

# Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy

## Three Guys, One 'Toon

by Linda Simensky

One day in 1996, I got a fax at the Atlanta head office of the Cartoon Network where I am vice president of original animation. It was from Vancouver animator Danny Antonucci. Danny had sent me a drawing of three goofy looking guys, with the title *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy*, and the tagline: "They're friends because they have the same name." "What do you think?" he wrote. Hilarious, I remember thinking. I remembered that back in 1974, I used to hang out with two girls in my neighbourhood, Linda J. and Linda V. We didn't have much in common other than living in the same neighbourhood and having the same name. I immediately identified with the concept and a series was sold.

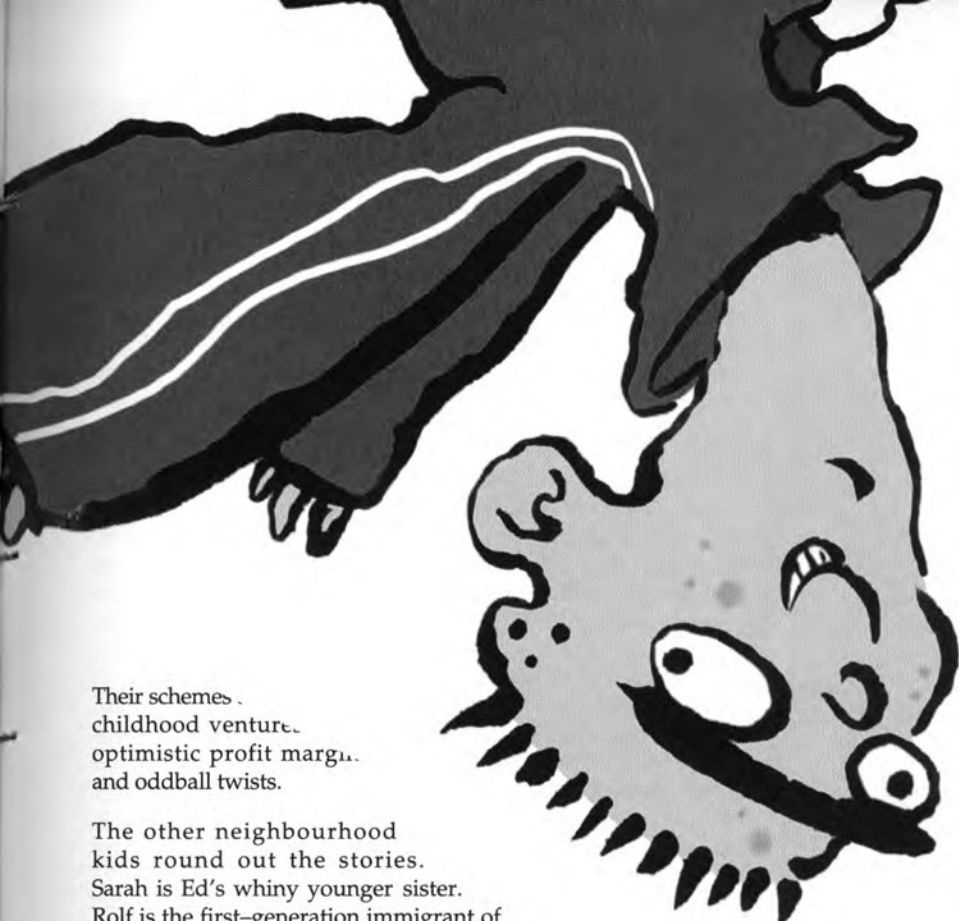
Well, actually there were several more steps before that last part happened but they were easy. I showed the fax to Mike Lazzo, the senior vice president of programming and production at the Cartoon Network, and he laughed. "Can we see more? Is there a bible?" he asked. The series bible came through by fax, a few pages at a time, over a period of the next few months. After an affirmative response from Betty Cohen, the president of the Cartoon Network, the legal paperwork and deal making began. Not long after, a start-up meeting was held poolside at Chateau Marmont, the one moment of Hollywood glamour we'd experience. "How soon can you have it ready?" asked the general manager and I watched Danny's eyebrows go up. Thus the Sisyphean task of producing the series began. Up to that point, the Cartoon Network had only produced shows through Hanna-Barbera in Los Angeles. Even shorts that were produced in smaller studios in other cities were produced through Hanna-Barbera. This would be the first show to be produced outside that system and the first to report directly to the Cartoon Network. The fate of our working with independent studios rested with this show. Nothing like a little pressure! In addition, every series we had done had started with a seven-minute short, but this time we were so sure we were on the right track that we jumped right into series production.

At that point in time, the Cartoon Network had been putting a great deal of effort into finding properties that weren't just

animated sitcoms but were actually cartoons. Visually eye-popping, gag-laden, character-driven and most importantly, funny—those were our cartoon goals. We were also trying to produce the cartoons by setting up units which would be creator-driven and self-contained. The old Warner Bros. "Termite Terrace" was our model since, as far as we were concerned, that's how the best cartoons were made. In the mid-1990s, Hanna-Barbera produced a series of 48 cartoons. The Cartoon Network went into series production on three of those shorts—*Dexter's Laboratory*, *Cow and Chicken* and *Johnny Bravo*. We were in development on our next show, *Powerpuff Girls*, with the *Dexter* unit, and were starting to put several other projects into development, when we decided the Eds should have their own series.

Antonucci's earlier projects had made him a household name among animators. *Lupo the Butcher*, his animated short from the late 1980s was, to some degree, the *South Park* of its time. I can remember a tape of *Lupo* being passed around the office back in 1988, as people told each other, "You've got to see this!" A few years later, in 1994, Antonucci started up his own studio, a.k.a. Cartoon, in Vancouver to produce his show *The Brothers Grunt* for MTV. Following that, he spent the next few years doing commercials, promos, network IDs and the opening for MTV's *Cartoon Sushi*.

He decided to remain in Vancouver and expand his studio to accommodate series production. After working out of a small, five-person studio, a.k.a. Cartoon moved into a loft in the Gastown section of Vancouver and began hiring a full staff to work on the first 13 episodes. *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy* is the story of three best friends bound by the same name, gawky social graces and an overwhelming desire to fit in. The series takes place during summer vacation, as the Eds search the cul-de-sac where they live for adventure, acceptance and money to buy candy. Ed is into monster movies and model kits. Edd is the really smart, really quiet and the unnaturally polite one. Eddy is the ringleader who loves being the centre of attention. The Eds are driven by their constant quest for cash, mostly for buying jawbreakers.



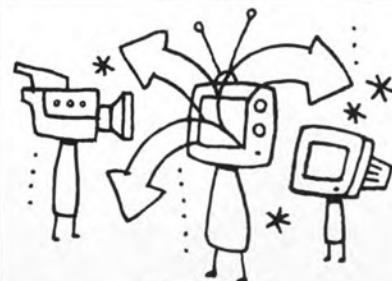
Their schemes . . .  
childhood ventures . . .  
optimistic profit margins . . .  
and oddball twists.

The other neighbourhood kids round out the stories. Sarah is Ed's whiny younger sister. Rolf is the first-generation immigrant of unknown origin who eats strange things and has a pet goat. Jimmy prefers hanging out with Sarah and finds the Eds too rough. Kevin, the neighbourhood cynic, finds the Eds' ideas stupid. Nazz is the neighbourhood heartthrob and the mysterious Jonny 2x4 has a best friend that is a wooden board named Plank. Rounding out the cast are the neighbourhood bullies, the dreaded Kanker Sisters. The characters are loosely based on Danny's two sons, assorted friends and people he's known throughout his life.

Each half-hour episode is comprised of two, 11-minute cartoons. Typical episodes range from the Eds crashing Nazz's sprinkler party, to dealing with cycles of fads that blow through the cul-de-sac, to Sarah's newfound crush on Edd. Each cartoon is produced "the old-fashioned way" to guarantee the maximum number of laughs. Danny works with story editor/head writer Jono Howard and a few other writers to generate the story ideas. Each writer then produces one-to-two-page outlines with the beats of the story. The outline is handed to two storyboard artists who work out the action and the gags. The storyboards remain up on the wall for the big pitch, at which point the artists pitch the storyboard to Danny and everyone else in the studio. The receptionist, the accountant and any visitors that day—are all included in the pitch audience. The gags and beats that get the laughs are keepers. The ones that fall flat get feedback or are reconsidered.

Season one, which premiered in January 1999, is doing remarkably well in the ratings. Every now and then the Cartoon Network produces a show that has an impact on popular culture or day-to-day life. Recently, a journalist in Tallahassee, Fla., wrote a column in his local newspaper about his search for the huge jawbreakers his kids saw on *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy*. In the April 19 issue of *People* magazine, in the crossword puzzle, the clue for #45 down was cartoon show, *Ed, \_\_\_ 'n' Eddy*. Fan Web sites are starting to spring up.

The show has started to appear in other countries via international cartoon networks. A second season has already been ordered for a November 1999 broadcast date. Apparently, puberty is as international as it is unforgiving. Will the Eds ever be shown in their own backyard? Will Canadians ever get to see the "Canadian Squirt Gun" episode in season two? Probably. While *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy* will hopefully be acquired for air on one of the Canadian cable channels, for now you have to rely on tapes from friends in the United States. ●



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