

Eye catchers

Jules Grant previews 21 of the hottest new children's shows making their debuts at Cartoon Forum and Mipcom Junior this autumn.



Prank Patrol (20x28')

Producer: Apartment 11/YTV, Canada

Target: 8-12

Distributor: Marvista Entertainment

Debating at: Mipcom Junior

This tween live-action reality show gives kids the opportunity to plan, construct and execute the prank of a lifetime. A UK version is currently being produced by Bakermedia for CBBC. The concept will launch as a format for the first time at Mipcom, distributed by Marvista Entertainment.



The Adventures of Hippo-T-Hop (26x30')

Producers: RDF Media (UK)/Cinamation (US)

Target: 6-12

Distributor: RDF Rights

Debating at: Mipcom Junior

Cinamation, the US-based production company owned by *Lion King* director Rob Minkoff, has teamed up with RDF Media on *The Adventures of Hippo-T-Hop*, a new animated comedy television and music series that RDF is hoping will be a major global franchise. Hippo-T-Hop, a hip-hop rapper, genuine hero and musical superstar, and an odd group of characters go up against the most ruthless villain in the world, Ton Def.



The Hive (52x7')

Producer: Monumental Productions, UK

Target: Preschool (2-3)

Sponsor: Pathé Distribution

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

Pappa Bee, Mamma Bee, Rubee and Buzzbee are a fun family of bumbles who all live in the Hive on Honey Farm, encountering many adventures with their friends and relatives Miss Ladybird, Willy the Wasp, Worm, Queen Bee and Grandpa Bee.

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Simpsons alum to run GigaPix

The former president and CEO of Film Roman and exec producer of *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* has resurfaced at California's GigaPix Studios, where he will launch the firm's first production slate.

David Pritchard, whose five-Emmy career has also included executive producing *Family Guy* and *Dr Katz - Professional Therapist*, has been hired as president to steer the CGI facility into original productions, plans for which will be unveiled in the coming months.

"David's reputation for creating and attracting creative talent and ideas is also a real strength for the studio. This combination is exactly what GigaPix needs to launch its first slate of projects into production and distribution," said Chris Blauvelt, founder and CEO of GigaPix.

Pritchard has also worked on *The Oblongs* for primetime on The WB, *Garfield*, *Bobby's World*, *Felix the Cat*, *Mr Potato Head*, *C-Bear & Jamal* for Fox Family and Fox Kids, and the films *Johnny Tsunami*

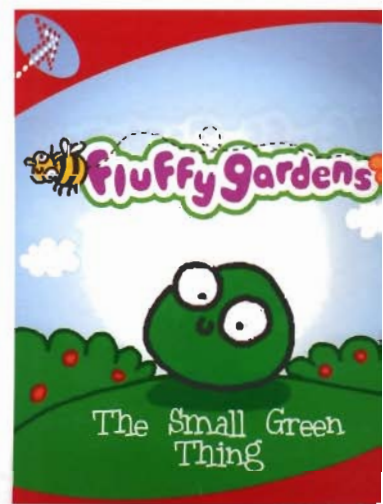
UK toon stalwart partners up for \$30m film

UK-based toon production company Uli Meyer Animation is teaming up with Bangalore-based Ittina Animation Studios for a forthcoming big budget feature film production.

The film, titled *MonsterMania!*, will be a fully CGI-animated comedy featuring all the classic movie monsters, scripted by British horror writers Michael Marshall Smith and Stephen Jones, who also developed the idea with Meyer.

The film, scheduled for completion in 2008, is currently being story-boarded at Uli Meyer in London as a coproduction with India's Ittina and Cinecarat of Switzerland.

Meyer told C21 that the film's US\$30m budget, together with a development crew of more than 100, will allow him to create a film that will "equal the quality of the bigger animation studios," adding that Ittina's involvement will create a second "pipeline" to share production and creative



NEWS FEED



Monster Buster Club (52x13')

Producers: Marathon Media/Jetix Europe/TF1/Mystery Animation

Target: 5-11

Distributor: Marathon International

Debating at: Mipcom Junior

This high-definition effort has already notched up sales to French terrestrial TF1, regional satcaster Jetix Europe and Canada's YTV, who have all committed to two full seasons. The ton follows the adventures of a secret club of five 10-year-olds who are the only ones aware that their town is being threatened by aliens. Together they build a network of tunnels to foil the aliens' plans, while still attending school. The action comedy is costing €18m (US\$23m) to produce.

The Annoying Thing (52x1')

Producers: The League of Good People/Kaktus Film, Ger/Sweden

Target: 6-9

Sponsor: Target Entertainment

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

The character also known as The Crazy Frog, made famous by the internet and mobile phone downloads, continues his shortform format with 52 sessions made for TV.



Dog Squad (26x11')

Producer: Greenlit Rights, UK

Target: 6-9

Sponsor: Evergreen Entertainment

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

Dog Squad charts the adventures of six trainee police dogs as they walk their way in and out of trouble. The series combines character-driven comedy with danger and mystery as the motley bunch of misfits, with debateable physical skills, live away from home for the first time.



Farmtastic (104x 45'')

Producer: Dibulitoun Studio, Spain

Target: 6-9

Sponsor: Hordago Film Distribution

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

Life in the countryside is not as quiet as it looks – at least not in *Farmtastic*. The series relates the crazy adventures of characters such as the proud and singing Rooster, the weak but cunning Fox, the lazy and funny Pig, the goofy Sheep, the farmer's right-hand man and The Dog.

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Nick greenlights kids' rock band comedy

US channel Nickelodeon has greenlit a weekly 'mockumentary' comedy series inspired by a real-life kids' band, which will kick off its 13-episode run with a 90-minute TV movie.

The Naked Brothers Band (13x30), to air in January, follows real-life brothers Nat, 11, and Alex Wolff, eight, whose mother, Polly Draper (*Thirtysomething*) also happens to be the show's creator/executive producer/writer/first-time director. The brothers play superstar bandmates, and write and perform all the show's original music.

Further mixing up the familial roles is Michael Wolff, the boys' real-life and on-screen father. Wolff, a well-known jazz musician, plays against type in the series by portraying a musically inept father, while also serving as executive producer.

"Nickelodeon is incredibly excited to be working with Polly and her family on this uniquely different comedy series and are very proud to be able to showcase the talents and original music of the Wolff brothers," said Nickelodeon's Marjorie Cohn, executive VP of

development and original programming. "*The Naked Brothers Band* series is a show that will make you laugh, but is intimate and genuine in its approach to dealing with everyday kid issues."

The series follows the rock outfit, chronicling their fame, friendship, temporary break-up and adolescence, and will feature several celebrity guest appearances. The TV movie that will introduce the series will feature cameo appearances by Uma Thurman, Julianne Moore, Cyndi Lauper and the cast of *Thirtysomething*.

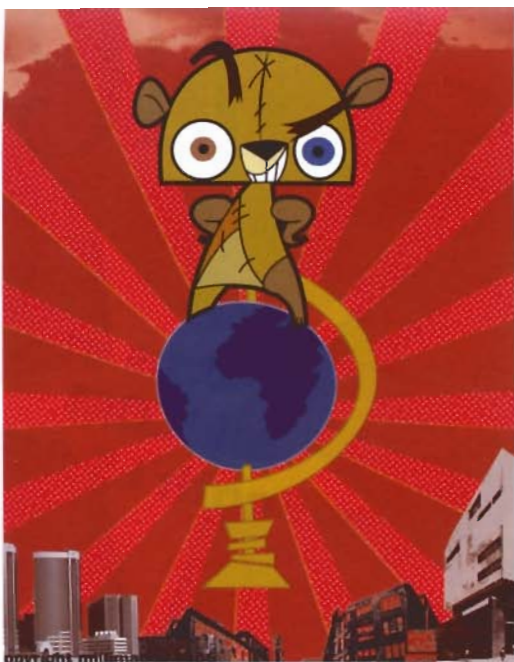
NBDtv rides the Underground with Ernie

UK independent distributor NBDtv will be taking new children's animation series *Underground Ernie* to Mipcom.

The 26x12' children's CGI-animated series is based on the names of the London Underground tube lines, and is being produced for UK diginet CBeebies by Joella Productions. Former England football ace Gary Lineker provides the main voiceover.



NEWSEED



Pocket Rockets (52x13')

Producers: Millimages (France, UK), Toons 'n' Tales (Germany)
Target: 6-9
Sponsor: TPS Jeunesse
Debating at: Cartoon Forum
 The Pocket Rockets are the guardians of the North, South, East and West, and consist of four exceptional kids who have to thwart villain Q-Babe's dastardly plans.



Friends and Chips (13x26')

Producer: REC, Spain
Target: 14-16
Sponsor: Euskal Telebista (ETB)
Debating at: Cartoon Forum
 Friends and Chips are common folk who turn normal things we know about culture into opportunities for irony. Sheepskin, the leader, always drags his friends along to the coolest social events.



Moonridge 5 (26x26')

Producers: 3-D Revolution Productions, UK
Target: 6-9
Sponsor: TF1
Debating at: Cartoon Forum
 In the 22nd century, five regular 14-year-olds attend Moonridge Academy, a boarding school on the Moon where Space Specialists are trained. For homework they capture dangerous and diverse Terrators on different planets using cool gadgets and turbo-charged vehicles.

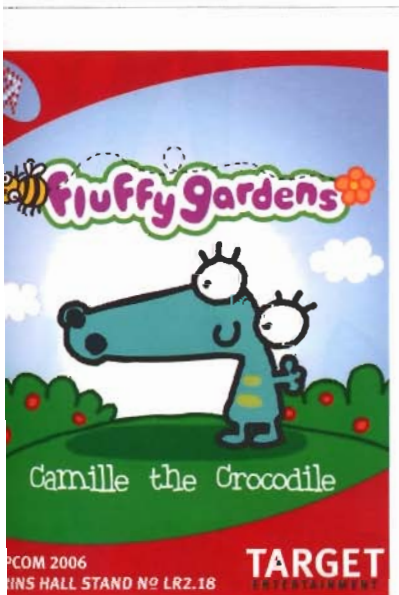
Harry and Toto (24x5')

Producers: Handle & Spout (UK)/GS Animations (Poland)
Target: Preschool (2-3)
Sponsor: Five
Debating at: Cartoon Forum
Harry and Toto tells the story of two very different friends, Harry the Hare and Toto the Tortoise. Because Harry is fast and Toto is slow, the two friends have to learn about their differences.



Johnny Test (13x30')

Producer: Cookie Jar, Canada
Target: 6-11 boys
Distributor: Cookie Jar Entertainment
Debating at: Mipcom Junior
Johnny Test chronicles the adventures of a fearless 11-year-old boy, his genetically engineered super dog Dukey and his 13-year-old super-genius scientist twin sisters, Susan and Mary, who use Johnny as their guinea pig for their first out-of-this-world scientific experiments.



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NEWSFEED

Dutch cartoon outfit has brainstorm
 Netherlands animation house Coconino will be unveiling its latest project at Cartoon Forum in France in September: a somewhat surreal children's series about a boy whose brain leads a life of its own.

Developed in cooperation with Bulgarian cartoon studio FinFilm and author Ed van Hinte, *Brian's Brain* (13x7') is aimed at the eight- to 12-year-old market and marks Coconino's first step into the international coproduction arena.

"There's a problem in Dutch TV right now," Coconino chief Peter Lindhout told C21. "There are big political changes going on, so none of the networks are making any decisions or taking any risks."

Moreover, Dutch broadcasters don't really believe in animation, he said, especially projects aimed at adults – all of which has forced companies like Coconino into the international copro market. "For *Brian's Brain* we'll be looking for a network and possibly another coproduction partner," Lindhout added.

Launched by Lindhout in 1999, Coconino has so far produced various ads and digital film work plus a trio of toons for Dutch public broadcaster VPRO. *Ted & Ed* (16x4') was aimed at the six-11 set, as was talking heads toon *Sjaarloos* (30x3').

More recently, the firm made *Colin* (13x5'), about an aging gay guinea pig. What began as strip by Victor Elberse in a Dutch magazine called Squeeze aired on VPRO this year and is being distributed internationally by SND Films.

Other Dutch animations selected for the Cartoon Forum this September include Telescreen's *Frog & Friends* (26x7'), based on the books by Max Velthuijs and aimed at four- to seven-year-olds, and Spunky Productions' *Nick & Ninnie* (26x2'30").



Ping & Pong (26x11')

Producer: Novel Entertainment, UK

Target: Preschool (2-3)

Sponsor: Cake Distribution/Hoek, Line and Thinker

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

Ping & Pong is a modern fairytale based on a little girl called Ping and a little dragon called Pong. Penned by Lucinda Whiteley and directed by Dave Unwin, the toon sees the pair transported into a world of imagination and dreams on the magical island of the Four Winds. Ping's favourite red ball, Bounce, is their constant companion as it leads them in the direction of adventure and discovery.



High Spy (39x26')

Producer: Alphanim, France

Target: 10-13

Sponsor: Jetix France

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

Alphanim, the French animation house behind titles like *RobotBoy* and *Zombie Hotel*, is unveiling its latest project at Cartoon Forum – a spy-based project for older kids aged 10 to 13. It centres on Carter and Malone, two teens who are recruited by a secret government agency to undertake dangerous missions.



Yin Yang Yo! (26x30')

Producers: Jetix Animation/Walt Disney Animation

Target: 6-11

Distributor: Buena Vista International Television

Debating at: Mipcom Junior

Jetix Europe's fourth coproduction with The Walt Disney Company sees twin rabbits Yin and Yang in a mysterious world filled with magic, monsters, mythical creatures, an evil wizard cockroach named Carl and a grumpy old panda named Master Yo. The production will join Jetix schedules across Europe and the Middle East as well as Latin America and the US from September.

Chaotic (40x30')

Producer: Bardel Entertainment, Canada

Target: 9-12

Distributor: 4 Kids Entertainment

Debating at: Mipcom Junior

A high-definition animated action-adventure series, the show is based on a trading card game that allows players and collectors to battle and trade cards in both physical and online worlds.



The Sandpixies (13x5')

Producer: Balance Film, Germany

Target: Preschool (4-5)

Sponsor: Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk

Debating at: Cartoon Forum

This series centres on brother and sister Sandpixies called Schorsch and Agathe who wake up in the sandpit after their children have gone home and experience nightly adventures there.

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Turner poaches Flextech creative exec

Turner Broadcasting in the UK has poached Flextech's Anthony van Someren as VP of creative and production at Cartoon Network, Boomerang, Toonami and Cartoon Network Too.

Van Someren will take up the newly created role in September following a restructure which saw Cecelia Persson promoted to vice president of programming and acquisitions.

Reporting directly to Dee Forbes, senior VP and general manager, van Someren will have responsibility for "developing and championing the creative vision across all platforms for all Turner's UK kids' channels," according to the company.

During his time at Flextech van Someren worked as creative director across *Trouble*, *Challenge*, *Bravo* and *Player*, with responsibility for creative execution on all channels.

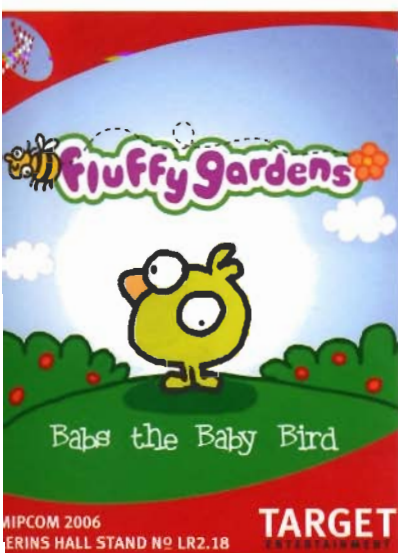
Muppets show up in east Europe

New York's Sesame Workshop has greenlit further episodes of interactive kids show *Play With Me Sesame*, and is launching Sesame-branded programme blocks in eastern European markets.

The non-profit production firm said the worldwide success of *Play With Me Sesame* in more than 50 countries had led to the green light for a further 26 half-hour episodes of the show, which stars Muppets Bert, Ernie, Grover and Elmo.

The existing 104 *Play With Me Sesame* episodes already air on networks including Disney Channel UK, Disney Asia, ABC Australia, YTV/Treehouse TV in Canada, Cartoon Network in India and RaiSat in Italy. The show is also one of the programmes in the new Sesame blocks in eastern Europe.

The block Sesame Nook already airs on MiniMe in Poland, while Hungarian channel Minimax will air a Sesame block, comprising *Play With Me Sesame*, *Elmo's World* and *Global Grover*, across Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic from December.



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G (26x10')

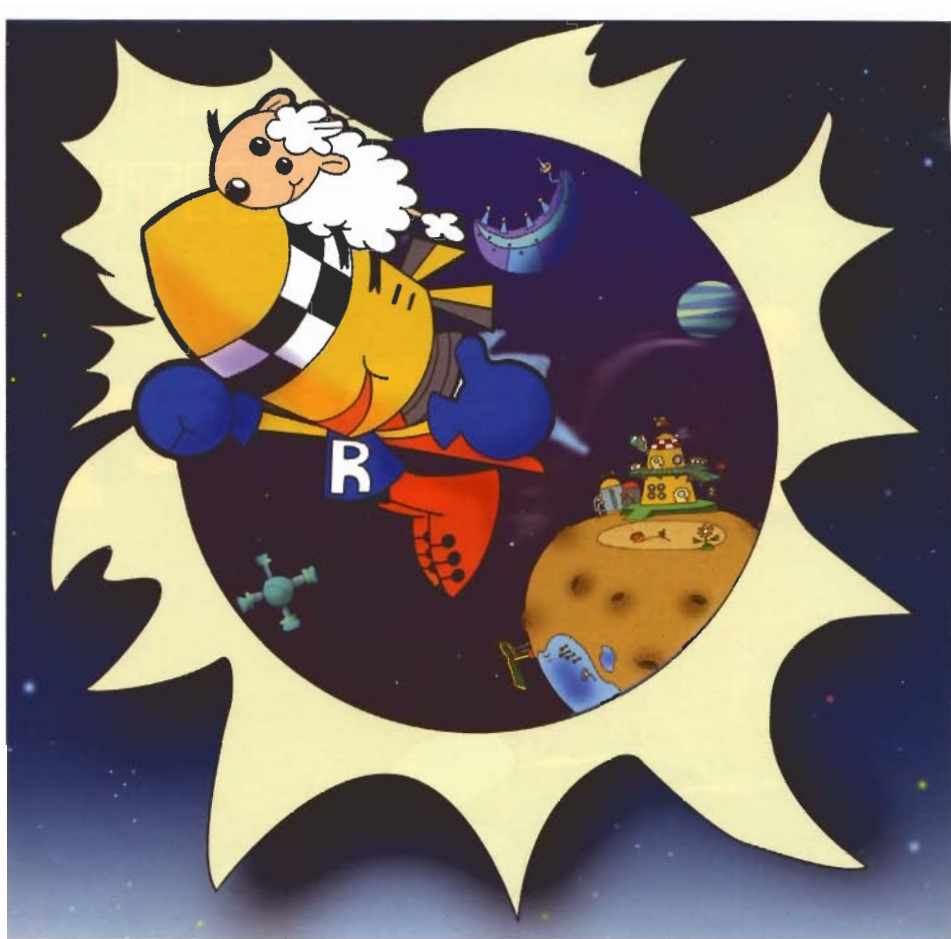
Producers: Calon, Wales
Target: Preschool (4-5)
Sponsor: SMG TV Productions
Debuting at: Cartoon Forum

Each day is a voyage of discovery for the inquisitive little cave girl and her prehistoric friend in this stop-motion series. The show is designed to attract the attention of precocious preschoolers who are learning to walk, talk and explore the world for the first time.

Scratch & Sniff (26x11')

Producer: A Productions, UK
Target: 10-13 years
Sponsor: Hit Entertainment
Debuting at: Cartoon Forum

Scratch & Sniff is a series of quick-fire animated adventures capturing the daily trials and tribulations of a cat and dog (who thinks he's a cat). The fast-paced, weird, noisy, and silly cartoon show follows two characters that simply don't know any better.



RocketBoy and Toro (52x11')

Producers: Imagestone (Korea), Village Productions (UK)
Target: 5-8
Distributor: Indigo Film & Television (excluding UK and Korea)
Debuting at: Mipcom Junior

The comic 2D animated adventure has been pre-bought by the BBC and was the subject of a rights deal with UK animation studio Cosgrove Hall. The series follows intergalactic messenger RocketBoy, who uses his speed to deliver gifts from planet to planet with the help of his loyal guard-sheep Toro and an array of robotic friends. Script development is being handled by Jimmy Hibbert (*Bob the Builder*).

Bingo Bongo (26x6')

Producers: Lobster Films (France)/Jet Media (Latvia)/Sofidoc (Belgium)
Target: All ages
Sponsor: Canal+
Debuting at: Cartoon Forum

Bingo Bongo deals with power relations among animals, who exhibit all the idiosyncrasies common to the human species. The action takes place in various settings, including rural, urban, underground, underwater and outer-space. ■



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Disney buys Indian kids channel

Disney has bought UTV Software Communications' Indian kids entertainment channel Hungama TV for just over US\$30m, as well as a 14.9% equity stake in UTV itself.

Both deals are subject to regulatory approval, but when finalised, the acquisition will cement Disney's presence in India's rapidly growing media market, which has a reputation for rigid regulations.

A previous Disney foray into Indian TV networks ended in 2003 when it closed joint venture Walt Disney India Private Ltd, ending a 10-year partnership with Modi Entertainment Network.

"India is a long-term strategic priority for The Walt Disney Company," said Andy Bird, president of Walt Disney International. "The acquisition of Hungama TV and the investment in UTV will significantly advance our presence in India and allow us to develop a strategic relationship with

one of the country's leading integrated media companies."

Hungama TV is currently the second-most-watched children's channel in India, and was the first home-grown 24-hour kids entertainment channel. The channel shows localised content aimed at children aged four to 14.

Galleon sniffs out deals for Skunk Fu!

UK kids IP firm Galleon has signed further international deals in Australia and France for *Skunk Fu!*, the animated TV series that will air on the BBC next year.

ABC in Australia and French satellite channel Canal J have acquired the series, which is also set for German, Swedish and Irish screens. Galleon is in advanced discussions with US networks about the show.

Skunk Fu! tells the story of a skunk who has to learn the ways of Kung Fu 'animal style' after accidentally being dropped in China by a wayward stork.