

The Undeer's Back!

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I first posted about the elusive Undeer – a funny character from a series of 7Up Christmas ads from the 1970s – back in October 2022, when I made this ornament for my sister, who as a kid was a big fan of the Undeer.

He's all but disappeared from pop culture history: no wikipedia, no youtube, no ebay listings. All I could find was a now-defunct "Friends of the Undeer" facebook page and a single blog post by the same author, who writes that wikipedia dismissed his submission about the Undeer as "an obvious hoax".

It certainly was not.

Like many folks of a certain age, I well remember those amusing commercials. So do my sibs, and based on the comments on the "Friends of the Undeer" page, we aren't alone. But the only images I could find on line are a couple of fuzzy shots of store placards.

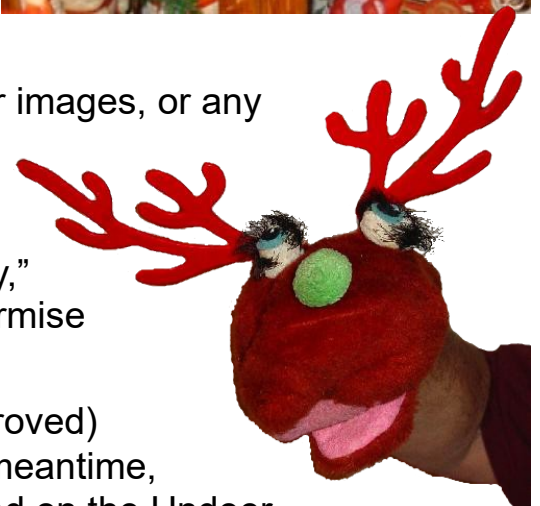


The elaborate ad campaign also included several items that kids could send away for, such as a hand puppet.

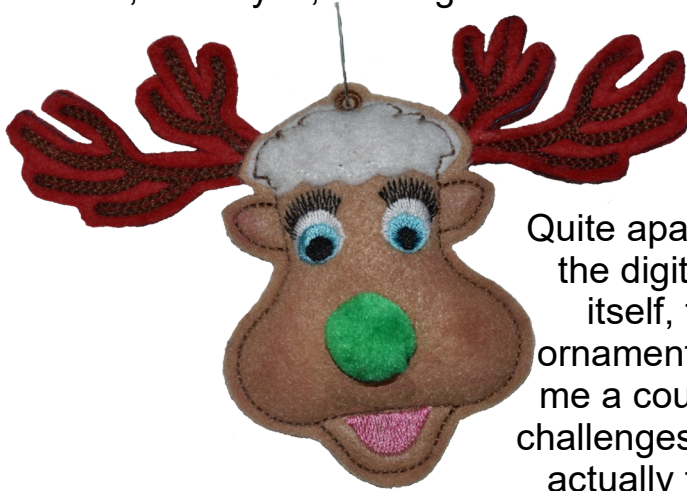


Oddly enough, although my on-line searches didn't turn up any better images, or any other information at all, I did find several references to the Undeer's signature line – "working my little hoofies to the quick". The folks who posted it described the phrase as "something Mom used to say," but they didn't seem to know its origins. I can only surmise that their Mom was also a fan back in the day.

I've been toying with the idea of making my own (improved) version of the puppet. One day I'll do that, but in the meantime, I decided to create an in-the-hoop felt ornament, based on the Undeer face in the wreath placard.



This wreath placard image isn't very clear, but it shows the basic shape and colouring for the Under's face. Based on this view, and on the puppet's colouring, I made a tan face with red antlers, blue eyes, and a green nose.



Quite apart from the digitizing itself, the ornament gave me a couple of challenges, and it actually took

three drafts to get it right. I didn't seem to have quite the right shade of felt for the face: one was too chocolatey, another too pale. Finally, I dug out a couple of squares of mottled tan/brown felt. And like Goldilocks' porridge, it's just right.



I wanted to give the ornament some dimension, so the head is stuffed, but I left the chin unfilled to emphasize the chubby cheeks. The pompon nose and the separate antlers add to the 3D effect.

The antlers posed a bit of a challenge: they needed to be firm enough to hold their shape without drooping, but they also had to be made of felt, like the head. I'd need to stiffen them somehow, and I knew from experience that wiring them was out.



In the past I've used dissolved water-soluble stabilizer to add just a bit of stiffness to my felt ornaments, but it wouldn't work in this case. It doesn't give a really firm result, and it can sometimes darken or discolour the fabric. It can also soften over time as it absorbs humidity from the air.



I decided to try a glue-based stiffener, which I'd never used before, and I must say I was pleasantly surprised: the antlers came out quite hard and didn't discolour. They'll hold their shape well and won't go limp over time. Perfect! I'll certainly use this product again.

I glued and stitched the antlers in place, then finished off my Undeer ornament with a touch of powdered blusher, just enough to give his cheeks a bit of a glow.

Ta-da! He's ready for the tree.
Unless . . .



Looking again at that wreath illustration on the previous page, I see that the Undeer has some baubles dangling from his antlers, so I'm thinking of adding a couple of jingle bells to complete the Christmassy effect, assuming that the stiffened antlers will be strong enough to support them.

And here's another thought:

Although the red antlers and green nose mark him as my sister's old pal the Undeer, my reindeer doesn't have to be a one-hit wonder.

A change in colour scheme easily turns him into Rudolph, with tan antlers, copper coloured eyes, and his signature red nose.

I originally made this ornament for my sister, the Undeer fan, but once DH saw him, he declared that we need an Undeer for our own tree.

