

Pocket Rockets hopes to soar in Pau



What's developing in kids production

by gary rusak

Can't make Cartoon Forum in Pau, France this month? Looking to get a peek at what to target at the toon fest? Here's your chance to take a gander at some of this year's most promising projects.

Megalomaniacal teddy bear strikes again

With humanity teetering on the edge of destruction, president of the planet Miss Cannelloni is forced to appoint a special team of agents to keep the world safe. Not constrained by the obvious choices of super-spies or military experts, Cannelloni turns to four extraordinary kids to help her out.

Paris, France-based Millimages' 52 x 13-minute series *Pocket Rockets* features Pendo, Angus, Inuki and Zahra, who are charged with protecting the world from a deranged teddy bear named Q-Babe. Aimed at kids six to nine, the action-adventure series lays Flash over photo-real backgrounds and sprinkles the offering with humor and outrageous gags.

In the first episode, Inuki is shocked to discover that Greenland is moving closer to England. Even more amazing is that upon closer inspection, the map of the world is reading more and more like a picture of the dastardly bear's face! Of course, it falls on the Pocket Rockets to fight the creeping continental drift and set the world right again.

Production partners Millimages France and Millimages UK are bringing *Pocket Rockets* to Pau in the hopes of securing an international distribution deal for the US \$8.4-million series and expect delivery for mid-2008.

A boy and cat take on the big, bad world

Little adventures take on an epic scale in *Jo and Jack* from Northern Ireland's iKandi Productions.

The 13 x five-minute series follows the trials and tribulations of three-and-three-quarter-year-old Jo and his feline best friend, Jack. Lively and colorful 2-D animation gives backgrounds a hand-drawn quality, while the characters, including Fred the Fridge and The Lumpy Bumpy Monster, are rendered in Flash.

The series for the two to five set revolves around the relationship between the boy and his cat, emphasizing their rock-solid friendship and shared timidity.

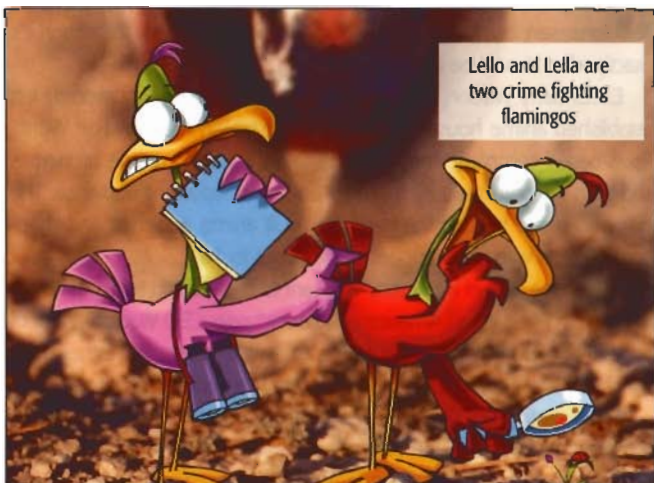
In an act of derring do in one ep, the pair embarks on a stealth

mission to grab a midnight snack. To score a stash of "fruity tootles, chocolate whips and jam wobbles" they must first overcome their fear of the ravenous Scary Carpet Monster and venture into the vast cavern otherwise known as the kitchen. Through teamwork and quick thinking, the pair succeeds in its task, unfortunately Jo and Jack's reward is a quick rebuke from Jo's mother.

iKandi has already secured a presale from Irish pubcaster TG4, and is the first Northern Ireland prodco to land a spot on Five's Milkshake block. Delivery could be as early as Q1 2007 for the series budgeted at roughly US\$350,000 per half hour. The prodco is also looking at creating an additional 13 episodes when further international distribution is secured.

The case of the maltese flamingos

Two loveable flamingos that enjoy poking their beaks into the mysteries of the animal kingdom form the centerpiece of Rome, Italy-based Gruppo Alcini's newest production *Lello & Lella—The Animal World Investigators*.



Lello and Lella are two crime fighting flamingos

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NEW PROJECTS COMING SOON!



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The 26 x 10-minuter targets kids six to nine and follows male flamingo Lello and his female counterpart Lella as they visit different countries around the globe to investigate indigenous animal culture. The project juxtaposes the 2-D flamingoes with live-action settings and wildlife footage.

A typical episode begins with Lello and Lella hanging out inside their tree trunk office exchanging hard-boiled barbs before receiving information that an animal somewhere in the world is in danger.

In the premier, the pair heads off to a city park where a duck's nest has been plundered and a turtle named Diesel is falsely accused of the crime. With the help of some crack research, the feathered gumshoes discover that a rare turtle—a member of the Alligator Turtle species—is responsible for the crime. The pair then hatch a plan to send the evasive reptile back to its natural habitat in Timbuktu via the post office.

With a US\$2.5-million budget, Alcuni's hoping to score a few more presales to add to the list that currently includes RaiFiction (Italy), DQ Entertainment (India), RTVSLO (Slovenia) and SABC (South Africa). Delivery is slated for the end of 2007.

Telescreen brings classic kids lit to TV

Netherlands-based production company Telescreen is turning Max Velthuijs' popular Frog and Friends books into a 26 x seven-minute series that should be delivered by summer '07.



Max Velthuijs' classic books transition to the small screen in *Frog and Friends*

Targeting the older preschool four to seven demo, the show tells the gentle tales of Frog and his pals Duck, Pig and Rat that stress living in harmony with the natural world and each other. Underpinning each episode are lessons about loyalty, honesty, trust and friendship. The hybrid 2-D/CGI style is meant to mirror the warmth of Velthuijs' original drawings.

In the first episode, which is set to bow at MIP Jr., Frog wakes up and recalls Hare told him it was a special day—but can't remember exactly why. After pondering what the word "special" means, Frog heads out to visit his friends only to find they are too busy to help him. Confused and a little upset, Frog returns home and happily discovers it's his birthday and all his friends have gathered there to celebrate.

So far, Dutch broadcaster KRO and Belgium net VTM are
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onboard as co-pro partners, and Telescreen has raised approximately 25% of the US\$2.9-million budget. Other possible deals are in the works with Magma Films for Irish and German distribution, and for North American distribution with Breakthrough Films. The prodco also has feelers out in Japan and France.

Sinbad retold as intergalactic action-adventure tale

Strapontin from Paris, France will be shopping its new 26 x 24-minute action-adventurer around the Pyrenees.



Sinbad gets a futuristic makeover in a new action-adventure series from Paris, France's Strapontin (above), and Cardiff, Wales-based Calon's *Ig* features a prehistoric preschooler discovering the world (right)

Sinbad of the Stars mixes traditional 2-D with CGI animation to depict the intergalactic adventures of Sinbad and Shanaya as they battle the evil genie Zamok to keep peace and harmony in the Three Galaxies. With the help of Temudijinn, a wise and magical sage, and a bevy of cyborgs, Sinbad and Shanaya spend much of their time searching the galaxy to find out what form the wicked Zamok will take next.

In one episode, the heroic pair notices that a once prosperous planet has deteriorated and assumes Zamok is behind it all. After uncovering a series of clues to identify the tyrant and relying on the help of some trusted contacts, they sedate Zamok's

host body and imprison him in a vessel. However, the battle isn't over because Zamok can never be destroyed entirely.

Aimed at the seven to 12 demo, the US\$7.6-million series should be delivered in 2008. Strapontin has a presale deal with French broadcaster TFI and promising leads in Canada and Germany.

Prehistoric preschooler helps build language skills

Ig is just like any two-year-old; she has a keen sense of wonder, a playful touch and a knack for learning. But unlike your average toddler, she is discovering the world before time in a prehistoric production from Cardiff, Wales' Calon.

The stop-motion, 52 x 10-minute series is endeavoring to captivate preschoolers with vibrant colors, exotic locales and a giddy cast of characters. Doggy, a pet dinosaur, Monkey Boy, a missing link, and Big Daddy, an authoritative T-Rex are there to help *Ig* out.

The gag-driven *Ig* has scripts peppered with simple words that are amongst the first 50 to 100 acquired by toddlers to encourage language skills. That said, the series will rely on visuals and action for much of the storytelling.

Music underscoring the action is purposely tribal in sound—log-drums and other ancient instruments will play catchy tunes.

Like most preschool shows, *Ig* eps are driven by the idea of discovery. In "I Can Do That", *Ig* decides she can do anything Monkey Boy can do until she sees him peeling a banana with his toes!

With a budget estimated at US\$6 million, the first batch of eps are scheduled to be delivered by Q3 2008. Calon's currently on the hunt for co-production

partners and distributors to raise upfront capital. The prodco is looking largely at pubcasters such as WDR in Germany, Rai Fiction in Italy and TV5 in France to provide a broadcast homes for the series. **S**



News in Brief

Disney makes moves as Indian market heats up

In a two-pronged deal, The Walt Disney Company has taken a major step to increase its presence in India. Worth a reported US\$44.5 million, the agreement includes the full acquisition of Hungama TV, the 24-hour Hindi-language kid's channel founded in 2004, and a reported US\$14-million investment in the channel's parent company UTV Software. Prior to the sale, Disney's Indian presence consisted of a programming block on terrestrial network Doordarshan that reaches 107 million households and satellite feeds of Disney Channel and Toon Disney/Jetix that reach approximately 30 million Indian households.