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Lost on *Pancake Mountain*

by David Kushner Jan 2 2008

Pancake Mountain combines puppets and punk bands to create television's coolest kids' show—and television's coolest music show.



"It's a school night and we're out past our bedtime!" shrills the announcer at Washington's 9:30 Club. "Yeaaaaah!" scream the fans, throwing up their hands. "Ready for Arcade Fire?" she says. "Yeaaaaah!" they shriek. On cue, the rock band whips into its scratchy anthem "Wake Up," and a couple dozen adrenalized tots start air-guitaring around them onstage.

It was a scene that could take place only on *Pancake Mountain*, the hippest music program on television, and America's best hope that the future will rock.

Started in 2003 as a variety program for children, this kooky public-access show has quietly become the must-play gig for grown-up bands from the White Stripes to Eddie Vedder, and a must-watch for music fans in the know. Past shows have featured dance instruction with hip-hop star M.I.A., an impromptu rendition of "Wheels on the Bus" by indie rocker Ted Leo, and a sheep puppet interviewing funk legend George Clinton.

It's a prime example of how a little D.I.Y. integrity—*Pancake Mountain* is filmed in D.C. on a shoestring—and a lot of patience can go a long way in building a brand. "It pisses on every music show I've ever seen," enthuses Ian Parton of British ensemble the Go! Team, who recently jammed on *Pancake Mountain*. "I don't know who's behind it, but obviously it's someone who knows their shit."

That someone is 43-year-old Scott Stuckey, the black sheep of the great American roadside-junk-food dynasty. Founded by his grandfather and located throughout the Southeast, Stuckey's had about 400 stands at its peak in the 1950s, selling candies and novelties like back scratchers and rubber snakes. Stuckey grew up in D.C., working at his family's kitschy stands, but was never enthusiastic about the family business. "My dad once dressed me as a pecan log roll and took me to the White House," he says.