Mattel Brings ThingMaker Back as 3D Printer

Written by Marco Attard
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Mattel is the next company to take on 3D printing as it presents the ThingMaker at the New York Toy Fair-- a bright orange low-cost 3D printer complete with iOS/Android app co-developed with AutoDesk.

The ThingMaker is technically a resurrection of an 1960s Mattel toy named, well, the ThingMaker. The old "at-home maker device" allowed kids to create small objects by pouring liquid plastic into molds before heating and cooling. The new ThingMaker also allows kids to make small objects, if through the power of 3D printing and a companion app.

As Mattel puts it, the app is what brings the ThingMaker printer to life-- users can create objects by either selecting easy-to-follow templates or build their own by selecting from "hundreds" of parts. Once a design is complete the app sends it to the printer, with printing times ranging from 30 minutes to around 10 hours depending on the size of the object in question.

Printing uses standard filament, with an average 1kg plastic spool providing enough material for 20 figurines, 30 pieces of jewelry or 100 rings. Meanwhile the app (a free iOS/Android download) is compatible with other 3D printers.

"In today's digital age, it's more important than ever for families to transcend the digital world and make their ideas real," the toy maker says. "ThingMaker pushes the boundaries of imaginative play, giving families countless ways to customize their toys and let their creativity run wild. We're thrilled to work with the 3D design experts at Autodesk to bring this one-of-a-kind experience to life."

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The ThingMaker hits the market from Q4 2016.

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