

cool new shows!

by lianne stewart



Derby Girls

STYLE: 2-D

FORMAT: 52 x 11 minutes

DEMO: six to 11

BUDGET: Approximately US\$250,000 per half hour

STATUS: The series is in the early stages of development, and Eat Your Lunch's Dave Skwarczek is currently working through co-production offers from companies in the U.S., Canada and India

DELIVERY: Q2 2008

PRODUCER: La Grange, Illinois' Eat Your Lunch

PREMISE: Any grownup will tell you there's more to sweet girls than meets the eye, and Eat Your Lunch explores the darker side of the fairer sex in its latest toon. Three very polite and kind young girls happily follow their school's strict rules, but they can't suppress their inner desire for speed, battle and competition for long. When the bell rings at the end of the day, the Derby Girls exchange their saddle shoes for roller skates and become hard-skating roller derby competitors.

The show plays on the retro fun and the independent girl power vibe of the sport, and subverts the animation's Golden Book-like gentle imagery with the addition of some ridiculous looking enemies who continually plot dirty tricks to play on the girls. In many episodes, the girls face teams of non-human foes such as aliens and monkeys. In one script, rival team Fox Trot concocts an evil scheme to finally beat its biggest rival, the Derby Girls. Super rich Fox Trot calls in four ex-circus chimps to join the team and trounce the Girls. These well-trained primates have the roller skills, but the Coach's birthday cake is also at the rink and may prove too great a temptation for the chimps, hindering their ability to compete. Further complicating things is that the Derby Girls' toughest member goes ape for the animals, wanting more to play with them than compete against them. Fortunately, her teammates pull it together to win the match, and the chimps become so desperate for cake that they ransack the local bakery and stick Fox Trot with the bill.



Zoopatrop

STYLE: 2-D

FORMAT: 52 x 12 minutes

DEMO: three to six, with a boy skew

BUDGET: approximately US\$10 million

STATUS: Not yet greenlit, but several U.K. broadcasters have shown interest.

DELIVERY: Q2 2008

PRODUCER: London, England's HIT Entertainment

PREMISE: Young community policeman Zak has a real passion for his job. Working with fellow Zoopatropers Sarge, Dee and T-Roy (and the young viewers at home), he helps keep Zoopaville a safe and happy place to live.

In each episode, the alarm sounds and Zak races off on his super-cool, multi-functional motorbike, the Zoopazoom One (or ZZ1, for short). Meanwhile, Dee hovers overhead in her nifty air-sea helicopter ZZ2. And if the going gets rough, T-Roy deploys ZZ3—a service vehicle used to transport a bunch of neat gadgets.

Storylines are still being hammered out, but some ideas include Zak helping out a city worker who starts to use an untested ZoopaScooper super-sucking street cleaner; and Zak discovering he has a fan who is setting off false alarms around the city just to see the Zoopatrop in action.

Monster Buster Club

STYLE: CGI

FORMAT: 52 half hours

DEMO: six to 11

BUDGET: US\$20 million

STATUS: In production

DELIVERY: Q3 2007



PRODUCERS: Paris, France's Marathon with Jetix Europe, TF1, and Canada's Mystery Animation in association with YTV

PREMISE: Sure, most of us wouldn't trust tweens with saving humanity, but you haven't met Monster Buster Club. The five 10-year-olds charged with saving their town from alien invasion are the only ones who happen to know about the unwelcome visitors. Operating via a network of secret underground tunnels beneath the town, the heroes carry out their plans to hunt down the invaders, while also getting their math homework done and trying not to drive each other batty.

In one action-filled ep, the group looks after a monarch, who just happens to resemble a pretty flower. King Petalia, however, is a powerful guy with many enemies throughout the galaxy, including some nasty robots that land on earth looking to practice their hedge-clipping skills. MBC uses its computer-inspired weaponry such as the Bubblesnet gun to fight off the Clipper Bots, but Petalia ends up MIA. It turns out Jeremy, a lovelorn and clueless MBC classmate, unwittingly helps King P escape harm. Near the ep's end, a female member of MBC opens her locker to find a love poem and present from Jeremy—a talking flower that turns out to be the mighty King Petalia himself.



PRODUCERS: Vancouver, Canada's Nerd Corps

PREMISE: Never mind the good guys—*League of Evil* is all about rooting for the villains. This band of four super bad guys has set its sights on global domination, which would be frightening if the band of evil-doers was in any way competent. Self-proclaimed evil genius and leader, the Great Voltar has grand schemes to rule the world, but his sweeping plans are curtailed by a pretty tight budget. And to top it off, his partners in crime include a once-great mad scientist, a fella who embodies the spirit of a hyperactive Neanderthal toddler, and Red Menace, a former Soviet super villain who's now just as content in his role as a stay-at-home dad.

In one episode, the Great Voltar purchases an ultra-cool, much-coveted Japanese robot (the '89 Bipedal Shuriken Typhoon Super S Atomic Death model, of course). But while he's showing off his awesome new toy, Voltar inadvertently starts destroying everything in his path. Competing villainous team (and part time sushi chefs) Force Fighters V soon gets word and trots out its own 'bot. After a needlessly long transformation sequence, complete with annoying but triumphant theme music, the Force Fighters challenge Voltar and his team to a robot-a-robot battle. But both villainous groups forget to fuel up their robots, so the confrontation ensues at a nearby gas station. Neither side can figure out how to make the hose reach gas tanks stationed 200 feet up, and their various misguided attempts culminate with a huge explosion. Both 'bots get fried, leaving the League of Evil to skulk off to the team vehicle—Red Menace's family minivan.

League of Evil

STYLE: CGI with 2-D

FORMAT: 26 half hours

DEMO: eight to 12

BUDGET: US\$300,000 to
US\$350,000 per episode

STATUS: It's in development, with a completed bible and first few scripts on deck. Nerd Corps is in discussions with Canadian and U.S. broadcasters.

DELIVERY: 2008

Reality!

STYLE: live action

FORMAT: 26 half hours

DEMO: eight to 12

BUDGET: approximately
US\$2.3 million

STATUS: It's in development now, and Kick is seeking presales, distribution and partners interested in format rights.

DELIVERY: Q3 2007

PRODUCERS: Victoria, Australia's Kick Productions

PREMISE: What tween doesn't live and breathe reality TV? Well, the Barker family wins an opportunity to star in their very own reality series in this new sitcom. Father Phil still lives in the '70s and thinks he's über cool, much to the embarrassment of his three kids: 16-year-old vanity case Amanda, tomboy Jessica who's 13, and trouble-making 10-year-old Jimi. Trustworthy mom Christine attempts to keep the family looking good for the cameras, but Grandma, who lives in her trailer in the backyard, is always ready to stoke the mayhem fire.

In one script currently being hammered out, daughter Jess is so tired of being portrayed as a crazy family in front of the entire world, she orchestrates some normal family moments for the TV crew. A nice, civilized dinner should be just the ticket to showing everyone the family's relaxed and unremarkable home life, but, of course, things don't go according to plan. At the dinner table, dad suggests a family sing-along; big sis Amanda won't stop listening to her headphones and younger brother Jimi refuses to take off his new night-vision glasses. And mom is no help since she didn't get her coffee that morning.

It's all normal behavior for them, but it's Jess who's acting like a freak for the cameras. She tries to start stilted and polite conversations, has a constant fake smile and pre-empts every potentially embarrassing moment with a loud joke or an abrupt change of subject. Finally, her big plans go completely off the rails when uncomfortable tummy rumbles hit the microphones revealing she's accidentally given her family food poisoning!



Lou

STYLE: 2-D with CGI

FORMAT: 26 half hours

DEMO: eight to 12, with a special appeal for girls

BUDGET: approximately US\$350,000 per episode

STATUS: The series is still in development, but French presale partners M6 and Disney France are onboard.

DELIVERY: Q3 2007

PRODUCERS: Paris, France's GO-N Productions and Toronto, Canada's Nelvana

PREMISE: Adapted from a series of comic books by Julien Neel, *Lou* tells the tale of an 11-year-old modern girl just looking to catch a break. She's desperate to distance herself from the nerd-vibe her video game-addicted, science fiction-writing mother gives off. But Lou's growing up in a single parent household, so getting away from geeky mom is not as easy as she had hoped it would be.

Living in an apartment building filled with many interesting characters helps the tween protagonist find fodder for her personal diary. She's also madly in love with Tristan, the boy across the way, and wants to set her mother up with newcomer to the building, Richard. But just as her 12th birthday approaches, things go a little crazy in one episode. She decides to take a big step and do something about her love for Tristan. When she sees him caring for a puppy, she figures a dog could help her break the ice. She offers to walk her neighbor's Great Dane, and quickly becomes mortified at the sight of the huge canine eating Tristan's soccer ball as he looks on. Not even a visit to her fave music shop will calm her nerves and help her get over the horror. In fact, it gets worse when Lou's crush catches her belting out a song while attached to headphones at the store. Her big plans to make 12 an important year are about to fall flat, until she decides to pull herself up by the bootstraps and tells Tristan that she thinks he's cute.

Huntik

STYLE: 2-D/ CGI

FORMAT: 26 x 20 minutes

DEMO: boys eight to 12

BUDGET: approximately US\$8.62 million

STATUS: Rainbow and Bocca will be scouting for presale partners at MIPCOM.

DELIVERY: Q1 2008

PRODUCERS: Loreto, Italy's Rainbow and Ireland's Big Bocca

PREMISE: This time, *Winx Club* creator Rainbow and co-pro partner Big Bocca have their sights set on the tween boy market. *Huntik* puts a time-travelling, globe-trotting twist on the classic conflict of good versus evil. The show's four protagonists, Dante, Lok, Sofia and Zhalia revisit classic legends such as the lost continent of Atlantis to collect powerful amulets from ancient civilizations that will help the group defeat its evil foe, The Organization.

The first episode sets the stage for the series, opening with Lok and Sofia accidentally breaking a statue that belonged to Lok's father in which they discover a hidden amulet and a journal. Before they can decide what to do with the objects, the dastardly Organization Suits set upon them and the pair are split up. The Suits chase Lok and Sofia down the backstreets and across the canals of Venice. Lok eventually escapes the Organization's clutches when he's able to unlock a spell in the amulet that gives him the power to out-run and jump his would-be captors. Unfortunately, the journal gets damaged during the adventure, leaving Lok and his pals to figure out how to fix it and further channel the powers it contains.

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"Young Franksteins" continued from page 109

For the first round that ended in the latter half of '05, the net chose the best clips and readied them for broadcast—turning speech bubbles into voices and crediting the kid creators. The spots, 60 from season one and 120 from season two, are currently used as one-minute interstitials and commercials that serve to promote the network and the production.

According to Teletoon's numbers, the Zimmer Twins website drew more than 195,000 unique visitors from across Canada in July 2006 alone, hitting the nine- to 12-year-old demo the heaviest. The site has received more than 290,000 separate entries since the launch of season one, even crossing linguistic lines—39.8% of all entries were created in French.

Although Steve Szigeti, director of online media for Teletoon, deems the project an unqualified success, he says it is difficult to gauge whether the website ended up driving viewers to the linear net or not—ratings for one-minute spots are difficult to track. However, the site is sticky and is most likely engendering viewer loyalty. Creator Jason Krogh of zincRoe points out that a full 30% of visits to the Zimmer Twins site last for more than 10 minutes.


Krogh sees the project as a nice synthesis of UGC with the traditional creative process. "In our project we have animators, and writers, and we brainstorm ideas and then we add kids to that mix."

The audience
flocked to the
Zimmer Twins
site to create its
take on the toon



THE FUTURE

Like anything that can be described as a trend there is the possibility that UGC will just flare out, and that the audience will tire of watching their own material and demand more professional productions and something new. However, Jens Bachmen, managing director of London-based media strategy company Digital Outlook, doesn't see UGC as a traditional trend.

Taking it further, Bachmen believes that the advent of the active audience will change the way producers and broadcasters approach content. "The mindset will have to change from 'I'm pumping stuff out there' to 'what kind of choices can I help my audience make,'" he says. 

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Bailey the Wonderdog

STYLE: Flash animation

FORMAT: 26 x 11 minutes

DEMO: preschool

BUDGET: US\$235,000 per half hour

STATUS: Cuppa Coffee will be financing this show solely from presales, and broadcasters in Canada, U.S., U.K., Australia, France, Germany and Japan are being targeted. Deals are expected to close during MIPCOM this month.

DELIVERY: Q3 2007

PRODUCERS: Toronto, Canada's Cuppa Coffee

PREMISE: Lots of things seem big and overwhelming to a tiny preschooler, but these smallest TV viewers will have a friend to help them build the confidence to ask questions and face new situations with enthusiasm. In real life, Bailey is Cuppa Coffee CEO Adam Shaheen's dog, but in this developing series Bailey the Wonder Dog is a hero who takes on daily life by putting his best paw forward. And when faced with challenges, he doesn't back down, choosing to take a more positive approach.

For example, in one episode, Bailey starts to dig a hole (as dogs are wont to do) just to find out where it ends. He recruits pals, Delores the action cat and Fred the show bird to help out, but the plan goes awry when each of them voices a different opinion on the best way to get the job done. Bailey digs in his paws, dismissing his friends to do it his way. Eventually, he burrows to such depths that he discovers the long-lost Kingdom of the Moles. Bailey is promptly crowned king. He laps up the attention at first, but soon finds himself growing tired of winning every game and receiving praise for no real reason, and realizes he misses his true friends and their viewpoints.

