

This Day in History... May 18, 1968

Hot Wheels



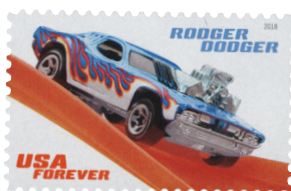
Purple Passion



Rocket-Bye-Baby



Rigor Motor



Rodger Dodger



Mach Speeder



Twin Mill



Bone Shaker



HW 40



Deora II

On May 18, 1968, Hot Wheels released its first toy cars, dubbed “The Sweet 16.” Since then, they’ve become one of the world’s most popular toy car makers, with the company estimating that they sell eight Hot Wheels every second.

In 1968, Hot Wheels revolutionized the toy car industry. Up until that point, Matchbox had ruled the market with its realistic street cars. But the creators of Hot Wheels had a pioneering vision that would change the way toy cars would be made.

Elliot Handler, co-founder of Mattel, had conceived of Hot Wheels in the 1960s to appeal to boys as Barbie had become a hit with girls. His idea was to create toy cars with the unique style of those that were produced in custom car shops. To realize his vision, he hired Chevrolet designer Harry Bentley Bradley to lead a team of creators in developing a set of 16 sleek muscle cars. These cars were painted with bright, metallic colors and engineered to move quickly along the company’s signature orange track. When Handler saw the first batch of cars, he exclaimed, “Those are some hot wheels,” and the name was born. Those first 16 cars, called “The Sweet 16,” were released on May 18, 1968.

Hot Wheels were an immediate hit with young boys, with 16 million cars sold in the first year alone. Their unexpected success rocked the toy car market, with other companies searching for a way to emulate them. At Hot Wheels, new designers joined the team, helping to create fresh, new cars that matched the ever-rising expectations of their customers. Among these new designers was Larry Woods, who would earn the nickname “Mr. Hot Wheels.” Woods was the lead designer at Hot Wheels for nearly 40 years, producing some of the company’s most popular and memorable cars. Over the course of Hot Wheels’ more than 50-year history, the company has produced about three billion cars – over 800 different models, and 11,000 variations. According to Mattel, eight Hot Wheels are sold every second.

In 2018, the USPS issued the set of 10 Hot Wheels stamps to mark the company’s 50th anniversary. They were issued in Fort Worth, Texas at the Goodguys 26th Summit Racing Lone Star Nationals at Texas Motor Speedway. At the stamps’ dedication, a USPS official said, “Today, we make history as the Postal Service and our partners at Mattel are celebrating the 50th anniversary of Hot Wheels with these dynamic stamps showcasing the iconic toys that were a part of my childhood and that of my children. These miniature works of art truly capture the thrill and excitement of these legendary vehicles and now will speed their way as Forever stamps on millions of cards and letters.”



Sharkruiser

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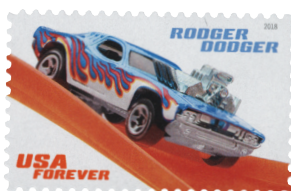
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