

# A COP WITH AN ASSITUDE

WATERTOWN'S CLAMBAKE ANIMATION PUSHES TV'S BOUNDARIES WITH A HOMICIDAL HEINIE BY MIKE MILIARD



## WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT A TALKING ASS?

At the family movie review site [commoncentsmedia.org](http://commoncentsmedia.org), one critic suggested that *Assy McGee*, while clearly "for very mature teens and adults only," might be fodder for family discussion. "Families can discuss comedy! What makes a cartoon funny? Is this show funny? Why or why not? What boundaries is it pushing?"

**E**xeter is burning. It's nighttime in the hardy city, and the throbbing megalopolis seethes. Lowlifes lurk in grimy alleyways. Sweat drips from every brow. Broken neon flickers.

Doesn't much sound like the leafy southern New Hampshire hamlet? Doesn't have to. In a TV show that stars a walking, talking pair of ass cheeks, wisecrattitude is clearly not a chief concern.

With *Assy McGee* (which airs at 12:30 a.m. Mondays on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim), the artists at Watertown's Clambake Animation have created one of the more unique characters ever to waddle across a television screen. Mr. McGee comes by his name honestly. He is, quite simply, an ass. A set of buttocks whose callipygian rondure would send Rubens into rapture.

But no effete aesthete is he. He's a hard-boiled cop, a gruff, gravel-voiced gumshoe who walks the littered streets of blighted Exeter with heat strapped to his side, guzzling booze through his talking sphincter. He's the kind of police officer who shoots first and then keeps shooting. One could say he is homicidal, firing indiscriminate rounds at—and hitting—bus passengers, ducks, and youth-soccer referees.

Which is not to say he's beyond discipline. Like most rogue dicks, *Assy* is stripped of his badge at the end of nearly every 11-minute episode—only to be back on the beat the very next week.

In fact, the show's sophomoric conceit may have been too much too soon. After the first six episodes of *Assy McGee* premiered on Adult Swim in late 2006, its original production company realized just what it was that they were releasing under its name, and decided to shut down and bow out.

Now, more than a year later—its creators having put their own asses on the line in forming their own independent animation studio—*Assy* is tearing back into Adult Swim, taking very few, if any, prisoners. In doing so, he's joining the juggernaut of current Boston/New England television talent that includes Jay Leno, Conan O'Brien, multiple stars of *The Office*, the creator of *Family Guy* and *American Dad!* (Seth MacFarlane), and the Farrelly Brothers (whose new show is *Unbitched*). But none of them push the envelope quite as far as this bloodthirsty buttocks.

## ASS-KISSING ASCENT

In a blue and orange office, strewn with the tools of procreation—*Guitar Hero*, a pogo stick, a bass guitar—Clambake Animation's principals discuss the whirlwind year that's seen the start-up grow into a 22-employee cartoon factory that handles scripting, casting, animation, audio, editing, sound design, and post-production work.

Upon graduating from Fitchburg State College in 1990, Carl Adams, Clambake's director of development and *Assy McGee*'s co-

creator, scored an internship with Tom Snyder Productions (TSP), an educational software company that also produced Comedy Central's *Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist*. The gig turned into a full-time job, and Adams started co-writing episodes. Dr. Katz won an Emmy for outstanding voice-over in 1995, and, after that, a coveted Peabody Award. "That kinda launched it," says Adams of his career in animation.

As Adams was getting established at TSP, his friend, André Lyman, who'd attended Rhode Island School of Design before dropping out to pursue a career in rock, also started working there.

When all was said and done, Lyman (now Clambake's creative director) and Adams had worked on nearly the entire run of *Dr. Katz*—a groundbreaking cartoon without whose edgy visual and comedic sensibility *Adult Swim* might never have existed. "I dealt with talent in the audio element, producing," says Lyman. "I still sorta work that way. I handle most of the visual aspects of the production."

Adams snickers. "Heh-heh. You said 'ass.'"

## ASSES ON THE LINE

About 15 years into Adams and Lyman's tenure there, TSP was bought by Scholastic, the educational publisher and production company known for such kiddie fare as *Captain Underpants* and *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. Adams dreamed up *Assy McGee* and shipped it to Adult Swim, whose Matt Harrigan helped, er, flesh out the character.

Certainly, clerical assuage with a firearm. Until, that is, they saw the show. Lyman still chuckles at the thought. "Carl goes out and creates this show called *Assy McGee* at Scholastic, and they go, 'Well, great, that's cool.' Until six episodes in."

"Until [the episode where] the kid shoots the priest's eye out," adds Adams.

Certainly, clerical assuage with a firearm is not material a children's educational publisher can feel comfortable with. "Scholastic really didn't know what the show was until they started seeing it," says Adams. "It sort of flipped them out. Understandably."

Soon, making *Assy McGee* became more trouble than it was worth. "Here we are, a production company, and we're getting notes from our lawyers saying, 'No, you can't do this, can't do that, can't do this,'" says Adams. "Shooting or blood or religion—pretty much everything you see in the first six episodes kinda made them cringe."

Luckily, Scholastic was sympathetic to Adams's dream of writing cartoon shorts about a blow-sporting set of ass cheeks who solves hooker homicides. So they ceased production, but handed him the rights to the show. "I had a good relationship with Turner [Broadcasting, which owns Adult Swim], so I looked to André and said, 'Let's maybe do this for ourselves.'"

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