

Nickelodeon Celebrates 10 Years of Pop Culture Icon SpongeBob SquarePants

July Anniversary Marked by Original One-Hour Documentary on VH1; TV Marathon Featuring 11 Brand-New SpongeBob Premieres; Extensive Digital Content; and Pro-Social Initiative

BURBANK, Calif., June 24 -- On July 17, 1999 SpongeBob SquarePants premiered on Nickelodeon and signaled the birth of a series and character that would become one of the most beloved and popular in television history. To commemorate SpongeBob's 10th anniversary, Nickelodeon is giving its fans the "Ultimate SpongeBob SpongeBash Weekend." Airing from July 17-19, the 50-hour programming event hosted by Patchy the Pirate will include an unprecedented 11 SpongeBob premieres and a top-10 countdown of celebrities' favorite SpongeBob episodes. Leading up to the anniversary, Nickelodeon's sister channel VH1 will premiere Square Roots: The Story of SpongeBob SquarePants, the first original SpongeBob SquarePants TV documentary from critically acclaimed producers Creadon O'Malley (Wordplay, I.O.U.S.A), on Tuesday, July 14 at 9 p.m. (ET/PT).

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090624/NY37465>)

Over the last 10 years, the porous brainchild of creator Steve Hillenburg has grown from a single Saturday morning kids' show to a certified pop culture maverick. Since its launch in July 1999, SpongeBob SquarePants has emerged as a pop culture phenomenon with 70 million viewers monthly, and has been the number-one animated program with Kids 2-11 for more than seven consecutive years. The show is seen in 171 markets in 25 languages and is the most widely distributed property in MTV Networks' history.

Following is a rundown of the Ultimate SpongeBob SpongeBash Weekend (all times ET/PT):

On Tuesday, July 14, at 9 p.m., VH1 will premiere Square Roots: The Story of SpongeBob SquarePants, the first full-length original SpongeBob SquarePants documentary from acclaimed producers Creadon O'Malley. Commissioned by Nickelodeon to commemorate the anniversary of the series' first episode, the documentary chronicles the beloved character's journey to international pop culture icon status and showcases the series' impact on everyone from President Barack Obama, kids across the globe and San Quentin inmates who readily sing its catchy theme song. The one-hour documentary, features an opening song from Avril Lavigne and commentary from creator Steve Hillenburg, cast and crew members, industry experts, fanatics and celebrities like LeBron James, Ricky Gervais and Rosario Dawson.

On Friday, July 17, at 8 p.m., Nickelodeon kicks-off the 50-hour marathon with the premiere of "To SquarePants or Not to SquarePants", which follows SpongeBob after his square pants have shrunk in the dryer. Unable to find a new pair, he tries round pants, but no one seems to recognize him as SpongeBob RoundPants.

The fun continues on Saturday, July 18, at 10 a.m. with the top-10 most memorable SpongeBob episodes as picked by fans on Nick.com. The night will be capped off with The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie at 8 p.m.

On Sunday, July 19, a top-10 countdown of celebrities' favorite episodes will air at 10:00 a.m. The weekend-long marathon culminates with 10 all-new premieres beginning at 7:00 p.m.

Nickelodeon's celebration will continue this fall with the debut of an hour-long TV movie event, "Truth or Square," featuring celebrity guest stars Will Ferrell, Ricky Gervais, Craig Ferguson, and Robin Williams, among others. The special finds SpongeBob, Patrick, Squidward and Mr. Krabs locked inside a giant freezer on the night of the Krusty Krab's anniversary celebration. While trapped, the friends look back on shared memories with shocking reveals.

Digital:

Leading up to the "Ultimate SpongeBob SpongeBash Weekend", fans can enjoy an in-depth SpongeBob experience on SpongeBob.com (<http://spongebob.nick.com/bash>) - the ultimate online destination where fans of all ages around the world can soak up all things SpongeBob with new content including a new SpongeBob online gaming event featuring 10 new games. Beginning the week of June 15, kids can cast their vote on SpongeBob.com (<http://spongebob.nick.com/bash>) for the top ten most memorable SpongeBob episodes, which will air on Nickelodeon during the "Ultimate SpongeBob SpongeBash Weekend".

Tom Kenny's (voice of SpongeBob SquarePants) celebrity playlist of his top 25 favorite SpongeBob SquarePants episodes will be available exclusively for purchase for \$29.99 on iTunes beginning July 13. SpongeBob has also made his debut on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/spongebob>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/happysquared>). SpongeBob on Facebook includes videos, fine art images, fan-posted pics and SpongeBob posters. SpongeBob's best pal, Patrick is also on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Patrick-Star/50403195950>). SpongeBob on Twitter features daily affirmations from the absorbent one such as "bubble blowing is all in the technique."

Pro Social:

SpongeBob is a featured part of Nick's ongoing pro-social campaign, The Big Green Help (<http://www.biggreenhelp.com/#>), which is devoted in part to raising awareness about the oceans and water conservation through SpongeBob and You Save the Big Blue - in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council and the National Wildlife Federation. This summer, Nickelodeon introduces all-new SpongeBob-themed public service on-air announcements that teach kids about the importance of water conservation.

SpongeBob SquarePants is executive produced by creator Stephen Hillenburg, who previously worked as a writer, director and creative director on Nickelodeon's animated series Rocko's Modern Life. Hillenburg graduated from the California Institute of the Arts with a master's degree in experimental animation and studied marine biology and art as an undergraduate.

Paul Tibbitt served as a director and writer on SpongeBob SquarePants for its first three seasons and is currently executive producer. He wrote some of the show's most memorable episodes, such as "Ripped Pants" and "Mermaid Man & Barnacle Boy." Tibbitt was one of the co-writers and storyboard artists on The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie.

SpongeBob SquarePants is a Nicktoons Production and is produced at the Nickelodeon Animation Studios in Burbank, Calif.

Nickelodeon, now in its 30th year, is the number-one entertainment brand for kids. It has built a diverse, global business by putting kids first in everything it does. The company includes television programming and production in the United States and around the world, plus consumer products, online, recreation, books, magazines and feature films. Nickelodeon's U.S. television network is seen in more than 98 million households and has been the number-one-rated basic cable network for 14 consecutive years. For more information or artwork, visit <http://www.nickpress.com>. Nickelodeon and all related titles, characters and logos are trademarks of Viacom Inc. (NYSE: VIA, VIA.B).

SOURCE Nickelodeon

/NOTE TO EDITORS: For downloadable photos and additional information visit: www.nickpress.com/

/CONTACT: Nicole Parker, Nickelodeon/LA, +1-818-736-3613, Nicole.Parker@nick.com; Maria Poulos, Nickelodeon/NY, +1-212-846-6283, Maria.Poulos@nick.com/

/Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20090624/NY37465>
<http://photoarchive.ap.org>

AP PhotoExpress Network: PRN11

PRN Photo Desk, photodesk@prnewswire.com/

/Company News On-Call: <http://www.prnewswire.com/comp/583050.html/>

/Web Site: <http://www.nick.com> /