



It's serious funny business at **CARTOON NETWORK**—the home of *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Dexter's Laboratory*—where crafting quality animation isn't just child's play. BY SCOTT BROWN

Doodle Dandies



Ed, Edd n Eddy fish for cash to support their jawbreaker habit

right now is make another *Powerpuff Girls*."

Ah, *The Powerpuff Girls*.

Smart. Emmy nominated. A palpable hit with critics and audiences. After the foregoing litany of sub-*Shazam!* stinkers, it's nice to be reminded that we're living in the year 2000, *The Herculoids* is but a distant, disturbing memory, and Cartoon Network—with its uncannily amicable union of artists and execs—is one of cable's greatest success stories.

LAUNCHED IN 1992, CARTOON NETWORK (owned, as is EWOC, by Time Warner) has since become much more than the Nickelodeon knockoff some expected it to be. Besides posting July's best prime-time basic cable ratings in the 2-to-11 age bracket, CN's summer prime-time programming trumped Comedy Central and VH1 in the coveted 18-to-49 demographic through late July. As for the secret to Cartoon Network's success, it lies in acknowledging one simple fact. "Children are really, really smart," says Lazzo, 43, and his tone tells you this is an axiom that's been driven into his cerebrum after years of working as TBS' head of kids' programming. Perhaps that explains his dismay when kiddie test audiences initially rejected creator Craig McCracken's *The Whoopass Girls*,

TITAN A.E. ASIDE, TIMES ARE good for 'toons—at least on TV. Just ask Mike Lazzo, Cartoon Network's senior vice president of programming and production. He remembers the bad times. Heck, he *owns* the bad times. "We have them in our library," he sighs, referring to such cartoon treasures as *Jabberjaw*, *The Super Globetrotters*, and other detritus of the '70s and '80s as if they were an embarrassing clutch of not-so-distant hillbilly relatives. "Of course, all shows have their fans. I was literally stalked by a gentleman

who wanted me to put *The Hair Bear Bunch* on the air 24 hours a day."

Thankfully, Lazzo didn't listen. Instead, he decided to fulfill boss Ted Turner's mandate for an all-animation cable network by rejecting the cookie-cutter mentality that had bequeathed *The Gary Coleman Show* to posterity. At its nadir, Lazzo says, the animation business "was just a bunch of suits sitting around saying, '*Scooby-Doo* worked! Let's make *Goober and the Ghost Chasers!* Let's make *The Funky Phantom!*'.... So we know how *not* to do it. The worst thing we could do