grown-ups the world over has been Geoffrey Parker's core business ever since. The company now supply games to Harrods, Tiffany and Bloomingdales - amongst others and some of their famous clientele include the Sultan of Brunei, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sir Richard Branson and Roman Abramovich - to name just a few.

Its capabilities, however, are best demonstrated when set a bespoke challenge. "We like people to ask the impossible, and then to prove that we can do it." Says Max Parker, current Chairman and son of the founder. "We don't want to compromise our work in any way. If we produce something amazing which only sells five pieces because of its cost then so be it, we would rather do that than sell five million pieces of something which really didn't measure up."

One of the most costly and extraordinary requests was for a half-a-million pound personalised Monopoly set, An extreme case of 'boys-and-their-toy's' syndrome!

Bound in alligator leather, every street was inlaid in hand engraved sterling silver. The Super Tax square was a replica of the buyers wife's engagement ring. 'Chance' was adapted into a working Roulette Wheel made from sterling silver; there were two 18 carat gold dice with 21 diamonds in each; as well as 32 houses and 12 hotels made from 18 carat gold. The playing pieces were all very personal objects too, such as an exact replica of his Rolls Royce, his yacht, Bulgari pen and not forgetting his mobile phone. All of this and 15,500 Euros in real cash to play with!

Other quirky pieces commissioned include a facsimile of George Washington's campaign case for the

Smithsonian institute, a blind backgammon set for Stevie Wonder and another bespoke monopoly board for one of the Polo glitterati, (made from finest English Bridle hide - instead of streets you buy Polo clubs, and pay vets fees rather than taxes).

The recent changes in gambling laws, too, come as a welcome change for the company. Geoffrey Parker have perfected casino games for the home and have been rolling them out since the late seventies. So the new laws can only bring new challenges for a company who are passionate about their work.

So grown-ups take note. If you're feeling nostalgic or long to drag your kids back to the civilised world then do it in style. All requests are considered if you're looking for something very special.

To arrange an interview or a visit to Geoffrey Parker Ltd., or to request samples or digital images, please contact Dawn Jarvis at Dee Carpenter Public Relations. Tel: 020 8780 9944 Email: dawn@deecarpenterpr.co.uk