



Winter 1-10-1997

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Recommended Citation

Aaron, Bob, "Happy Happy Toy Toy! It's Ren and Stimpy! Bob Camp, Head Writer for Popular Cartoon Show" (1997). *News and Events*. 6726.
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January 10, 1997

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Happy Happy Joy Joy! It's Ren and Stimpy!**Bob Camp, Head Writer for Popular Cartoon Show****On Nickelodeon, MTV to Speak at Illinois Wesleyan, Jan. 20**Locals
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BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--They're animated pals. One half of this duo is a crazed dog, an anorexic-looking Chihuahua. His sidekick is a cat, who owes his lineage to Larry Fine, the frizzy-hair, pie-in-the-face slapstick comic of Three Stooges' fame. *Ren and Stimpy* are the bizarre cartoon characters, who have won fame and fans on the Nickelodeon and MTV cable TV networks.

Bob Camp, the head writer, artist, and director of *Ren and Stimpy*, will visit Illinois Wesleyan University on Monday, Jan. 20. His presentation will be at 7 p.m. in the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University, St., Bloomington. It is open to the public, free-of-charge.

Ren and Stimpy are pop culture icons. T-shirts bearing their image are routinely spotted from Berkeley to Harvard Square. The *Tonight Show's* Jay Leno and other late-night comics have weaved the dog-and-cat team into their monologues. And, establishment media like the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post* have run features on *Ren and Stimpy's* adventures and misadventures.

Unconventional is one way to describe Camp's career.

"After high school and before studying film making at the University of Texas in Arlington," Camp said, "I did caricatures and portraits at amusement parks, fairs, and rodeos.

"After school," Camp added, "I began traveling all over the United States and Canada doing caricatures and portraits."

While working in Provincetown, Mass., during the summer of 1981, Camp met cartoonist Gary Halgren, who talked him into moving to New York City and helped him land a job at Marvel Comics doing movie parodies for *Crazy Magazine*, a *Mad Magazine* knockoff.

"When *Crazy Magazine* folded," Camp said, "I picked up other comic and illustration work around town, doing everything from fake Norman Rockwell's for magazines to inking and drawing on Conan Comics."

Characters with *unconventional* names are another Camp career trademark. In the mid-1980s, he worked for an animation outfit, where he designed Thundercats, Silverhawks, Tigersharks, Minimonsters, Street Frogs, and Karate Kat.

Eventually, Camp landed in Burbank, Calif., where he designed characters and worked on storyboards for *Ghostbusters*.

While he was at the Burbank-based DIC working on *Ghostbusters*, Camp met John Kricfalusi, creator of *Ren and Stimpy*, who was then working on a remake of Bob Clampett's *Beanie and Cecil*.

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"I would walk down the hall," Camp recalled, "see all this great work being done, started talking with them and finally joined them doing storyboards."

Kricfalusi and Camp teamed up to design an anti-drug game board, prompting Camp to quit his job at Tiny Toons.

"We rented a single room in the building that is now Spumco, Inc.," Camp said, referring to their company name, which owes its heritage to Raymond Spum, inventor of animation. "John sold the *Ren and Stimpy* show to Nickelodeon and Spumco was born. That's when we did the pilot episode, which led to the fabulously successful cartoon series."

Speaking of the *Ren and Stimpy* team in the *Comics Scene* article, Camp said: "We are people who've either quit or been fired from studios in town because we either don't fit in or won't fit in."

Ren, the Chihuahua, is known for his distinctive voice, which dangerously resembles that of Peter Lorre, an imp of an actor who played rogues in films like the classic, "Casablanca."

"We tried other voices, but it always came back to Lorre," Camp explained in a *Comics Scene* interview. "He has the best, weaseliest little-evil-guy voice ever."

In that same interview, *Stimpy* was described as a "living punching bag--just like the person his voice was based upon," Larry Fine of the Three Stooges.

"Stimpy sounds a lot like Larry Fine," Camp said in the *Comics Scene* interview. "That's because Stimpy is Larry Fine . . . Larry Fine had a really stupid-sounding voice, but he was a comic genius. Everybody talks about Moe, Curly, and Shemp, but what about Larry? He could take a *punch*! He wrote about being the third man out, and about how they were always smacking him around, beating and abusing him."

In an Aug. 11, 1992, article, the *Washington Post* pointed out: "Designed for children, *Ren and Stimpy* became a runaway hit after it was introduced last August, doubling Nickelodeon's Sunday morning ratings among children ages 2 to 11, with a 5.8 rating amounting to about 1.2 million viewers. The show also has won a fanatic following among adults, especially after it was picked up evenings by MTV, Nick's sister network."

And, what accounts for *Ren and Stimpy's* appeal?

"The show's success," according to the *Washington Post*, "is part testimony to the blandness of most everything else, but also to its own bizarre originality. Where fisticuffs and verbal abuse remain banished from the tapioca Utopia of most contemporary cartoon shows, *Stimpy* and particularly *Ren* fairly seethe with the comedy of aggression. Muddling their way through an all-too-malevolent universe, they bash and are bashed, stomp and are stomped, are subjected to grotesque transmutations and cubist-style facial realignments. That in itself may be nothing new in the realm of cartoons, but the denizens of *Ren and Stimpy* bring new extremes of emotion: rage, paranoia, naked greed, even psychosis, all of which give the show a uniquely contemporary feel."

Camp lives in the Los Angeles area, hard at work on *Ren and Stimpy's* latest adventures.

Camp's IWU appearance is sponsored by the IWU Student Senate, Current Issues Committee.

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IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$4.6 million Center for Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty--is slated to open next fall, as well as a \$6.5 million residence hall, accommodating about 118 students. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive (+)" in its latest edition.

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| Editor's Note: Bob Camp's 7 p.m. lecture is open to the news media for coverage. |
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