

Success for David Weale's Crumbfest

By CYNTHIA DENNIS

There have been plenty of rumours flying around concerning David Weale's recent success with "The True Meaning of Crumbfest" — more specifically, everyone thinks he is rich.

This reaction is to be expected when a fellow Islander writes a cartoon that is broadcast worldwide on the well-known Teletoon Network. Television equals big bucks, right? Not necessarily, and, believe it or not, to some people, namely Weale, success is not measured by or equated with monetary profit.

A number of years ago, as Weale was sitting at his desk in his small UPEI office, he somehow came up with the idea for a story about a mouse. When it came time to publish a book he was working on (*An Island Christmas Reader*), he was unsure about including the mouse story entitled "The True Meaning of Crumbfest," wondering what people's reactions would be to this very different type of tale. Fortunately, he decided he would.

During a conversation with a friend, Gretha Rose, the two got the notion that the story about the mouse would be great for a cartoon, and they began working towards making it a reality. After a long process of searching, Rose contacted a Toronto broadcasting company called Teletoon, which fell in love with the story. Weale was then faced with learning how to write a script for animation.

After writing a bout a

dozen trials of the screenplay before finding common ground with the producer, they finally settled on a script that resulted in the cartoon that aired this past December.

Weale remains uncertain as to whether or not he plans to write any future episodes.

"One 23-minute episode costs \$750,000 to create," he explains, adding that it was "something that took two days to write and nine (long) months to produce." He simply does not feel that pursuing it would be a good use of his time.

"I don't envision myself as an animation artist," says Weale. "What I'd really love to do is write music." He wrote two of the songs featured in the show and claims that one of the most memorable moments of the whole experience was when the entire audience at the gala screening joined together in singing his tunes.

When the producers go ahead with the series, there will be 13 episodes in total, generating approximately \$8 million. Here's where people get excited. But considering the circumstances, and Weale's somewhat lack of involvement with the future of Crumbfest, he is not likely to see very much of that money.

Although he enjoyed the experience and is thrilled to see his first work on screen he would much rather stay behind the scenes, using his time working on other projects. He will be offering ideas periodically, in fact he was some

great ones in the works, but will be giving others a chance to do the actual writing of the episodes.

As the creator of Crumbfest he has composed what is referred to as "the Bible," a huge book detailing all aspects of the story, the tone, characters, etc, so when someone sits down to write they will have guidelines to follow. As of now, after giving up the rights, any future stories are essentially out of Weale's hands.

In a very selfless way, Weale is pleased not merely because of what this success means for the future of his own projects, but is most happy about (not surprisingly) the opportunities created for other Islanders.

"All of the characters' voices, except for one, are being provided by Islanders," he says. Most of the music is also locally composed and arranged. In including these Islanders, he is helping put PEI "on the map," and is making it easier for other to get projects off the ground.

Despite the fact that Weale is not "rollin' in the dough" like so many would love to think, he is quite content with his accomplishments. As for future endeavours, he is planning another show for this summer, and is currently working on another screenplay.

Keep an eye open: with an attitude like his, combined with an amazing amount of talent, maybe someday soon we will see him on the big screen.

New fee added to blank CDs and tapes

By SHERI BLOCK

REGINA (CUP) — The price of blank tapes and CDs is about to increase thanks to a new levy introduced by the federal government.

While no one is sure exactly how much more consumers will have to pay, industry insiders speculate the increase could range from \$1 on the price of tapes to \$2.50 on the price of CDs.

The actual levy will not be determined until next fall after hearings are held into the matter. Importers and manufacturers will not be required to charge the levy until a decision is made.

The levy, which came into effect Jan. 1, was introduced to compensate for the revenue lost by musical artists, composers and producers when copies of tapes and CDs are made.

"The levy is really geared toward the consumer who walks in and tapes a CD onto a blank," said Marian Donnelly, executive director of the Saskatchewan Recording Industry Association.

Until recently, copying a pre-recorded CD or cassette onto a blank one was illegal. But under new federal legislation, this is now allowed for private use.

"The music industry did not want [dubbing] legalized — the levy was the trade off," said Al Mayer, owner and president of Attic Records.

So far, some consumers don't seem to mind the fact that they'll soon have to dig deeper into their pockets to purchase blank media.

"I think it's probably a good idea because there's so many people out there taping," said Jennifer Melville, a first-year science student at the University of Regina. "It's like stealing."

But some people in the music business are concerned that since distribution of the levy is based on factors such as radio play and record sales, only big-name artists will benefit from it.

"It will benefit the big guys but not the little ones," said Joe Wood, owner and president of RDR Music Group, a Toronto-based CD manufacturer.

"Their music would have to be in such a demand [for them to benefit]."

Mayer agrees. "It's probably safe to say bigger artists will get bigger shares," he said of the levy.

Todd Rennebohm, who plays in the Regina area band FTA, says he doesn't expect the levy will make a difference for independent groups.

He says many independent bands will end up being harmed by the levy because they often buy blank CDs to make copies of their music.

"Being an indie artist, it's a drawback because you're paying [the levy] for your own discs," he said. "Instead of saving us money, it's costing us more."

But while Mayer says the levy has some unfortunate consequences, he says it's important to compensate for unauthorized taping if the Canadian music industry is to grow.

"When the industry is not maximizing its profit there is not much to invest in new bands," he said.

A joint body, including the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada and the Canadian Musical Reproduction Rights Agency, will collect and distribute the levy.

"The difficulties lies, not in new ideas, but in escaping the old ones, which ramify, for those brought up as most of us have been, into every corner of our minds."

—John Maynard Keynes