

# Oz puppets for all

Oz character puppets mass produced for children to play with at home have been popular for almost as long as professional *Wizard of Oz* puppet shows. A Tin Woodman puppet that was sold at Disneyland's Geppetto's toy store appeared on Ebay a few years ago, but far more common are the Hazelle Marionettes produced by a company in Kansas City. Founded in 1935, Hazelle created marionettes, finger puppets and hand puppets. Although they didn't offer a Tin Woodman, their line included Dorothy, Scarecrow/Strawman, Lion, and Wicked Witch. A slightly modified version of the story added "Mike" to the plot. Once the story was in public domain, characters like these that didn't reflect the MGM styles were easy for toy manufacturers to produce and sell.

Of course, other kids and parents made their own Oz puppets at home.

Less expensive hand puppets became popular as marketing premiums for various products. Most notably Proctor and Gamble offered puppets with figural heads and plastic bodies with soap products in the 1960. The puppets advertised *Off to See the Wizard*, an animated television cartoon. A Emerald City paper theater was available as a mail-in offer.



*The Off to See the Wizard puppet theater.*



Additional puppets promoting *Off to See the Wizard*, were simpler still; each Oz character was printed on flat plastic shapes and packaged with snack food. Another approach to puppet-izing that production was the finger tip hand puppet with an enclosed voice box. With the pull of a string the various characters spoke recorded lines.



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And what Oz fan wasn't eating Smucker's jam in 1985? The only way to get *Return to Oz* plush hand puppets of Scarecrow, Tik Tok or Gump was by sending in labels with \$4.99.

MGM-styled puppets were among the popular products offered in 1989 to celebrate the film's 50th anniversary. Young fans could easily accompany or act out the entire film with the brand name toys.

-- Jane Albright



Can you help us build an online photo gallery of *Wizard of Oz* hand puppets? Send a clear photo and description to:  
**Admin@OzClub.org.**  
Include "Puppets" in the subject line.