

3rd and Bird: Meet Elliot

3rd and Bird! was produced by Little Airplane Productions for BBC. *3rd and Bird!* is a new animated preschool series about a community of birds who live, learn and play in the branches of a beautiful old tree. The vibrant community of *3rd and Bird!* is always alive with songs, dances and endless whistling! Samuel and Rudy invite little Muffin along for a picnic with their friend, Elliot. But when they arrive, Muffin is shocked to find out that Elliot is not a bird like she is...he is a worm! Muffin thinks she and Elliot are too different to be friends. It is up to Samuel to teach his little sister that different is good.

3rd and the Bird! was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010 finalists in the “up to 6” fiction category.

International experts’ opinions



Figure 1: Samuel and Rudy invite little Muffin along for a tea party with their friend, Elliot.



Figure 2: The birds are on their way to meet Elliot.

Many international experts liked the concept of diversity in the program. “I think this episode is one of the best representations of diversity that we have seen” (female expert, USA). The male producer from the US explained, “I wanted to do a show that is community based, where all the problems are solved internally. If you watch the series of *3rd and Bird*, they never get outside help. They have always got to solve it with the teacher, their friend, a worm, or somebody like that, but it is an internal way of resolving it.”

They also appreciated the fact that the program is full of innocent emotions of children. “I really think this is a beautiful program. It has all the good feelings” (female expert, Denmark).



Figure 3: Muffin is startled when she sees that Elliot is NOT a bird.



Figure 4: Muffin told her sister that she wanted to go because Elliot was a worm.



Figure 5: Muffin shouts at Elliot when she finds Elliot acts everything differently.



Figure 6: Her sister asks her to tolerate difference.



Figure 7: Muffin decides to give it a try and apologizes to Elliot for her rudeness.



Figure 8: Muffin and Elliot finally become friends.

The international experts liked the quality of the voices in the program. "Well you have got nice voices here. It has that kind of freshness, fruity freshness, in the voices." (male expert, Germany). A male producer from the US explained the casting of the kids. "Every actor on that show with the exception of the kid that played Rudi were all first timers. We tend to like to cast first timers, because they don't have a lot of preconceptions about how to act or how to sing." The experts admired the concept of animation in the program. "The animation, everything, struck – whereas sometimes I think you can veer off of that, and then it is not as effective; but these characters are so well drawn out and the performance is so believable – and the voice performances. So, I think it comes through more clearly than some other animated shows that try to deal with concepts that I think it would be at times easier to just see real kids doing it" (male expert, Canada).

Many international experts appreciated the use of music to reach the young kids. "I think 3rd and Bird is just beautiful. I love the idea that there is a show for preschoolers that has a musical feel about it – that has loads of singing. I know, because we have watched lots of kids watch 3rd and Bird, and it doesn't take them very long to start singing along with the episodes" (female expert, Australia). They also loved the fact that the children were involved in singing. "I am in love with birds generally. I think this story here is so cute, cute, cute. I really loved that it was real children voices instead of Disney where everyone is speaking like this (imitates a high-pitch voice). They speak quietly and nice. Even the children, they sing with their own voices" (female expert, Denmark). "Isn't the music fantastic? That guy can run his songs. Sometimes things that are musicals are boring songs" (female expert, New Zealand).

Some international experts liked the fact that the children were shown going through various experiences and absorbing the morals rather than being taught by the adults as it is normally shown. "I was thinking that compared to Martha, I liked this better, because it is still a very moral story, but because it is a child experiencing this and not a grandmother like Martha, then I really get the concept" (female expert, Denmark). An international expert raised the point about the use of animals in animation. "It strikes me – it is interesting that all the animation is with animals. It is birds, cows, sheep, lots of worms: how come they haven't made any beautiful animation where it is actually children, babies, or young? You can do it, but it is always through animals that we get these stories" (female expert, Denmark).

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