

Raggs®



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Raggs LLC and KQED Debut International Hit Preschool Television Series “Raggs” this Summer

**26 Half Hours of “Raggs” Began Airing on Select PBS Kids Stations June 1
National Concert Tour Visits 20 US Cities**

(Charlotte, North Carolina, July 9, 2007) – Raggs LLC, Charlotte, North Carolina, and KQED, San Francisco, California, are premiering “Raggs,” the international hit television series for three to six year-old children, on U.S. public television this summer. The series debuted 26 half-hour episodes in select markets across the country on PBS Kids beginning June 1. National markets include: KQED (San Francisco), KCET (Los Angeles), KRMA (Denver), WPBT (Miami), WTVI (Charlotte), WPBA (Atlanta), KCET (Seattle), and the University of North Carolina network, UNC-TV and the South Carolina state network, ETV. Please check local listings.

In this appealing new television series, “Raggs” stars five colorful canine characters and their wisecracking pet cat, who play great rock’n’roll music and live in their own clubhouse. Known professionally as the Raggs Band, the talented musicians are best friends and together discover the joy of learning. Music, literacy, science and discovery themes weave together with amusing storytelling for a seamless, entertaining learning experience.

The “Raggs” characters include: Raggs, the energetic puppy and lead guitar player; Trilby, the band’s “fashionista” and bass player; Pido, the surfer dude drummer; B. Max, the band’s inventor and keyboardist; and Razzles, the organizer and dancer. The cast rounds out with a high maintenance cat named Dumpster whose wry comments to the audience during the show compliment his interviews with the children about the subject of each show.

Co-produced by Raggs LLC, a Charlotte, North Carolina, production and touring company, and Southern Star International, a major producer and distributor of television programming in the

world, “Raggs” is a fast-paced mix of humorous stories and character-driven action. The innovative format, which features live costumed characters, animated segments, interviews with children and music videos, reinforces one preschool academic and pro-social theme per program using a variety of segments.

Several aspects of “Raggs” make the series an international success with children. Whether it is about the fun-loving dogs finding out there are four seasons to how and why trees grow, together Raggs and his friends discover the wonders of the world just like kids do everyday. In addition, the series includes music as an integral part of the overall “Raggs” experience. Each episode features several sing-along performances and music videos that reinforce the theme for the episode. As well, Dumpster, the “Raggs” family pet, is a very opinionated cat who talks directly to the audience and has his own segment where he interviews real kids about the program’s theme or “big idea.” Finally, the “Wag and Wiggle” segment, in which the band prompts audience participation, is designed to be highly interactive and encourage physical activity and movement.

“With KQED as our sponsoring public broadcast station, we are proud to bring the show back home to the U.S. this summer,” Toni Steedman, “Raggs” original creator and president of Raggs LLC, explained. “We started here in the U.S. with touring, CDs and TV specials, but we found our production relationship and first broadcaster in Sydney, Australia.” Steedman added, “Actually, the series has become a complex international production with the physical sets in Sydney, animations from Southern Star’s Singapore studio, music and sound from Concentrix Music and Sound Design in Charlotte and U.S. segments produced by Emulsion Arts, also here in Charlotte.”

In 2005, Southern Star, which handles global sales of the series, signed one of the largest children’s television production deals in the world to produce Series 1, 65 half hours of the new “Raggs” series, for Network Seven in Sydney, Australia. The first series completed in late 2005 and began airing daily at 9:00 a.m. on January 2, 2006. The show immediately caught on and consistently won the ratings for the prime morning timeslot. Seven was impressed and by March 2006 ordered the next series of 65 episodes, Series 2, which began airing at the beginning of 2007. With Series 2 complete, Seven has again ordered 65 more episodes, Series 3, which has begun production in Sydney. By the end of 2007, “Raggs” will have 195 episodes available to air around the world.

“Raggs” success in Australia has led to a sell-out tour this spring, the release of CDs and DVDs and upcoming merchandise. In addition, the Raggs Band appeared with the famous Wiggles as one of only two children’s acts to be asked to perform in front of a live audience of 100,000 at the Sydney Botanical Gardens this past Christmas as part of the country’s nationally televised Christmas special, “Carols in the Domain.” Additional countries have acquired the rights to air the “Raggs” show starting this year and include Singapore, Ireland, South Africa and Bulgaria. Other countries including the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and multiple commitments in Asia and Europe are expected in the coming months.

“The scale of ‘Raggs’ is extraordinary for our industry.” Donald Derheim, Executive Vice President of Marketing and Communications, explained, “With ‘Raggs’ you have this absolutely entertaining show with stellar academic credentials, the most charismatic characters, and then, on top of everything, there’s an enormous amount of content including 130 finished episodes, 120 songs plus literally hundreds of incredible segments such as music videos, cartoons and concerts as a bonus.”

In January, Raggs LLC began the customization of two segments of the show with U.S. children to replace Australian children and retained Emulsion Arts, an award-winning movie and film production company based in Charlotte, North Carolina, to handle the task of selecting and coordinating hundreds of children. Expressive and talkative children were recruited to meet with Dumpster the Cat for live interviews about the subject of each episode. Over 500 kids auditioned over a three-day period in March, and 200 kids were chosen to participate in the interviews, which were held on a special set at WTVI, the public broadcast station in Charlotte. Other

children were selected to take part in the show's music videos that have been shot in and around the area including the ski slopes, private homes, parks and the beach.

Raggs LLC has also performed comprehension testing at schools in the Charlotte, North Carolina and Lexington, Kentucky markets to test the retention of educational content by preschool students. "Raggs" educational advisor, Shalom Fisch, Ph.D., an internationally respected authority on children's television and author of two books on "Sesame Street," coordinated the testing.

Describing the show's educational approach of reinforcing each episode theme with multiple segments, Fisch explained that "'Raggs' draws upon the very best of educational practice." He added, "Beyond the appeal evident in the vast success that the 'Raggs' television series has already achieved in Australia, this approach contributes to a television series that not only delights, but also benefits a broad audience of preschool children."

To coincide with the broadcast, the Raggs Band hit the road with their energetic "Dance Party Tour" on June 20th and have already played to thousands of fans in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Denver and Minneapolis at the Mall of America. Traveling in their own customized tour bus, the band is making stops at venues such as zoos, museums, public parks, YMCAs and schools. Most concerts are free. The concerts feature the characters performing their favorite interactive songs allowing kids to dance and sing-along.

To date, the Raggs Band has already played over 2000 live concerts around the world. There have been three overseas tours for Armed Forces Entertainment last year, three trips to The White House Easter Egg Roll, two summers at The Palace Theatre in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina and appearances at major fairs and festivals around the country. The fairs and festivals include the New York State Fair, Tennessee State Fair, North Carolina State Fair, Ohio State Fair, Oklahoma State Fair and over 100 other venues.

The fun continues online at www.raggs.com, where kids can click on the "Follow the Tour" feature, download the schedule and view photographs of the band in action. Kids can also create their own music, and engage in a variety of entertaining and educational activities. Brand new online features connecting to the series will also launch later this fall.

"The 'Raggs' TV series encourages children to use their creativity and imagination as they follow Raggs and his friends' adventures," Steedman explained. "It's a wonderfully captivating and delightful way for children to discover early academic concepts and great music."

"'Raggs' is charming kids on the other side of the world with its engaging characters, catchy music and fast-paced storytelling." Derheim added, "We're looking forward to introducing 'Raggs' and the band's adventures to U.S. kids through KQED and select PBS Kids markets."

KQED, San Francisco, California

KQED (www.kqed.org) is a service of Northern California Public Broadcasting, Inc. (NCPB), with over 780,000 weekly radio listeners and more than 1,000,000 monthly viewing households. KQED Public Television 9, one of the nation's most-watched public television stations during primetime, is the producer of local and national series such as *Quest; Check, Please! Bay Area; Jacques Pepin: Fast Food My Way*; and *Jean-Michel Cousteau: Ocean Adventures*. KQED's digital television channels include KQED HD, KQED Encore, KQED World, KQED Life and KQED Kids, and are available 24/7 on Comcast. KQED Public Radio, home of *Forum with Michael Krasny*, *Pacific Time*, and *The California Report*, is the most-listened-to public radio station in the nation with an award-winning news and public affairs program service (88.5 FM in San Francisco and 89.3 FM in Sacramento). KQED Education Network brings the impact of KQED to thousands of teachers, students, parents and the general public through workshops, community screenings and multimedia resources. KQED Interactive offers video and audio

podcasts and live radio stream at www.kqed.org, featuring unique content on one of the most-visited station sites in public broadcasting.

Raggs LLC, Charlotte, NC (www.raggs.com)

“Raggs” is an original concept created by Toni Steedman, a former Charlotte, NC advertising executive. The “Raggs” television series is a co-production between Raggs LLC and Southern Star International, Sydney, Australia. Series executive producers are Toni Steedman from Raggs LLC and Cathy Payne and Noel Price from Southern Star.

Steedman and her daughter, Alison, originally created Raggs in 1990, as an imaginary pet dog who loved rock ‘n’ roll music. Raggs stories became the entertainment for carpool rides to and from school. In 1997, Steedman began using a commercial version of Raggs for a Kid Club Program in U.S. regional malls. By 2001, the Raggs concept had expanded to include the band. In 2002, the Raggs Band (aka Raggs Kids Club Band) began playing concerts, recorded their first CD titled “Pawsuuup!” and produced a pilot DVD/TV special also titled “Pawsuuup!”

By 2003, the Raggs franchise was growing rapidly, adding new music, new DVDs and tour dates around the US. With the popularity of the characters and their music, Raggs LLC began to explore TV production and broadcast opportunities. In March 2005, Raggs and Southern Star, International, a global production and distribution company based in Sydney, Australia, solidified plans to develop and distribute the “Raggs” TV series. The series is in its second year of broadcast in Australia on Seven Network. Ten other countries including the US are beginning broadcast in 2007.

Southern Star International, Sydney, Australia

Southern Star is an integrated film and television production and distribution group. Divisions of the company are involved in film, television and video production; sales and distribution; and licensing and merchandising. Southern Star is a division of Southern Cross Broadcasting (Australia) Limited, a publicly listed company on the Australian Stock Exchange.

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