Written by David McKendry
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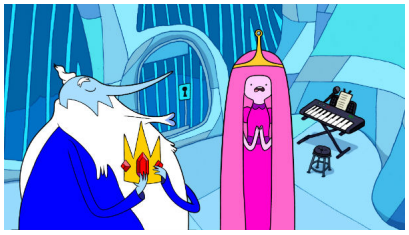
Two years ago, they were all over San Diego Comic Con: Young men and women in blue short-sleeve shirts wearing bunny ear hats. I was told what this was from, and also told I should watch the show. However, like most things I'm told to do, I put it off for another year.

Then this past year at E3, it happened again. This time it was a giant inflatable dog that went all the way to the top of the fifty-foot show room ceiling. Once again, I was told what show this was from, and again I was told I should watch. Of course, I did no such thing. It wasn't until I accidentally stumbled upon ADVENTURE TIME one night that I realized what a stubborn fool I'd been.

Now I've become a full on ADVENTURE TIME fanatic, quoting episodes and perfecting an incredible Lumpy Space Princess imitation. With adult humor carefully hidden beneath childhood themes and subtle horror influences throughout, I'm ashamed of how long it took me to come around to the appeal of this show.

Good thing, because ADVENTURE TIME's writer Dick Grunert is a massive horror and Fango fan. Grunert invited FANGORIA to Cartoon Network's Burbank studio to discuss the stranger influences behind ADVENTURE TIME and discover just how this wonderful show is put together.



FANGORIA: How did you start on ADVENTURE TIME?

GRUNERT: I started out on ADVENTURE TIME as the production coordinator. I've worked in TV animation production for 15 years. I pitched and got to write a couple of outlines for the show in seasons two and three, and then moved into the writing side of things in season five.

FANG: What are some of your favorite horror films? Do any inspire story ideas?

GRUNERT: My all time favorite horror movie is the original BLACK CHRISTMAS. Some of my other favorites are Tobe Hooper's THE FUNHOUSE, LET'S SCARE JESSICA TO DEATH, MAY and THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL. Most of these films are about strange, misunderstood people, and I think that's a recurring theme on AT. I mean, Ice King's just a misunderstood weirdo, right?

FANG: What's your favorite character to write for?

GRUNERT: There are so many fun characters to write for on this show. I love Ice King and Lumpy Space Princess.

FANG: Take us through the process of how a show is made.

GRUNERT: We don't write scripts on AT. The writers pitch ideas and break the story, and then we write a two-to-three page outline, laying out all the important beats. Then, a storyboard team gets the outline, and they're responsible for filling in the gaps, fleshing out the story and coming up with the dialogue. It's really a collaborative effort between many creative and talented writers and artists. And as much as this is Pen Ward's baby, I think there are a lot of different voices on the show, and each one gets to shine.

FANG: Are there a lot of horror fans on the show? What are some of the other influences other writers bring to the show?

GRUNERT: Pen is a big zombie fan, so we've had a few zombie-themed episodes. Everybody on the show loves genre TV shows and movies. You'll frequently overhear the crew talking about GAME OF THRONES, THE WALKING DEAD and LOST. There are a lot of gamers on the show too, so that's also a big influence.

As we ended the day, part of me was still hoping that I'd see Jake squeeze his way out from under a closed door or maybe have Gunter pop in for a quick picture and dance. Sadly, none of that would occur, nor did I get a chance to show off that Lumpy Space Princess impression.

ADVENTURE TIME stills courtesy of Cartoon Network. Photo courtesy of John Humphrey.