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There really ain't

THERE AIN'T nothing like a doll, nothing in the world. Nothing talks like a doll; nothing walks like a doll.

Once again, that's the tune of toy manufacturers as the mountain of the dolls reaches its Christmas peak.

A computerized doll named Julie is being touted by its manufacturer as the most technologically advanced doll ever, with a 64K memory — comparable to the early Apple II — and a 32-bit Texas Instruments microprocessor, more sophisticated than an early IBM personal computer.

The doll can be trained to respond to its owner's voice, answers questions with more than 100 sound-activated sentences, and has sensors in its fingers that make it appear it's reading from books.

The 23-inch-tall doll also senses heat, cold, light, darkness and movement, and warns when the batteries are low. Julie's eyes, face and mouth move as she talks.

When taken in a moving car, Julie asks: "Where are we going?" In a dark room, Julie asks: "Can you see OK? It's kind of dark." Julie also can ask for a sweater when temperatures drop.

The recommended retail price is \$90 to \$125, but some stores already are selling the doll for \$200, said Bob Goldberg, executive vice president of marketing for Worlds of Wonder Inc., makers of Teddy Ruxpin, the computerized talking stuffed bear introduced last Christmas.

LESS COSTLY ON the financial doll scale are Blooming Dolls, named not for the department store but because they start as flowers in a pot and "bloom" into puppets and then fabric dolls.

The Cap Toys product, designed for preschoolers, retails for about \$20.

Grandma's Marshmallow Babies, soft stocking dolls with a light marshmallow scent, and Busy Elephant, complete with a rattling ball that spins on the end of its trunk, come from Playskool, makers of Mr. Potato Head.

An elephant is one of six animal dolls in Fisher-Price's Wild Puffalumps collection. Dressed in colorful Hawaiian-print shirts and sunglasses, they sell for about \$25 each and include a panda bear, lion, toucan, rhino and monkey.

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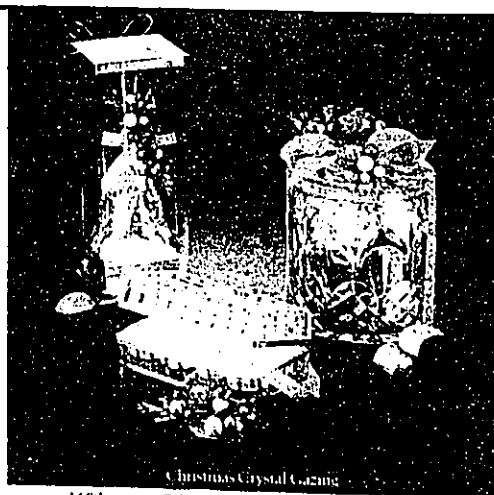


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