

CP Arts

Youth Brigade

The creators of Pancake Mountain hope to bring their old-school-punk aesthetic to the kid-vid set.

Company Letterheads:
Soldano, Crandall,
O'Neill, Seder, Stuckey,
and Guillaume Bernardeau vowel off.



By Sarah Godfrey

Captain Perfect loves the kids. And they love him back: Among the caped crusader's powers are the ability to reduce small children to quivering mounds of jelly with a single funny face, a clumsy gait that inspires belly laughs, and a sixth sense that allows him to predict exactly what tykes want from television programming—and it ain't Barney. "The kids in D.C. want quality!" the Captain proclaims in the premiere episode of *Pancake Mountain*, a new children's TV show. "Not this cheap, cheesy stuff!"

The declaration comes when the gold-top-hat-wearing superhero, played by stand-up comic Erik Myers, finds himself in a meeting with "the Board." The evil conglomerate of suits, portrayed by the likes of former Hüsker Dü frontman Bob Mould and WTOP reporter Neal Augenstein, wants to give Captain Perfect the boot and change *Pancake Mountain's* format. On the table are kid-on-kid wrestling and product tie-ins, such as pancake Frisbees with faux dollops of delicious fruit topping.

As the show just isn't working, the board argues. Who wants to see punk legends performing kids' songs and sketches about the evils of littering? To convince the Captain that the show is in desperate need of change, a board member reads a fictional review: "Tom Shales of the *Washington Post* says, '*Pancake Mountain* is so stale, your kids will be sitting on the television watching the couch.'"

Before our hero finds himself climbing on the conference-room table to escape the security guard sent to escort him from the building, he tells the board members exactly what he thinks of their plan to bombard Washington's kids with more of the same violent images and toy commercials that they are exposed to every time they turn on the tube: "This is doo-doo."

Like the star of his show, Scott Stuckey thinks much of children's programming these days is crap. The 39-year-old creator of *Pancake Mountain* decided to make the

show—a mix of music, comedy, and cartoons—as a sort of penance for the advertising editing he does through his 6-year-old D.C.-based film and production company, Monkey Boy Studios.

"I guess after a while, I felt guilty about what we were putting out there," says Stuckey. "In TV, there needs to be something different. And we had the equipment and stuff anyway; we knew all of these great creative people, so it was just, like, 'Maybe we should try to do our own kind of local show.'"

Along with the solace it would provide him after long days of working for such clients as the U.S. Mint, the Washingtonian wanted to offer youngsters the same sort of colorful TV personalities he enjoyed watching as a kid. "Growing up, there were all kinds of locals on TV, like [WDCA's] Captain 20," Stuckey says. "The stations had more of a mom-and-pop thing—the weatherman might also be the clown, and you might actually see that guy walking down the street. Today, I just felt that when I look at TV shows on Saturday or Sunday morning, it could be in any city at any time."

Last spring, Stuckey, who has remixed songs and edited videos for the likes of Widespread Panic and Minor Threat, began putting in calls—to musicians he had worked with, animators, and various other friends with talents to lend the endeavor—and started fleshing out an idea for a show that would offer an alternative to Saturday-morning fare rife with "infomercials for turkey roasters and Thighmasters."

Everyone Stuckey contacted agreed to pitch in. Brendan Canty of Fugazi and Kathi Wilcox of Bikini Kill lent the trippy, high-speed theme song, Vic Chesnutt agreed to bang out a version of "I've Been Working on the Railroad," and Ian MacKaye decided that the second release by his latest group, the Evens, would be a kid's song created for the show.

Although getting older, having kids, and recording music to appeal to one's progeny may not seem punk, Stuckey says that *Pancake Mountain* adheres to the genre's values.

"It's still the do-it-yourself movement," he says. "The punk people involved don't necessarily sound punk, but what started the punk scene is driving us."

(continued)