

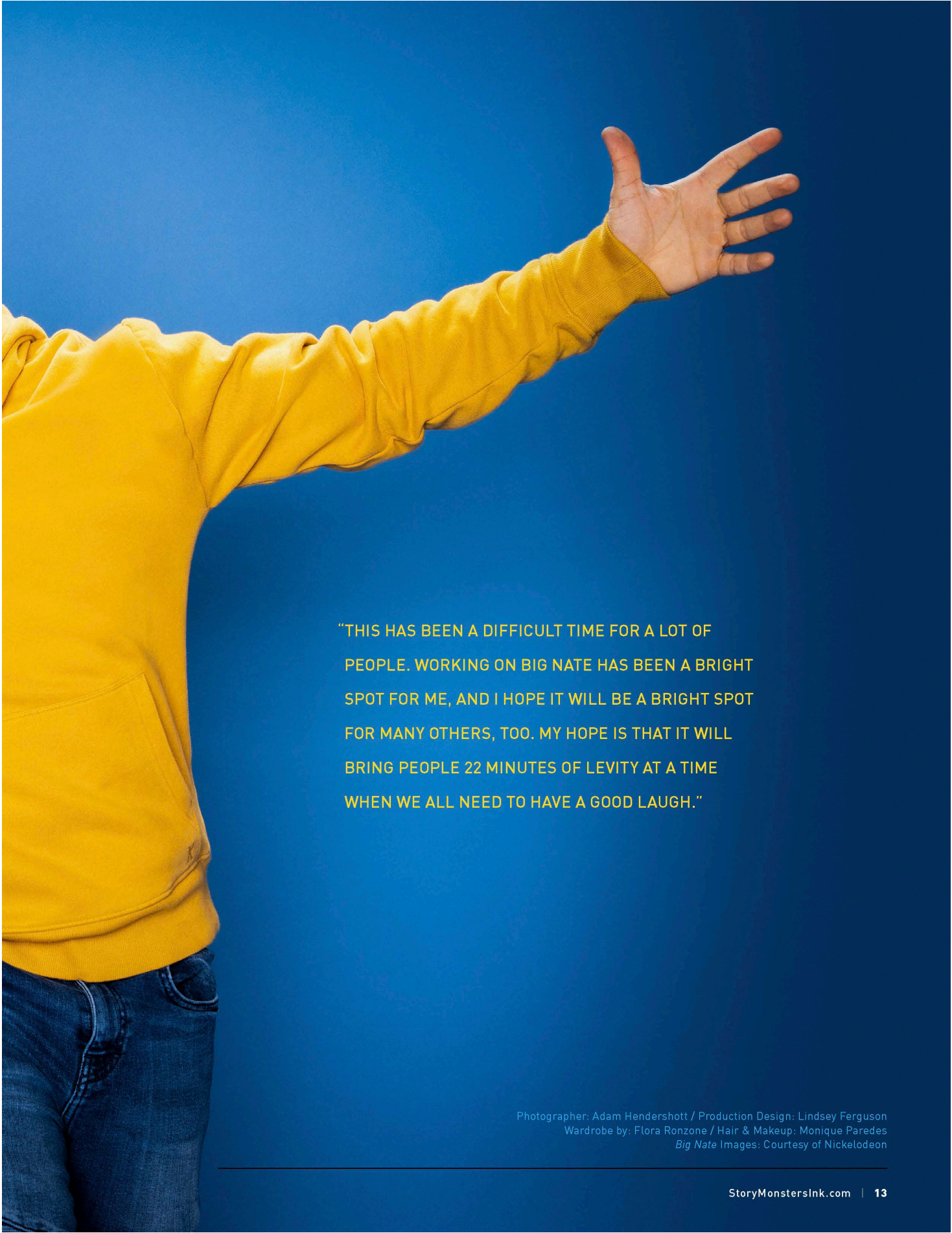
One to Watch:

Ben Giroux

by Melissa Fales

NICKELODEON'S NEW ANIMATED SERIES, *BIG NATE*, premiered February 17 on Paramount +. The show, based on the popular comic strip and book series by Lincoln Peirce, is about the triumphs and trials of a sixth-grade boy who finds escape through drawing cartoons. Actor Ben Giroux voices Nate. "Nate is a character I can totally relate to," says Giroux. "I grew up always doodling something. I wanted to do justice to the source material and take care of *Big Nate*'s existing fan base, but at the same time, elevate the story for a modern audience and invite in a completely new generation of *Big Nate* fans."



A person wearing a bright yellow hoodie and blue jeans is shown from the side, with their right arm extended horizontally towards the right. The background is a solid blue gradient. The text is centered in the lower half of the image.

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SPOT FOR ME, AND I HOPE IT WILL BE A BRIGHT SPOT
FOR MANY OTHERS, TOO. MY HOPE IS THAT IT WILL
BRING PEOPLE 22 MINUTES OF LEVITY AT A TIME
WHEN WE ALL NEED TO HAVE A GOOD LAUGH."

Photographer: Adam Hendershott / Production Design: Lindsey Ferguson
Wardrobe by: Flora Ronzone / Hair & Makeup: Monique Paredes
Big Nate Images: Courtesy of Nickelodeon



Giroux is no stranger to being a part of children's television shows. He's well-known for his role as The Toddler on Nickelodeon's *Henry Danger* and its spin-off, *Danger Force*. He's also appeared in *The Big Show Show* and in episodes of *NCIS*, *House*, *M.D.*, *Will & Grace*, and *Bones*, among other popular TV series. He's an accomplished voiceover actor, with roles in *Batman vs. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *The Loud House*, and *Bunsen is a Beast*, to name a few.

When Giroux isn't acting in TV shows, he's directing, producing, and creating funny videos, such as his *Back to the 90s* and *Back to the 80s* parodies with Jensen Reed. "I started to cut my teeth as director and producer in the early days of YouTube," he says. "I was just starting to figure out my comedic voice. Today, I consider myself a content creator as much as a voice actor and actor. Everything I do is to make people laugh. I think I'm a better director

because I know what it's like to act. And honestly, I find as much joy being behind the camera as in front of it." The comical content Giroux posts on his TikTok channel has led him to amass over four million followers.

Giroux describes the premise of *Big Nate* as a story about "a precocious, mischievous kid and his ragtag misfit group of friends." Not only has Giroux had a solid relationship with Nickelodeon for years, he was friends with a number of his fellow *Big Nate* castmates before starting this project. "This project feels really personal for me," he says. "I feel like all of the actors are playing heightened versions of themselves. The personal friendships I have outside the show are the glue that holds everything together on the screen." Giroux says his off-camera friendship with Arnie Pantoja, who plays Teddy Ortiz has brought a unique spark to their work together on *Big*



Nate. “Teddy is Nate’s co-conspirator and Arnie is my real-life Teddy,” he says. “We’re writing and improv partners in our real life. Our improvisational comedy dynamics are absolutely reflected in the finished product.”

Giroux says working with this cast, which includes Rob Delaney, Carolyn Hennesy, Dove Cameron, and a special guest appearance by Jack Black, has been a treat. “Everyone brings their own talent to the process and it’s a really fun ensemble,” he says. “I give a lot of credit to (executive producer) Mitch Lawson. He really lets us improvise and those magical moments often make it into the show. If you’re watching an episode and something seems off the cuff, that’s because it is.”

Giroux expects the quality of the *Big Nate* animation work to amaze viewers. In *Big Nate*, the animation of Nate’s reality at PS38, which Giroux calls “a grimy, dingy, kind of gross, underfunded public school” is in sharp contrast from that of his doodles which are bright and glossy. “When Nate starts drawing, his doodles come to life as two-dimensional animations within the three-dimensional show,” says Giroux. “It’s mixing multiple styles of animation in the same TV show. It’s very cool.”

The animation supplements a well-written script that will generate laughter from young and old alike. “I’m saying this as objectively as possible,” says Giroux. “*Big Nate* has the funniest scripts I’ve ever had the pleasure of

working with. I grew up watching *Rugrats* and *Ren & Stimpy*. The thing I appreciated the most about those shows was that they had an edge to them. There was a bite to them. And *Big Nate* has that.” Giroux says he thinks multiple generations will enjoy watching *Big Nate* together because they are adult and kid friendly. “When they say *Big Nate* is a family show, they mean it,” he says.

Over the past two years that *Big Nate* has been in the works, the cast has been remotely recording their lines from different locations, thanks to the social distancing restrictions of Covid-19. “We record as an ensemble on Zoom,” says Giroux. “We rip off of each other. We react to each other and we lean on each other. I think it’s a great technical achievement that none of us have ever been recording in the same room and yet it all sounds consistent. And I think it’s amazing to have made it all come together in the midst of a global pandemic.”

Giroux recognizes that all the accommodations required to produce the show during Covid-19 would be for naught if the finished product didn’t entertain the audience. “I think *Big Nate* is really funny,” he says. “This has been a difficult time for a lot of people. Working on *Big Nate* has been a bright spot for me, and I hope it will be a bright spot for many others, too. My hope is that it will bring people 22 minutes of levity at a time when we all need to have a good laugh.”

For more information about Ben Giroux, visit bengiroux.com. ●