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Space Toys Losing to Westerns

By Marilyn Mercer

The past and the future are battling it out for the attention of the young, according to the Toy Guidance Council's preview of toys for Christmas, 1959.

Space toys, last year's top favorites, are being challenged by Western paraphernalia, and the old West is coming along fast. According to a Toy Guidance spokesman "Last year, just after the sputnik, space toys were big; but television is making inroads."

In the space category, budding scientists will find rockets of all prices and descriptions, launching pads, space helmets, physics sets. For \$6.95 you can build your own atomic power plant: Revell makes the kit.

Holsters

From the West come outfits approximating those of favorite TV good and bad guys; spring-mounted hobby horses, hats and holsters. There's a real-looking Colt .45 that shoots bullets about 3 feet weighted for fanning action for fast guns; for ladies and card players there's a tiny derringer.

The rival categories carry over into electric trains. Lionel has a rocket-launching flat car; you shoot the rockets at an explosives car and, if it hits, the car falls into fragments.

"The government announced that it was building these cars last month; we had them on our drawing boards a year ago," said the Lionel man.

Gilbert, on the other hand, is featuring a Casey Jones vintage six-eight wheeler appropriate for crossing the Great Plains.

The trend in dolls is away

from imitation adults and toward imitation children. "It's a big year for baby dolls," said a Toy Guidance spokesman; the babies are life-size, from six months to three years, and a three-year-old can dress one in her own clothes.

Sick Doll

For small invalids there's Marybel, the doll that gets well. She comes equipped with bandages, a cast, crutches, and paste - on measles and chicken pox.

Television inspires toys outside the Western category too. The exhibit includes Shari Lewis doll, a Perry Mason game, Huckleberry House animals and others. "The kids demand them," explains the Council.

Miscellaneous and newsworthy are a plastic clock that a child can take apart and put together—it keeps reasonable time for 14 hours and costs \$4.98; a barber kit with a realistic, buzzing shaver; build-it-yourself Maserati and Mercedes Benz racers; matchbox cars—tiny models of cars, trucks, antique automobiles, each one packed in a matchbox, 49 cents a piece.

For rich children there are cash registers, a wooden coin bank with a moneybag, and a safe that has a secret combination and burglar alarm.

Electric Organ

For rich parents, there's a three octave electric organ that plugs in and plays like a real one—\$80. Or a complete, nine-part General Electric kitchen with a light-up stove, and rotisserie insulated freezer that keeps ice cream several hours, and battery-powered dishwasher. Doll-size, it sells for \$60.

The Toy Guidance Council

is an industry group formed to evaluate, with the help of a panel of educators, the products of toy manufacturers. This exhibit marks the opening of the Council's new permanent home, a six story building at West 55th St.

The first two floors will be devoted to displays of new toys as they come on the market; the third floor is a "play laboratory" with a see-through mirror for observation.

The building will be open to buyers, educators and the press. The facilities of the "play laboratory" are open to accredited social workers, teachers, and child guidance workers who wish to bring in groups of children for study.