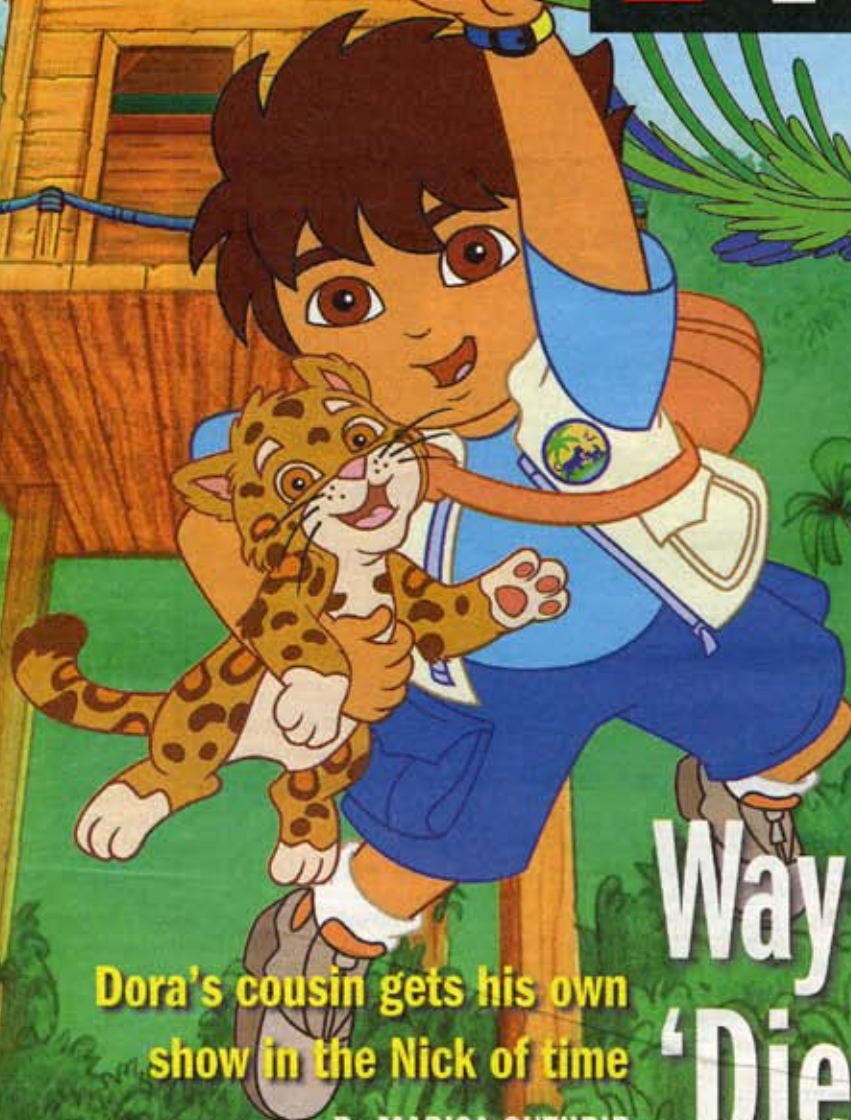


NEW YORK

VUE



Dora's cousin gets his own
show in the Nick of time

By MARISA GUTHRIE

Way to go,
'Diego'!

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Girls have 'Dora'— now boys have 'Diego'

By MARISA GUTHRIE



Diego is bilingual, and he talks with animals, too.

'Dora the Explorer" has become a heroine to millions of little girls.

Now, Nickelodeon and the creators of "Dora" are hoping to extend the popularity of their bilingual, globe-trotting heroine with the "Dora" spinoff "Go, Diego, Go!"

The new series revolves around Dora's 8-year-old cousin Diego, who made his first appearance on "Dora" two years ago. Also bilingual, Diego runs the Animal Rescue Center in the Latin American rainforest.

"I think 'Diego' is sort of the 'Mork & Mindy' of 'Happy Days,'" joked Brown Johnson, head of

Nickelodeon's preschool division.

It's understandable why Nickelodeon and the "Dora" folks want to expand the franchise.

More than 8 million viewers tune in each week to accompany Dora on her bilingual adventures.

A stage version of "Dora" has been playing to packed houses for three seasons.

The show is seen in more than 74 countries in 15 different languages. And sales of Dora merchandise have topped \$3 billion since it was launched in 2001.

If you're ever in a place where preschoolers congregate, check out how many of them are accessorized with pink "Dora the Ex-

plorer" backpacks.

While "Dora" viewers are evenly split along gender lines, "Diego" will offer little boys someone to identify with.

"When we were creating 'Dora,'" said executive producer Chris Gifford, "we weren't thinking about adding a boy character, although maybe we should have. We added Diego near the end of the second season of 'Dora' and viewers really responded to him. With 'Diego,' we wanted to create a boy to give little boys a character that they could pretend to be."

In each episode, Dora and her trusty sidekick Boots embark on mystical journeys, for instance, traversing a crocodile-infested moat to rescue a story-book

prince banished to a remote castle. Dora asks viewers for help. Pauses in the program are included so viewers can answer her questions. Each episode also includes a Spanish word.

Like "Dora," "Diego" engages viewers by talking directly to them. But Diego's adventures are grounded in reality. Diego rescues real animals and the series is packed with facts about their habitats, diets and, sometimes, predators. Diego has his own sidekick, Baby Jaguar, who accompanies him on all of his adventures. And his 11-year-old sister Alicia, a computer whiz, keeps her brother

informed of approaching dangers via their video watches. Of course, Dora will make several guest appearances on "Diego."

The series premieres Tuesday at 8 p.m. on Nickelodeon and joins the Nick Jr. lineup Wednesday at 11 a.m.

"Diego" skews to a slightly older viewer than "Dora," said Johnson. But both shows teach problem-solving skills while imbuing children with multicultural awareness.

"I think kids have this innate wish to be helpful," said Johnson. "So when Diego says, 'The tree frogs need our help. Will you help me?' Kids are like, 'Yeah!'"

"Being helpful makes kids feel accomplished and good about themselves," she added. "It's the idea of community and building that helpful muscle."

'We wanted to create a boy to give little boys a character that they could pretend to be.'

But not all of the animals in need of rescue are as cute as tree frogs. And making a show that holds kids' attention while staying faithful to science was a challenge.

"We're attracted to telling stories about really cute animals," said Gifford. "But we have been challenged by some of our curriculum advisers to tell some stories about some animals that may be scary. None of them are bad, of course, just a little scary."

So Diego rescues an anaconda, which is an enormous snake. At one point, said Gifford, while hiking through the jungle with the snake, Diego puts it around his neck. In another installment, Diego and Alicia rescue a crocodile abandoned in a city pond.

All of the animals talk and they're all given names, which helps to, um, humanize them. And Gifford credits the animators for their innate ability to render traditionally threatening species with sensitivity while staying true to their nature. The animators work with scientists at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park who

Diego's rainforest adventures are grounded in reality.

research and authenticate all of the animals' traits and characteristics.

The same painstaking preparation is applied to the series as a whole. Nickelodeon works with child development experts. "Dora" and "Diego" are vetted by the littlest critics. Each episode, said Johnson, is tested three times during its production.

"Nickelodeon puts kids first," she said. "We really think about how they watch TV, what makes them laugh, what interests them."

Nickelodeon test-screens all of its shows with children.

"We learn an awful lot from our viewers," said Johnson. "They're really our most important asset. If they're not interested, they turn away immediately."

During one recent test screening for a series not on Nickelodeon's air that shall remain nameless, said Johnson, "every single child except one left the room and he was asleep."

Parents probably won't find their children sleeping through "Dora" and "Diego."

Instead, they're more likely to be talking to the TV. ■



"Go, Diego, Go!" premieres Tuesday at 8 p.m. on Nickelodeon.

The Washington Post

TVWeek

CHESAPEAKE EDITION

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Kid Stuff

*Ninja-Wannabes,
Animal Rescuers and
Magical Apprentices
Are Among This Fall's
New Characters.*

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By JUDITH S. GILLIES
Washington Post Staff Writer

Islands and exotic lands figure big among the new shows for kids this fall. Action-adventure anime from Japan, preschool lessons set by the sea in Scotland and a drama of survival on a remote are just a few of the offerings.

Here's a sampling of what's new for tots to teenagers:

"Go, Diego, Go!"

Airs: Weekdays at 11 a.m. on Nickelodeon beginning Wednesday. A prime-time special airs Tuesday at 8 p.m.
Ages: 2 to 5

Dora the Explorer's 8-year-old cousin is the star of this new animated action-adventure series. Diego's trilingual — speaking English, Spanish and talking to animals, too.

A call for help at an animal rescue center in the rain forest kicks off each episode. Diego aims to assist with a scientific approach that teaches preschoolers about animals as well as problem-solving skills.

Actress Rosie Perez lends her voice to the educational series as "Click," a high-tech camera with a knack for locating lost animals.

"Magical DoReMi"

Airs: Saturdays at 8 a.m. on Fox, starting this week
Ages: 3 to 7

"Magical DoReMi" is action-adventure anime aimed at girls.

The DoReMi trio — Dorie, Reanne and Mirabelle — are third-graders, best friends and apprentices striving to be full-fledged, good witches. Using music and magic, they learn to cast spells and learn about friendship, courage and love.

The show, a hit in Japan, is new to U.S. audiences. It's part of Fox's "4 Kids TV" Saturday block, which includes two other new series:

■ "Bratz" at 9 a.m. Four friends produce their own teenage magazine, based on their experiences in high school and travels around the world; for girls 6 to 11.

■ "G.I. Joe Sigma 6" at 10 a.m. A team of heroes — Duke, Snake Eyes, Heavy Duty, Scarlet, Long Range and Tunnel Rat — face villains in this action-fantasy geared to boys 6 to 11.

"Naruto"

Airs: Saturdays at 9 p.m. on Cartoon Network, starting this week
Ages: 9 to 14

Twelve-year-old Naruto is a smart kid who constantly gets into trouble. He's an orphan striving to become a master ninja, but first he must learn to control a dangerous demon within.

For Kids: New Shows For Fall



Ed has lots of ways to get around in "Get Ed."

DISNEY

fearless 11-year-old boy, with a genetically engineered dog, is always willing to be the guinea pig in his twin sisters' scientific experiments.

"Get Ed"

Airs: Mondays and Fridays at 7:30 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays at 4 p.m. on Toon Disney, starting Sept. 19; and Saturday and Sundays at 9 a.m. on ABC Family, starting Sept. 24
Ages: 6 to 11

Genetically engineered Ed and his four friends are couriers for Dojo Deliveries in a futuristic world. Their aim: To deliver mysterious packages while dodging obstacles set up by evil Mr. Bedlam.

Ed, a guileless teenager, is trying to discover who he is — and what special powers he has — while working and playing with his friends.

The anime adventure series has aired in Japan for a few years. "Naruto" debuts in English on U.S. television as part of Cartoon Network's "Toonami" action-adventure block on Saturdays.



"JOHNNY TEST," WARNER BROTHERS ANIMATION
A fearless boy stars in "Johnny Test"; a friendly Miss Hoolie in "Balamory."

"Loonatics Unleashed"

Airs: Saturdays at 9 a.m. on WB, starting Sept. 17
Ages: 6 to 11

Six animated superheroes — descendants of Looney Tunes characters — work together to save the city-planet of Acmetropolis in 2772.

The great-great-great-whatever grandsons and daughters of Bugs Bunny, Lola Bunny, Daffy Duck, Tasmanian Devil, Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote are on the team, each with unique abilities. But the same incident that gave them their super powers gave villains special strengths as well — setting the stage for battles to control the world.

Also new to the "Kids' WB!" Saturday block are:

■ "Coconut Fred's Fruit Salad Island" at 8:30 a.m. An eternal optimist and his friends are at the center of this animated comedy.

■ "Johnny Test" at 10:30 a.m. Johnny, a



BBC

"Balamory"

Airs: Weekdays at 9:30 a.m. on Discovery Kids Channel, starting Sept. 26; weekdays at 6 a.m. on TLC as of Oct. 3
Ages: 2 to 6

This BBC import's style may remind some parents of the late Fred Rogers show, but this neighborhood is a Scottish village by the sea.

Miss Hoolie leads a live-action cast and preschoolers in songs, dances and activities such as feeding newborn lambs and getting a haircut.

"Flight 29 Down"

Airs: Saturdays at 12:30 p.m. on NBC, starting Oct. 1
Ages: 8 to 14

When a plane is forced to land on a remote beach in Micronesia, the students who were on their way to a camping trip are — dare we say — "lost."

The pilot takes three of the kids to explore the island and seek help, while seven others must learn survival skills and how to get along.

Created by Stan Rogow, executive producer of "Darcy's Wild Life" and "Lizzie McGuire," the show is filmed in Hawaii.