

HOOPIING it up!

Photos by Mickey Pallas

BECAUSE Young America is so unpredictable, it's hard to say what fad or fancy the youngsters will popularize next. In the past decade they've run the gamut from burp guns to Zorro outfits, including the Davy Crockett and Hopalong Cassidy sagas, flying saucers, space helmets, and beanies with gadgets.

This year the kids are whoopin' it up with hoops—Hula Hoops, Whirl-a-Hoops, Spin-a-Hoops, and Hoop-de-dos—and there's no telling when the dizzy whirling and twirling will end. They've got Mother doing it, sisters and brothers, of course, and even Dad has a notion that this may be the easy way to take off a couple of inches—until he tries it.

It all started in Australia last January, and soon most of the youngsters down under were encircled by one or more hickory hoops. But when A. K. "Spud" Melin, president of the Wham-O Co. of San Gabriel, Calif., bought the rights for production of Hula Hoops in the United States, he found that the hard wood stung the legs of beach hoopers, so he devised a 36-inch hoop of polyethylene plastic tubing. It wasn't long before Melin found himself with four plants turning out 100,000 hoops a day—and scores of imitators. Conservative estimates indicate that more than 16 million hoops have been sold so far this year!

Melin is philosophical about the fickle uncertainty which the toy business seems to share with show business. Aware that his hoops are eventually destined for the closet or trash bin, he hopes to be ready with the next gimmick that will capture the fancy of fad-happy America.

Janet Pawlak, 10, of Chicago, has fun keeping five Hula Hoops whirling at once. Champ of her playground, Janet can do lots of other tricks.



First step in hoop assembly is trimming plastic to size. The ends of curved hoop are joined. And plant boss shows how they whirl. There's even togetherness in hoops.