



## Milking The Pro's

*A series of interviews by Jake Friedman*

If you're reading this newsletter, you love toons as much as I do. We made it our interests, our hobbies and/or our professions. But what exactly is out there for people who love toons? I had the opportunity to ask nearly a dozen people all over the animation spectrum the four main questions that are the crux of any good brain-tapping. In this multi-part article, professionals in and around cartoons talk about their gigs and offer input to the rest of us.

**Tom Warburton** is the creator of one of the top shows on Cartoon Network, **CODENAME: KIDS NEXT DOOR**.

**JF:** What's the hardest thing about having your own cartoon show?

**TW:** There's an interesting word the French use that really distills all the difficult parts of having your own cartoon show into one perfect word. Now, I don't know what that word is but it probably starts with 'le' or something else French. As for me, I like to use the Italian word 'relentless' (pronounced 'ri-lent-less'). Every week we're trying to make a brand new sooper double action packed and funny 11 minute movie about the Kids Next Door. You're juggling approximately 35 episodes in different stages in any given week and there's no such thing as putting it aside for a moment to think about it or really make it "perfect." Craig McCracken (creator of Powerpuff Girls and Fosters Home for Imaginary Friends) once said that TV production was like having everything on a conveyor belt in front of you. You only have so much time to finesse one episode before the next one is suddenly on top of you. And the next one. And the next. And the next! So right now I'm kind of like Lucy and Ethel working on that candy wrapping assembly line. It's hard work but if it wasn't hard then it'd be boring around here. And I hate being bored.

**JF:** What's the biggest perk?

**TW:** I'd have to say the biggest perk is just having my own show in the first place. I'm the "boss" and sometimes the people who work on the show actually LISTEN to me (when they're not laughing at me). I've been given this opportunity by cartoon network to make the show I want to make with virtually no interference. Sure, they give us some notes and there are some basic, common sense strictures to follow, but that's the challenge in it. You NEED rules to push! It's no fun mooning a nudist colony! It's more fun mooning the church picnic!

**JF:** Why did you choose to do what you're doing?

**TW:** Back in 1990 when I was out looking for my first job in NYC, Candy Kugel (ASIFA-East sooper old-school executive supreme and Buzzco Associates joint chief of staff) told me that you shouldn't get into the animation business unless you HAVE to do it, unless it was the ONLY thing you could do. Hearing that, I tried to run but I tripped and fell. Before I could get back up, she and Vinnie Cafarelli had locked the door and chained me to a desk and made me learn animation at Buzzco. And I love them for it. There WASN'T anything else I wanted to do. making drawings move and do funny things was always my dream and now I get letters from kids all over the world saying that they love Codename: Kids Next Door! They're probably lying, but it makes me feel good anyway.

**JF:** How do I get to be where you are now?

**TW:** It's a messy combination of hard work (physical and mental), luck (straight out of the bottle and the kind of luck you make yourself), knowing the right people (both artists you want to work with and people at networks), talent (the artistic kind and the busi-

ness kind), doing your homework (know your audience and the network you're pitching to) and I like to top it all off with a nice Manhattan, straight up (2 parts bourbon, 1 part sweet vermouth, a dash of bitters, and garnish with a cherry. Two cherries if you've worked extra hard that day). There's really no magic formula to it but it's always been my belief that if you really want something and work hard enough to get it...you WILL get it. I KNOW it sounds cliché, but I REALLY wanted to have my own show, and I spent a massive amount of time trying to make it happen. And here I am with Codename: Kids Next Door. Now I just have to try not to blow it!

Nationally acclaimed writer **Gary K. Wolf** is the creator of **Roger Rabbit**. He authored the cult classic novel **Who Censored Roger Rabbit?**, inspiration for the multiple Academy Award winning film **Who Framed Roger Rabbit**. Visit him at [www.garywolf.com](http://www.garywolf.com).

**JF:** What's the hardest thing about adapting a novel for motion picture animation?

**GKW:** Working with the doofuses who come to the movie business from outside the creative field and don't understand animation. That's one of the reasons why early Disney and current Pixar movies are so good and so successful. The people doing them understand the process, know its advantages and its limitations.

**JF:** What's the biggest perk?

**GKW:** Having craft services give you all the lattes you can drink. Free!

**JF:** Why did you choose to write a novel about something as implicatively "childish" as toons?

**GKW:** I don't think Toons are childish. They convey very adult messages. They just do it in very simple ways.

**JF:** How do I get a novel picked up by an animation studio?

**GKW:** Write the novel, pray.

*Next issue: Design-studio head Craig Yoe and indie filmmaker Bill Plympton*

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