

kidScreen

About reaching children through entertainment
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FEATURES

Strategy déjà-vu plays out on the international fall TV dial

International Introspective—merch market reconnaissance in Japan

Forum Forecast: New toons to shine in Varese

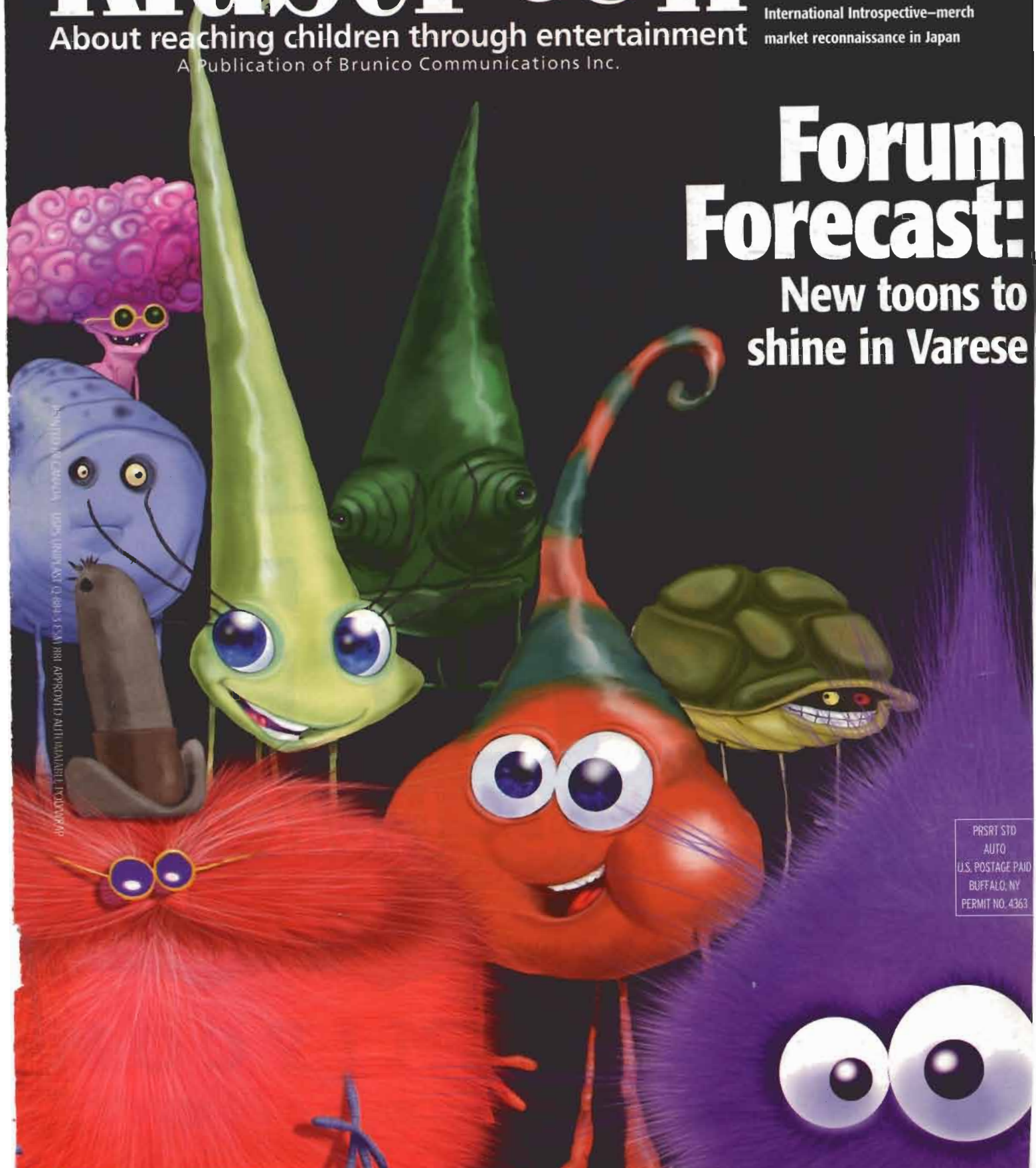


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UP NEXT

What's developing in kids production

BY SIMON ASHDOWN

As a Euros-only affair, Cartoon Forum may not draw the same mix of international players as MIPCOM does. But where content variety is concerned, it takes a backseat to no other industry event. From sentient antibodies, to crime-fighting sandwiches, to revolutionary trolls, this year's Cartoon Forum pitches should give distributors, buyers and other financiers plenty to ponder. To help expedite the tire-kicking process, here's a preview of some promising projects that will be making the rounds at Forum this year.

TV-Loonland spreads the yuks thick in *Sam Hamwich*

Hoping to replicate the success of its hit show *The Cramp Twins*, Munich, Germany's TV-Loonland is back with another slyly quirky toon designed to tickle the funny



Hold the mayo: TV-L's *Sam Hamwich* brings real meaning to the deli term hero sandwich

bones of eight- to 12-year-old boys. Based on an original concept from the San Francisco, California-based creative duo of Stephen Holman and Josephine Huang

(*Phantom Investigators*), *Sam Hamwich: Superhero Sandwich* stars a superhero on rye who is trying to keep peace in Millennium City. Along with his trusty sidekick Chip, Sam subdues mutant fries that spray citizens with messy chili sauce (driving up the rates at local laundromats), as well as solving the mystery of suspicious accidents that start occurring on the film set of his biopic. To give the US\$4.1-million, 2-D animated series a contemporary action feel, TV-L plans to lean on the styles of Ang Lee and the Wachowski Brothers, so don't be surprised if you see a sandwich suspended mid-air in a ninja crouch.

Status: TV-Loonland is in discussions to co-produce the 26 x 11-minute series with a Canadian producer, and is seeking additional partners.

Cartoon Saloon's *Skunk* sniffs out action comedy

For its first original kids show, Kilkenny, Ireland-based animation studio The Cartoon Saloon is shooting for the heart of the boys action/comedy genre. Targeting the six to 12 set, *Skunk* is a 26 x 13-minute, Flash-animated toon that concerns the hero-quest of a young animal trying to learn the art of kung-fu from a wise old panda bear. It turns out that Skunk was mistakenly dropped in China at birth by a stork, who thought he was a baby panda. Episodes will alternate between exploring the Luke-and-Yoda-esque relationship between the two characters as

Cartoon Saloon's Flash-animated *Skunk* tackles a classic ninja-in-training editorial line



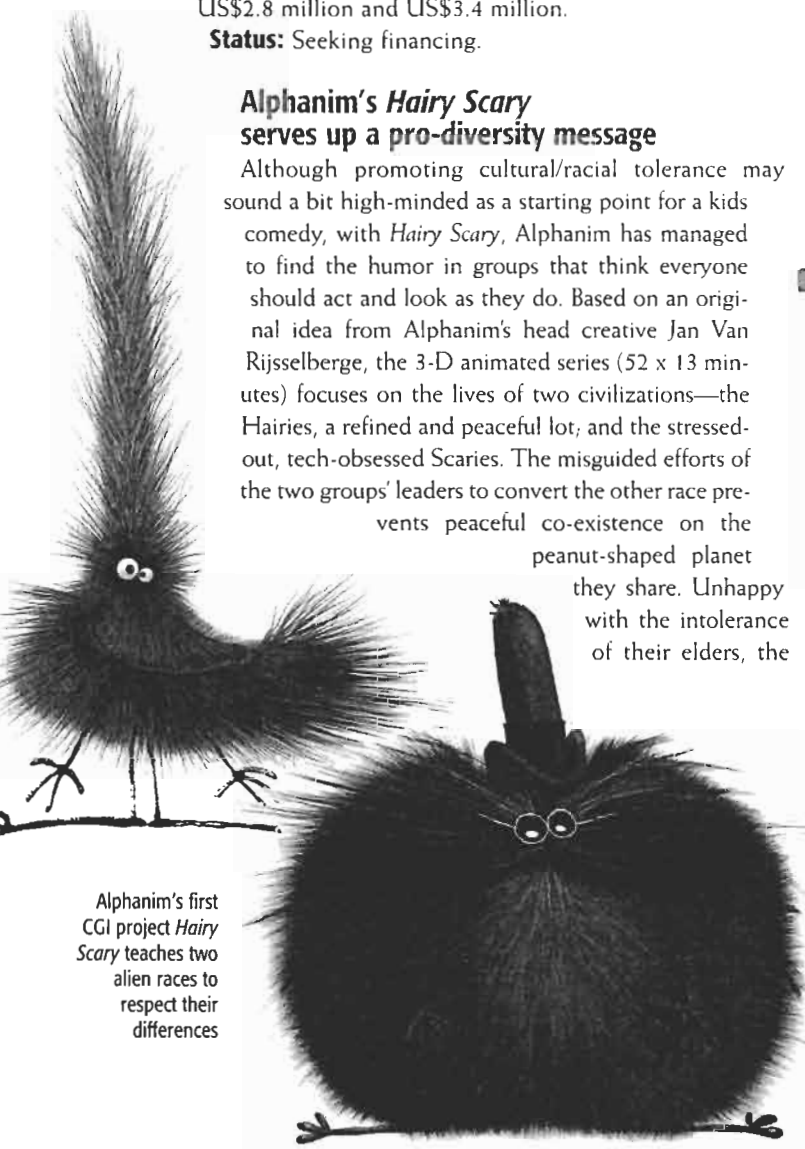
Panda tries to tame Skunk's rambunctious ways, and recounting their battles to save the enchanted forest from the villain Dragon and his army of ninja monkeys. Though the series has obvious boy appeal, the simple design of the lead character is reminiscent of Hello Kitty, and Cartoon Saloon producer Paul Young hopes that will endear it to girls. *Skunk* is budgeted at between US\$2.8 million and US\$3.4 million.

Status: Seeking financing.

Alphanim's *Hairy Scary* serves up a pro-diversity message

Although promoting cultural/racial tolerance may sound a bit high-minded as a starting point for a kids comedy, with *Hairy Scary*, Alphanim has managed to find the humor in groups that think everyone should act and look as they do. Based on an original idea from Alphanim's head creative Jan Van Rijsselberge, the 3-D animated series (52 x 13 minutes) focuses on the lives of two civilizations—the Hairies, a refined and peaceful lot, and the stressed-out, tech-obsessed Scaries. The misguided efforts of the two groups' leaders to convert the other race prevents peaceful co-existence on the peanut-shaped planet

they share. Unhappy with the intolerance of their elders, the



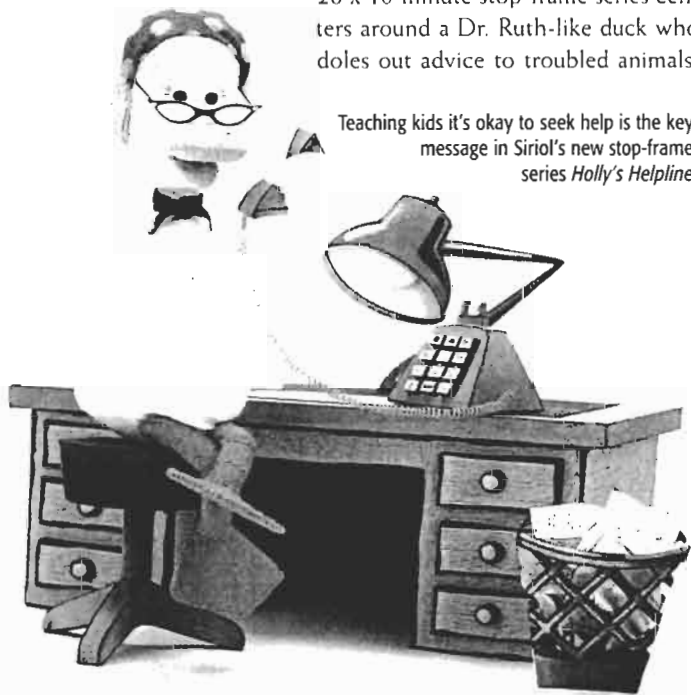
Alphanim's first CGI project *Hairy Scary* teaches two alien races to respect their differences

Hairy and Scary kids band together to launch a resistance that tries to block all homogenization attempts. Paris, France-based Alphanim has developed the *Hairy Scary* pilot with Sweden's Happy Life, and the series, which is aimed at six- to 10-year-olds, is budgeted at US\$10 million.

Status: Looking for co-pro partners and broadcasters.

Siriol's *Holly's Helpline* rings up preschool problem-solving tips

Preschoolers may be young, but that doesn't mean they can't figure things out for themselves...with a little help. That's the message Cardiff, Wales-based Siriol Productions tries to underscore in *Holly's Helpline*. Budgeted at US\$3 million, the 26 x 10-minute stop-frame series centers around a Dr. Ruth-like duck who doles out advice to troubled animals.



Teaching kids it's okay to seek help is the key message in Siriol's new stop-frame series *Holly's Helpline*

Whether it's an ostrich who's frustrated because he can't fly or a skunk with a personal hygiene problem, Holly gently and subtly provides each of her patients with the tools they need to overcome their challenges. To pinpoint the types of problems kids in the show's four to seven target demo would face and how best to resolve them, Siriol (a division of Entertainment Rights) consulted with Childline, a U.K.-based telephone service that helps distressed kids.

Status: Siriol is co-producing *Holly* with Welsh broadcaster S4C, but the studio is also seeking other co-pro partners.

Futurikon's *Germ*s takes a fantastic voyage into the depths of the human body

Although the idea of setting an action-adventure series inside the human body has been explored before (most recently in Warner Bros. film *Osmosis Jones* and its TV offshoot

Ozzy and Drix), Paris, France-based Futurikon's *Germ*s is nonetheless hoping to put a new spin on the premise. The series, which has a much darker sci-fi feel than *Ozzy and Drix*, follows the



odyssey of three characters (K-Bob, Poo and Hank) who used to be part of the immune system (called the Service), but were cast out after they were deemed to be germs. Each episode finds the three outsiders trying to ingratiate themselves to the Service by helping to fight pathogens and other viruses that are threatening to infect the body. Though the three protagonists admire the Service, they soon discover that its ranks are made up of automatons—cells predisposed to executing specific tasks and nothing more. As existential angst sets in, the trio sets out on a quest to locate the Service's mythical leader the General to see if he can provide meaning to their lives.

Created by Futurikon producer Norman LeBlanc, *Germ*s is budgeted at US\$6.9 million.

Status: Looking for partners.

Dargaud-Marina's *The Trolls of Troy* conjures up a new fantasy tale

With another *Lord of the Rings* film to go and multiple *Harry Potter* pics still in the works, it's clear that the fantasy genre will be working its magic with audiences for a couple of years yet. This fact isn't lost on Paris, France's Dargaud-Marina, which hopes kids will be drawn to the charms of *The Trolls of Troy*. Based on a same-name French comic book series by Jean-Louis Mourier and Scotch Arleston, the 26 x 24-minute show is set

Dargaud-Marina's *The Trolls of Troy* tracks the plight of persecuted creatures

in a faraway time and delves into the plight of trolls who are trying to escape enslavement at the hands of humans. Though the trolls are stronger, humans use their recently mastered magical powers to control them. Series protagonist Waha and his ilk must band together to vanquish the human leaders Rysta Fuquatou and Haplin, both of whom want to exploit the trolls' labor before exterminating the entire race. Targeted at the six to 12 set, the 2-D animated series is budgeted at US\$5.9 million.

Status: Dargaud-Marina is co-producing the series with French broadcaster M6, but is still seeking additional financing.

TV-Animation spins an absurd animal tale with *The Crazy Barn*

What if George Orwell's *Animal Farm* was reworked as an animated sitcom by the subversive mind of Gary Larson? That's the question Copenhagen, Denmark-based TV-Animation has been contemplating, and the answer it's come up with is *The Crazy Barn*. Aimed at eight- to 12-year-olds, the 2-D animated series is set on a farm where the animals gab and kvetch just like humans. All is not well, though, as the livestock threatens to revolt against the dim-witted farmer Johan, who is forever trying to catch them in the act of conversation. Bridging the animal-human divide is the farmer's son



Making friends—animal or human—is the key theme in TV-Animation's *Crazy Barn*

Carl, who manages to fool the animals into communicating with him by dressing up in a rooster costume. Eventually, Carl and his newfound chums Lola the Turkey and Sir Richard the Rat put together a weekly TV show that becomes the talk of the farm. Life looks good for Carl—an outcast in the human world—as long as he can keep his real identity hidden from his animal friends. Based on TV-A's live animation gameshow format *The Crazy Barn Show*, this 26 x 24-minute series is being produced for US\$4.5 million.

Status: Looking for financing. ☒

Producers get into a new groove with music-based kids shows

BY SIMON ASHDOWN

The fact that most people can hum the theme songs to *Sesame Street* and *Barney* with little difficulty underscores the integral role that music has played in preschool-targeted television. But while producers have historically used music primarily as a branding tool or as a means of advancing or reinforcing an episode's narrative, few have seen music education as worthy of a TV treatment. That's starting to change. With recent research linking the study of music to stronger social and math skills, producers are looking at developing shows that encourage kid interest in music.

It was while struggling to find such a series for his daughters that Phil Chalk, company director/producer at U.K.-based Evoke Entertainment, got the inspiration for *Notezart*. "I started kicking around the idea of how we could show classical musical notation in a way that would be accessible to kids," says Chalk, a classically trained trumpet player. From that initial brainstorm, he came up with a world and characters to represent the rudiments of music.

Each episode of the 26 x 11-minute series follows a similar format, with *Notezart* (the descendent of a famous composer) and his sidekicks Major (a dog) and Minor (a bird) trying to figure out the song of the day. Along their journey through the Land of Harmony, they collect clues about the song from other characters and objects. Once *Notezart* figures out the tune—one of several well-known children's songs—he and the other characters recite it.

Chalk has tapped Hollywood film composer Carl Davis to score the theme song of the 2-D animated series, which London, England-based Tell-Tale Productions (of *Tweenies* fame) is consulting on.

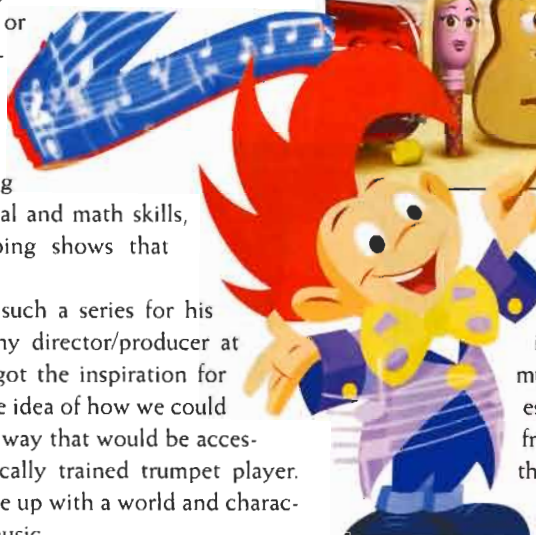
Like Chalk, Zenith Entertainment's head of children's drama and animation Julian Scott hopes that his new show *MusoMice* will help remove some of the barriers that prevent kids from getting psyched about music. Set in an orchestra pit after the musicians have left for the night, the live-action/puppet series stars four mice who pose kid viewers questions like, "What objects can we use that will sound like rain?" and "What does a rainbow sound like?"

Comprised of multiple segments, each episode sees the characters introduce a theme, which they explore through rhythm, pitch and stories (most of which are relayed by Minim the cat).

Scott developed the series concept with Melly Buse (who produced Henson's *The Hoobs* and scored some of its music) and early childhood music educator Linda Bance. In fact, Scott got the idea for the show while watching his own child participate in a music



Touch's *Musicland Band* (above) tweaks kid interest with sophisticated playing styles, while Evoke's *Notezart* (left) teaches them to decipher music



playgroup that Bance runs. Though watching *MusoMice* won't teach kids how to read music, Scott is confident they will be more interested in the subject. "What we tried to import from Linda's playgroups was to get kids to realize that it's okay to make music and that it's okay to make a din," says Scott.

Promoting kid interest in tunes was also the driving force behind *The Musicland Band*, a 3-D CGI direct-to-video series from Santa Ana, California-based Touch Studios. Based on an original concept by creator Carla White, the series is about the adventures of characters who resemble various musical instruments. Rather than bore kids ages four to eight with music theory, the US\$400,000 series aims to pique their curiosity about music by exposing them to as many genres as possible.

"Unfortunately, a lot of today's kids music is dumbed down. With *Musicland* we tried to incorporate all different styles—Broadway, country, surf music, etc.—but make it really authentic so that kids and parents won't mind listening to it to," says White, who produces and writes all of the series' music with her husband Tim.

So far, Touch's approach is winning fans. The first DVD in the series (*We Stick Together Like Glue*), which was sold exclusively on the web (www.musiclandband.com), has moved 10,000 copies since it was released last year. And an accompanying CD has sold 5,000 units. As modest as those sales are compared to a Disney title, the first ep has since been picked up by Pro-Active Entertainment, which will make it available through large distributors such as Ingram and Baker & Taylor in October.

White is also talking to producers about developing a *Musicland* TV show, and is in pre-production on the second DVD, due out next spring. Entitled *Glamorous Life*, the DVD will star the Sticky Twins, two drumstick sisters who decide to enter an *American Idol*-like contest. **CS**