



## 'SUMMER CAMP ISLAND' PROMISES MORE MAGIC FROM CARTOON NETWORK

BY JACKIE SIZEMORE



**IN A WORLD OF REBOOTS AND PREQUELS, CARTOON NETWORK'S NEW ORIGINAL SHOW 'SUMMER CAMP ISLAND' IS A WONDERFULLY ODD SERIES FULL OF ANIMALS, MAGIC AND PARENTS WHO WON'T LISTEN TO THEIR KIDS.**

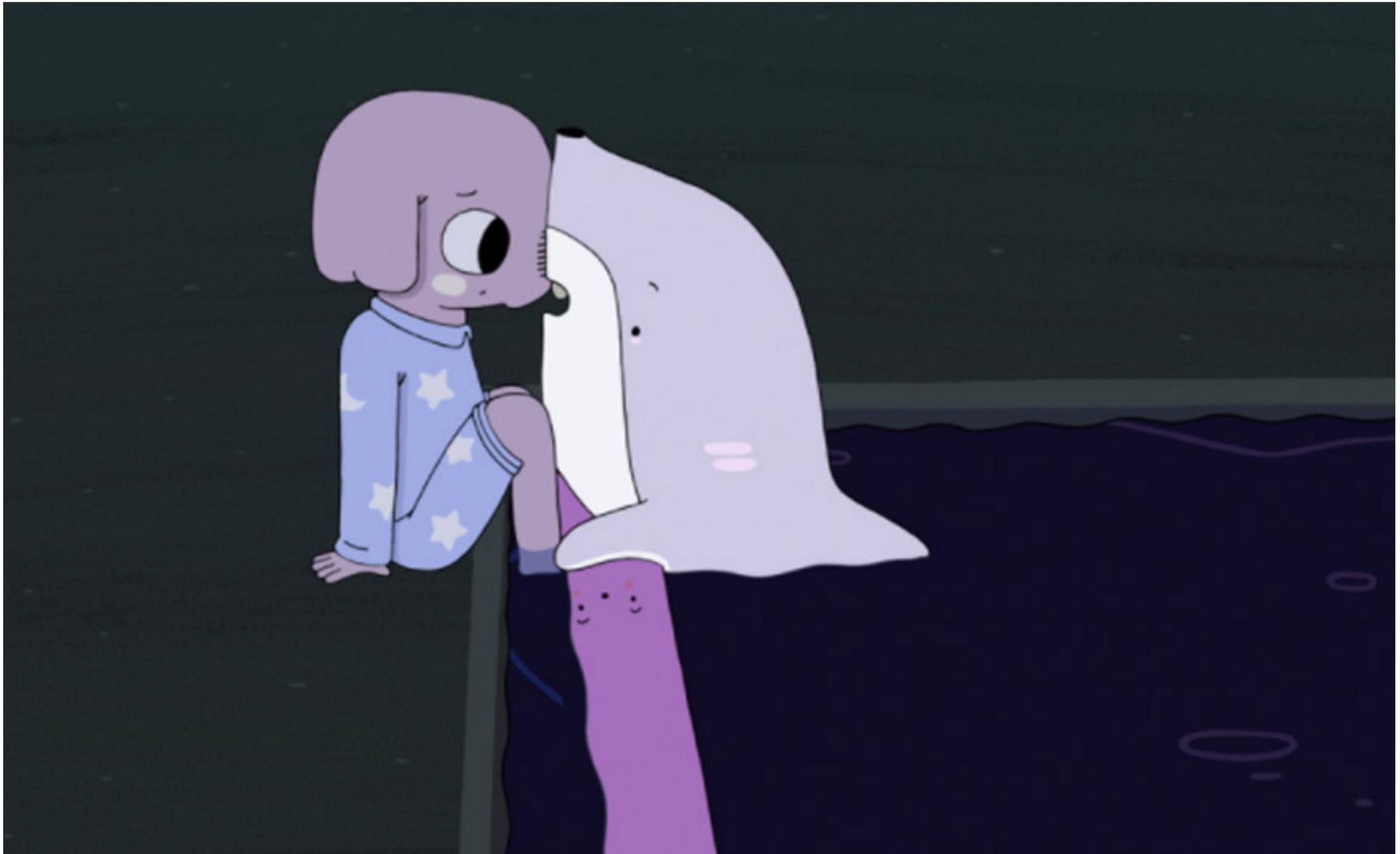
In U.S. pop culture, summer camps are the perfect setting for coming-of-age stories: odd living arrangements, counselor drama, a whole new social hierarchy and, of course, no parents. Just as in *Westworld*, what happens at summer camp stays at summer camp. Where else can children look to teenagers as authorities on everything from hygiene to adulthood? Or, in the case of one of my personal favorites summer camp movies, *Holes* (2003), "camp" may in fact be a conspiracy-filled front for adults searching for something they weren't destined to find. Plus Eartha Kitt.



'HOLES' / WALT DISNEY HOME ENTERTAINMENT

*Summer Camp Island*, which will air on Cartoon Network beginning July 7, 2018, is based on British creator Julia Pott's Cartoon Network short film featured at 2017's Sundance Film Festival. Rob Sorcher, Cartoon Network chief content officer *said*, "We are all wanting to spend summers inside this timeless and magical world captured by Julia's signature warmth and inventiveness." Julia Pott's [Vimeo channel bio](#) puts it this way: "I employ awkward animated characters to act out my inner struggles." This kind of directness is something that can be felt in the dialogue and mood of many of her short films.

Pott earned her MA in animation from the Royal College of Art in 2011 and since then has swooped up multiple festival spots and awards, including being featured among *Variety's* "10 Animators to Watch" in 2017. Her animated short film *Belly* served as her master's thesis and was an official selection of the 2012 Sundance Film Festival. In it, an elephant character named Oscar must go looking for his brother Alex in the belly of a whale, losing a friend in the process. Pott explained that she called it *Belly* "because it's about living with this thing that you've lost in the pit of your stomach for the rest of your life." Though this Oscar looks a bit different from the Oscar in the new Cartoon Network series, there is clearly a resemblance.



CARTOON NETWORK

Julia Pott also worked as a staff writer for *Adventure Time*, where she's credited on several episodes, including the eight-part miniseries *Elements*. Interestingly, the *Summer Camp Island* pilot revolves around a sleepover as an introduction to the two main characters, not unlike *Adventure Time's* first episode "Slumber Party Panic" where the main characters end up fighting off an accidental zombie apocalypse.

Before Cartoon Network, Julia Pott may have been best known for a short film called *My First Crush*, which used real interviews with people about first crushes and love and animated their stories using animals. The odd mix of sincere, introspective stories combined with cute hand-drawn animals captures the whimsical, childlike joy of first loves. It seems that using animals to explore complex feelings and problems has been a common theme throughout Pott's work. In a 2012 interview, she stated, "Whenever I would animate humans, I found the subject matter seemed too black-and-white. The animals became embodiments of our human characteristics in more endearing packages, an easier pill to swallow." In another interview in 2012, it is clear that Pott's passion for animation began at a very early age. "I always drew and I always told people I wanted to be a cartoonist and work for Disney. But I think I mainly just wanted to be Snow White at Disney World."

Beyoncé once wisely told us "Girls run the world," and it seems Cartoon Network has caught on, with Julia Pott being the second woman to have a children's series green-lit by the company, following Rebecca Sugar's wildly successful *Steven Universe*, which has gained notoriety for themes of inclusivity, mental health awareness and emotional sensitivity, most recently inspiring a body-positivity partnership project with Dove. Now *Summer Camp Island* will likely tackle the larger themes of many coming-of-age stories. Between the setting and the wide appreciation for her previous animation projects, *Summer Camp Island* may attract adult viewers who were drawn to *Steven Universe* and *Adventure Time*.



CARTOON NETWORK

The sneak peek pilot of the new show begins with Oscar holding a rotary phone (yes, kids, those still work!) and leaving a voice mail for his mom. "Hey, Mom, things have gotten pretty strange since you dropped me off at camp. Like, our socks turned into abominable snowmen, and horses became unicorns. And the camp counselors are all popular girls with magical powers." In any other world, any one of these developments might be cause for alarm, but this is Cartoon Network, and viewers know to expect the unexpected. As in any good summer camp plot, though, Oscar's mother responds with an oblivious "Sounds great, honey!" and voices concern only about whether 14-year-old Oscar is old enough for overnight camp.

Oscar's voice mail brings to mind *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda's [tweets](#) revealing the frantic letters he sent home from his childhood summer camp begging his parents to come save him. One letter written carefully on lined paper really captures his desperation to get back home to New York City: "The electricity is malfunctioning, the septic tank is rupturing, the insect repellent isn't working, and the insects are biting."



CARTOON NETWORK

The style of *Summer Camp Island* can best be described as cute, and the pastel color palette amps up the “sweetness” factor. Otherwise two-dimensional-looking objects, like a rug on the floor or a blanket stretched across a bed, are marked with short dots and dashes to create the effect of a pattern. Oscar’s dorm room walls are decorated with ironic posters and Polaroid-shaped snapshots. These little details create a wholesome vibe, like middle school doodles in the corner of some class notes.

There are quirky details and plenty of anthropomorphic moments, such as pajamas coming to life despite having agreed to remain silent. “Pajamas!” Oscar scolds. “We talked about this. There’s no dancing at the sleepover.” Each character has tiny dashes of pink on their cheeks, which gives more emotional depth to their two-dimensional faces. The bit of blush on Oscar’s talking pajamas makes their guilty expressions all the more sheepish.

This world full of magic and the unexpected is an intriguing setting for the camp's pre-smart technology. In the opening scene, Oscar uses a rotary phone to dial home, though his mother answers on her cell phone. Oscar's cabin has a portable, presumably battery-powered radio, complete with a long antenna sticking out. In Hedgehog's cabin, she reveals a **Wes Anderson**-esque checklist on a retractable banner hung on her wall. "Whoa, glitter glue!" an impressed Oscar exclaims.

Perhaps these otherwise outdated technologies are a reflection of what summer camp can mean to attendees. At camp, kids and teens are in a world of their own and often one of, at least partially, their own making. They are cut off from their normal rules and limited in how frequently they can contact their families. At the summer camp I attended in Clear Lake, Indiana, campers had to sing tunes in order to retrieve their mail from home. I have yet to find another situation where this skill has come in handy.

As with so many preteens, Oscar and Hedgehog's friendship appears to be in transition somewhere between childish and adult. In the pilot, it becomes clear that Oscar and Hedgehog have a tradition of wearing pajama sets during their annual special sleepover, but Hedgehog is quick to ditch her pink set in exchange for her regular clothes when her new friend Max — as cool as his backward baseball hat — informs them he doesn't wear pajamas.

Oscar's one-way feelings of wanting to be more than friends is sure to stir up trouble as Hedgehog pursues first crushes. But with a whole summer at camp, it's hard to say how things will end up.

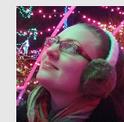
Watch the full short pilot of *Summer Camp Island* below!

Keep up with creator Julia Pott on social media: Facebook [@Julia Pott Illustration](#), Instagram [@juliapott](#) and Twitter [@juliapott](#). ■

Facebook 2722 | Twitter | G+ +1 | Email | More

NEXT ARTICLE

Jackie Sizemore is a writer, educator and entrepreneur whose work has appeared in *GOOD*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Opossum* and more.



0 Comments Crixeo

1 Login ▾

Recommend Share

Sort by Best ▾



Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS ?

Name

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON CRIXEO

### The Circumcision Debate: A Brief History

48 comments • 8 days ago



**DJ** — Compare the two cultures: u.s.a. And Britian, for example. Among the part of the population that is not circumcised for religious reasons, circumcision is vanishingly rare in Britian. In ...

### How 6-Year-Old Ruby Bridges Helped Topple Segregation

1 comment • 5 months ago



**antony chavez** — Brave,.....!

### Why Blockchain Will Change Everything

6 comments • 3 months ago



**Block Gemini** — Block Gemini is a blockchain company based in Dubai.Do check our website out : <https://www.blockgemini.com/>

### The Rise of Pot Churches in the United States

3 comments • 15 days ago



**Brian Kelly** — Fear of Marijuana Legalization Nationwide is unfounded. Not based on any science or fact whatsoever. So please prohibitionists, we beg you to give your scare tactics, ...

[Subscribe](#) [Add Disqus to your site](#)[Add Disqus](#)[Add](#) [Disqus' Privacy Policy](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Privacy](#)

### ARTICLES YOU MAY ALSO LIKE



**'Adventure Time: Islands' Explores Gnarly Concepts**



**'The Magicians' Continues the Magic for Harry Potter Generation**



**'Cuphead' Revives the Magic of 1930s Cartoons**

**SUBSCRIBE FOR UPDATES**



[Contact](#) [Support](#) [Advertise](#) [Contribute](#)

