

Adventures in Toys is that — and more

By C.L. Rugenstein
staff writer

A VISITOR'S first impression of the Adventures in Toys shop was: Where DO they get those wonderful toys?

Adventures, on West Maple in Birmingham, specializes in unusual, luxurious and hard-to-find toys — some of

them good enough to tempt adults.

For instance, the Learning Materials Workshop.

It features several sets of wooden shapes, including the curved, rainbow-colored sections and building blocks. Set in a 36-inch-square playframe (with legs available to convert it to a table), the \$350 workshop is a traffic stopper for children and adults, who

pause to tinker with the blocks.

"It's the most unusual toy you'll see anywhere," said the shop's owner, Shelly Littman. "We, as adults, have not stopped looking at the possibilities."

And what adult could resist the plush golden replica of the MGM lion?

Specially commissioned by MGM and created by Dakin, the \$400 lion (about the size of a lion cub) has teeth from a real lion in its mouth.

LIONS, TIGERS and bears are everywhere.

Littman has unusual and collectible bears to please the most demanding bear aficionado.

The Beary There set is three bears: one dressed in a Babe Ruth base ball suit, one as a college sport circa 1920 with porkpie hat, argyle socks and raccoon coat, and one Tom Selleck style in loud Hawaiian shirt and lei. All were priced at \$73.

Along with the fun bears are the Stuffed button in the ear collectibles. These come in different persuasions — seals, hippos, foxes and rocking bears besides bears.

The seal, posed on a drum and balancing a blue ball on its nose, is \$90. The monkey and elephant are a little more.

The showstopper is the Stuffed hippo with big pink bow and white tutu. She looks like she danced straight out of Walt Disney's "Fantasia" looking for her alligator prince.

THE COLLECTIBLES have a circus theme. Four bears with red, green, blue and yellow bodies and white heads sport peach chenille tails and a \$110 price tag.

But luxury-loving toy buyers better get them quick.

"They're limited editions," Littman said. "They'll be out just this year and then no more. Prices will skyrocket next year."

Another luxury for the small fry set is the big, Stuffed rideable rocking bear, \$600.

TOYS THAT stimulate the imagination are always a luxury, and such are the dress-up trunks Littman stocks.

The cardboard trunks look like miniatures of the old treasure-laden steamer trunks once found in many an attic.

The boy's trunk goes for \$24, the girl's for \$32. (It has hangers and a drawer.)

Outfits to be added range from \$45 to \$90. A girl can dress up as a Victorian lady in crimson taffeta gown with bustle and hat, or '50s belle with poodle skirt and sweater. Even a budding Madonna can find a trendy leather skirt, black lace tights and shocking pink tube top.

Youngsters can be cowboys in real white leather chaps, pirates or silver-suited astronauts.

"The astronauts could be boys or girls," Littman said. "I hate to be sexist."

UNUSUAL THINGS Littman stocks are the walking, talking, bilingual dolls. French-made, approximately 14 inches tall and dressed in sweaters, slacks and legwarmers, the battery-operated dolls come with four 2-inch discs.

"They can speak either French or English when you put in the record," Littman said.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Adventure Toys has something special for the guppy set — that's pre-yuppy — this BMW car by Cars for Kids. It features a Honda engine, two gears, reverses and capable of 16 mph. Sells for \$3,500. And you even have to check the air pressure in the tires.

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