

PARTING SHOT

A weekly snapshot from The Daily Astorian and Chinook Observer photographers



Maxx Rauh, 17, jumps over a fence on his bike at the Tapiola Skate Park. Rauh, who moved here from Redding, California, about eight months ago, just started riding BMX again after a year-and-a-half break.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

ODDITY

Surreal, not stoned

Trippy, life-size puppet
a 'true child of the '60s'

By LYNN ELBER
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — H.R. Pufnstuf is coming back to television, and he's bringing a few old pals and a 1960s vibe along with him.

More than 40 years after the debut of the "H.R. Pufnstuf" children's series, its title puppet character will pay a visit to Nickelodeon's new "Mutt & Stuff," the cable channel said Tuesday.

Pufnstuf will be joined by Freddy the Flute and Cling and Clang along with that duo's cool Rescue Racer on a "Mutt & Stuff" episode taping next month. It's scheduled to air in early 2016.

"Mutt & Stuff," as the title suggests, shares family history with "H.R. Pufnstuf": Both are from prolific children's TV producers Sid and Marty Krofft.

Nickelodeon's series for preschoolers, which debuted in July, features a mix of puppets and real puppies in its dog-school setting. Calvin Millan, the 16-year-old son of Cesar Millan of "The Dog Whisperer" fame, joins with friend and larger-than-life dog puppet Stuff to provide training tips and lessons on canine loyalty and love.

"Mutt & Stuff" is the first children's TV show from the Kroffts since they produced "Land of the Lost," the 1974-77 series about a family's adventures in an alternate universe populated by dinosaurs.

The reason for Pufnstuf's visit? He's Stuff's uncle. Marty Krofft promises that Pufnstuf will be the same life-sized, redheaded, cowboy-boot-wearing puppet familiar to viewers of the show that debuted in the late 1960s.

"We don't mess with our characters," Krofft, 78, said in an interview, speaking for himself and sibling Sid, 86.

Pufnstuf is voiced by comedian, actor and activist Randy Credico. Lennie Weinrib was the puppet's original voice.

Cult favorite

Just 17 episodes of "H.R. Pufnstuf" were created for its original 1969-71 run on NBC, but they've lived on in reruns (with MeTV their current home) and the memories of fans.

The show proved so indelible that a 2007 TV Guide poll of all-time cult favorites saw it ranked No. 27, sandwiched between "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman" and "Stargate SG-1."

Some wags may trace its enduring popularity to the notion that it was a true child of the '60s — in other words, that "H.R. Pufnstuf" had a certain recreational drug aura about it.

Marty Krofft flatly rejects that as untrue. "If we did the drugs everybody thought we did, we'd be dead today," he said, adding, "you cannot work stoned."

He suggests it was the show's surreal and brightly colored look, in an era marked by hallucinogenic imagery, that prompted such



Robert Voets/Nickelodeon via AP

Calvin Millan, left, as Calvin, Stuff, and clockwise at top right, Zippy, Grandma, Giggles and Wiggles in season one of "Mutt & Stuff," on Nickelodeon. H.R. Pufnstuf, the title character of the 1969-71 children's series will appear on an episode of Nickelodeon's new preschool series.



Robert Voets/Nickelodeon via AP

A scene from the television series, "H.R. Pufnstuf." The title character of the 1969-71 children's series will appear on an episode of Nickelodeon's new preschool series "Mutt & Stuff."

speculation. Another stubborn idea, that the initials "H.R." signified hand-rolled (as in marijuana joint), was also misgendered, according to Krofft: They stood for Royal Highness, backward, he said.

'How many drugs did you do?'

The Beatles, themselves fending off claims that their 1967 song "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" was a veiled reference to

LSD, were among those who found the show intriguing.

The group's manager, Brian Epstein, called to request that copies of the show be mailed to them in England, Krofft said, a request that brother Sid double-checked years later when Ringo Starr became his neighbor in Los Angeles.

Starr in turn had a question for Sid Krofft, according to Marty: "How many drugs did

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Marty Krofft

one half of a sibling team of television producers who were influential in children's television and variety show programs in the USA, particularly throughout the 1970s and early 1980s

you do?" the Beatle inquired. (Again, Marty Krofft adds, the answer was none.)

The Kroffts have big plans for Pufnstuf and crowd, with possible vehicles including a feature film and their own new TV series. And the siblings are busier than expected with "Mutt & Stuff," since its ratings success prompted Nickelodeon to double its season-one order to 40 episodes. Pufnstuf himself may return in future episodes.

"To make another hit at this time in our lives, I've got to give ourselves a pat on the back," Marty Krofft said.

They have more works in progress including "Electra Woman and Dyna Girl," which originated as part of ABC's "The Krofft Supershow" in the 1970s and is being rebooted with YouTube stars Grace Helbig and Hannah Hart.

Might other producers be resting on their felt-covered laurels at this point? "What am I gonna do, retire and watch daytime television and be dead in a month?" Krofft replied.