



# Phineas & Ferb's Great Space Adventure

Creators Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh give us the skinny on their new movie.

It's hard to believe that it has been 13 years since toon veterans Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh introduced the world to the beloved stepbrothers Phineas and Ferb and their put-upon big sister, Candace. This summer, fans of the show will be able to enjoy a spanking new 2D-animated movie featuring the mixed family unit, in which Candace is abducted by some very kooky aliens.

*Phineas and Ferb The Movie: Candace Against the Universe*, which debuts on Disney+ in August, brings back original voice stars Ashley Tisdale (Candace), Vincent Martella (Phineas), Caroline Rhea (mom Linda), Dee Bradley Baker (Perry the Platypus), Alyson Stoner (Isabella), Maulik Pancholy (Baljeet), as well as David Errigo Jr. as Ferb. Of course, Povenmire and Marsh also return as the insane Dr. Heinz Doofenshmirtz and Major Monogram. Adding even more star quality to the mix are guest voices Ali Wong, Wayne Brady, Diedrich Bader and Thomas Middleditch.

Povenmire and Marsh had worked together on *The Simpsons* and *Rocko's Modern Life*, and spent many years pitching their concept for the original show to various studios until Disney greenlit their idea in the early 2000s. Audiences immediately warmed up to the clever writing,

memorable characters and the catchy songs the duo wrote for the series. *Phineas and Ferb* ran for 222 episodes from 2007 until 2015, and inspired a previous movie (*Phineas and Ferb the Movie: Across the 2nd Dimension*), spin-off talk show and numerous games, tie-in toys and books.

In a recent phone interview, Povenmire and Marsh told *Animag* that when the execs in charge asked them to dust off the characters and prepare a movie for Disney+, they couldn't say no. "Disney+ was looking for projects that would appeal both to kids and adults, and our show has a multi-gen-

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— Co-creator Dan Povenmire



erational appeal," says Povenmire. "In fact, about 47 percent of our audience was adults, with or without their children. We had done the show for 10 years, and thought that we had done enough with these characters. But then, we realized we kind of missed them. So we started thinking about a fun premise that would appeal to everyone, even those who weren't familiar with the show."

## To Boldly Go...

The creators wanted to try a situation that they hadn't fully explored before, but when you

have done every possible scenario for 222 episodes, you have to really stretch your creative muscles. "We had gone to a lot of places and done a lot with these characters, so we wanted to make sure we had something new to say, but didn't want to violate any of the characters' set-ups and rules of their world," says Marsh. Adds Povenmire, "There's this joke in an episode of *South Park* about how every time they want to do something, they realized that *The Simpsons* had already done it. For us, the first week in our writers' room, we came up with these ideas and our

writers said, 'Oh, sorry, we did that in season one. We did that in the third episode!' So we became our own *Simpsons*!" Marsh responds,

"We made it too difficult for ourselves."

One plotline they had never explored was putting anyone in any sort of danger on the series. "We had never done a real rescue story, so we started thinking, what if Candace is in trouble and the boys have to save her?" says Povenmire. "What if she was abducted by aliens? Then, we could build this whole new world and have fun with sci-fi scenarios."

In fact, the duo managed to have a lot of fun with sci-fi tropes, as they always do in their shows. "We had fun spoofing this TV show within



**A Musical Family:** Thirteen years after debuting on Disney Channel, the eccentric siblings Phineas, Ferb and Candace return for an intergalactic adventure on Disney+.



the movie, which is a throwback to the '50s and '60s science-fiction shows and movies, and then we also have this lush, weird planet which they all go to," says Povenmire. "Most of the gi-

Thomas Middleditch as the guy from *Silicon Valley*. But then I saw him on this great improv series on Netflix called *Middleditch and Schwartz*, and he was spectacular. So, he nailed his part,

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ant trees are mushrooms. Everything is based on fungus there, which in retrospect made us look smart: There's a plot point that there is no carbon dioxide on that planet. We had put all of these fungi there, but we found out that according to Wikipedia, fungus doesn't produce any carbon dioxide." Marsh jokes, "I remember thinking about that much in advance. We were much cleverer than you think!"

Another cool element was the talented guest stars who joined the project. "Ali Wong came in and knocked it out of the park," notes Povenmire. "We're big fans of hers, and she really hit every comic beat exactly the way we wanted it. I knew

too. Then, there's Diedrich Bader, with whom we also worked on *Milo Murphy's Law*. He brought something so strange to his role of Borthos that we weren't really expecting, but we laughed every time he did any of his lines."

The two creators point out that one of the reasons these characters and the original show were such a hit with audiences was because they avoided being snide or mean. As Povenmire recalls, "Between the time we came up with the show and when it was put on the air, *SpongeBob* happened. I worked on that show, and from the beginning, I knew that show was going to be a big hit, because I loved that character so much.

He was genuinely a nice, positive character."

"We really wanted to see if we could do something edgy when all the humor wasn't based on the jerks and the idiots," says Marsh. "That seemed to be what everyone connected with the show wanted. It was cool, it was funny and intelligent. The jokes weren't based on meanness and idiocy. Parents felt it was a safe place for their kids to go, but we didn't do it in a way that talked down to the kids. We never cut a joke because somebody thought it was too intelligent or might have gone over our audience's head. It's OK if we aim a few jokes at the parents ... or the engineering or philosophy students!"

### Songs in the Key of Danville

The two creators also say they really enjoyed filling their show with fun, catchy songs that stuck in viewers' heads. "It was so good to get back to writing *Phineas and Ferb* songs," says Povenmire. "Swampy and I have done about 400 songs together. We can really do them fast together. For this movie, we collaborated with some great musicians: our original composer Danny Jacob, songwriters Karey Kirkpatrick (*Something Rotten!*), Emanuel Kiriakou (Whitney Houston's "I Look to You") and Kate Micucci (*Garfunkel and Oates*)."

Naturally, like everyone else working in the industry, the creators had to deal with the COVID-19 shutdowns and getting used to communicating with everyone virtually instead of in person. The directors praise the ease and convenience of working with tools like SyncSketch and Evercast to draw and collaborate with their creative teams from home. "I do love that we are going through this animation boom right now," says Povenmire. "We had another boom in the 1990s, but that one was a false bubble. The tough part is finding people when you're staffing up your show, because everyone is already working."

"I hope people will enjoy our movie. Maybe they might be nostalgic for their childhood during these traumatic times," he concludes. "I hope it makes them feel safe and that they think it's both funny and moving, and that it cheers people up and makes them sing and dance."

"A lot of people who grew up with *Phineas and Ferb* may now have kids of their own," adds Marsh. "I hope they watch the movie together with their children and a new generation gets to know these characters." ♦

***Phineas and Ferb The Movie: Candace Against the Universe* premieres on Disney+ on Friday, Aug. 28. All four seasons of the original animated series and *Phineas and Ferb the Movie: Across the 2nd Dimension* are streaming on Disney+. Disney XD will also air all episodes of the show from Aug. 25 to the movie premiere.**