



managing director of L.A.-based consultancy outfit Radar Cartoons. "She found me at the New York Toy Fair. I saw a plush version of Ruby sitting among a bunch of hip Hello Kitty keychains all distributed by Nakajima. Ruby, who at the time, looked a lot like a Goth version of Betty Boop, spoke to me! She just had to be a cartoon!"

Through Nakajima, Street got in touch with Ruby's creators at Mighty Fine and convinced them to sell her to television. She adds, "I actually think Ruby found Nelvana, not me, because they were the perfect fit for Ruby's animation production. From the moment we started working together, everyone was on the same page! We had the same sensibilities, a common animation language—we all love the style of Mary Blair—and the distinct feeling that Ruby herself is a special friend!"

These optimistic feelings are also shared by the folks at Mighty Fine. "It's the perfect brand extension to Ruby's book titles [*Keys to Happiness* and *Guide to Friendship* and her apparel and accessory collections]," says Justin Watson, Mighty Fine's brand manager. "With Nelvana's production expertise and Mighty Fine's excellence in graphic design, we're confident of a long and successful partnership."

To bring Ruby's inherent charms to animation, Nelvana is relying on a special kind of 3D animation.

"We move the camera around in a 3D environment," explains Nelvana's Hamilton. "It's a very flat, graphic approach to CG animation because we really wanted it to feel like a 2D show. Toon-shading can be done in many different ways. So far, we've been using Alias' Maya for CG and, to get that 2D digital look, we use a version of Toon Boom's Opus, which works better for animated series work and incorporates Maya files."

Although the old Ruby Gloom was fond of saying such things as "Absence makes the heart go fonder—so get lost!" the new animated Ruby will definitely be an upbeat character who will appeal to all kids. As Hamilton sees it, "We accentuate this ironic juxtaposition of the two worlds. She might live in a place called Gloomsville, but in reality, she's the happiest girl in the world. What we're really saying is that you should never judge a book by its cover!" Regardless of that cover, we have a feeling this one's going to be a bestseller! ■

## Tim Burton Will Love Her!

Nelvana animates Ruby Gloom, the quirky Mighty Fine character who loves the Victorian Era.

If her face looks familiar, it's because Ruby Gloom has been the darling of the apparel and accessory industry since L.A.-based design firm Mighty Fine introduced her a few years ago. Now the eccentric little redhead is on her way to toon stardom as Nelvana, Mighty Fine and Radar Cartoons join forces to bring her to vivid animated life.

Aimed at six- to 12-year-olds, the new 26x30 minute series will follow the adventures of Ruby and her pals in Gloomsville. Although the character looks a bit Gothic, she is actually dubbed "the happiest girl in the world," looks at the bright side of things and encourages her friends to celebrate their differences. As Jocelyn Hamilton, Nelvana's VP of creative production explains, "We're widening the brand to appeal to a younger group and we're definitely choosing not to focus on the

Goth side of the original character. In the series, she will continue to dress in black, love the Victorian Age and enjoy old-fashioned things, like writing with a quill."

Ruby is joined in her many adventures by her odd assortment of friends and animals—one-eyed Iris (who always knows only half the story), Doom Kitty, a friendly ghost called Boo Boo, Skullboy, Misery, Scaredy Bat, Mr. Buns and three crows named Edgar, Allan and Poe!



"When I think of Ruby, I think of a little character that just insisted on being animated," says Rita Street, the show's exec producer and

