

SPECIALTY RETAILER

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Circ - 8,000

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Bacon's

3749

G

ames
&
Puzzles

Playing for Profits

by Nancy Lombardi

ABC's runaway hit game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* continues to top the ratings making success the final answer for retailers. The popularity of the board game version of the series, from Pressman, is making this category hotter than it already is. The NPD Group is reporting that the games and puzzles category was up 17.4 percent in dollar value between 1998 and 1999. Card and children's games were up significantly as well.

Winston Stoodly of Winston's Game Co. has been witnessing this resurgence in his stores. He says that people are not playing on computers for entertainment as much as they once were. "People use computers at work, they don't want to use them at home as well," he says.

As a result, board game versions of this game show and others help to bring consumers to the aisle. Game shows have always been a great basis for board games due to the name recognition and quick gameplay. Pam Canfield of That Games Store likes Endless Games' \$25,000 **Pyramid** and **Family Feud**, two all time classics in the game show world. She has also been spreading the word about the company's newest game set to debut this fall, A&E's **Biography Who Am I?** game, due to its different levels of gameplay.

Some other games that sparked her interest are University

Games' **Battle of the Sexes** which she says she has been carrying since it first came to this country from Australia.

But one of her greatest finds at this year's Toy Fair is **Music Mayhem**. The object of the game is to name the song and artist but the key aspect is that each player contributes their own CDs. This makes the gameplay different every time.

"Many specialty stores were looking at this game at Toy Fair because they saw the value in it for teachers," says Canfield.

Although the category is doing well, Canfield notes that there is a lack of originality with some games. **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire** is selling very well but that is due to TV exposure and it is not something that is exclusive to the specialty market.

"What happens every fall is that there is always a game that pops up in the specialty market at the last minute. It is always something that wasn't advertised and wasn't at Toy Fair," she says.

Retailers have to be on the lookout in the coming months. But for now keep an eye out for this word-of-mouth item: **LCR**. The game **Left, Center, Right** is from George and Company of Buffalo N.Y. Canfield says the inexpensive, easy to play dice game is spreading as more and more people try it and get hooked.