



All-Round Sensation!

Something big is brewing in puzzle-land. The people behind the original gazillion-selling sensation the Rubik's Cube have a new brain-teaser ready to consumer-launch in late Summer 2009. It's called the **Rubik's 360**. And the buzz is that it's going to be huge.

Whether it will be quite as huge as its spiritual leader the Rubik's Cube, only time will tell. But according to the man himself, **Professor Erno Rubik**, the 360 takes the puzzle concept into another dimension. Literally.



As its name suggests, the 360 is spherical as opposed to cube-shaped. There have been a number of variants on Rubik's original over the years – some, like the Rubik's Magic, hugely successful in their own right. But, says the Professor, "*I feel*

that the Rubik's 360 is one of the most innovative and exciting puzzles we've developed since the Cube – adopting elements of my original design, challenging the solver to use skill, dexterity and logic. But it's a more kinetic challenge, more physical, because gravity is involved. We all have great hopes for it."

International Celebrity

Rewind back to the 80s - the decade of big hair and shoulder pads. Professor Erno Rubik's fiendish plastic puzzle first hit the shops just before Christmas 1980, quickly becoming the fastest-selling toy of all time. Rubik, an architect and University lecturer in then Communist Hungary, had spent six years struggling to get his prototype – originally designed as a teaching aid for his students – into commercial production. Once he did, though, there was no stopping him, or it.

'Toy of the Year' in both 1980 and 1981, the Cube was everywhere. Like the international celebrity it soon became, it was featured on a Hungarian postage stamp. It even had its own TV show. but while sales inevitably declined during the late 80s and 90s, the Cube didn't die like so many other short-lived toy crazes.

Since about the time of its 25th Birthday, the Cube has got really big again – spurred on by a new generation of global enthusiasts sharing 'Speedcubing' tips and techniques on the internet. Now more than 100 official WCA (World Cube Association) Speedcubing competitions take place all over the world each year. At the 2007 bi-annual World Championships in Budapest, Rubik's home town, more than 150 competitors from 46 countries got together to try to twist and spin their way to glory. The fastest 'single solve' time recorded at that event was 10.59 seconds - by Englishman Dan Harris – and there are only 13 people globally who have broken the much-contested 10-second barrier. The current World Record, held by nimble-fingered teenager Erik Akkersdijk from Holland, currently stands at a staggering 7.08 seconds.

The Rubik's Cube, then, is here to stay, and its popularity is continuing to grow, with sales of 15 million units achieved worldwide last year (2008). Type the word 'Rubik' into *You Tube* and you get about 36,500 results – twice as many as for David Beckham. American Cube-meister Dan Brown's (no, not *that* Dan Brown) 'how to' video has been viewed almost 8 million times in less than a year. Probably because, despite the incredible speed at which it can be solved by the huge bands

of 'Speedcubers', the Cube remains a fiendishly tough challenge for the likes of you and I.

On the cusp of a radical evolution!

But what of this latest Rubik's introduction, the 360? How will it fare among the Speedcubing fraternity, and even more importantly, the wider games-buying public? Suffice to say that the team at Seven Towns, international Rubik's licensor and rights holder, are eagerly anticipating another global mega-hit.

Says London-based **David Hedley Jones**, Seven Towns' Senior Vice President – Rubik brand: *"Ever since we helped Erno Rubik to launch the Cube back in 1980, we've worked incessantly both to promote and safeguard the Rubik's brand. As well as keeping the cheap, potentially dangerous fakes off the streets, and safeguarding its iconic imagery throughout the press, online and broadcast media, we're always on the lookout for Rubik's themed concepts that will appeal to our international army of fans. We're certain we've found a winner in the 360, and are confident that this fantastic new concept will have all the appeal and longevity of the Cube"*.



Six Coloured Balls -

Three Transparent Spheres -

Only One Solution

When you actually put your hands around the Rubik's 360 you can see what gives Seven Towns such confidence. Whereas the original Cube drew criticism for being too esoteric, too intellectual, and altogether too difficult when first released, the 360, although similarly challenging, has the immediate and instinctive tactile appeal of all the best toys and games.

It is a baffling piece of equipment, to say the least... echoing the Cube in its colour-scheming and the demands it makes on dexterity and visual awareness. As with the

Cube, gameplay is easy to grasp, but not so easy to execute. Not quite so easy to describe, either, but here goes...

The Rubik's 360 is 10 centimetres or so in diameter, and consists of a transparent plastic sphere housing two further internal transparent spheres, both independently suspended on a rotating axis, with six coloured balls at its centre. In essence, the object of the puzzle is to steer the coloured balls through holes in the spheres and into their respective coloured 'home slot' domes on the outside.



But along the way you have to contend with the problem of gravity... The challenge of completing the puzzle - and then, with practice, achieving ever-speedier times - clearly positions the 360 alongside the Cube in the hand-held puzzles field. And like the Cube, you don't have to solve it in one go. The 360 has special horizontal rings to 'lock' the balls in place once you've captured them correctly on its circumference.

So you don't have to start all over again if you make a mistake or get too tired (or frustrated!) to continue. Because it's fun and undoubtedly attractive to look at, the 360 is also likely to appeal equally to both sexes - and all ages and abilities.

*"Simple but complex; static but dynamic;
easy to understand the task, but hard to
work out the solution."*

**Erno Rubik's summation of his original design concept
for puzzles could well be applied to this new one.**

The team at Seven Towns views the puzzle as complementary rather than competitive to the original Cube; expecting it to considerably expand the existing market for the Rubik's brand. "We see the 360 as potentially appealing to an even wider and more international audience than our original puzzle" says David Hedley

Jones, "And of course, requiring no electricity or batteries, it's very much in the current eco-friendly mode".

They say that lightning never strikes in the same place twice. And it does seem unlikely that the extraordinary success of the Rubik's Cube could ever be replicated. But the Rubik's 360 just might give it a serious run for its money.



In any commercial arena – everybody's always looking for the elusive 'Next Big Thing'. The new Lego. The new Monopoly. The new Rubik's Cube. Seven Towns has high hopes that its Rubik's 360 is just that, the big thing that everyone is going to want in their Christmas stocking at the end of the year.

Will those expectations be fulfilled? Well that, ultimately – as always in this consumer society – is up to us...

For more information on all things Rubik's, log on to www.rubiks.com

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**The legendary Rubik's Cube:
perpetual design icon
and the world's best selling toy**



The fiendishly difficult, but entrancing Rubik's Cube (350 million have been sold since its launch in 1980) may have 43,252,003,274,489,856,000 possible combinations on its six coloured faces – but it has only ONE solution. Once it has been 'scrambled' you solve The Cube by twisting its fifty-four squares around the ingenious central axis - until all six faces consist of solid blocks of colour.

Now once again enjoying enormous popularity worldwide (sales achieved during 2008 were 15 million, over 2007's 12 million), the iconic Rubik's Cube's fascination and fun factor is undiminished. Rather, it is magnified by the power of the web's social networking possibilities, providing super-celebrity status for the 'wonder boy' Speedcubers – some of whom, in World Championships attracting hundreds of entries from all five continents, solve the puzzle in *less than 10 seconds* or just over a minute - *blindfold*.

The current World Record Holder for solving The Cube is Dutch teenager Erik Akkersdijk, who, in July 2008, achieved the incredible 'single solve' time of 7.08 seconds. Worldwide rights to the Rubik's Cube are owned by 7 Towns Ltd. of London.

A world phenomenon, the Rubik's Cube is not just huge, it's everlasting – and as its eponymous Hungarian inventor Erno Rubik himself says: "*If it's capable of living for almost 30 years, it's probably capable of living forever.*"



For more information on the new Rubik's 360, or HR pics, please contact:

Ms Ray Hodges – direct line **+44 (0) 1628 894793** or email r.hodges@hpsgroup.co.uk

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