STEAM toy

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NEW STEAM TOY AIMS TO HELP CHILDREN TO CREATE MUSIC

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A new toy provides children with an intuitive way to learn music through experimentation.

After Michael Tougher received a degree in Product Design Engineering in Glasgow, Scotland, he decided to combine inventing and music to create a new educational toy. His invention, Soundbops, allows kids to compose their own songs without traditional instruments. It is made up of brightly coloured buttons (the 'bops') that each play a different musical note when pressed. The buttons can be rearranged or piled on top of one another to create chords. By reconfiguring the bops, children can produce new sounds and create their own songs.

Soundbops also allow children to change instruments with the twist of a dial, and will eventually include an application to enable further exploration from a tablet or smartphone. Soundbops can also connect to existing MIDI applications using Bluetooth. The system is targeted at children between three and eight. It comes with music books that use a simplified system of musical notation, and builds on this over time to teach children how to read music. According to Tougher, the STEAM toys market will be worth USD 30 billion by 2019. He is hoping that Soundbops' makes a further combination to education, fun and ease-of-use, which will in turn help him to carve out a space in this growing market.

Soundbops has just finished a funding round on Kickstarter where the company exceeded its target funding. They have also raised funding from Belgian-based Meusinvest and LeanSquare. According to José Zurstrassen, president of LeanSquare, "Soundbops ... takes an age-old problem and

attempts to solve it using digital tools and innovative engineering and design ..." The company plans to start shipping the Soundbops in December 2018. We have seen a number of innovative educational toys here at Springwise, including a toy that uses AR to teach about the elements and electronic blocks that teach children programming through play. What other STEAM toys could help teach educational skills to young children ?

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