

# ADC Draws Venture Capital to Toons

by Ramin Zahed

A few years ago, venture capitalist Ira Warren took a look at the billions of dollars generated by the animation industry since 1995, and he realized he was looking at a potential gold mine. "It was amazing to see the huge jump that the business had made in the span of 10 years. The global revenues from animation jumped from 8 billion to 80 billion," says Warren. "It was obvious to see that tapping into this market can yield high-multiple returns. When you take in the income generated from DVDs, video games, toys and other merchandising possibilities, you can generate multiple streams of revenue from a successful animated show."

To that end, Warren teamed up with business entrepreneur Howard Miller and formed



Animation Development Company, an outfit that helps animators and artists create a professional trailer and pitch package based on their idea. "There are a lot of media outlets hungry for animated content worldwide," adds Warren. "We have upward of a dozen projects that we can take to these outlets. What we do is allow creative people who don't have the finished package or access to the decision-makers at the major broadcasters and cable outlets to launch their projects."

Helping realize Warren's vision is Konnie Kwak, president and CEO of Toonzone Studios, which serves as ADC's co-producing partner. A seasoned veteran of the business, Kwak served as production exec for Korea's Yeson Studio and worked on shows such as *Dilbert*, *Ed, Edd 'n Eddy*, *Fairy OddParents* and *Family Guy*.

"One of the reasons I recommend Ira to artists and animators is that he if likes your idea, he'll produce your pilot," says Kwak. "I wanted to put money in development and asked him if he could help me. That's how our partnership began. Together, we developed a boys' action series

called *Action Dad*."

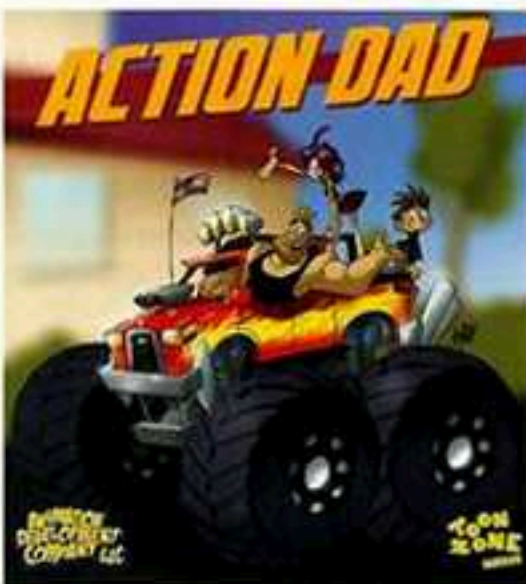
Kwak admits that it's tough to be an indie producer in a climate dominated by giant conglomerates and powerful censors such as Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network and Disney Channel. "When you pitch your project to Ira and me, we can get things running," she says. "If partners are all happy with a project, we get funding together, it's a much faster process and we can get into the acquisition side and get international distribution. We don't have a huge overhead, and it will take us about nine months to deliver the package. Another important factor is that as a creator of the show, you'll get more control over your intellectual property."

Indie distribution outfit Showcase Entertainment will be in charge of distributing *Action Dad* internationally, which is partially financed by Hawaii Film Partners. Showcase president David Jackson says, "Ira is a good business man, not an animator. We all know that it's hard to get things made. Ira is actually getting them made!"

In addition to *Action Dad*, ADC is also working on *Midnight*, a series created and drawn by DC Comic veterans—the husband-and-wife team of Tom Hodges and Terri Fon-

tana-Hodges. Their clever concept about an ordinary couple who become a crime-fighting pair at night was first introduced as a glossy comic-book last November.

"You can think of the TV animation business as a



horse race," concludes Warren. "Look at the long-term pay-off. Sure, the big winner gets a grand prize, but the second-place, the third-place, the ninth-place all get great returns. I think animation is the most stable industry in the world, because kids are always going to love to watch cartoons. Cartoons are the best babysitters. It's the only industry run by adults based on the opinions of four-year-olds!" ■

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