



## **A new way to play**

### **Toywheel releases "Toy Car RC" and connects toys in the real and virtual world**

Berlin, 3rd of April 2014 - Showing children how they can use new media as part of their playing, without overloading them or putting them in front of a games-console for hours: this is the vision of Evgeni Kouris, founder of Toywheel, a Berlin development studio for Digital Toys. Toywheel stands for conscious use of the latest technologies and endless fun via augmented reality. The first product - the "Toy Car RC" app - is now available in the App Store.

"We want to combine the interactivity of video games and the creativity, diversity and educational benefits of physical toys. In the case of digital toys it's primarily about what we don't do. Just because something is technically possible does not mean that it's beneficial for children", explains CEO Kouris.

To this end, the developers employ Augmented Reality technology, which is still relatively new in Germany, to craft unique and individual play experiences by merging physical and virtual environments. "Toy Car RC" is one of the first games to offer this technology to such a young age group. Unlike traditional online games, the children can move around freely, explore their surroundings and learn the game alone or in groups. The app is completely intuitive which means that children can play with it in the same way they do with wooden building blocks etc. which is obviously also a boon for parents. Kouris' long-term goal is to take everything that we can see, hear and feel in the physical world and reflect that in a virtual experience and makes it extremely simple to take part in.

The first project allows children to steer a car through two different worlds: Candy Land and Western World. The actual physical playing environment is imported into the game using a simple printed target pictures. Specifically, this could mean that children can drive the car across their own bed, swerve between pots and pans in the kitchen or entertain themselves while waiting in line at the doctors or at a restaurant. The markers (or target images) can easily be printed out using any standard printer - and if this is not available, any magazine page, bank note or hand-drawn image can be converted into a target image using the camera of the mobile device. The games are not goal-oriented and there is no 'winning' - fostering imagination and creativity is the priority. All necessary elements are already contained in the game and don't have to be acquired through expensive in-app purchases.

Both founders have made it their mission to connect the digital world with the creative fun of traditional toys and thereby tackle parents' fear of new media. To this end, they are working closely with the University of Kassel to analyze the latest developments and research about the effects of new media on children and young people, and to integrate these insights into the continuing development of their games. Soon the paid version of the Toy will be released featuring two more worlds and several exciting vehicles. In the coming months more games with completely different themes are due to reach the market.

## **About Toywheel**

Toywheel is a Berlin-based Digital Toys Studio that brings the intuitive play experience with

toys into the present digital age. Specially created and designed for kids, the Toywheel apps link reality to interactive media. Behind the digital toymakers for kids are the two co-founders Evgeni Kouris and Christian Bittler. The company is financed by various Business Angels such as Brendan Donovan, IT-entrepreneur and himself a father of three.