# DOGSTAR

™

MEDIA WORLD

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ATOM
AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS OF MEDIA INC.

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## About the series

*Dogstar* is an animated comedy series for children consisting of twenty-six 24-minute episodes. It's the story of an amazing quest across space to find a missing ark full of dogs: the Dogstar.

Flash was used to animate *Dogstar*. However, each animated character was broken down into many more parts than is usual with most Flash animation projects. This helped to produce a rich and intense animation.

## Using episodes of Dogstar in the classroom

This study guide provides opportunities for discussion and activities for primary age students related to the key learning areas of Science, Humanities, English, Health and The Arts. It is suggested that teachers screen the first episode of the series to set the scene and to assist students to acquaint themselves with the characters and underlying storyline.
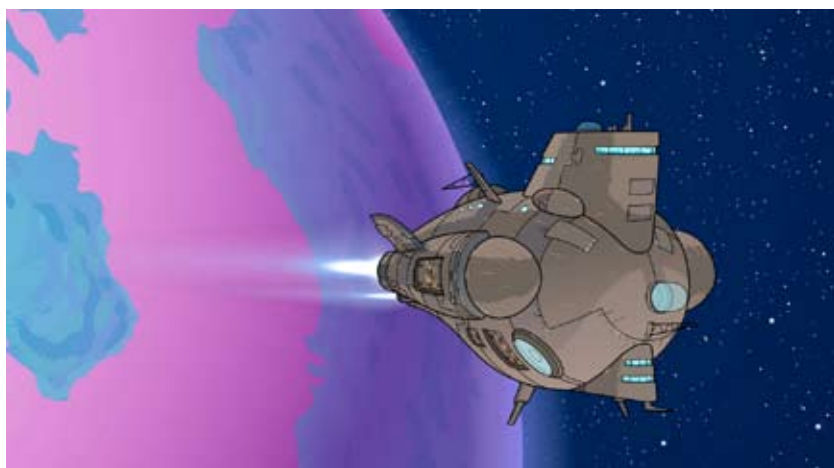
Teachers may choose to screen the series sequentially or they may select particular episodes and use those activities from this guide that meet the needs of their students or that relate to topics being investigated in their classroom.

Discussion questions and activities are provided in this guide to support a number of the central themes explored throughout the series including:

• Families, relationships and feelings

• Humans, pets and other animals

• Heroes and villains

• Technology and inventions

• Responsibility for the natural environment and the future.

Key questions have also been provided to support one-off viewing of a number of the *Dogstar* episodes.

Information about the development, production and technology behind the series has been included to assist teachers of older students to develop learning experiences in relation to animation and to the creation of this series.

## The story

On the voyage from Old Earth to New Earth a freak accident occurs. As a result, the Dogstar, a giant space ark containing all of the world's dogs, becomes lost in space.

The year is 2347 and somewhere between packing up and moving the entire population of Old Earth to New Earth, all the world's dogs go missing. Okay, so everyone was forced to move. Old Earth was smelly and disgusting after all those years of pollution.

New Earth is so fresh and clean – just right for sensitive, eco-friendly new citizens. The entire population of Old Earth, all its possessions, all its deodorants, underpants and collectibles, were packed into spaceships and shot off into space. All the animals went too. Assigned alphabetically; Aardvarks on the Aardvarkstar right down to Zebras on the Zebrastar. But somewhere along the way, the Dogstar went missing. A technical glitch – pilot error – who can say? Aboard the Dogstar is every canine family pet; every lovable terrier, every pampered lapdog, every boisterous hound, every loyal companion, and of course, Hobart.

The Clark family loves Hobart. He's a trusted, loyal buddy – a valued member of the family in every sense. The Clark kids aren't going to take the situation lying down. Even though everyone tells them it can't be done, the Clark kids set out to find the Dogstar! Borrowing Dad's spaceship, the trusty Valiant, the kids embark on a journey that will take them to the farthest reaches of the universe – and beyond. And beyond that too! They'll meet strange alien races, unusual phenomena, puzzling conundrums, perplexing paradoxes and startling challenges. And that's before they even go outside.

The Clark kids are on a quest to find their missing dog Hobart and they won't rest until they find him, and every other dog from Old Earth. New Earth is a miserable place without dogs. Everyone knows it. A lot is riding on their journey. But not everyone wants the Clark kids to succeed. Bob Santino, an evil genius, has produced the Robog – a robotic replacement dog that he's sold very successfully to those people on New Earth who are pining for the real thing. And that's everyone!

Robogs are functional, but soulless – and it's a drag picking up batteries from parks. So Santino has a vested interest in stopping the Clark kids. If they find the Dogstar, he'll be out of business. He's extremely rich, extremely powerful and he owns the fastest spaceship in the universe – the BobCat. Surely it's only a matter of time before he finds the Clark kids – or the Dogstar. And if he were to find it first …

# BEFORE WATCHING *DOGSTAR*

### *Thinking about genre*

Like books, films can be categorized into genres. Film genres comprise identifiable types or groups of films having similar form or filmic techniques or conventions such as time and place (settings), plot, key narrative events, character types, props, content, atmosphere and mood, recurring icons or motifs and themes. Films may 'fit' several film genres.

- Ask students to brainstorm a range of genres into which films and television programs may be categorized. For example, comedy, quiz shows, mystery, science fiction. It can be helpful to have students think about categories used by video or DVD stores to organize films.

- Read the story outline (above) to the class. Encourage students to create a class list of words used in the outline that provide clues to the genre of this series.

- Develop a class definition of science fiction.

- List science fiction television programs or films students have viewed.

- Ask students to explain what they would expect to see and hear in a science fiction television program or film. In particular, consider how science fiction might be portrayed using animation.

- Have students suggest and justify the colours they would expect filmmakers to use in an animated science fiction television series.

### *Vocabulary development*

- As a class, develop an alphabetic list of as many animals as possible. Encourage students to add to the list throughout this unit.

- Create an alphabet book of science fiction terms, or related television programs, films, comic books or other print texts.

### *Setting*

- Create a class list of settings that students think are appropriate in science fiction television programs, films, comic books or other print texts.
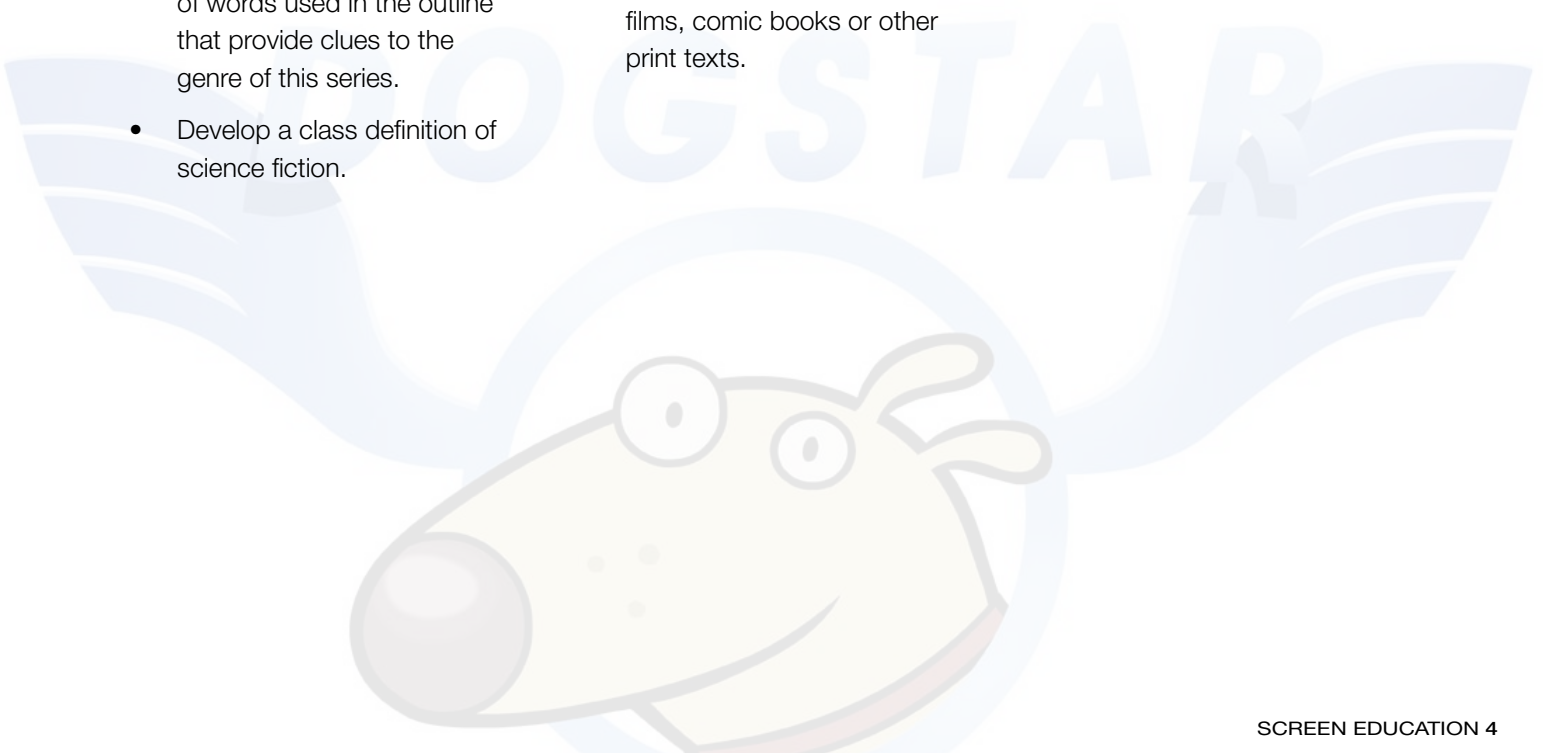
## *Plot*

In a narrative book or film, the plot is the ordering and telling of events and actions that make up the story.

- Discuss both the title of the series, *Dogstar*, and *A Dog's Tale,* the title of episode one. What are possible meanings of each and why might these titles have been selected? Consider the way in which each uses a 'play on words' to create meanings.

- Screen episode one of *Dogstar*. Encourage students to share and discuss their responses to the episode, for example the aspects they enjoyed and those they did not enjoy, things that surprised them or that created strong feelings, and aspects that relate to their own lives.

- As a class list key events that make up the plot of episode one on sentence strips. Create a plot profile by placing events sequentially along the horizontal axis of a graph. On the vertical axis create a rating scale. For each event place a star above it to show its rating from high to low points of the story. Join stars to create a line graph.

Discuss what the graph tells you about the structure of this episode.

Use the information from the graph to write a sentence describing the plot structure of episode one.

- Series co-writer Philip Dalkin says:

  *While I've ended up doing a lot of kids' shows, in the end you write them for yourself – for the kid in you. I love*

*the fact that this show has one simple premise; these kids just want their dog back and that's a springboard for adventure and fun.*

Discuss the messages students think may arise from a series having characters who have such a simple goal.

Encourage students to make some predictions about the types of adventures and fun that may lie ahead for the characters in this series.

## Characters and Characterization

- Encourage the class to analyse each of the low and high points on the plot profile (line graph) to discover which characters were involved in each event. Consider the action or behaviour of each character and the type/s of characters involved on each occasion.

- Discuss whether students view some characters as good and others as evil. Do they think any characters are heroes? Why or why not? What do they think makes someone a hero?

- Provide pairs of students with a copy of the character descriptions and the illustrations of the characters included in this guide. Have students take turns to read each character description, to identify the correct illustration and then to cut out that picture and paste it in the appropriate space on the worksheets.

- Assess students' understandings about relationships between characters by having them create socio-grams. To do this they write the names (or use illustrations) of characters and draw lines to show connections between them. On each line students write a phrase or sentence explaining or describing the relationship.

- As a class, brainstorm the many virtues, personality traits or other qualities of the illustrated characters, for example, honesty, heroism, loyalty, respect, generosity and kindness, greed, ambition, dishonesty, deceitfulness. Have students work with a partner to use words that are opposite in meaning to create a simple character report card, similar to the one below.

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**Character: …………………………………..**

| honest | _____X____ | dishonest |
| kind | _____X_____ | cruel |
| calm | _____X_____ | excitable |

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# VIEWING DOGSTAR

## Introduction to close analysis

- Series co-creator and co-writer, Doug MacLeod says:

  *I like these characters because they're all quite flawed. The kids aren't perfect and one message that can be gleaned from this series is that most people are not perfect. It would be nice to think another message is that everyone can get along but in fact the show is more like real life. Strange, when you consider it's an animation.*

  As a class, vote on whether students think the characters in *Dogstar* have similar personalities and qualities to real people. Ask students to stand on an imaginary line, representing a voting continuum, according to how strongly they feel the characters are similar to humans.

  Encourage students to justify their position on the line. Allow them to move as they listen to one another's opinions if they can explain the reason they have for moving.

Select a sequence or an episode of *Dogstar* enjoyed by students to be analysed more closely. Have students consider and share their findings. They might explore how each of the following contributes to the creation and communication of meanings:

- What types of shots and camera angles have been used?

- What is in the frame? What is not in the frame?

- What colours have been used?

- What characters have been included? Why? Which characters have not been included? Why?

- What are the characters doing? Why?

- What are the characters saying? Why?

- How are other characters responding?

- What else is in the scene, for example, what background is used, what props and so on?

- What can you hear, for example, music, silence, sound effects, narrator's voice?

- What type of voice does the narrator have? Why do you think he was chosen?

- What types of voices do characters have? Why do you think each was chosen?

- What other television programs or films are you reminded of when you view *Dogstar*. Give examples.
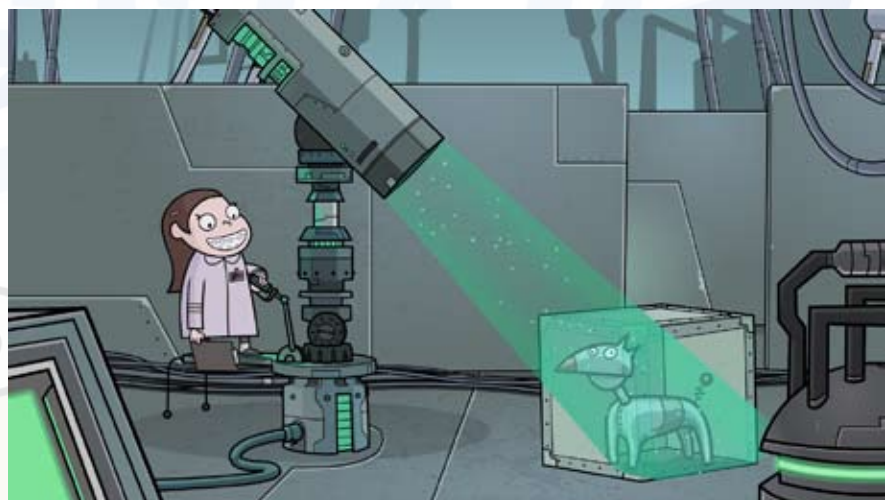
# MESSAGES, MORALS AND THEMES

## Selecting episodes to use in the classroom

Teachers may choose to screen episodes sequentially or may select episodes that are relevant to the needs of their students and to classroom topics or themes. Note that if selecting a limited number of episodes, it is worth considering the order in which they are screened, as changing the order of episodes may be confusing to some students.

Key headings in the next section will assist teachers to select and to develop appropriate activities. Teachers may also choose to use the key questions provided for some of the episodes to assist with follow-up discussion and as a springboard for teacher planned activities.

The skills of close analysis will assist students to explore how the ideas underpinning the messages, morals and themes of the series are created and communicated by series creators. Students will also discover the effect of different background knowledge and experience in creating their own differing meanings.

• According to Director Aaron Davies:

*The series really looks at things that concern kids including* greed*, ambition,* consumerism *and* relationships*. Above all, the show is about fun … science fiction allows us to make the most of every set-up … and to use our imagination to conjure up hilarious situations.*

As a class, have students discuss whether or not they agree with the Director about the things that concern kids.

Have students work in small groups to make their own list of important concerns about their lives or the world in which they live.

As a follow-up to particular episodes viewed by the class, ask students to identify and add to a class list, any issues that are explored by the characters or through the plot as the episode unfolds.

As topics or issues are identified, have students describe the messages or morals they believe are promoted by the episode. Encourage students to explain and justify their points of view about the topic, and the issues, messages and morals.

# MESSAGES, MORALS AND THEMES

## Families, relationships and feelings

- Have students work in pairs to list the roles of parents, and then to also list the roles of children at different ages or stages of life. For example, baby, toddler, child, adolescent, young adult.

  Discuss the reasons for differing roles and responsibilities.

- Create a large family tree showing the members of the Clark family. Display in the classroom.

- As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between this family and the students' families. Ensure sensitivity and respect as students contribute their ideas.

- Discuss the different ideas about parenting of the mother, Greta Clark, and the father, Mark Clark. Do you think one of the Clark parents is better at parenting than the other? Why or why not?

  What does it take to be a good parent?

- Place labels next to the characters on the large family tree which describe their feelings at different times in the series.

- Ask students to work in small groups to create an art work that presents information about the talents, skills or qualities of the members of the Clark family. Have them also include the failings or weaknesses of each character.

- Discuss the way in which all members of families, and all members of society in general, have both strengths and weaknesses.

  Discuss also the ability of individuals to contribute to the lives of their families and beyond in many valuable ways. Encourage broad and inclusive thinking as ideas are suggested, discussed and recorded.

- What are some of the messages found in *Dogstar*, that relate to competition, greed, ambition, racism?

  Ask students to provide examples of each one and explore how the actions and words of characters and events work together to create messages.

  Consider how the technical aspects of animation including colour, movement, and sound contribute to these messages.

## Humans, pets and other animals

- Discuss what it means to be an animal. Consider whether humans are animals. Consult print and online dictionaries and reference sources to develop some definitions.

- Divide the class in half. Have one half cut out magazine pictures and create a collage or develop an extensive class list of animals that make suitable domestic pets; while the other half creates a collage or list of animals that would not be suitable as domestic pets.

  Compare the collages or lists to discover any points of clarification.

- As a class, agree on and list the qualities of five or six animals that make them suitable to be pets for humans. Add these qualities to the collage.

  Consider and list the advantages and disadvantages both for animals and for humans in being or keeping a pet.

  Work in pairs to create mobiles with images and words that represent the advantages and disadvantages for both humans and animals.

- Have students create a storyboard for an event in a

# MESSAGES, MORALS AND THEMES

short story in which a human and a pet swap places. Encourage students to use their storyboard to assist them to communicate their ideas as a short written story.

- Use large diagrams and labels to create a chart that compares the features of real dogs and the robogs featured in *Dogstar*.

- Design an imaginative robotic pet that draws upon the features of a number of different animals.

  Create drawings with labels, a magazine advertisement and a jingle to 'sell' your robotic pet. How will your jingle persuade people to want this pet and what will make your pet seem 'cool'?

- Investigate the many features of dogs, for example, the range of breeds, habits, feeding requirements, growth and development and reproduction. Students could work in small groups to research one particular breed and then present findings to the class, including a dog care booklet for that breed.

- Investigate a different animal suitable to be a domestic pet. Create a webpage detailing important information.

## Heroes and villains

- Categorize characters from *Dogstar* according to whether they are heroes or villains. Provide examples of actions or dialogue to support your categorization.

- Identify the features of the characters in *Dogstar* that give the viewer clues about whether they are heroes or villains.

  Discuss how the use of stereotypes helps viewers to create meanings.

- Imagine there are to be two new characters joining the *Dogstar* cast; one is a hero and the other is a villain. In small groups, think about and discuss the features, the costumes and the colours you could use to represent each of the characters.

  Have individuals draw suggestions for the two new characters. Share and discuss differing ways of representing the ideas of characters as heroes or as villains.

- Discuss what makes some one a true hero in real life. Do people need to be media stars to be heroes? Why or why not? What are the messages about heroes and heroism in *Dogstar*?

## Technology and inventions

- Work with a partner to create clues for a guessing game. The clues need to describe the technology and the inventions that feature throughout the *Dogstar* series.

  Clues might include the purposes of the item, its shape, size, colour, who might use it and where it might be used.

- What messages do you think the people involved in creating *Dogstar* intended to communicate about the ways technology and inventions are part of our lives?

  Make a list of these messages that you think can be found in the *Dogstar* episodes.

- What household technology has been invented or improved in your lifetime? List and discuss how items are used and whether they really do improve our lives.

- Survey your parents and/ or older citizens to find out about the technology or inventions in their lifetimes.

## Responsibility for the natural environment and the future

- Create a large class mural that provides examples of why everyone in the *Dogstar* series needed to leave Old Earth.

- Add statements to the mural to explain how this is similar to or different from our planet Earth.

- Brainstorm all of the things that people consume each day. Create categories for the items, for example, food, drink, services, toys and entertainment, communication and media.

  Develop a survey and conduct an audit at school and/or at home to record all of the products and services consumed, used or purchased by each student in one day. Depending on the age of the students this may include food, clothing, toys, multimedia, drinks, energy, water and so on.

- Make a class list of the reasons people buy things, for example, peer pressure, they are needed, persuaded by advertising, it's 'cool', for entertainment.

- List the advantages and disadvantages of buying lots of 'things' that are not really needed. In what ways does consumerism impact upon the natural environment?

- Discuss what makes a product 'cool' or attractive, for example, friends have it, popular people have it, it has a great logo, it looks good, it works really well, celebrities have one or advertise it.

  Make posters promoting the idea that 'It's cool to be different'.

  Secondary students may be interested in reading about the way in which companies work to be 'cool' so that people will want their products. Teachers will need to check the website to be sure it is suitable for their students.

  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/etc/hunting.html

- In episode twenty-six of *Dogstar*, when everyone returns to Old Earth, Ramon Ridley is asked to develop rules to ensure the sustainability of the planet. If this animation was based on reality, do you think this would be necessary? Why or why not?

  Work in groups to list the ten most important rules you would include.

- As a class, discuss the responsibility we each have for the natural environment. Create a positive focus by encouraging students to suggest ways each of us can contribute to environmental sustainability through small or larger actions.

  Create a graffiti wall filled with images and lists of strategies that people of all ages can implement to reduce the impact of humans and in particular of consumerism on the natural environment.

- Have students work in groups to plan, storyboard and create their own animation that tells a story of hope for our world. Depending on their ages, interests and capabilities, students may use software as simple as PowerPoint; they may even use Flash. Alternatively, models or clay or cutouts could be animated.

## Flash animation

Each animated character was broken down into many more parts than is usual with most Flash animation projects. Although this meant animation production was more involved and time-consuming, the complex animation that was produced gave a richer, more intense and full feeling to the animation. Characters in *Dogstar* typically have separate hands and arms, separate feet and legs, and separate eyebrows and eyes. A wide range of eye expressions were created, as well as many extra mouth expressions beyond the standard lip-sync.

Animators were encouraged to push Flash beyond its normal limitations. Typically, Flash animators use the cut-out elements supplied to them by the design team but on *Dogstar* animators were encouraged to do a lot more 'free' animating, to draw more symbols and to draw more animation within symbols. Thus in an arm move, instead of letting Flash simply 'in-between' one drawing of an arm from one position to another, the animators were encouraged to draw several more naturalistic in-betweens, resulting in smoother motion. Once this set of drawings was created, it could be reused in other scenes to ensure the animation was consistent across the series.

• Screen episode one of *Dogstar* and observe the way that Hobart walks. Spend some time observing real dogs. In what ways is the walk cycle of Hobart similar to and different from walk cycles of real dogs?

• Observe another animal or a person walking. Use your observations and some research using books and the Internet to help you, create a flipbook showing the walk cycle that you observed and investigated.

### Concept to design

'*The Simpsons* in Space' is how *Dogstar* was first pitched by Media World to writer and series co-creator, Doug MacLeod.

- If you heard this pitch what would you expect from this series?

The look of *Dogstar* is based on (Design Director) Scott Vanden Bosch's own distinctive illustrative style – a style refined over years of work on animated series, website design, music videos, short films and children's book illustration.

Vanden Bosch and Media World producer, Colin South, were keen to retain Vanden Bosch's signature style for the series when the program underwent a dramatic transformation from its original concept as an adult animation series to a series created for children.

The highly original look of the series grew out of Vanden Bosch's desire to create an animated series that was distinct and adventurous and which stood out against anything produced in Australia to date.

Vanden Bosch says, 'I wanted to put my stamp on it; especially the colour palette and the cohesive look of the characters and backgrounds'.

- Use the Internet to investigate the work of Scott Vanden Bosch. Do you think he has put his own stamp on *Dogstar* through the selected colour palette? Do you agree that he has created cohesive characters and backgrounds? Explain and justify your opinions by giving examples from particular episodes.

Director, Aaron Davies was involved from the outset in the development of *Dogstar* and saw it evolve from an adult series akin to *Futurama* to a comedy drama pitched squarely at a broad children's market. 'Seeing that evolution, and watching the characters develop has been hugely rewarding', says Davies.

Davies believes that *Dogstar*'s team of designers and animators has pushed the animation software Flash to its limits, with an end result that's visually stunning.

- Do you agree with Davies' opinion about the use of Flash animation? Why or why not?

Multi-award winning composer Yuri Worontschak's challenge when creating the music for *Dogstar* was not only to create a series theme that was 'big, uplifting, bold and inspiring', but to compose a lively underscore for every episode of the 26-part series. In the end, he drew heavily on inspiration from the great science fiction television themes from the 1960s.

- Do you agree that the series theme is 'big, uplifting, bold and inspiring'? Why or why not?

- Use the Internet and terms such as 'science fiction, television, musical, themes and 1960s' to investigate and list films and television programs that may have inspired composer Yuri Worontschak. Select some interesting (and appropriate) works to screen and discuss in class.

### Character design

- Cut and paste each of the images of the characters and match them to the correct character description.

| 'Goodies' | Image |
|---|---|
| **Glenn**<br><br>Glenn has borrowed his attitude to life from Planet Man – a comic book superhero whom he worships. He has a Planet Man doll ('It's not a doll … it's an action figurine!') that he carries with him and constantly refers to for advice. Being voice-activated, gives him advice like, 'A true hero, Glenn, isn't afraid of vitamin rich broccoli despite its unusual taste'. However such advice doesn't really help when Bob Santino is about to blast you out of the sky. Glenn is loud, opinionated and sure he is a hero-in-waiting. He has taken on the role of pilot because – well, it's heroic. | |
| **Simone**<br><br>Simone is bossy and articulate, but when it comes to the crunch, she is a bit indecisive.<br><br>She's the communications officer of the Valiant because she knows ultraspeak, the intergalactic language of diplomacy and communication. Unfortunately, whenever she uses it, aliens throw rocks at her. She is good at drawing up 'to do' lists and good at organizing rosters but when the pressure is on, she is the first to crack. She knows it's a big challenge she has to overcome. | |
| **Lincoln**<br><br>Lincoln spoke his first word at just three-weeks old. And that word was 'photosynthesis'.<br><br>Yes – Lincoln is a genius. He is possibly the smartest human being around; certainly smarter by far than all his family members put together. On board the Valiant, Lincoln is the navigator. He often has to explain highly complex concepts to a brother, sister and grandmother who can't really understand what he's talking about. But he's used to no one really understanding him and he tries to be patient. | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Gemma**<br><br>Gemma's a tough feral alien from a desolate asteroid called Gavin where the national sport is rock throwing. It is also the national dance. In fact, rock throwing is pretty much the only thing they do on Gavin. Gemma's a wily hunter, especially with that tail of hers, but she's not a deep thinker. She finds it difficult to understand human ways at first and doesn't get the concept of a 'pet'; an animal you keep around but you don't eat? Strange. But Gemma's loyal to the Clark kids, and a good alien to have on your side. | |
| **Gran**<br><br>Gran, the kids' grandmother, is the only adult on the Valiant. Like the kids, she's determined to find Hobart, and has tagged along to make sure the kids don't get into mischief. And let's face it; she's also in it for the adventure. She's 271 years old, and lots of her body parts have been augmented with artificial devices, some invented by Lincoln. It's hard to know which parts of her are real. But the kids get comfort from her words of wisdom, like 'A bird in the hand can be very messy' and 'Many hands make it difficult for you to buy gloves'. Even Lincoln doesn't really understand what she actually means, but the kids like her being around. | |
| **Boombah**<br><br>Boombah is a fat, lazy, pink, genetically modified cat that was invented by Lincoln. He is the Clark kids' secret weapon. Boombah has an incredibly sensitive nose for dogs. He can smell them from five light years away. That makes him very valuable. With Boombah on their side, Lincoln believes they cannot fail to find the Dogstar. | |

| 'Baddies' | Images |
|---|---|
| **Bob Santino**<br><br>Evil genius and owner of the gigantic Santino Robotics Corporation, Bob will do anything to keep his Robog manufacturing empire afloat. He actually stole the Robog blueprints from a scientist called Ramon Ridley and took the credit for inventing this dog-substitute. The Clark kids threaten his status, so he's determined to destroy them. To the population of New Earth, Bob seems like a charming philanthropist, but the minute he's out of the public eye, his true nature is revealed. Santino is scheming, nasty and constantly irritable – it's almost like his shoes are too tight. | |
| **Dino Santino**<br><br>Bob's long-suffering son Dino loves all things artistic; mime, music, sock puppets, painting and expressive dance. Dino can break into a dance routine, recite poetry or express his emotions through mime at the drop of a hat. Sometimes this embarrasses Bob, and when Dino does it during moments of action or danger it can get a little distracting. But Dino is determined to please his father. An uphill task for anyone, let alone Dino. | |
| **Daina Macarena**<br><br>Daina is Bob's deadly bodyguard. She's Ninja trained, toned and supple. Daina doesn't move much, but when she does, it's with graceful precision. She's cold, detached and precise. She lives only to protect Bob and his assets. If she's coming your way, look out, you're in trouble. | |

| More characters | Images |
| --- | --- |
| **Mark & Greta Clark**<br><br>The Clark kids' parents are back on New Earth. They don't have a choice about that. After all, the kids 'borrowed' the Valiant without telling them. It's inconvenient for Mark – he needs the Valiant to run his removals business and he's keen to get it back. Greta constantly tells him he has to give the kids room to explore their own needs, so Mark tries to be patient. But it's hard to run a removals business when you don't have a spaceship to move things with and you have to make do with camels. | |
| **Zeke & Alice**<br><br>Zeke and Alice are the robot pilots in charge of the Dogstar. Neither of them has spoken to a human being since the Clark's dog, Hobart, cocked his leg on an instrument panel, causing the Dogstar to catapult into space and get lost. Zeke is convinced he is human. Alice knows she is not. Whether or not they are human is a constant debating point between them. They've befriended Hobart, and he often joins them on the bridge of the Dogstar. And it's this interaction with Hobart that actually humanizes the two robots. | |
| **Hobart**<br><br>Hobart is the Clarks' faithful family dog, lost in space along with five billion other dogs. Hobart is inquisitive and intelligent. He's the only dog onboard the Dogstar that can get out of his kennel and he is often up on the bridge with Zeke and Alice. The Clark kids miss Hobart dreadfully. And the feeling's mutual. He misses them too. | |

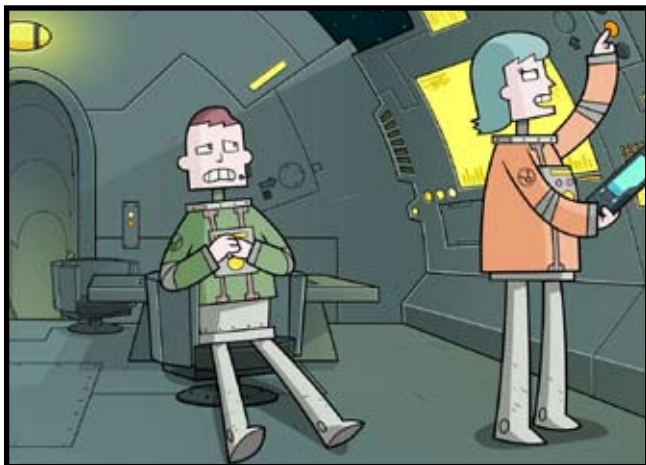| | |
|---|---|
| **Ramon Ridley**<br><br>Ramon is a muttering, embittered, brilliant scientist who was the real inventor of the original Robog and was ripped off by Bob Santino. Ramon can't bear to hear Bob's name mentioned. He'll spit when he hears it. Often on your shoe. He's a wild arm-waver when he talks, and he carries on his back all his worldly belongings and whatever he picks up on the way. He's jittery and suffers from extreme mood swings. You don't invite him to dinner parties. | |
| **Planet Man**<br><br>Glenn's doll (sorry, action figurine) is based upon the live action, intergalactically syndicated television series and comic books of the same name. Planet Man is voice-activated and responds only to Glenn with pre-programmed phrases such as, 'When in doubt, Glenn, push the red button'. Sadly, Glenn takes this sort of thing literally. | |

# EPISODE SYNOPSES

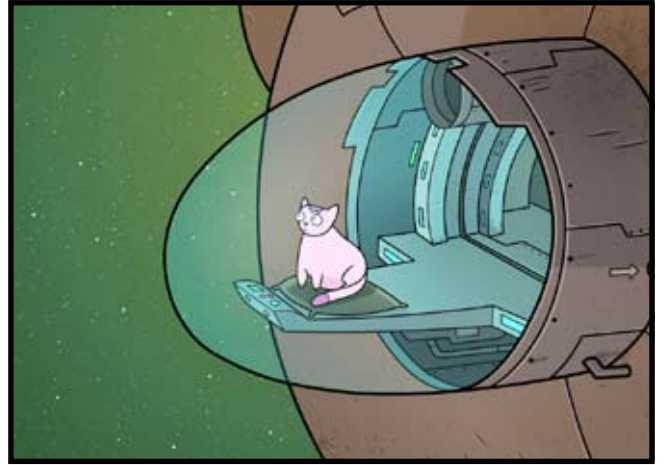| Episode synopses | Key questions |
|---|---|
| **Episode 1 – A Dog's Tale**<br><br>***During the move from Old Earth to New Earth all of the world's dogs go missing.***<br><br>In the year 2347, when Old Earth is pronounced uninhabitable, the Clarks load their family dog Hobart onto an intergalactic ark called the Dogstar to be transported to New Earth.<br><br>Unfortunately, the Dogstar never arrives. All the dogs from Old Earth – and two confused robot pilots, Zeke and Alice – are lost. But the Clark kids (and Gran) are determined to find the Dogstar and bring the dogs home. Robotics entrepreneur Bob Santino is just as determined to stop them. | Setting the scene<br><br>1. Why does the population of Old Earth need to move to New Earth?<br><br>2. The series is set in the year 2347, how many years into the future is this?<br><br>3. How did the humans become separated from the dogs?<br><br>4. Why do the Clark kids set out on a quest to find the dogs?<br><br>5. Are the Robogs suitable as replacement dogs? Why or why not? |
| **Episode 2 – Obedience School**<br><br>***Lincoln escapes from the evil Bob Santino and joins the crew of the Valiant.***<br><br>Out in space, Glenn, Simone and Gran discover it's not easy finding a lost Dogstar in the battered old Valiant. Back on New Earth, at Bob Santino's heavily guarded School for the Gifted, Lincoln manages to breed a cat called Boombah that can sniff dogs across galaxies.<br><br>Lincoln and Boombah are just what the Valiant crew need. But can they grab them from under Bob's nose? | Brothers, sisters<br><br>1. What are some possible advantages and disadvantages of having younger brothers and sisters?<br><br>Giftedness<br><br>2. What does it mean to be 'gifted'?<br><br>3. What is Bob Santino's motivation for opening a school for the gifted?<br><br>4. What might be advantages and disadvantages of being labelled 'gifted'?<br><br>Fairness<br><br>5. Why do some people say that people who cheat only cheat themselves? |
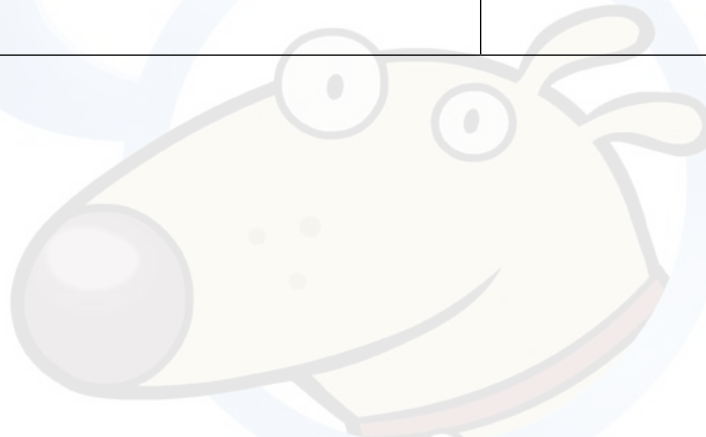
**Episode 3 – Fetch**

***The Clark kids are trapped by Gemma, a rock-throwing alien.***

Pursued by Bob Santino, the Clark kids crash land the Valiant on an asteroid called Gavin where they meet Gemma – an alien. She imprisons them, throws rocks at them and tries to eat Boombah. Eventually, they form a friendship and she joins the crew on their quest.

Friendship is like that. You have to take the rough with the smooth.

Friendship

1. What are the five most important qualities of a best friend?

2. How can you be a good friend?

3. What things can make friendship difficult?

Pets and animals

4. What is a pet and why do people keep pets?

5. What animals make the best pets? Why?

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**Episode 4 – Pedigree**

***Lincoln enables Boombah the cat to speak.***

Visiting New Earth, the Valiant crew meets Ramon Ridley, the original inventor of the Robog. They help him back to New Earth to confront Bob Santino, the man who ripped him off!

Lincoln creates a voice-box for Boombah so they can understand him. This proves to be an annoying mistake. Not surprisingly, the Dogstar remains lost.

Technology and inventions

1. What is one invention that you think has been very important to human survival?

Fairness

2. Do you think it is fair to use the ideas of other people without their knowledge or permission? Why or why not?

3. How can creators or inventors be protected from people 'stealing' their ideas?

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**Episode 5 – Dogfight**

***The Valiant lands on a planet where aliens are constantly at war***

The crew of the Valiant become embroiled in a war between two alien races; the Glurgs and the Radnoks. Gran tries to unite the warring factions by introducing them to the joys of competitive sport. It works. Trouble is, it turns out to be more dangerous than war – and the Valiant crew members are right in the middle of it.

Aboard the Dogstar, Zeke and Alice almost fly into a sun but are saved when Hobart unknowingly helps the robots fix the navigation system.

Families and fighting

1. What are some reasons why children fight?

2. Why do other people fight?

Problem-solving

3. What strategies can help people to solve problems?

Competition and co-operation

4. How does competition and co-operation affect relationships between people?

5. Is competitive sport more fun than social sports activities where there are no winners or losers? Explain your ideas.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Episode 6 – Dog Ears** | Advertising and consumerism |
| ***Bob Santino uses a trick to locate the Valiant.*** | 1. What are the aims of advertisements? |
| Bob Santino discovers that Glenn is a *Planet Man* fan and inserts spyware into a *Planet Man* add-on which Glenn unwittingly buys. | 2. What are some of the different ways advertisers attempt to persuade people to buy or to use their products or services? |
| With Glenn's *Planet Man* doll now a homing device, it's a matter of time before Bob Santino will locate and destroy the Valiant – after retrieving Boombah, of course. Eventually, Glenn saves the day for a change. | 3. What problems can be created when people want lots of new things? |
| | 4. What problems can be created when people buy or consume lots of things? |
| | Heroes |
| | 5. What does it mean to be a hero? |
| | 6. Who are some real life heroes and what makes them heroic? |
| **Episode 7 – Underdogs** | Being human |
| ***The Valiant crew is captured by robots.*** | 1. What is the difference between a human and a robot? |
| The Valiant is captured by the robot inhabitants of Ruca, a race that has done away with humans. Ruca now has a king and queen robot and slave robots called drones. The robots recognize Gran, with her robotic leg, as being almost like them. They confide in Gran and with her inside knowledge, she is able to save the kids from being exterminated. | 2. What is the difference between a human and a dog? |
| | Families |
| | 3. Why do parents worry about their children? |
| | Fairness and social justice |
| Meanwhile, Zeke decides to see what life is really like as a dog, and joins Hobart in his kennel. He discovers he prefers it to working with Alice. | 4. Are all people treated equally? Why or why not? Is this fair? |
| **Episode 8 – Sit Drop Stay** | Heroes |
| ***Bob Santino captures Boombah the cat.*** | 1. What does it mean to be a hero? |
| A meteor shower shears off the nose-cone of the Valiant and Boombah floats away! He's captured by Bob Santino. The crew of the Valiant launch a rescue mission to save Boombah from his clutches. | 2. What is meant by a rescue mission? |
| | 3. What are some strategies that would help to ensure a rescue mission is as successful as possible? |
| Meanwhile, Hobart gets Zeke and Alice to help him find his ID tag. While they are away from the bridge, their ship almost collides with the BobCat and the Valiant. So near – and yet so far! | 4. What are some real-life rescue missions that have been undertaken recently? |
| | 5. Who are some real life heroes and what makes them heroic? |

| **Episode 9 – The Beagle Has Landed** | Human similarities and differences |
|---|---|
| ***The crew of the Valiant encounters a race of talking dogs.*** | 1. In what ways are people throughout the world similar and different? |
| Lincoln and Glenn are captured by a highly evolved race of dogs, from the planet Sirius II. They walk on their hind legs and speak like human beings. | 2. In what ways are humans similar to and different from dogs, other animals? |
| Meanwhile, Zeke loses his memory, and while Alice leaves him to find a lap link data cable, the Valiant finds the Dogstar. | Memory<br>3. What is a memory? |
| Simone tells Zeke to stay exactly where he is while she saves Lincoln and Glenn. But by the time she returns from saving her brothers, the Dogstar is gone and Zeke has no memory of ever seeing the Valiant. | 4. How is the memory of a person similar to or different from a computer?<br><br>5. Why is the ability to remember important? |
| **Episode 10 – Sick As A Dog** | Natural environment and sustainability |
| ***The Dogstar arrives back on Old Earth.*** | 1. How have humans affected Earth's natural environment? |
| The Clark kids meet Ramon Ridley again. He says he knows where the Dogstar is – and directs them to Old Earth!  Indeed, the Dogstar has returned to Old Earth. Zeke and Alice make the unwise decision to let the dogs out for a walk. | 2. What human behaviours affect the Earth's natural environment?<br><br>3. How can humans reduce their impact on the natural environment? |
| Old Earth remains polluted and the toxic fumes practically destroy Zeke and Alice. But Hobart manages to save them, and they immediately leave. Moments later, the Valiant arrives. Once again, so near and yet so far. Ramon chooses to stay on Old Earth and begins cleaning up the planet with a broom. | 4. What are Earth's most important natural resources?<br><br>5. How can humans contribute in positive ways to the protection, conservation or renewal of natural resources? |
| **Episode 11 – Puppy Love** | Love and other feelings |
| ***Simone falls in love.*** | 1. What feelings can humans experience that are positive? How is each feeling usually expressed? |
| When Hobart falls in love with a French Poodle, Zeke tries to prove to Alice that he too can feel such an emotion. | 2. What feelings can humans experience that are negative? How is each feeling usually expressed? |
| Meanwhile, Simone falls in love with one of the human settlers on Karzol, a planet with a dangerous secret. Santino, Daina and Dino don't fall in love with anyone. | 3. What is the difference between loving someone and falling in love?<br><br>4. Can animals fall in love? How do you know? |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Episode 12 – Running With The Pack** | Reality and imagination |
| ***Glenn goes to a* Planet Man *convention.*** | 1. How can you tell the difference between a television program that is about real life and one that creates imaginary characters and worlds? |
| Glenn attends a *Planet Man* convention and after being chased by Bob, escapes with the old actor, Bud Rafferty, who played Planet Man in the television series. | 2. What are some television programs that present things that are real? |
| Glenn struggles to understand that Bud is only an actor and not the real Planet Man, while Bud struggles to understand that he's not acting in a television show when Bob Santino attacks the Valiant. In a sly ruse to escape being annihilated, the Valiant crew sends Bud to Bob as a hostage – dressed in a pink cat costume. | 3. Do these television programs present everything exactly as it is in real life? Why or why not? How do you know? |
| | 4. How can you be sure that you are not being misled when you watch television programs? |
| **Episode 13 – Paws** | Twins |
| ***A monster threatens the Valiant.*** | 1. What are possible advantages and disadvantages of being a twin? |
| Lincoln invents a matter transporter called a Beambox to send keepsakes to their parents on Old Earth. Touched, Mark and Greta Clark send things back, but Bob Santino sneaks in a nasty surprise of his own. Bob's 'gift' hatches into a terrifying monster as soon as it arrives on the Valiant. Fortunately, Gemma is very good at dealing with terrifying monsters. | Keepsakes |
| | 2. What are your five most important keepsakes? Why are they important? |
| | 3. If you were selecting ten keepsakes to put tin a time capsule to be opened in 100 years time, what would you select and why? |
| Equally terrifying are the twin versions of themselves that Zeke and Alice find aboard the Dogstar. | Fear |
| | 4. What terrifying things do you have to deal with? How can you cope with them effectively? |
| | 5. How can other people help you to deal with scary thoughts. |

# EPISODE SYNOPSES

**Episode 26 – Tail's End**

***Everyone and everything moves back to Old Earth.***

Ramon Ridley finishes rejuvenating Old Earth and swears the Valiant crew to secrecy. He gives them a homing device that will attract the Dogstar and to everyone's surprise, it works! The crew return to New Earth with the Dogstar but are greeted by mass panic. Bob Santino has accidentally sent Robogs digging to the core of New Earth where they have triggered earthquakes. New Earth is about to implode.

It's time to leave. But where to? The kids have to break their promise to Ramon but in return extract a promise from everyone to look after their old planet. Everyone is reunited with their pet dogs on Old Earth. But will history repeat itself? Probably, if human nature is anything to go by.

Society and the environment

1.  Is it likely that robots with empathy will ever be created/ Why or why not?

2.  What makes someone 'a responsible corporate citizen'?

3.  What is the relationship between Dino and his father Bob Santini? Has it changed? How do you know?

4.  What are some of the icons from the built environment that are evident in this episode, for example, Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House? Why do you think they have been included?

5.  How has greed and ambition created problems for characters and for the natural environment in the series? Is this similar to or different from real life?

Beginnings and endings

6.  In what ways does this episode reflect the series beginning?

7.  What are your predictions for the future of Old Earth?

8.  Do you think there will be another *Dogstar* series? Why or why not?

### Episode 14 – Dog Show

***The Dogstar is found and the media get in on the act.***

When Bob finds the Dogstar, the Clarks, thinking quickly, call the media. Bob can't destroy the Dogstar under the scrutiny of television cameras. But Bob rewires the Dogstar navigation controls, disables Zeke and Alice, and sends the spaceship hurtling towards a sun …

This time, Planet Man really does come to the rescue!

### Episode 15 – Old Dog New Tricks

***A time whirly returns the Valiant back to planet Ruca.***

The Valiant lands on planet Ruca again – but on this visit the crew have journeyed back in history to a time before the robots rose up to overthrow their masters. And no wonder the robots later revolted. Ruca of the past was run by some very nasty people, including a nine-year-old lunatic emperor. Amazingly, Gemma's the one who finds a way to his heart.

### Episode 16 – Hounded

***Gemma is accused of eating Boombah the cat and is put on trial.***

Could Gemma really do the unthinkable and eat Boombah? This seems to be what happens when the Clark kids visit New Earth and are lauded as heroes at a public reception. As it happens, Boombah has been eaten. But not by Gemma.

The truth, as usual, is much more bizarre.

### Episode 17 – Smart Dog

***Boombah the cat and Lincoln are welcomed to the Planet Mensa.***

Onboard the Dogstar, Zeke's belief that he is human leads him to play practical jokes on Alice. Meanwhile, Lincoln takes a brain-boosting holiday on the planet Mensa and attracts the attention of Bob Santino. Invited to stay on Mensa, Lincoln is tempted until he realizes he must use his powers to save the Valiant.

Alice finally pays Zeke back with practical jokes.

### Episode 18 – Dog Gone

***Bounty hunter Baba Ganoosh is hired by Bob Santino to find the Clarks.***

On the Dogstar, Hobart, Zeke and Alice come across Chester, a highly evolved yet tiny dog who speaks incessantly. Chester, a secret agent from the Planet Sirius II, is convinced he's in a prison ship and tries to organize a breakout with Hobart.

Meanwhile Bob Santino sends the galaxy's best bounty hunter, Baba Ganoosh, to find and destroy the Valiant. Not only does Baba Ganoosh find the Valiant, he is confronted by his niece, Gemma. This could be his toughest mission ever.

### Episode 19 – Bad Dog

***The Clarks return to New Earth and the School for the Gifted.***

Dino tries to impress his father, Bob Santino, by taking on the mantle of evilness. But Dino just doesn't cut it as a villain even though he tries awfully hard, especially in the wardrobe department.

Amazingly, Dino captures the crew of the Valiant. The kids elude him however and, not so amazingly, the Dogstar remains lost.

### Episode 20 – Dog Leg

*Bud Rafferty, the ageing star of the Planet Man television series, proposes to Gran.*

The kids are shocked to discover that Gran has a secret admirer. Glenn is especially shocked because Gran's secret admirer is none other than Bud Rafferty, the actor who played Planet Man. But it's all a clever ploy by Bob Santino, who has hired the actor to lure the kids away so he can capture Boombah.

Zeke makes Alice a birthday cake when, by accident, he discovers her date of manufacture.

### Episode 21 – Top Dog

*The Valiant is stuck on a planet full of advertising executives.*

Could there really be a whole planet that acts as an advertising agency for the entire universe? And could this planet help the Clarks to locate the Dogstar? Or will the Dogstar remain lost? The answers are yes, no and probably.

### Episode 22 – Let Sleeping Dogs Lie

*Evil Bob Santino unleashes the Dreampod where all dreams come true.*

It sounds like the perfect toy. Enter a Dreampod, and your wildest dreams come true. Of course, there is a slight drawback; it's a ploy by Bob Santino to distract the Clark kids and get Boombah.

Unfortunately, the Clark kids don't know this when they find themselves inside the Dreampod. And since the Dreampod belongs to Bob Santino, it's only fair that they return the favour.

### Episode 23 – Off Lead Area

*Bob Santino creates a fake Dogstar.*

The kids find the Dogstar. It has been destroyed by meteors, or so it seems. When they return from investigating the desolate hulk, they all get a cold, except Simone who is the only one left to pilot the Valiant when it is chased by the BobCat. Could this have been a trap set by Bob Santino? You bet!

Meanwhile, Zeke and Alice have landed on a planet with trees. And it's been a long time since all those dogs have seen a tree!

### Episode 24 – Dogged Determination

*Boombah the cat is cloned with disastrous results.*

A single pink hair is all it takes for Bob Santino to clone Boombah. The problem is the clone, called Barbara, grows to the size of a building and takes Dino as a hostage. The Clarks strike a deal with Bob and save his son.

Onboard the Dogstar, Zeke the robot pilot, once again proves to his co-pilot, Alice, that he is human – this time by becoming a portrait artist.

### Episode 25 – Man Bites Dog

*The Dogstar reaches New Earth but the space ark is no longer its normal size.*

The Dogstar goes through a microwave radiation anomaly and ends up the size of a tennis ball. It arrives at New Earth where, by a stunning coincidence, it ends up inside the very Robog that belongs to Mark and Greta Clark. As Zeke says, 'Stranger things have happened', though he can't think what.

Meanwhile, a damaged Valiant crash-lands on Old Earth and the kids meet up with Ramon Ridley who is still trying to clean up the planet. This is difficult because Bob Santino has been dumping all his toxic waste on Old Earth.

## Media World

Media World Pictures is one of Australia's leading independent production companies, with offices in both Melbourne and Perth. The company, which has been operating since 1982, produces everything from award-winning animation series to acclaimed feature films, documentaries, and more recently, prime time drama series for television. Media World has kicked off its twenty-fifth year of production with two landmark productions: *Dogstar*, a 26-part children's animated series for the BBC and the Nine Network; and *The Circuit*, a ground-breaking drama series for SBS Television.

Media World has successfully developed and produced hundreds of hours of content for both television and the big screen. High profile productions such as the company's 1992 award winning feature *The Silver Brumby* starring Russell Crowe have been seen by audiences all over the world. Media World's subsequent features are many and varied and include the psychological thriller Zone 39 (John Tatoulis, 1996), the romantic comedy *Beware of Greeks Bearing Guns* (John Tatoulis, 2000), and the tongue-in-cheek adventure *Let's Get Skase* (Matthew George, 2001).

Since 1994, Media World has also become a major player in the animation market, and established its own animation studio, Animation Works. Media World's animation credits include: *The Silver Brumby* (two series based on the feature of the same name); *The New Adventures of Ocean Girl* (based on the successful live-action series); and two seasons of the controversial animated sitcom John Callahan's *QUADS!* (a co-production with Canadian company Nelvana).

Following a company restructure in 2003, Media World Pictures is now headed up by producers Colin South and Ross Hutchens and business affairs manager Judy Malmgren.

http://www.mediaworld.com.au

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MEDIA WORLD

# Technical information related to production

### Production dates

November 2004 to March 2007

### Running time

Twenty-six episodes of twenty-four minutes

### Hardware

Design and animation work was done on PCs. Post and post FX work was completed on Macs.

### Software

The designers used Photoshop and Flash MX. The animators used Flash MX. The post team used Final Cut Pro for editing, After Effects for the majority of Post FX work, Particle Illusion (Wondertouch) for some FX, Photoshop for the occasional clean up or paint task and iView Multimedia for library management and batch renaming and processing of materials. iView's batching function was especially useful for pre-production set-up tasks when preparing the picture and sound files for the Nelnet. All audio was recorded, edited and mixed in Pro Tools.

### File management

A dedicated online database known as the Nelnet was leased from Canadian company, Nelvana Ltd for the storage, management and transfer of all design and animation assets. FTP sites were also used extensively for the transfer of picture and sound files.

### Production notes

Created in widescreen high definition (HD SR) and featuring 5.1 sound (Dolby SR), *Dogstar* was produced entirely in Australia from concept through to post production. Production was largely conducted in Melbourne and Perth with crew in four main studios communicating via an online asset management database called the Nelnet.

The series had input into scripts, designs, and picture edits from the UK (BBC), Germany (children's broadcaster ZDF) and Australia (Nine Network) during the production process. Edited pictures were compressed in the Perth post studio and uploaded to a dedicated ftp site enabling parties to quickly download, view and provide feedback.

Design Director, Scott Vanden Bosch's lavish designs were brought to life by Director, Aaron Davies and enhanced via the FX and editing expertise of Post Production Supervisor, Merlin Cornish. Working in high-definition in Flash (1920 x 1080 pixels) meant that the designers especially could add a huge amount more detail and texture than is typical in animated series. Planning Post FX from the beginning helped to overcome the two dimensional cut-out style limitations of the animation program. The team were able to conceive the series in far greater depth than most Flash-created programs.

## *Pre-production*

At the design stage, each Flash symbol (equivalent to a cut-out piece of a character) was created with further layers within it, allowing sophisticated tweaking of movement, shadows, lip-sync and cyclic animations. Many 'robot' characters and background elements were created with automatically playing detailed animation loops. This extra animated detail added colour and interest without adding repetitive work to the animation teams.

Master Designs for characters, props, locations and FX were created at the very beginning for use throughout the series. Then, upon delivery of each script, episode-specific designs were drawn up. These were detailed but not fully finished as they were created specifically for use by the storyboard artists, and it was this process that defined what design elements were needed. Once the storyboard was finalised, it was carefully analysed so the Design team knew exactly what to produce for each episode in terms of background angles and detail, characters and character expressions, props and FX design.

Storyboarding was far more complex than any other Flash series the company has worked on. Because of the intricate backgrounds, number of characters, and elaborate interaction between characters and backgrounds, the storyboarding had to double as the Layout stage. Storyboards were intensely revised to best suit the needs of the stylistic and complex designs.

Upon completion of a storyboard, each board panel was scanned and an 'animatic' – a picture edit composed of storyboard stills – was edited to the pre-recorded voice track. The program was edited to length so that each scene was already timed to the Director's wishes. Each animatic went through a minimum of three edits to fine-tune the content and pacing before the animation went into production.

Each animatic was then broken down into individual elements of image and sound. The image file for any particular scene contained between one and twenty-four storyboard panels and the accompanying voice tracks. Sometimes guide audio for key sound FX was included so that animation could be carefully timed to synchronize with the FX.

The movie and sound clips were incorporated into individual Flash files by the Scene Planning team. This team also added the appropriate designs to the scene files then uploaded these scenes to the Nelnet ready for download by the animators. The planning process meant  the animators were neatly presented with dialogue, designs and a set of timed and edited storyboard panels for each individual scene.
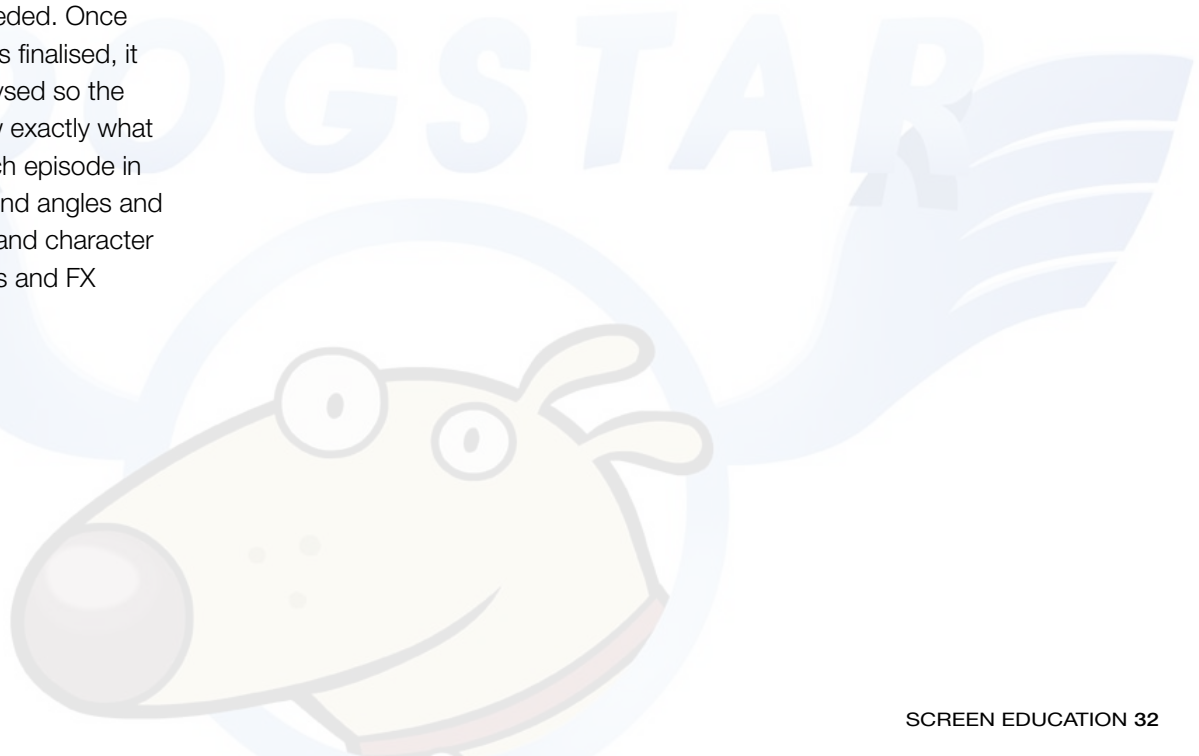
## Assets management

The Nelnet online database enabled efficient communication and data transfer between crews working in four different locations. Media World Pictures had first used the database created by Toronto-based animation studio, Nelvana Ltd when co-producing the animated sitcom John Callahan's *QUADS!* with them between 2000 and 2003. Media World negotiated to use the system again and thus all the series' designs and animation assets for *Dogstar* were housed in Toronto.

Entering the Nelnet site via password access, crew members could search for designs, download and upload scene elements, and communicate with colleagues through a comments panel available for each design or scene.

The Nelnet set-up enabled team leaders and production management to get a detailed snapshot of production progress department by department. This was a substantial leap forward compared to the laborious tracking of hundreds of paper folders across multiple locations that traditional 2D character animation production management demanded.

## Post fx

To address the limitations of Flash animation and create the most visually appealing program possible, visual FX formed a key component of each episode. FX work was layered in at the storyboard, design, animation and post stages of production. Over one third of the scenes were given some sort of FX treatment in post production with the crew focussing on adding visual depth and giving any element that would occur naturally in the environment a more organic appearance (eg. light, smoke, water and flames).

Early in production, Post Supervisor / Special Effects Designer Merlin Cornish made custom filters using presets in After Effects. Then, as episodes were first assembled using the completed animation, Merlin would note the key or 'hero' FX for each episode and commence work on the trickier treatments while the picture was going through the stages of editing. By the time the main FX block in the schedule was reached, the more detailed FX were well advanced, if not already approved.

The FX were mostly achieved by taking apart the Flash scenes and applying filters to individual Flash layers using After Effects. In order that different effects could be applied to each layer, each Flash animation scene was constructed in a hierarchical manner so the Post FX team could easily separate elements such as background, mid-ground and foreground, as well as each animated character.

As the series progressed, the Design Department managed to incorporate some of the team's FX plans within the designs rather than leaving them for the post FX stage, thus allowing Post to direct more time to creating other FX.

To achieve the goal of adding visual depth, focus pulls and background or foreground blurs were regularly applied. Where focus pulls were done between Flash layers in a scene, minor scale adjustments were made to the layers to create a 'lens' stretch feel. The resulting effect subtly suggests that the scene was shot by a camera and subconsciously creates the impression of greater depth in the viewer's mind.

Where time permitted, glow FX were added to make the most of incidental lighting design. The lighting layer would be given a transfer mode so the light would spill into other layers and appear to be in the location rather than a single cut-out lighting element.

## Some other FX treatments:

- Water was given an embossed, reflective sheen to generate a liquid look.

- The sun was given a heat distortion, rings of flames, and an intense yellow colour.

- Displacement maps were created to suggest the passage of wind or presence of heat.

- Motion blurs were added to fast moving objects.

- Atmospheric FX were added to planets.

- Particle Illusion software was used to create FX such as specks and dust.

- Where holograms were used, the design was isolated and the background distorted in order to give the hologram a more three dimensional, defined space within the location.

- Live HD footage of smoke was layered into appropriate scenes.

## Did you know?

1. Originally the concept for *Dogstar* was for an adult animation series.

2. *Dogstar* was created, designed and animated totally in Australia.

3. The *Dogstar* series took almost three years to make.

4. There are twenty-six episodes in *Dogstar*.

5. Each episode took fifty-eight weeks to complete – from script development to delivery.

6. At the peak of production the *Dogstar* team was juggling production on all twenty-six episodes.

7. Approximately 120 people were employed to make *Dogstar*.

8. More than 100 actors auditioned for roles on the show.

9. Media World Pictures has operations at opposite sides of Australia in Melbourne and Perth. Thanks to the Internet, teams in both cities worked simultaneously to produce *Dogstar*. The scripts, design, audio recording and audio post, on-line post and most of the animation was worked on in Victoria, the rest of the work, including a third of the animation, all scene planning and fx post production happened about 3500km away in Perth, Western Australia.

10. *Dogstar* was the first totally Australian-made animation series to have been picked up by the Disney Channel in Australia.

11. There is a Fan Club website at <http://www.dogstar.tv>.

12. The *Dogstar* novel was written by one of the series scriptwriters, Philip Dalkin and was published by Penguin Books in September 2007.

# KEY FACTS

## An animated comedy series for children aged 8-12 years

**DURATION** 26 x 24 minutes

**FORMAT** Widescreen
High Definition (HD SR - 1080/50i),
Dolby SR 5.1 Sound

**COMPLETED** March 2007

**PRODUCER** Media World Pictures
frontdoor@mediaworld.com.au

**PRODUCED WITH ASSISTANCE OF** Australian Film Finance Corporation
Film Victoria
ScreenWest

**AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTERS** Nine Network, Australia
Disney Channel, Australia

**INTERNATIONAL DISTRIBUTION** Daro Film Distribution
EM Entertainment GmbH

**INTERNATIONAL SALES TO DATE** Africa, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, India, Indonesia, Ireland,
Latin America, Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Seychelles, Taiwan,
Turkey, United Kingdom

**AWARDS** Nominated: Best Children's TV script
– Writers Guild of Australia, 2007
Winner: Best Children's TV script
– Writers Guild of Australia, 2006
Finalist: Best TV Animation
– Australian Animation and Effects Festival, 2006
Official Selection: International Showcase
– Cartoons on the Bay, Salerno, Italy, 2007
Finalist: Best Children's TV Series
– EnhanceTV ATOM Awards, 2007

**PUBLISHING** Novelization – Penguin Books
Released September 2007

## http://www.dogstar.tv

**References:** Dogstar Press Kit <http://www.mediaworld.com.au/?q=node/35>