

# Santa Barbara SEASONS

CELEBRATING LOCAL LIFE & CULTURE

## LOCAL LOWDOWN

NEW & NOTEWORTHY IN SANTA BARBARA

## Wacky Winter

Finding Picasso with Matthew McAvene



## LOCAL LOWDOWN

## First Person



got to pick one thing, you've got to choose one thing and stick with it. I've always enjoyed jumping from medium to medium, and so now it's kind of like I've rolled it all together into an art ecosystem where they all feed each other and connect with each other."

That "art ecosystem" includes the creation of several different fantastical universes, each revolving around its own characters and legends and each with its own ancillary product lines of costumes, toys, t-shirts, trading cards and art.

Creating characters is not a new venture for

McAvene, who worked with his brother Paul (McAvene Designs) on projects for Jim Henson Company, Disney, Fox and Universal, among others, prior to his move to Santa Barbara in 2002.

But the Macky World characters are even nearer and dearer to his heart because they're all his, with no outside clients to contend with.

"I think being in that industry of creating characters and just kind of falling in love with the whimsy of it inspired me. I was always designing puppets from the moment I started with my brother. We had our first puppet job, which was two characters called Pug and Zero, which were these time travelers that show kids different jobs

that people had. Firemen, teachers, etc. ...They ended up winning an Emmy as a PBS show. I kind of fell in love with puppets early on," he says.

A purple seven-foot-tall creature named "Sherbert" greets visitors at the beach every Sunday at Macky World's Santa Barbara Arts and Crafts Show booth, where a full line of products are available from the Shadowland Explorer adventure saga, including creature hats, cool t-shirts with interchangeable Velcro designs, costumes and Tape Ninja action figures (made from duct tape).

**It's a creative "dream come true," says McAvene, who admits that keeping so many different balls in the air can be challenging. In addition to the Macky World characters, some of whom were recently on exhibit at Elizabeth Gordon Gallery, he also has two collaborative ventures with his 9-year-old son, Ben, a fourth grader at Washington School.**

"Finding Picasso" is a series of webisodes, which feature both Matthew and Ben searching for their inner Picassos from their home design studio, where Ben designs characters and dad helps bring them to life.

Father and son also work together on the "Deep Sea Hermits," a hip-hop musical group with Ben as the lead rapper. Their first video release is "TVs Everywhere," set right at home on the streets of Santa Barbara.

"I'm definitely pretty busy," laughs McAvene. "But there's a will and there's a way...and it's so much fun to see it all come to life."

—LESLIE DINABERG

# The Wacky Macky World of Matthew McAvene

**L**ike many creative folks, Matthew McAvene has always enjoyed mixing it up with a variety of imaginative endeavors.

As a musician, he often graces Santa Barbara's live concert stages accompanied by life-sized dancing puppets, and as an artist, he has designed sets for Animal Liberation Orchestra, Boxtales and other favorites. His latest creative and clever

concoction is Macky World, an umbrella label for a line of character-based products he's been noodling around with for a number of years.

"It's exciting to me because it's the first time that I've been able to conceive an idea that brings all of my creative abilities together, which has been the challenge along the way," says McAvene.

"I've been told repeatedly that you've



Check out McAvene's music video "Brighter" on YouTube, where his music and wacky Macky art worlds merge seamlessly.