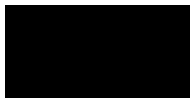



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Revenge of the nerds

Until a few weeks ago, Ken Faier was VP of production and distribution at Canada's Alliance Atlantis Communications (AAC). Today, however, Faier is getting in touch with his inner nerd as the newly installed president of Vancouver animation house Nerd Corps Entertainment. Jo Anne Kenny speaks to the head Nerd.

Until recently, Nerd Corps has been more of an animation service company, and has spent the past two years producing boys' action property Dragon Booster for AAC. Building off the success of Dragon Booster and with Faier in the new role of president, the goal is to take the company to the next level.

"The primary goal is to finance shows that we create, then to find coproductions in the international marketplace, and lastly to do service work. My goal is to take Nerd Corps into the international marketplace and make us a player," says Faier. "Ultimately we would like to start some sort of small distribution mechanism, mainly the financing and presales in major territories, and then merchandise."



The company has two shows in development at the moment, a comedy for six- to 11-year-olds in its early stages and a CGI boys' action-adventure series called Storm Hawks, which it will be pushing at Mipcom.

"We have pitched it to Canadian broadcasters so it looks pretty good to set it up in Canada, and we have also had amazing interest from the US," according to Faier.

The show revolves around land-based and air-based action and is set in a world where the only way to communicate with each other is through flight. A group of kids has taken on the legendary role of the Storm Hawks as they attempt to replace crystals that control weather patterns and can restore order in the world.

"There is lots of flying and aerial battles – the planes look like Dakar motorcycles mixed with World War 2 fighter planes. It is very much about personalising your bikes and your flying machines."

Co-founded by Ace Fipke (ex-VP creative development at fellow Vancouver animation shop Mainframe Entertainment) and Chuck Johnson, Nerd Corps is a full-service 3D animation facility whose primary goal is to "break free from the preconceived boundaries of 3D Animation."

"The beauty of what Ace can do is he really pushes the boundaries of CGI and does it in a way that is cost-effective," says Faier, who adds that its shows will still be "big budget" but compared with old-style shows will be much less expensive. "Some of the stuff we are developing looks 2D but is done in a CG environment."

As for the Nerd moniker, Faier says it is an attitude: "The whole philosophy is that nerds are actually cool – it is about embracing what it is that you love to do, and loving things like technology and comic books and odd art," says Faier. "It is all that stuff that could have made you an odd-ball nerd in elementary school, but as you get older you embrace these things and realise that it is pretty special to be good at them."

Long live the nerds.

Jo Anne Kenny
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