SPECIAL REPORT: GERMANY

Alwin Jeck, the director of merchandising at Ravensburger.

smaller, with substantially less people, and a population that's not used to wearing or using licensed products. Plus, properties are not advertised and promoted like they are in the U.S." As a result, Klaus says Bullyland is sticking with standard 'classic' characters like Sesame Strasse (Sesame Street), Disney, and Looney Tunes, instead of taking risks with younger, lesser known and less established properties.

Taking a different stance, Gunter Vetter, managing director of Euro Lizenzen (EL), cautions against not taking risks with newer properties.

"The bulk of prospective licensees is most prepared to license classics along the lines of Winnie the Pooh and Janosch," says Vetter. "Often, however, due to an unwillingness to take a risk, many firms attempt to jump on the bandwagon once a property has become firmly established, which can ultimately lead to an over-saturation of the marketplace with the property in question. Furthermore, many interested parties are denied licenses because the categories they wish to license are already gone."

Although EL no doubt recognizes the need for classic properties and represents a number of these, including the Smiley portfolio, Felix the Cat, and the Haribo Goldbear, the company has also branched out into other sectors. In fact, EL was one of the first agencies in Germany to venture into "brand" licensing, which has long been the buzzword of the North American industry. Two of the brands on EL's roster include beverage mega-brand, Pepsi, and Maui and Sons, the popular California-lifestyle apparel collection.

"The German market is avidly on the lookout for new brands, and experienced marketers are quick to realize the enormous potential behind a brand name," Vetter notes. "Consumers are more keen than ever on purchasing an emotionally laden product that makes a statement through a brand, and importantly, a unique design. Through a given brand, the consumer identifies himself with a certain lifestyle and peers on one hand, and on the other, distinguishes himself from the 'masses.'"

Heartworks' Kim Anderson, a top license in Europe and the U.S.

Bavaria Sonar, which handles such properties as Janosch, Die Maus, and most recently, SOS-Kinderdorfer (SOS Children's Village), works at developing its licenses into comprehensive branding programs by ensuring that all merchandise is an appropriate extension of the core property.

"Our strategy is classic, long-term, and branding," says Gloria Rathsfeld, mar-

Spanning two continents, V.I.P.'s Sir Michael Lou (left) greets Sony Signature's Dell Furano.

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