

In the room with writer Butch Hartman

Emily Claire Afan



The second annual [Toronto Screenwriting Conference](#) runs at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management April 9th & 10th.

All this week, *Playback* will feature Q&As with some of the all-star cast of writers leading the Conference, including writer/producer/director Pen Densham (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*), animation writer Butch Hartman (*The Fairly Oddparents*), gaming scribe Kevin Shortt (*Avatar: The Game*), comedy writer/executive producer Christine Zander (*Nurse Jackie*) and Leonard Dick (*The Good Wife*, *Lost*, *House*).

A Q&A with Butch Hartman

In a career that spans two decades, Butch Hartman is best known as the creator and executive producer of Nickelodeon's mega hit animated series *The Fairly Oddparents*, which is one of the longest running series on Nickelodeon at nine seasons and more than 120 episodes.

In addition, he has created other animated hit series for Nickelodeon including *Danny Phantom* and *T.U.F.F. PUPPY*. His other writing credits include *Johnny Bravo* and *Dexter's Laboratory*. Hartman will be leading a session on Writing for Animation moderated by Gemini Award-winning animation writer Rob Pincombe.

What was your first writing project for which you were both credited and paid?

It was either a *Johnny Bravo* episode called 'Super Duped' where Johnny Bravo pretends to be a super hero, or the first short cartoon I ever created and directed called *Pfish and Chip*.

What is the one piece of advice would you give to screenwriters today?

Two pieces of advice, actually. One: Always have more than one idea. Why? Because you never know if your first idea will get made or not.

Two: When you sell a screenplay do NOT quit your day job. Why? Because it will take you forever to get paid, and you have no idea if your idea will get made or not. And the great Steve Oedekerk gave me some very good advice: if the script is great, the movie will get made. Why? Because great actors will like it and want to make it and actors are what get movies made.

Who is your favourite character and why?

I would probably have to say the character of Cosmo from *The Fairly Oddparents* and Dudley Puppy from *Tuff Puppy*. Each is a certified moron and morons are far more fun to write for, especially for comedy.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career?

Wanting to do too many things at once. Fortunately I'm blessed with the ability to multi-task and come up with a lot of fun ideas. (At least ones that I think are fun). The problem is that there just aren't enough hours in the day.

Is there a screenwriter you admire – who and why?

The great William Goldman, Robert Towne, David Mamet, Buck Henry and Warren Beatty (strictly because of *Heaven can Wait*), Aaron Sorkin (*Social Network* made me a fan for life) and Steve Oedekerk. He's a personal friend and has taught me more about screenwriting (for movies) than I could have possibly learned on my own.

Read more: <http://playbackonline.ca/2011/04/05/in-the-room-with-writer-butch-hartman/#ixzz1Il5vfpD7>