



upfront



## theskonkworks brews up a batch of new toons

**IT** seems appropriate that the first project from a renaissance man like Michael Carter would be about Leonardo da Vinci. After 10 years spent in the creative, technical and business sides of the animation industry, Carter hung his own shingle 10 months ago to create Toronto, Canada-based animation incubator theskonkworks (an old English term for something brewing).

Setting its stage, Carter signed his first deal with Toronto's Decode Entertainment for a live-actioner he created himself. *Being Leonardo* teaches kids about an invention from the famous thinker and then shows them how to recreate it using common household implements.

He's since snapped up *Peep and the Big Wide World* creator Kaj Pindal and Dan Lane, a storyboard artist on Aardman Animation's feature film *Chicken Run*, to refine his developing projects. The team has caught the eyes of larger production houses and is starting to lock down development deals.

Pindal conceived theskonkworks' first 52 x 11 minute project, *The Wanderbirds*. The 2-D series follows a family of penguins as it leaves the overcrowded South Pole for roomier climes in the North Pole. Targeted at the older end of the preschool demo, Shaftesbury Kids in Toronto is on board to co-develop the series.

Also in the works is a set of 52 x one minutes designed for mobile called *Two*



Satirical CGI comedy *Two Fellas* is just one of many projects the toon incubator has maturing in its vats

*Fellas*. This one is Lane's baby and is aimed at tweens and teens. The guffaw-inducing CGI series revolves around the meandering thought processes of two channel-surfing couch potato roommates as they discuss, well, nothing much at all. It's expected the team will announce mobile deals soon. **NL**