

A Blast from the TV's Past

New York's Museum of Comic and Cartoon Arts brings back historic Saturday morning cartoons in a one-of-a-kind exhibit. **by Jake Friedman**

How'd you like to lay your eyes on an authentic '3'x3' Smurf Village playset, which helped spawn the cartoon series? Or an original printing of "The Chipmunk Song," the inspiration for Alvin? Or

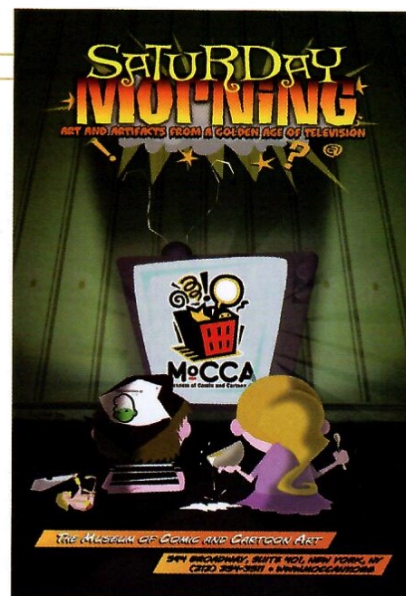
chief operating officer. "Everyone has a favorite Saturday morning cartoon." The exhibit, which runs from November 18 to March 16, will include regular screenings, lectures and a gallery filled with original art and memorabilia. Most of the items are focused on the time between 1966 and 1990, referred to as the "Golden Age" of Saturday morning cartoons.

"The reason why it's considered the 'Golden Age,' is that was when the most kids were 'toonied-in,' so to speak," says Murray, who spent months researching this exhibit with books like Jerry Beck's *Animation Art* and The Burke Brothers' *Saturday Morning Fever*, not to mention autobiographies by both Bill Hannah and Joe Barbera, websites like toonopedia.com, and his own Saturday morning memories.

"Kids have more options these days. There weren't 24-hour cable cartoon channels. There were only three networks, and in 1966 all three began programming original content for Saturday morning." Murray also notes why this period ended in the 1990s. "That's when the Children's Television Act was passed by Congress to increase the quantity of educational programming on television, and that's when you see networks throwing in the towel and programming news shows ... Also, the divorce rate had spiked and weekend mornings became very important to parents; there were drives to get kids more active in sports on weekends."

If you're reading this magazine, chances are you're one of the millions who grew up in this halcyon period of animated TV and will no doubt find your favorite cartoon here, in some form or another. "There's every type of animation art imaginable, from character designs to layout drawings, to clean-ups to cels; there's also story packs, series bibles, model packs and, of course, toys," says Murray.

It wasn't easy for Murray and the team at MoCCA to assemble more than a 100 pieces from over 75 television shows. "We applied



The Care Bears



Fat Albert



Flash Gordon

the series bible for Disney's *Gummi Bears*? For the first time ever, scores of classic cartoon shows are gathering under one roof. The Museum of Comic and Cartoon Art, New York City's only cultural center devoted to the toon world, is holding an exhibit titled "Saturday Morning: Art & Artifacts from the Golden Age of Television."

"It's something most people can relate to," says Matt Murray, curator and MoCCA's

for a few grants, but we ended up funding this show largely out-of-pocket and through private donations. Over time we've received a number of donations from galleries and collectors who believed in the cultural importance of a museum dedicated to comic and cartoon art. These connections have also helped us build a network, so that if we need a piece we can put the word out and see what comes down the pipeline. We also meet a fair number of creators at conventions and events who will loan or donate art to us."



Matt Murray

Throughout the spacious gallery, you'll find plasma screens playing Saturday morning cartoons non-stop, some with dated commercials included. The lectures are scheduled to be led by historians and speakers from different aspects of the industry.

Finally, rest assured that you can bring your friends and family along who may not know a squash from a stretch. "Besides being an exhibit about cartoons we watch," Murray points out, "we're also looking to clue people in on the process of animation and guide them through that by using the artwork."

For a museum exhibit, it's bound to keep you coming back again, not unlike the cartoons you used to watch. Just don't forget your sugar cereal and footsie pajamas. ■ **Jake Friedman is a New-York-based animator. For more info, visit www.jakefriedman.net.**

Visit www.MoccaNY.org for a complete list of details.