

I first met Steve and Bluey in March 1993 in London, England. It was a real treat. I'd admired their work since the mid-1980s when *The Children of No Name Place* and *What's Out There?* were all the rage. In those days, Steve and Bluey worked frequently with their sister Michele and actor Baby Ebby. The quartet had great chemistry and made us all envy the innocence of their carefree youth. Their shows were silly, and their sincere enjoyment was obvious; they'd giggle through entire performances.

Steve and Bluey, affectionately known as "the guys", were instigators of rambunctious fun with an intriguing weirdness about them. Screaming and whooping and howling, Bluey made a name for himself when he introduced his "hyper attacks". At any given moment, he would start convulsing and screaming, then break into opera or dance or a passionate story about something so unrelated to what was going on, cast members were rendered speechless – except Steve. He reacted to Bluey the best; that's why they're such a great team. For all of Bluey's eccentricities, Steve's comparatively stable behavior helps ground his emotional friend, but Steve can be just as goofy; he always said he wasn't afraid to make a fool of himself. That bravery and vulnerability, combined with Bluey's fun-loving madness, created a mix that endeared them to a lot of people. It also offended a few.

Back then, their gags were centered around loving insults and ribbing, which is acceptable when one character is addressing another, but when Steve and Bluey started doing live shows to promote their comedy albums and thought nothing of treating the audience the same way, they were headed for trouble. Unfortunately, not yet having mastered delivery, some remarks bordered on insult. Inevitably, they were burned during a show in 1989 when an innocent admirer they were addressing took serious offense to razzing remarks. The incident deeply shook Steve and Bluey. It upset them that they had hurt someone's feelings. It was obvious they needed to learn control; this was their painful lesson.

At the time we met, Steve and Bluey were on hiatus from their feature length radio play, *The Magic Lift*, but still in turmoil over the costly production and complex creative issues. To keep alive during these times they performed in comedy radio shows, many of which were produced at Fantasy World Studios in London.

They had moved abroad with the production of their comic strip, *Bluey*, when Graphic Syndication, and later Swedish Creative, attempted to market the series in Europe. When the strip was cancelled in early 1992, the guys decided to stay in the UK and return to radio. That same year they made a modest hit with a couple of nondescript radio plays. They wanted *The Magic Lift*, however, to be their masterpiece, an epic that would take them to the top. Unfortunately, they had created a production so big it started capsizing under its own weight, nearly doing in our heroes. The script, written by Bluey, was more advanced than anything they'd attempted in the past. Before *The Magic Lift*, the shows they produced were quite simple: simple structures, easy to produce. But now Steve and Bluey were evolving. They were growing up, and they became tangled in that awkwardness maturation always creates. The story was sophisticated, but the simple approach Steve used (as the feature's director) prevented them from realizing his vision. The frustration was agonizing.



Jim Mardi.

At the time, my production partner Paul Baum and I were making a name for ourselves producing and editing music albums and post production sound for movies. And even though our endeavors earned us an office at Galaxy Film Studios, I was becoming restless and started questioning why I started producing in the first place. Like Steve and Bluey, I was going through an identity crisis of my own.

A friend of mine who also supervised post production sound mixes had asked for my advice on a film he was working on. For a couple of weeks each afternoon I would walk across the lot to assist on the production. One of the supervisors of that film was a man called Hannibal Hathaway. Being an avid listener of radio comedies, the name Hannibal Hathaway meant something to me (someone of the same name produced those fun *Steve & Bluey* radio shows). I asked Hannibal if he was the suspected producer. Indeed he was, to my great delight. When I asked what the next *Steve & Bluey* show was going to be, Hannibal played a cassette tape containing the first 15-minutes of *The Magic Lift*.

To me it sounded every bit as good as any of Steve and Bluey's past work, and I sensed something special even in its unrefined stage. I started asking questions and was astonished to hear Hannibal say he was pulling out of the project, and that Steve and Bluey were considering shelving the production! Then I started thinking...*a radio play like The Magic Lift was exactly the challenge that could restore my enthusiasm for storytelling.*

After a good deal of thought and planning, Paul and I approached Gerry Goldstein, (an executive at Galaxy Film Studios) and asked for a guarantee of the company's support if I could convince Steve to let us co-produce his feature. Galaxy, after all, was a full-service studio and certainly capable of producing an audio production. Gerry agreed it was worth the investment. With his blessing, Paul and I flew to London in March to make the offer. So began a professional partnership and personal friendship I treasure dearly.

In 2000, Steve, Bluey, and friends were asked to submit remembrances of *The Steve & Bluey Comedy Team*, random stories that document the adventures of a hard-working cartoon act pursuing a career in show business. The result unveils a unique look at the life of a cartoon character.

Steve and Bluey are far from typical cartoon characters, and I hope in the following pages you will come to know them as I have. I hope, too, you will receive great pleasure in discovering the world of cartoons from the cartoon's point of view.

Jim Mardi