

# Meet New York's New ANImagician!

ANImagic's Jeff Nodelman talks about the studio he helped create after abdicating as CEO of his own successful independent animation house. **by Jake Friedman**

As far as new animation studios go, it's hard to find one with the kind of zest and creative freedom as ANImagic, headed at the canopy organization of Creative Group in New York City by Jeff Nodelman. Nodelman came fresh off Noodle Soup Studios (*Venture Brothers*, *Hopeless Pictures*), an indie animation house he founded five years ago, to head animation production and I.P. development for projects at ANImagic.

"This place here is built for how best to tell a story," asserts Nodelman. "It doesn't matter who the idea comes from, whether it's a top supervisor or from the guy who cleans the kitchen." While no longer a CEO, Nodelman wears his new position with pride. "It was fun to be an entrepreneur, but I'm a storyteller at heart."

Nodelman was hired by Creative Group's CEO and chairman Joseph Avallone and president Tom DeFeo earlier this year to help build an animation studio in an already burgeoning multi-media company. "As a CPA, Joe is the real businessman and Tom is an Emmy-award-winning editor with decades of experience, and they both have a distinct vision for what they want this place to be," says Nodelman. "Tom is a storytelling pro, and he's directing one of our flagship projects, *Nate the Great*."

ANImagic is slated to produce 40 22-minute Flash-animated episodes of *Nate the Great* for PBS, in which

Nodelman acts as art director, to begin airing in 2008. In addition, the studio is producing an original CG 7-minute short for the festival circuit called *Tree Elves*, an international project utilizing Creative Group's wholly owned Beijing animation facility.

The beginning of this year, ANImagic goes into production on its first feature film, *The Fourth Horseman*.

It will be the first animated feature for Fangoria Entertainment, one of the most recognizable names and a leader in the world of horror and also a subsidiary of Creative Group. Both projects will be directed and written by Nodelman. The studio already got some attention for its online revival of *SpeedRacer* earlier this year.

"I want this place to be said in the same breath as the great storytelling studios in Los Angeles. As you walk through ANImagic, it's like an animation campus because we have the ability to go from concept through completion, just like the big Hollywood boys. Real estate is expensive in the city and any room that doesn't generate revenue can be seen as wasted space," says Nodelman, "but ANImagic is fully funded by its parent company, the Creative Group, and their goal is to be creating and working on projects that we own the rights to, that we can then generate revenue through. The best way we can do that is to have a place where the artists can get together and

talk through the process."

Because the studio is producing self-financed projects, there's very little red tape for the creative team to hurdle. "Joe and Tom challenge everyone to do the job we were all brought on to do. When we bring ideas to them, if they like it, we move right ahead. If not, we literally just go back to the drawing board."

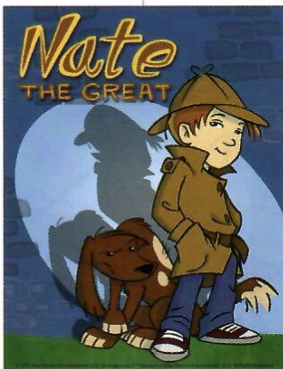
The studio also sports 98,000 square feet of facility space over four buildings, as well as the highest-end tools for all the employees. In the back are sound stages for stop motion and motion capture, not to mention recording facilities. "If it's got a button on it, we make sure everyone who could use one has one," adds Nodelman. Perhaps that's why ANImagic has been able to bring in artists from Canada, Ireland and L.A., as well as seasoned animation heavyweights like storyboard artists Diane Kredens and Jeff Buckland.

Clearly, Nodelman has high aspirations for ANImagic and their projects. "But my greatest production is my two boys, Dylan and Spencer. And I want to sit in a movie theater with my wife, Melanie, and my two boys, eating popcorn, and watching a film that Daddy created that was once their bedtime story. That, I think, would be the ultimate dream come true." ■

For more info, visit [www.animagicstudios.com](http://www.animagicstudios.com)



Jeff Nodelman



## Marvel Builds King's *Dark Tower* Comic

Marvel Comics has announced a collaboration of epic proportions with renowned horror novelist Stephen King. The comic division of Marvel Entertainment recently signed on to launch a comic-book series based on King's saga *The Dark Tower*. Spanning 25 years, the story centers on Roland Deschain, the last Gunslinger from a long-lost world, whose life quest is to save the Dark Tower. King's seven bestselling books will be translated into comics by highlighting the events and life experiences of young Roland, ultimately revealing the origin of his burdensome destiny. King will supervise the project to ensure the comics develop the original story and that the new stories continue to supplement and define the saga's mythology.

To adapt King's work, the comic-book powerhouse has also enlisted proficient author and comic-book writer Peter David to script the first seven issues of the new *Dark Tower* stories. David has been known previously for novels like *Sir Apropos of Nothing* and the *Psi-Man* adventure series as well as his work as co-creator and author of the *Star Trek: New Frontier* series for Pocket Books. Also on the roster is Eisner-award winning artist Jae Lee who will assist David and King in translating this masterful storytelling into a visually stimulating project.

"As a lifelong fan of Marvel comic books, and as an adult reader who's seen comics 'come of age' and take their rightful place in the world of fantasy and science fiction, I'm excited to be part of Roland's new incarnation," notes King.

Look for the new Marvel comic *The Dark Tower* in stores on Feb. 7. More more info, visit [www.marvel.com](http://www.marvel.com).

—Claire Webb



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## **Animagic Lays Off Entire Staff**

On May 21st, Jeff Nodelman's animation studio Animagic laid off its entire staff, about 75 people, after 6 weeks of employment on "Nate the Great." Animagic is a subsidiary of Creative Group and Moe Green Entertainment.

"Nate the Great" was a show that PBS bought from Creative Group last year. Unlike most shows, which run for about 10 test episodes, "Nate" was picked up for a whopping 40 episodes that were going to syndication.

The staff was called into a meeting at 11am Monday morning and was told that the project was cancelled. Nodelman labeled it a hiatus and sent all the artists back to their desks to pack up, where they found the information on their computers inaccessible.

According to a source, PBS itself is shocked at the cancellation, which stems from the investors pulling out their funding.