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By Jimi Devine
THE FREAK BROTHERS ARE READY TO ROLL ONE

The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers make the jump from print to the small screen as they turn 50

BY JIMI DEVINE

On the eve of their 50th Anniversary in 2021, The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers are poised to become bigger than ever with a new animated series backed by A-list voice talent dropping this fall — or harvest season, as the Freaks would see it.

The Freak Brothers originally launched in 1971 as a three-man quest for various drugs with a dash of social commentary. But their love of cannabis was certainly most apparent. It’s almost a blessing that previous efforts to bring them back to life over the years fell short so they could be a bright spot in 2020 just ahead of their anniversary.

Over the course of The Freak Brothers’ quarter-century print run, creator Gilbert Shelton created a different kind of comic book following. It’s a reputation that helped pull a top-shelf cast for the reboot that includes Woody Harrelson as Freewheelin’ Franklin Freek, John Goodman as Fat Freddy Freekowtski, Tiffany Haddish as Fat Freddy’s iconic cat, and Pete Davidson as Phineas T. Phreakers. Adam Devine and Blake Anderson will also voice two new characters and serve as executive producers.

Alan Cohen and Alan Freedland (King of the Hill, American Dad) will serve as showrunners, writers and executive producer alongside Courtney Solomon (AFTER, Mr. Church, An American Haunting, CAKE) and Mark Canton (former chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment’s Columbia Tri-Star Motion Picture Companies, 300, POWER the series).

While a solid group, it’s safe to say Solomon is the man that brought The Freak Brothers back to life after an old comic popped up in his storage 20 years since his first experience with Phineas, Fat Freddy and Freewheelin’ Franklin.

“Well, see I was 17,” Solomon told L.A. Weekly. “I’m originally from Canada, and we were backpacking through Europe [in the ‘80s] and of course, you know, being nice 17-year-old Canadian boys we had to stop in Amsterdam for two days.”

Solomon and friends found their way to the red light district after they smoked some hash and explored the sights after taking the recommendation from locals. They quickly realized much of the area was not for them and decided to go back to smoking hash. In that moment, Solomon would pick up his Freak Brothers Annual at a head shop on his way back to the coffee shop. They spent four more hours smoking hash and cracking up over the Freak Brothers’ exploits on their quest for the good herb.

Two years ago a couch-surfing friend that was mid-divorce offered to organize Solomon’s storage, and one day Solomon found The Freak Brothers comic he’d originally scored in Amsterdam sitting on his desk.

Solomon knew there was nothing comparable to the Freak Brothers in the space that is “authentic cannabis more for the cannabis people, I mean there’s just no entertainment,” he said. “I’m not going to say there’s not that ‘you know how to cook’ with cannabis, you know, that kind of stuff. But there’s nothing like this, pop culture, and the Freaks are the originals.”

While maybe 10 or 15 years ago wasn’t the right time for the Freak Brothers to end their hiatus, Solomon felt now was the time, with nearly 70 percent of Americans supporting legalization.
send the stuff to him, you know, the creative as far as the designs for the characters and the animation looks, and the universe look and all that stuff as a courtesy. And he gives us comments, he’s very opinionated.”

One of the biggest shifts they collaborated with Shelton on was turning Fat Freddy’s cat into an African-American woman in a quest to update the show for the diversity of the times. “Because we can’t change the three guys because it’s too much of a variation to the IP, obviously, but there’s a place where you know we could do something, and you know, the cat was clearly male in the comic book there’s no question about it,” Solomon said.

Shelton knew some of his original fans were going to be really pissed about that, but told Solomon eventually he thinks they’ll come to understand why it needs to happen and greenlight the biggest change from the original comic strip. “You know there were other tweaks and stuff along the way but for the most part, for the look of how we made the universe, the look how we made the animation, he’s been super happy and loves how the animation came out.”

The ultimate goal of that animation effort was a modern retro look that’s trippy enough to meet The Freak Brothers’ needs, even if the drugs won’t be quite as wild as in the comics.

“My intent was to do a bunch of the cool things that were done in the comic books and even go to other places the comic books didn’t go,” Solomon said. “And so the medium allowed that for us. And yes, the look of it is, you know, I’d say even better as far as the feel of the show and the universe we created there. I mean the color scheme, it exceeded my expectations.”

“I gotta say that I’m somewhere between a Franklin and a Phineas,” Solomon replied with a chuckle, when asked which brother he most identified with. “I’m pretty laid back, most of the time so that’s where I fall. But you know, I am the scientist and I am the one with all these sorts of theories, like Phineas. So I’m somewhere in the middle of those two guys. Honestly, I’m not really Fat Freddy but I love Fat Freddy’s Cat.”

Solomon said writing the quips for Freddy’s cat has been one of the funniest parts of the production process, especially given Haddish’s delivery.

The Freak Brothers are now a year removed from their Comic-Con 2019 launch, where they didn’t even have a cast yet and did very little promotion.

“We wanted to go to Comic-Con and tell the audience at Comic-Con first because that’s just seemed like the right thing to do. And so, we didn’t make a big plan or the usual events that go on there, And they ended up putting us into this big hall,” Solomon said.

800 people would show up to hear the news.

Solomon believes in today’s comic book universe, The Freak Brothers is seen as the high end of the underground comic scene.

“There were certain underground comics that lived in their own thing and they’re not Marvel, they’re not DC, but they have their own unique very very hardcore and loyal following,” Solomon said.

As for working with the wild lineup of voice actors that eventually came onboard?

“Woody is awesome. Tiffany is awesome. Adam and Blake are obviously great. Pete Davidson has been amazing to work with and John is just a treasure,” said Solomon, who is excited to announce some more additions to the cast in the months to come before the full series drops with eight 22-minute episodes. This will be a great upgrade from the short teasers we’ve been getting. Solomon plans on the entire first season being ready by the end of November.

Solomon said they plan on announcing where people will actually be able to watch The Freak Brothers in the next couple of months. They wanted to make it as modern as possible when it comes to how the Freaks are distributed, but not at risk of having an impact on what they can do with the content.

Despite some rumblings in cannabis circles about the possibility of some weed products to go along with the series, there are some obvious hurdles with state law around animated characters and cannabis.

Solomon said the main merchandise focus at the moment had been on things like shirts, bongs and rolling papers, but they’d certainly been approached by folks about Freak Brothers official weed. Solomon said, as long as you don’t use the animated characters, you could actually do a licensed cannabis line if you wanted to. The main at the moment, however, is making a solid show but, “if we ever did do it, we’d make sure it was really like high-end stuff that only [the Freak Brothers] would smoke.”
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Are you a regular cannabis user?

Research Description & Purpose
The goal of this study is to learn about areas of functioning in cannabis users. Information will be collected using individual assessments over the course of 12 months. This research is being conducted by UCLA researchers Dr. Yih-Ing Hser and Dr. Larissa Mooney, and is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Would the study be a good fit for me?
This study may be a good fit for you if:
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You would be asked to:
- Attend 4 assessment sessions where you will be asked questions about your cannabis use and daily life.
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For attending all the assessment sessions, you can earn $230 (plus up to an additional $100 if traveling to a UCLA research office).

Contact Information: To take part in this research study or for more information, please call 1 (800) 581-9847 or visit https://uclahs.fyi/uclacannabis or scan the QR code to access the link.

FOOD

A PERFECT COMBINATION
When Comic-Con and National Tequila Day collide, it can only be good

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Bars are closed and Comi-Con 2020 will be a virtual reality this year. But if there’s any consolation to be found, it’s that National Tequila Day falls on July 24. You can still let your freak flag fly from home and celebrate the beloved spirit. Whether ordering in or mixing it up, we’ve got you covered.

Eat and Drink
Lanea in Santa Monica has reopened its doors in time for their first anniversary with a new cruise-up, takeout option featuring cocktails and tacos for pickup, expanded outdoor dining and meal packages for takeout or delivery. To celebrate their return, this beachy cocktail bar and restaurant is launching an all-day Taco & Tequila Happy Hour with $2 tacos and $9 cocktails daily throughout the summer and additional specials for National Tequila Day. The spirit-driven cocktail bar has an extensive variety of more than 400 mezcal and tequilas.

Summer menu additions include the Third Street Sling made with Hibiscus Patron Tequila, fresh lemon, passion fruit and pineapple, and the Jungle Bird Scooter, with Vida Mezcal, fresh lemon, ginger and Campari. Also available are signature canned cocktails.

Sparklers
Azulana from Pure Azul can easily be your go-to beverage that doesn’t require any additional mixing or preparation. The brand also has a substantial CSR program, committing 8 percent of profits to nonprofit initiatives in Mexico that support the farmers/jimadors and their families.

Recently launched out of Los Angeles and produced in Jalisco, Mexico, Azulana comes in three flavors — original, lime and pineapple rosemary — in 12-ounce cans. They’re 4.3 percent ABV, 145 calories and is gluten free.

Onda, the brain child of actress Shay Mitchell, is also a new spirits brand that offers a line of premium canned sparkling tequila using blanco tequila and real fruit juice. The beverages come in grapefruit and lime flavors with a 5 percent ABV, 100 calories and zero sugars and carbs.

Tequila To Go
Party Can Triple Spice Margarita claims to be first-ever large format, ready-to-drink craft cocktail with 12 full-sized margaritas in one resealable can. It’s made with 100 percent blue weber agave tequila, premium orange liqueur, fresh lime juice, and a triple spice mix of ginger, cinnamon and chili pepper — just chill, shake and serve. It is available online for $29.99.

Golden Eagle Spirits, from celebrated bar chef Christian Rollich, features two handcrafted tequila cocktails made to order for pickup or delivery — the classic margarita or a Cortez made with tequila, fresh lime juice, bitters and house-made cola.

MIX YOUR OWN

PIÑA PARA LA NIÑA
Serrano chile
1½ oz. Cazadores Reposado
3/4 oz. agave nectar
3/4 oz. fresh lime juice
3 slices of serrano
2 oz. pineapple juice to salt the rim

Shake vigorously and serve on the rocks in a 12 oz. margarita glass. Garnish with a lime wheel and pineapple slice.

PICOSITA
Chile Habanero
1½ oz. Cazadores Reposado
3/4 oz. agave nectar or simple syrup
4 chunks of cantaloupe, muddled
2 slices of chile habanero
1 oz. freshly squeezed lime juice

In a cocktail shaker, muddle cantaloupe and combine all the ingredients with ice. Shake, serve and garnish with a slice of habanero.

1800 SILVER SUMMER SANGRIA
1 oz. 1800 Silver
3 oz. rosé
.25 oz. fresh lime juice
.5 oz. simple syrup
3 cubes watermelon

Muddle watermelon, shake and strain over ice cubes in a stemless wine glass. Top with rosé and stir gently to combine. Garnish with cucumber-wrapped inner glass and watermelon slice.
REPRESENTATION MATTERS AND JACQUI C. SMITH IS HERE FOR IT

Art that celebrates the beauty of women and girls of color

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

S mart and sexy, individualistic and adorkable, confident, quirky and assertively present, the women and girls that populate the universe of artist and illustrator Jacqui C. Smith hold space for themselves, each other and any viewer who needs it. In vibrant colors, deft lines and stylized personalities, her figures radiate a light-hearted energy that carries within it a rather urgent message — that representation matters. And that priority is something Smith amplifies not only in her sellable, collectible, eye-catching fine art itself, but in how she brings that work to the world.

Smith is a prolific and busy freelancer with about a million things going at any given time — illustrating children’s books for self-publishers and companies, creating designs for large and small businesses and events, managing a multimedia makers studio — all while selling her artwork at boutiques, craft shows, festivals and conventions. As one of the few Black artists showcasing illustrated artwork at events like DesignerCon (where we first met her last year), Smith is very cognizant of the power of her presence to engage the community in a conversation on diversity. But she also just straight up enjoys it.

“I love the big shows,” Smith tells the Weekly in a recent interview. “Meeting and talking to people, the connection, the motivation, the inspiration.” Artists spend a lot of time alone in the studio and Smith laughs that, “the only time I talk to people is at shows! I have fallen in love with that experience.”

“So what does an artist who relies on the in-person dynamic and the energy of big shows and niche boutiques do in a post-pandemic version of the industry? Like everyone, at first Smith was at a loss for an answer. “I’m OK now but at the start I was so terrified. I stressed out this summer, but other doors opened, and in the end it has pushed me to think about what I want for the future. A reset. The two-year plan I had… yeah.”

Online sales are good, but Smith can see now that in some ways, the situation was the push she needed to move forward on her dreams.

Aside from her three (so far) coloring books, she also creates stickers, journals, coasters, greeting cards, prints, T-shirts and pins. But lately a bigger dream has been asserting itself — her burgeoning career in character design and animation. “I had like five things on my bucket list,” she says, “and having an animated series with my girls was one of them!” Wanting to pursue what it would mean to create not only characters, but a whole narrative world, but being rather too busy, if there’s a silver lining of the pandemic’s impact on her career path, Smith says that’s it’s been getting back into animation. “Now I have a writing partner, so I’m not just drawing characters, we are writing stories.”

The ladies in her work are a combination of figures from popular culture and current events, plus people she knows or just sees — though there’s a little bit of her in all of them. Smith has always prioritized representation in the community and in the work, both who makes it and what it is that’s made. Her series of ink drawings on wood are a whole other mood than her digital portraits, but they belong to this narrative arc, as well as occupying a special place in her process. At four feet square and impossibly detailed, these fine and complex ink drawings have a ritualistic, pattern-forward stylization that invokes Aubrey Beardsley and a 1970s psychedelic take on Art Deco. They take months to complete. “They are very special to me in terms of envisioning the women, and wood grain shows up a lot in my digital work now as well,” she says.

Across her stylistic array, Smith’s work uniquely embodies its own message within its being rather than in didactics or exposition, though there are definitely works responding to the Black Lives Matter movement and the need to elevate Black creatives. “I do see [the protest movement] opening doors, and I am so proud of people for standing up for something. Artists made amazing pieces that opened people’s minds to the possibilities that are out there. It’s a hard conversation that needs to be had, but this is a good start. There are so many things that still need to be said, stories that need to be told.” In this calling, Smith’s message is focused but subtle. “It’s Black and it’s beautiful; it’s that I am here.”

jacquicsmith.com.
CULTURE

STORMY ILLUSTRATED

Stormy Daniels heads up Space Force to take on the Orange One

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Stormy Daniels happily admits that she loves few things more than irritating President Trump, or in her words, “the evil one.” This comes as no surprise, and frankly, it’s been a joy watching her annoy the shit out of him via her book, talk show appearances and a particularly memorable turn hosting Saturday Night Live. But now, with the help of Tidal Wave Productions, she’s taking things up a level. A new comic book called Stormy Daniels: Space Force will surely make the president’s piss itch on a variety of levels. Not only does it parody his much-ridiculed Space Force program in a more outlandish fashion than the recent Steve Carell Netflix series while presenting Daniels as a Barbarella-esque space hero in a Star Wars-ish universe, but the story includes a grotesque, orange villain called Ordon. Not hard to guess who that's based on.

Infuriating Trump, while undoubtedly great fun, wouldn't mean much if the comic book wasn't good. Fortunately, it's a riot. Racy adult humor and plenty of in-jokes have resulted in a title that will appeal to fans of the aforementioned Barbarella as well as Mel Brooks’ Space Balls.

The relationship between Daniels and Tidal Wave began in an unconventional manner. The comic book publishers produced a title called Political Power: Stormy Daniels as part of their biography series, but Daniels wasn’t involved. In fact, she was promoting her book at the time and so was not exactly pleased that other people were benefiting from her name. “They did a comic book version of my story and I had no knowledge of it until some fans started bringing them to my appearances to have me autograph them,” Daniels tells us on the phone. “Around the same exact time I got a nasty message from somebody at my publishing company because my book was either just about to come out or had just come out. I had my team contact Tidal Wave and go after them pretty aggressively — a cease and desist because they were using my trademarked name and image. They came back and were super apologetic and cool, and said, ‘What if we make some changes that you like?’ And then, ‘It’s a little too late to pull it or do anything about it, but what if we make a donation to charity.’ If you can’t beat them, join them.”

Darren Davis is the head at Tidal Wave, and the co-creator and writer of Stormy Daniels:
Space Force. He says that the original Political Power run was actually great timing on their part, as it led to an even better comic creation.

"A year later, I heard back from one of the people that threatened us, and he said, 'We want to work with you guys — what if we re-did the comic book, added some new pages to it, Stormy will do the foreword to it, and she'll even edit it,'" Davis says. "I thought it was a great idea. Then we were going to donate a percentage of the proceeds to Wounded Warrior on her behalf on the sales of the book. So we decided to work with her, and we changed it from Political Power: Stormy Daniels to Female Force: Stormy Daniels."

When that went well, Daniels and Tidal Wave wanted to continue working together. Davis went away, had a think session, and came back to Daniels with the concept for Space Force.

"He came to me and said he had this idea, and I was like 'Oh my God!,'" Daniels says. "He sent me the concepts. Initially, it was a little more of a Star Trek-y vibe, and I was like 'Whoa, I'm a Star Wars kind of girl — we're going to have to make a couple of adjustments.' He made my character like a space pirate. I love me some Han Solo — he does not know, but he was one of my first loves. So my character is like a space pirate, leading the rebels. My sidekick, like Chewie to Han, is a little alien pet based off of my dog Munch who recently passed away but was very famous with my fans."

In addition to Munch, fans of Daniels, Star Wars and all political junkies will savor the little tributes and Easter eggs that are all over the book. But none are more enjoyable than the villainous Ordon.

"It's all fun and tongue in cheek," Daniels says. "I don't take anything entertainment-wise too seriously. People always ask me if I think I'll use this to become a mainstream actor. At no point in my 20-plus year career in porn did I have that delusion. Some girls honestly do and I feel sorry for them. 'Oh, I'm going to use porn as the stepping stone to become the next Meryl Streep.' No bitch, you suck dick for money. This is a comic book to make people smile, which is what we all need right now."

Artist Pablo Martinena says that he was able to draw inspiration from the real Stormy Daniels when drawing her space pirate character. He must have done a good job; there will be four initial books leading to a trade hardcover, the series will be ongoing, and it's now being considered for an animated series.

"I don't want to jinx it so I don't want to say too much, but the only place I can imagine something like that ending up would be Adult Swim, which would be right up there with how amazing and exciting I was when I got to do SNL," Daniels says. "Those are things I never thought were a thing. Getting off stage on SNL, I said it was the best day of my whole life. I want to be sister wives with Amy Poehler and Tina Fey."

"We got the screenplay from the manager," adds Davis. "They're going around pitching that now. Stormy will voice her part. We might have dog toys too. A company is interested in doing something with us. It's super weird but I'm OK with that."

That company is Chomp-A-Chump Trump, branded as 'America's greatest Donald trump parody squeaking pet toy,' and Daniels was already working with them before the idea of a Space Force dog toy of some kind was born. This whole idea has legs. So where would Daniels like to see the story go?

"It's 2020 and the way that things are evolving, anything that I could possibly come up with that is far fetched enough to be in a comic book storyline, reality is going to be like 'Bitch, hold my beer' and it's going to give us something better," she says. "Me living out my personal fantasies on my head, I'd like to see the Orange One exposed for exploiting women and I'll lead an uprising of angry rogue pirates called the Pussy-Grab-Backers or something, and we'll go after him and create a better life for the people of the republic."

Daniels pauses, then adds: "While also getting our nails done and being fabulous, obviously."

Obviously.