

WAY BACK THEN



2007 Rubik's World Speedcubing Championship



Birth of the legend

The 'power' behind the Rubik's throne has always been **Tom Kremer** (*left, below*), founder of London-based 7Towns Ltd. – the company which owns the worldwide rights of all things Rubik's.

Here we ask Tom to cast his mind back to the early eighties... the days of stone-washed flares, 'big hair', big shoulder pads and big egos (must-watch order of the day was the Texan uber-soap *Dallas*, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran and sparked off a war of discontent that would last well into the 21st Century – and a retired film star named Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States). Legendary Beatles superstar John Lennon was shot dead outside his New York apartment; Alfred Hitchcock, Steve McQueen and Peter Sellers passed on to better things – and Japan passed the US as the world's largest car manufacturer. The Moscow Summer Olympic games were boycotted by the US - and in the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher became the first ever female prime Minister.



Meanwhile, back at the ranch, behind the Iron Curtain... a certain Budapest-based lecturer at the Department of Interior Design at the Academy of Applied Arts and Crafts named **Erno Rubik** had developed the Rubik's Cube – set to become a genuine cultural phenomenon... and the fastest-selling toy ever. Like Concorde, The Cube has become an icon in itself... and is so firmly entrenched in the worldwide public consciousness that its place in history is assured...

Q *Tom, you 'discovered' the Rubik's Cube. How did you first meet Erno Rubik?*

A In the late 70s I already ran my own marketing and licensing company, 7 Towns – and was recognised as a successful inventor and product developer, representing professional inventors from all over the world. I first saw the Rubik's Cube being demonstrated in a

hallway at the Nuremburg Toy Fair – it caught my eye from 20 yards away because it was turning on two axis... which shouldn't have been possible.

I took the trouble to go to Budapest, meet the government agencies and manufacturers and thus finally met Erno Rubik who, at that time, was the only one able to demonstrate solving the Cube.

Q *Did the Cube take off very quickly after that?*

A Not on your life! I visited well over twenty major companies in many different countries with the Cube - and the reception was uniform. They all told me not to be silly... normally I brought them toys and games which had conventional attributes and appeal – but everyone in the industry told me they thought the Cube had absolutely no chance!



The general view was that its 'faults' were numerous: too difficult and expensive to manufacture, impossible to demonstrate its fascination on TV, too abstract, too cerebral, too quiet... a challenge for the esoteric academic mind rather than a puzzle meant for the young and the public in general.

Q *What was the turning point, then?*

A Despite all this doom and gloom, whenever I had the Cube with me at any group gathering (whether it was a school 'do', or a dinner party or at an event of any kind where people gathered) and started to play with it, there was an immediate interest. People wanted to take it away from me... and when they did, I could never get it back!

I became convinced that to realise the Cube's full commercial potential it had to have the marketing muscle, promotional power and distribution network of a major international company, but none of the leading players in the field shared my enthusiasm.

In the meantime, the Hungarians had commenced manufacture in a small way – while I continued to search for a viable partner. After many disappointments, I persuaded the Ideal Toy Corporation to send Stewart Sims, their VP of Marketing, to Hungary - to see the Cube in play with his own eyes. It was now September 1979, by which time it had gained a sufficient degree of popularity in Budapest to be seen in the street, on trams, in cafes - each time in the hands of someone turning and twisting it, completely absorbed.

After five days of convoluted negotiations between a sceptical American capitalist and an obstinate communist organisation ignorant of the mechanics of a free market, Ideal was persuaded to come up with an initial order for one million Cubes - amidst much handshaking and relief all round! The rest, as you know, is history!

Q *So, what is the secret of the Rubik's Cube's success... and longevity?*

A **Deep down, I always felt confident that the Rubik's Cube would be successful,** but I could never claim that I was able to foresee that it would become a phenomenon beyond the toy business... that it would enter the culture of virtually every country in the world, and that the people who wanted to have one would be grandmothers and grandfathers as well as their sons, daughters and grandchildren.

I believe that the Cube has this universality is because goes deep into the human psyche - and it actually touches on two fundamentals. Disorder, chaos on the one hand - and complete order, calm and symmetry on the other. And the transition from the one to the other continues to be magical.

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NOTES FOR JOURNALISTS AND BROADCASTERS:

2007 WORLD RUBIK'S SPEEDCUBING CHAMPIONSHIP

If you want some really cool facts about Speedcubing, visit The World Cubing Association's site – www.speedcubing.com – which, apart from telling you all about the World Championship, is fully up-to-date with all the fantastic Cube records, including the fastest time for solving the Cube blind-folded, underwater, one-handed – even for solving it with your feet!! There are also mountains of other sites dedicated to this finger-twisting phenomenon – and you can find loads of interesting facts and solution ideas at the **official 'Cubist' website** – www.rubiks.com.

**For more information/high resolution pictures,
please contact our Worldwide Press Officer:**

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London-based David Hedley Jones, Worldwide Director of the Rubik Brand, is available for interview... as is **Dan Harris, the UK Rubik's Speedcubing Champion** – he can do it in **13.06 seconds**.

Please call us to arrange a date/time.

**We have produced a brand new Rubik's World Championship B-roll of useful footage – including an interview with ERNO RUBIK himself, sequences from the last World Championship, archive shots, Budapest panoramas, etc.
(see over)**



To access the

RUBIK'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP B-ROLL

please go to www.thenewshub.net

LOG IN: **Username:** rubik2007
 Password: worldchampionship

Click on '*Video Production*'. Then click on '*View Footage*'

Once viewed, to request hard copies of this footage please contact James Myers at the Television Consultancy:

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Tel: + 44 (0) 207 535 5800