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Booming market for 1980s toy Return of the Transformers



NOSTALGIA: Mark Starick shows son Jayden his Transformers collection. Picture: JAMES ELSBY

By SEAN FEWSTER

OSCAR winner Steven Spielberg will bring one of the toy phenomenons of the 1980s to the big screen - generating a booming adult collectors market for the robots known as Transformers.

The director has announced he will follow next year's *The War of the Worlds* with a live-action tale of the mechanical heroes who disguise themselves as cars, trucks and jets.

The news has prompted people in their mid-20s to seek out the original Transformers toys - and they are prepared to pay thousands of dollars to recapture childhood memories.

Susan Wardle, from the Toy Collector at Ingle Farm, said adult buyers had made Transformers one of the store's most popular lines.

"The big buyers are people aged 20 to 24, the people who were kids when the toys first came out and still remember them," Mrs Wardle said.

"There's always a strong interest in them and whatever we get in stock sells pretty much straight away, especially the early, hard-to-get stuff."

She said the most popular figures were the "Generation One" toys, which were released

A discerning collector

ADULTHOOD has given Mark Starick both the opportunity and the funds to indulge in his childhood passion.

"I've always loved Transformers and, as a kid, I got what my mum and dad got me," said the father-of-two.

"But the bits and pieces I got kept me interested, even though I never really liked the later releases. I've always liked the Generation One toys."

When some of those classic Transformers were reproduced

to commemorate the line's 20th anniversary, Mr Starick, 24, finally had his chance to build a large collection.

In the last 18 months, he has spent close to \$1000 on the toys, paying as much as \$200 for rare items. "I like the fact the toys are not crazy spaceships that don't look like anything real - they look like real cars and trucks that you would see on the road," he said.

His passion has spread to sons Jayden, 5, and Ethan, 2.

between 1984 and 1990 and featured metal parts.

"People pay up to \$300 for the toys, depending on whether it's the last piece they need for their collection," she said.

"The further they get into collecting, the more customers are prepared to pay for top-quality, pristine items."

Stephen Jesson, who runs the website theyareamongus.com, said many fans were building on the "modest collections" they had as children.

"In my mid-20s I spent thousands of dollars on Generation

One toys (but) I sold my entire collection so I could go around the world debt-free," he said.

"It wasn't until 2001 that I rediscovered my love of Transformers and I've been rebuilding my collection ever since."

He now owns 400 figures and other members of the site own more than 900. "Everyone is looking for an escape," he said.

"I like to unwind not by cracking open a beer but by breaking open the odd toy and escaping to a place full of fun and imagination - no matter how childish that seems to some."

Stabbing murder charge

A MAN will face court today charged with the stabbing murder of another man in Sydney.

Police were called to a house in Willmot about 7pm on Sunday after reports there had been a stabbing during an argument.

They found a man, 36, suffering a stab wound and were unable to revive him.

A man, 30, from Willmot, who was arrested at the scene, was charged with murder yesterday. He was denied police bail.

Land title advice packs

MORE than 200 of the state's pastoral lease holders are set to receive information packs about developing indigenous land use agreements.

The SA Farmers Federation, the State Government and the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement were among groups involved in three years of talks about native title and indigenous issues.

An example access agreement for pastoral leases has been produced, which parties can enter into on a voluntary basis.