

## **CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS: THE FIRST EPIC MOVIE (2017)**

- Released by June 2nd, 2017
- 1 hour 29 minutes
- \$38,000,000 (estimated) budget
- David Soren directed
- Rated PG for mild rude humor throughout
- Atlas Entertainment, Cruel & Unusual Films, DC Entertainment
- Produced by Rob Letterman, Dav Pilkey,

## **QUICK THOUGHTS:**

- Phil Svitek
- Marisa Serafini
- Demetri Panos

## **DEVELOPMENT**

- The first book of Dav Pilkey's 12 book series was published in 1997. The series has been translated into 20 languages and has sold 80 million books worldwide
- DreamWorks' interest in the film rights to the *Captain Underpants* series date back to when the first installment was published in 1997, but Dav Pilkey did not want to sell them
  - Early attempts included video games, a live-action feature, an animated series, and a live-action series
  - To persuade him, DreamWorks gave Pilkey a tour around the studio with everyone wearing underpants over their actual pants, which made him laugh
- In October 2011, his representatives indicated Pilkey was ready, and DreamWorks Animation won the rights in an auction
- In October 2013, Rob Letterman was announced as director and Nicholas Stoller as scriptwriter
- It would be the second film to involve Letterman and Stoller working together; the first was *Gulliver's Travels*
- Following DreamWorks Animation's reorganization in early 2015, the studio announced that the film would be produced outside of the studio's pipeline at a significantly lower cost
- It was instead animated at Mikros Image in Montreal, Canada, and therefore looks differently than most of DWA's films
- A month later, Letterman left the project but came back as an executive producer, and David Soren, the director of *Turbo*, entered talks to direct the film
- During production, Pilkey got to work closely with Soren. He was relieved that Soren was directing since he was a fan of *Turbo*. In an interview with *Los Angeles Times*, Pilkey said: "Once I met David, it was like a huge load fell off my back; I was like, 'I don't even have to think about this anymore. Just send me a couple of tickets to the premiere.'"
- Commenting back, Soren said, "In a way, the controversy over the books ended up being liberating for the film. Normally on an animated movie you're trying to appeal to every possible demographic, and often that results in your content being watered down a little bit. Obviously we hope we get as wide of an audience as possible. But it's likely that if people have issues with the books they may have issues with the movie too, and we didn't feel like we needed to waste a lot of time trying to rope them in. It allowed us to make the purest version of the movie."
- Some believe that the best compliment an author or property creator can give a movie's director and producers is to leave them in complete charge of the adapted material. That's exactly what *Captain Underpants* creator Dav Pilkey chose to do.
- "Dav came around the studio a couple of times," recalls producer Mireille Soria. "He has a very interesting perspective. He doesn't really like movies that are exact interpretations of books, word by word, and don't bring anything new to the mix. He had a really good connection with our director, David Soren. They both see the world in the same way. They felt like kindred spirits. Pilkey felt confident leaving the movie in David Soren's hands." Soren says he and Pilkey connected quite quickly because they had the same artistic influences when they were young. "We both taught ourselves how to draw by studying the work of [*Peanuts* creator] Charles M.

Schulz," notes the director. "We both loved *The Little Rascals*. We shared many of the same influences. I think that's a big reason why the tone of the books and the movie feel in sync with each other. Dav seemed very appreciative, even relieved, that we understood that the friendship and chemistry between George and Harold was central to the success of the series.

- Lower production costs was announced by then-CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg in January 2015 as part of a corporate restructuring plan that included reducing the studio's head count by roughly 500, slashing its feature slate to two films per year and outsourcing work on *Captain Underpants* so that it could "be produced at a significantly lower cost." Mireille Soria, who produced *Captain Underpants* with Mark Swift, says the decision to make the film at the Montreal facility of Mikros Animation, which is headquartered in Paris, was influenced by cost control as well as a capacity crunch at DreamWorks' own animation studio.

#### **WRITING** (Nicholas Stoller- Screenplay, Dav Pilkey- Epic Novels)

- The title for the film says The First Epic Movie despite no sequel having yet been announced. This is because the books had the subtitles "The First, Second, Third, etc. epic novel" under the titles
- Nicholas Stoller is an English-American screenwriter and director. He is known best for directing the 2008 comedy *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, and writing/directing its 2010 spin-off/sequel, *Get Him to the Greek*. He also wrote *The Muppets* and directed the Seth Rogen comedy, *Neighbors*. He is a frequent creative partner of Jason Segel
- Pilkey was born in North Ridgeville, Ohio, to Barbara and David Pilkey, Sr. He has one older sister. In elementary school in North Ridgeville, Ohio, he was diagnosed with ADHD and dyslexia. Pilkey was frequently reprimanded for his behavior in class and thus usually sat at a desk in the school hallway, where he created the *Captain Underpants* character. Pilkey entered his first book, *World War Won*, in a national competition for student authors and won in his age category. The book's publication in 1987 was included in the award. The atypical spelling of his first name came from a period of employment in a Pizza Hut, when the "e" was omitted from his nametag. Even though it is spelled D-A-V, it is pronounced "Dave"
- Combines elements of first four books
- Locked in script and didn't tinker with it after

#### **STORY/PLOT:**

- Friendship
- Similarities to other movies
- Sense of humor
- Relatability
- Innocences of characters
- Captain Underpants
- Villain
- Melvin the nemesis

#### **CAST:**

##### **KEVIN HART** (George) **PIC 01**

- He is Harold's best friend and writes stories for the comics he and Harold make
- "I really wanted to do this movie because *Captain Underpants* is such a great franchise, and it's also something my kids could really identify with. Both my son and daughter thought that I was the coolest person in the world for doing it."
- Hart believes that one of the most powerful aspects of the movie is the way it celebrates creativity. "Kids love to put their imagination to use and be creative. George and Harold are two kids that love to draw and to tell stories. Their stories become reality in their world. I love the fact that the movie doesn't frown upon their creativity."

### THOMAS MIDDLEDITCH (Harold) **PIC 02**

- He is George's best friend and illustrates for the comics he and George make
- Middleditch is known best known for his role in *Silicon Valley*, but he has lent his voice to the comedy cartoon *Henchmen*
- Among the major challenges of delivering CG versions of Pilkey's illustrations was creating Harold's hair—which is usually drawn as this big yellow cloud-like squiggle in the books. "We needed to bring the looseness and cartoony feel that the hair has in the original illustrations, and that took us a lot of research and time to achieve," says producer Mark Swift. "I love how the hair turned out in the end. It really captures the fluffy mess. You can cheat the details in 2D, but in CG, it's a lot more complicated."
  - The design team knew from the very beginning that they needed to come up with a unique and creative way to deliver the characters' hair in the movie. "We were aware of the fact that we couldn't do realistic hair," notes character designer Rune Bennicke. "We tried it in the beginning, and it wasn't pretty. We also knew that we couldn't opt for the helmet-hair approach, like some other recent CG animated movies had done. It had to be something in between, and I think we found an interesting middle ground. It keeps the design and actually represents cartoony hair in a believable way."
  - "We used the same workflow we used for another recent movie we did—*Asterix and Obelix: Mansion of the Gods*," explains CG supervisor Guillaume Dufief. "There was a lot of back and forth about the look of the hair, but in the end, we were very happy with the way the CG version echoed the original drawings. It was cartoony, less realistic, and definitely not easy to do!"

### ED HELMS (Captain Underpants/Mr. Krupp) **PIC 03**

- The principal of Jerome Horwitz Elementary School, who is hypnotized into becoming the superhero created by George and Harold
- The *Hangover* movies, *We're the Millers*, *Vacation*
- The actor says the movie gave him a great opportunity to work with Kevin Hart and some of his other comedy friends. "Kevin and I used to do stand-up comedy in New York back in the '90s, and I'm also good friends with Thomas Middleditch and Nick Kroll. So the making this movie felt like coming home, working with these talented people that I know, like and respect."
- Helms, who has participated in animated movies such as *The Lorax* before, says he loved playing the characters in CAPTAIN UNDERPANTS. "With animation, you walk into a studio and jump into the fun part. You're performing, and it's broad, heightened and wacky. It's just fun every time. It's a joy to come to work."
- He faced the special challenge of coming up with two different vocal variations for Principal Krupp and Captain Underpants. "It was very important to find distinct voices for the two so that it was clear which character was on the screen at any given time, because sometimes Principal Krupp is wearing Captain's underpants, and sometimes Captain Underpants is dressed like Krupp," Helms explains. "But because they're both coming out of me, you also connect them as the same person. Principal Krupp was just a more angry and gravelly voice, with lots of rage and frustration, while the Captain is just broad and delighted with the whole world."

### NICK KROLL (Professor Poopypants) **PIC 04**

- Villain Professor Poopypants doesn't make his appearance until the fourth book
- A scientist angered after being constantly made fun of and not taken seriously for his name who decides to take over the world and destroy Captain Underpants
- In the novel, Professor Poopypants' real name is Pippy Pee-Pee Poopypants. This is changed in the film to the even ruder Pee-Pee Diarrheastein Poopypants
- Kroll is best known for his roles in *Little Fockers*, *Parks and Recreation* and *The Kroll Show* and as a voice in the raunchy animated movie *Sausage Party*

### JORDAN PEELE (Melvin) **PIC 05**

- George and Harold's nemesis who is a child prodigy inventor; he becomes Prof. Poopypants'

- unwitting sidekick
- Peele is best known for his role in *Key and Peele* and also wrote and directed *Get Out*. He also lent his voice to the animated film *Storks* and the series *Bob's Burgers*

#### **KRISTEN SCHAAL** (Edith) **PIC 06**

- The shy school lunch lady and the love interest of Mr. Krupp
- Schaal has voiced such animated characters as Trixie in *Toy Story 3*, the witches in *Shrek Forever After* and Mabel Pines in *Gravity Falls*

#### **SYMBOLISM/TRIVIA/EASTER EGGS**

- This is the last DreamWorks Animation film distributed by 20th Century Fox before Universal Pictures will take over distribution in 2019 with *How to Train Your Dragon 3*
- Released on the year of the book series' 20th anniversary
- This is the sixth Dreamworks movie to be adapted from a children's book, the first five being *Shrek*, *How to Train Your Dragon*, *Rise of the Guardians*, *Home*, and *The Boss Baby*
- In the first book, one of the pranks that George and Harold pull is having the PA system in the school playing "Weird Al" for 6 hours. The film's theme song is sung by none other than "Weird Al"
- During the Flip-O-Rama segment, as Harold steps on the book pages, his footprints leave marks that closely resemble the guide areas in the actual *Captain Underpants* books, in which the reader places their hands in order to properly flip through the pages

#### **DIRECTING** (David Soren)

- The CG-animated movie is directed by David Soren, a longtime DreamWorks veteran, who directed the studio's inventive 2013 feature *Turbo* and two *Madagascar* shorts, *Merry Madagascar*
- Soren has great memories of the first time he came across Pilkey's books. "It was twenty years ago, I had just moved to Los Angeles, and I discovered the first *Captain Underpants* book at a bookstore. I picked it up and read half of it right there in the aisle," he recalls. "Years later, once I had kids of my own, we read it again together, then the next book, and the next, until we'd devoured the entire series"
- Soren came onboard after original director Rob Letterman started the live-action feature *Goosebumps*. When Soren joined the project, he had a few script drafts from screenwriter Nicholas Stoller, and art and character design already were in place.
- David Soren recalls, "We would constantly go back and look at those tests whenever we needed to show the actors or a new crew member what we were striving for. They also laid the groundwork for our animation style in general"
- David Soren is a director, writer, and actor known for *Captain Underpants* (2017), *Turbo* (2013), and *Merry Madagascar* (2009). A DreamWorks veteran of twenty years, Soren has worked as a story artist on "The Road to El Dorado," "Chicken Run" and "Shrek." He then served as the head of story on the hit animated comedy, "Shark Tale." Soren joined DreamWorks after graduating from Sheridan College, located near his hometown of Toronto, Canada
- When Soren joined the project, he had a few script drafts from screenwriter Nicholas Stoller, and art and character design already were in place. The film was finished two years later, which is quick by major animation studio standards

#### **PRODUCTION/CINEMATOGRAPHY** ()

- "Story, art, layout and editorial were all handled at DWA in Glendale with a small crew, and then Mikros did all the animation, lighting, effects — basically everything on the CG side," explains Soren.
- With *Captain Underpants* DreamWorks Animation took the unusual step of animating the feature film in partnership with an outside studio, Mikros Image Studio. "We had a script and concepts that the studio was in love with," said Swift, "and we all were eager to move forward immediately." At the time DreamWorks Animation was already deep into production on both *Trolls* and *The*

*Boss Baby*, which would have delayed the film's start by a few years, but Swift and the rest of the filmmaking team were able to convince the studio to consider an outside company for portions of the production provided they could duplicate the quality of work DreamWorks would provide. □ "We searched for a studio that shared our artistic sensibility," says Swift. "I came across the amazing work that Mikros Image Studio had done in recent years. I was very impressed with the work they had done on *Asterix and Obelix: Mansion of the Gods* (2014) and knew that they were working on *The Little Prince* (2015). The quality of their animation really drew me to them."

- DreamWorks Animation did all of the front end work on the film including development, the script, the storyboards
- There was a straightforward division of labor (and lots of video conferencing) between DreamWorks Animation and Mikros, says director David Soren, who also helmed *Turbo* for DreamWorks Animation. "Story, art, layout and editorial were all handled at DWA in Glendale with a small crew, and then Mikros did all the animation, lighting, effects — basically everything on the CG side," explains Soren.
- The film's production designer Nate Wragg, a longtime DreamWorks veteran, whose credits include *Puss in Boots*, *The Croods*, *Mr. Peabody & Sherman* and *Home*, says when he first joined the project in 2012 he immersed himself in Pilkey's world to make sure he clearly understood the tone of the Captain Underpants universe. "The big challenge was that the books' drawings are quite simple," he notes. "They are absolutely charming and appealing in their own way, so we had to figure out how to translate them to a different medium. At first, we looked at the drawings and noticed that they're loosely drawn and fun, but then we really came to understand the language—this unique style that is consistent in all the books."
- Wragg was also very keen on preserving Pilkey's particular brand of humor in the design. "One of the things that stood out to me when I read the books is just how silly the world is," he points out. "Things like cars, buildings, and store names are always silly and whimsical in the way they are drawn and portrayed in the books. Once we started using that logic as a base for all our designs, we really began to find the style of the world for our CG adaptation."
- After taking a complete crash course in Pilkey's universe and experimenting with different storylines and visuals, the DreamWorks team zeroed in on the best possible way to bring the characters to life.
- Soren also incorporated non-CG mixed media for some sequences told from the point of view of 9-year-olds. "To get in their headspace, we went to the comic book style to make it look like fourth graders made the animation. We also used sock puppets and combined 2D and 3D to make a version of their flip-book sketches."
- Production designer Nate Wragg recalls a particular illustration in the Pilkey's book that really helped him and his team get the right visual style for the movie. "For me, that it was an illustration of Principal Krupp, looking angry as can be sitting at his desk," he says. "What struck me as important about this image was that it has a memorable character in an important location—united by the same tone. If you look closely at the illustration, we don't see a lot of detail as it was pretty stripped down and simple, but it was impactful. We wanted to keep things simple, maintain the iconic details like the pencil and penholder sitting on top of Krupp's desk. We looked at his desk as more of a symbol of his disciplinary captain's chair and treated the space as more of an interrogation room. This was something that we would build on the illustration as we designed the set, all while staying true to the tone of the illustration and the tone the story was telling."
- For the artistic team, one of the main challenges of the movie was finding just the right CG look that would retain the charm and whimsy of Dav Pilkey's original illustrations while blowing them up for the big screen. To help make that translation as smooth as possible, the filmmakers tapped Rune Bennicke, a veteran character designer and animator. Bennicke, whose impressive credits include *Mulan*, *The Tigger Movie*, *Lilo & Stitch*, *Asterix and the Vikings* and *Kung Fu Panda 3*, delivered some astonishing early 2D animation tests that defined the tone of the characters right out of the gate

- One clear objective was to cut down the level of detail in the designs. “When I first came on board, I discovered that we needed to look at these characters as symbols, and not worry about actual anatomical details,” explains Bennicke. “They are cartoon characters. They have dot eyes. They don’t need realistic hair.”
- The character designer recalls the very first two animation tests he put together for the project. The first was one of Principal Krupp turning into his alter ego Captain Underpants. The second one, which involved Professor Poopypants, turned out to be a revelation
- “It all happened very easily,” says Bennicke. “The Professor asks the class what they think is the most exciting thing about robots, and Melvin, the teacher’s pet, says it’s the mathematics behind robots. The Professor gets so excited that he floats in the air, and as soon as he finishes talking, he comes back down and lands. It’s a very odd notion, and it defies the laws of physics, but it works in a traditional cartoony world. I was a bit scared to show it to the team, but they loved it and we decided to go for it.
- The creative artists wanted to avoid the rigid rules of the real world and step inside a more cartoony universe and found this very liberating. “A lot of our sets are designed free of hardcore logic,” explains the film’s lead visual development artist Christopher Zibach. “We always try to find the funniest joke for any given object or circumstance. The goal is to find out what makes a prop funny or childish. Of course, the audience still needs to recognize what the object is
- One of the delightful ways *Captain Underpants* stands apart from other CG-animated movies of recent years is in how it utilizes several different visual styles and formats to capture the boys’ adventures. The filmmakers have included various types of animation and even live-action sock puppets, just as the books incorporate comics created by George and Harold and Flip-O-Rama—a traditional “flipbook” method that uses illustrations on consecutive pages
  - “We wanted the comic-book sequences in the movie to be hand-drawn, our version of what a couple of fourth graders would draw,” explains David Soren. “That meant limiting our tools to better resemble those used by a child. Using a cruder, limited animation style, colored with markers or pencil crayons, all composited in a simple way that could have been taught in an Animation 101 class. The idea was to start the comic book sequences using primarily still imagery, and the deeper we go into we go into the actual adventures within the comics, the more immersive and graphic we get.”
  - A more graphic and stylized type of 2D animation was also used for the sequence that shows Professor Poopypants trying to get rid of the boys’ *Huffaguffawchuckleamulus*—the enigmatic part of the brain that appreciates humor! “This section is more fully animated and rendered than the comic-book sequences,” explains Soren. “So we feel like we’re actually inside George and Harold’s brains.” □ The film moves into its Flip-O-Rama sequences when there is a major fight scene or confrontation involved.
  - “There’s a battle scene between the giant Turbo Toilet 2000 and Captain Underpants, so George and Harold rush in and pause the madness,” says the director. “They say, ‘The following sequence has scenes that are so intense, complicated, and expensive, that we can only show it using a technology known as, Flip-O-Rama,’ then Harold’s CG hand comes in and flips the pages back and forth to create the illusion of movement. It couldn’t be more basic. Ironically, animated movies are really just incredibly time consuming, elaborate, expensive Flip-O-Rama’s.”
  - Another visual treat is the use of live-action sock puppet animation, created by acclaimed Los Angeles-based studio Screen Novelties for a scene that illustrates how Harold imagines their lives would be if Principal Krupp manages to put them in separate classes. “The boys are in their treehouse, traumatized by Krupp’s threat. It’s raining outside. Their shoes and socks are lying around. The sock puppet fantasy came organically from the situation they were in. It was the perfect way to visualize their fears. It also opened to door for all the other playful techniques we use in the movie,” notes Soren.

#### **EDITING/VFX (Matt Landon)**

- Primarily a post production manager for movies such as *My Week with Marilyn*, *Spy Kids All the Time in the World*, *Scream 4*, *Piranha 3D*

- The film breaks the fourth wall a LOT

#### **SOUND/MUSIC** (Theodore Shapiro)

- Features a new track from Cold War Kids' Nathan Willett, "Saturday". Lil Yachty's cover of Yello's "Oh Yeah" is also included, as is Adam Lambert's take on Aretha Franklin's "Think".
- The original songs 'Captain Underpants Theme Song' by 'Weird Al' Yankovic and "A Friend In You" by Grammer are also included in the set, written and recorded exclusively for the film.
- Adam Anders, who worked as the film's executive song producer as well as the soundtrack album producer, collaborated with Peer Astrom, who produced the overall soundtrack.
- Yankovic calls him the "waistband warrior" and then sings that it's "wedgie power time," while also calling him "the freaky bald dude in his underwear."
- Director David Soren wanted the music in the film to parallel the whimsical heart of the story and characters. "This is a film that celebrates unbridled creativity and deep friendships," he notes. "I wanted the raw energy and extreme fun in these characters and the film's obvious love of artistic non-conformity to be reflected in the song selections."
- Original song highlights include, the "Captain Underpants Theme Song" performed by "Weird Al" Yankovic, "A Friend Like You" performed by Andy Grammer, which is based on Harold and George's friendship and "Saturday Song" performed by Kevin Hart and Thomas Middleditch, as their characters George and Harold, in the body of the film with a full version of the song performed by Nathan Willett of Cold War Kids featured during the credits
- Notable covers include Adam Lambert performing a high energy toe-tapping version of Aretha Franklin's popular hit, "Think," in addition to a cover of "Hallelujah" performed by Kevin Hart, Thomas Middleditch, and Ed Helms which is featured in the film and on the soundtrack
- The score is composed by Theodore Shapiro, whose credits include *Tropic Thunder*, *Ghostbusters*, *Spy*, and *Trumbo*. Included in the soundtrack is Shapiro's original music, "Comic Book Opening," "Saving the Day," and "The Prank for Good." Beyond composing the score, Shapiro played an integral role in also co-writing some of the original songs in the soundtrack, including the "Captain Underpants Theme Song," where he shares credit with Al Yankovic, Adam Anders and Peer Astrom. Utilizing Shapiro's score, the filmmakers created a fun, dynamic tone that furthered the film's narrative
- A soundtrack for the score of the film is to be released on June 9th. It features 24 pieces of music on it, and an exclusive digital booklet on iTunes. Three of the scores are also available on the soundtrack (those being Comic Book Opening, Saving the Day, & The Prank For Good)
- One segment shows Captain Underpants conducting a children's chorus as they perform Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture with whoopee cushions

#### **PROMOTION**

- In 2014, DreamWorks Animation announced a January 2017 release date
- The film premiered on May 21, 2017 in Los Angeles
- First trailer for the film released the day after the DVD release of Nick Kroll's previous animated film, *Sing*

#### **BOX OFFICE**

- Total Lifetime Grosses (As of June 7): \$30,387,935
- Domestic: \$30,387,935
  - + Foreign: \$882,848
  - = Worldwide: \$31,270,783
- Domestic Summary
  - Opening Weekend: \$23,851,539
  - (#2 rank, 3,434 theaters, \$6,946 average)
  - 79.8% of Total Gross:
- > View All Weekends
  - Widest Release: 3,529 theaters
  - In Release: 6 days / 0.9 weeks

- In North America, the film was released alongside *Wonder Woman*, and was projected to gross around \$20 million from 3,434 theaters in its opening weekend
- It made \$8 million on its first day and \$23.9 million in its opening weekend, finishing second at the box office behind *Wonder Woman* (\$103.3 million)

## RECEPTION

- IMDB: 7.0
- Cinemascore: A
- RT: 85% Tatometer, 70% Audience
- The site's critical consensus reads, "With a tidy plot, clean animation, and humor that fits its source material snugly, *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie* is entertainment that won't drive a wedge between family members."
- Matt Zoller Seitz of RogerEbert.com gave the film three-and-a-half out of four stars. Although Seitz pointed out that the film is hampered by "a rushed, jumbled quality" and has the usual tiresome features for DreamWorks such as "frenetic action scenes... and the use of workhorse pop songs", he emphasized that "[t]hey've approached this compendium of elemental slapstick and unabashed childishness with the reverence that the Coen brothers brought to *No Country for Old Men*."
- "*Captain Underpants* successfully builds for us a strong central cast of characters. George and Harold share a strong bond, and it honestly reminds me of myself with my own best friend from elementary school. They also firmly root the film on the grounds of a school, and we see things on that scale. As a result, even though the principal's threat to put them in separate classrooms may seem tame by most villain standards, it still seems major to us, the audience, because it's a big deal to them. They play lots of pranks, but they ultimately do so because they feel it's for the greater good. They never seem malicious or cruel in their actions, and in fact show a lot of concern for when things get out of hand." -Cornell Daily Sun
- "A common complaint about modern children's movies is that they're overconcerned with being Secretly Adult, packed with ancient cultural references and highfalutin sentimentality that flies right over all the kids' heads so as to more emphatically slap all the parents in the face. Anyone over 4 feet tall emerged from *Inside Out* openly weeping; anyone under 4 feet just thought Anger was funny when he got mad. The result is forlorn dog whistles mixed with oblivious whale song, a family-bonding experience marred by the fact that you're all not really watching the same thing. *Captain Underpants: The First Epic Movie* does not have this problem. No, in this case, the whole fam gets to laugh, as one, at jokes about Uranus." -The Ringer

## SEQUEL/LEGACY

- With Pilkey's 12-book series to draw from for more material, DreamWorks Animation wants, in success, to make additional films based on the characters.
- Captain Underpants and the new push to make cheaper animated movies???
  - Of the top 50 biggest films from the last 15 years, 12 have been animated — nearly a quarter — including billion-dollar blockbusters *Frozen*, *Minions* and *Toy Story 3*
  - Universal's latest studio release, *Sing*, cost \$75 million to produce at the company's Paris-based facility, Illumination Mac Guff
  - The exploration of lower production costs was announced by then-CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg in January 2015 as part of a corporate restructuring plan that included reducing the studio's head count by roughly 500, slashing its feature slate to two films per year and outsourcing work on *Captain Underpants* so that it could "be produced at a significantly lower cost."
  - Mireille Soria, who produced *Captain Underpants* with Mark Swift, says the decision to make the film at the Montreal facility of Mikros Animation, which is headquartered in Paris, was influenced by cost control as well as a capacity crunch at DreamWorks' own animation studio, where *The Boss Baby* and *Trolls* were both underway
  - Mikros, which was acquired by Technicolor in 2015, also worked on Netflix's *The Little Prince* and Gkids' *Mune: Guardian of the Moon*



- Swift adds that the *Captain Underpants* material was the right fit for this model, since it is "a relatively simple movie in the sense that it doesn't have crazy effects, dragons, the sea. We came up with a budget that was appropriate for what we needed."
- "Creatively, it went really well," he notes. "We created a look that would be cost-effective but also suit the material. Dav Pilkey's work is heavily stylized and cartoony in nature. He was very influenced by *Peanuts*, and I was, too." Soren also incorporated non-CG mixed media for some sequences told from the point of view of 9-year-olds. "To get in their headspace, we went to the comic book style to make it look like fourth graders made the animation. We also used sock puppets and combined 2D and 3D to make a version of their flip-book sketches."
- What really helped keep costs low, says Soren, was "a commitment from the studio to lock down the story early and not tinker with it too much." That meant once they entered the more costly animation production process, there were limited changes. By contrast, Pixar is known to tinker with films throughout production and start over if needed