

Interview: Voice Artist Rob Paulsen on ‘Animaniacs Live!’ in Grayslake, Ill. on March 3, 2018

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CHICAGO – If the words, “We’re Animaniacs...” immediately makes you think, “There’s baloney in our slacks...” then you’ll want to experience voiceover artist Rob Paulsen, the iconic character of Yakko on that series, as well as the voice of Pinky (“Pinky and The Brain”) and Donatello/Raphael (“Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles”), among many other cartoon legends. Rob, with Animaniacs composer Randy Rogel, will be appearing in “Animaniacs Live!” at the James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts in Grayslake, Ill., on Saturday, March 3rd, 2018 (click link below for details).

Rob Paulsen was born in Michigan, and like other hopeful dreamers, moved to Los Angeles in the 1980s to pursue acting work. It was a chance audition in 1983 with the “G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero” cartoon series that launched him into a lifelong pursuit, leading him to do voice characters for “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,” the aforementioned “Animaniacs,” “Pinky and the Brain,” “Jimmy Neutron,” “The Tick,” and many many more. As he says below, he began as a dark haired man in his twenties and continues as a white haired man in his sixties, in the sense of how he looks makes no difference in his particular acting and singing craft.



Rob Paulsen of 'Animaniacs Live!' with Three of His Well-Known Voice Characters

Photo credit: RobPaulsenLive.com

HollywoodChicago.com did a comprehensive talk with Rob Paulsen in anticipation of "Animaniacs Live!" and he spoke in-depth about a career that not only had him work with contemporaries like cartoon partner Maurice LaMarche (voice of "The Brain") and Steven Spielberg (Executive Producer for Animaniacs), but cartoon voice legends like Daws Butler, June Foray, Don Messick and the great Mel Blanc. This is Part One of a three part interview...

HollywoodChicago.com: So you will be bringing 'Animaniacs Live!' to Chicagoland. What can audiences expect from this 'raucous celebration of animation, music and comedy?'

Rob Paulsen: You encapsulated it. That's what they'll see. End of interview. [laughs] Ultimately, anybody that attends will go home exhausted, after two hours of laughter. The music of this show is from 'Animaniacs,' which in looking back now was a remarkable show, and music was very important to its success. The music was written by my partner at 'Animaniacs Live!,' composer Randy Rogel. Warner Bros. licensing gave us a deal so we could travel around the country and put on this show.

We tell stories about how the show was made, do the songs... even the songs that never made it to the show. It showcases the genius of Randy, Executive Producer Steven Spielberg and show creator Tom Ruegger. The stories are fantastic, and the songs cover so many subjects, and then we end up with a Q&A, which people really enjoy.

HollywoodChicago.com: You had your heyday in the beginning of the so-called Second Golden Age of Animation beginning in the 1990s. What got you the G.I. Joe gig that started it all, and what makes you most proud to be part of that history?

Paulsen: It was an audition that got me G.I. Joe. I grew up in Michigan, began as a singer, and moved to Los Angeles to be an actor. One finds pretty quickly that there is a million people that are your 'type.' It wasn't anything that I didn't expect, and people always call it 'hard.' Well, hard is laying sod or pouring hot tar on a freeway in August, performing wasn't hard because I chose it.

I was doing live action stuff, and the opportunity presented itself to read for a cartoon, and mainly it was another way to work. I got the gig for G.I. Joe, and the same company was doing Transformers, so I got another gig on that show. That's when it occurred to me, these were gigs where nobody cares what you look like. It was also a Screen Actors Guild job and it paid well. It's been a pretty good run, almost 40 years later I'm still doing it. When I started, I was a dark haired guy in my twenties and nobody cared what I looked like when I did voiceover, and now I'm a white haired guy in my sixties, and still nobody cares. [laughs]

In the Part One audio portion of the interview, Rob Paulsen and the cartoon geek interviewer wax nostalgic for the classic voiceover artists such as Don Messick ("Jonny Quest"), June Foray (Rocky in "Rocky & Bullwinkle") and the legendary Mel Blanc. And Rob provides a touching and monumental tribute to his "Pinky and the Brain" partner, Maurice LaMarche. To read and hear PART TWO of the interview, [click here](#). [27] To hear PART THREE, [click here](#). [28]

"Animaniacs Live!," featuring Rob Paulsen (Yakko) and composer Randy Rogel, will be performed at 4pm on March 3rd, 2018, at the Mainstage Theatre at the James Lumber Center for the Performing Arts, Grayslake, Ill. For more information and to purchase tickets, [click here](#). [29] For more on Rob Paulsen, [click here](#). [30]



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