

# UPFRONT

■ **TELEVISION:** Pelham couple's entry is among top 55 in CBC's ComedyCoup

## 'Loving idiots' among award contenders

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A Pelham couple is hoping their tale of family ties and stupidity will one day be broadcast on television screens across the country.

Blair Wood and his wife Christina Nicolaou have teamed up with a cast of well-known comedians, who include Second City, SCTV and Saturday Night Live among their credits, to create *Idiot Parade, Get Stupid*.

It's one of more than 230 projects entered in CBC's ComedyCoup, an online campaign that asks fans to watch teaser videos and choose their favourite TV shows.

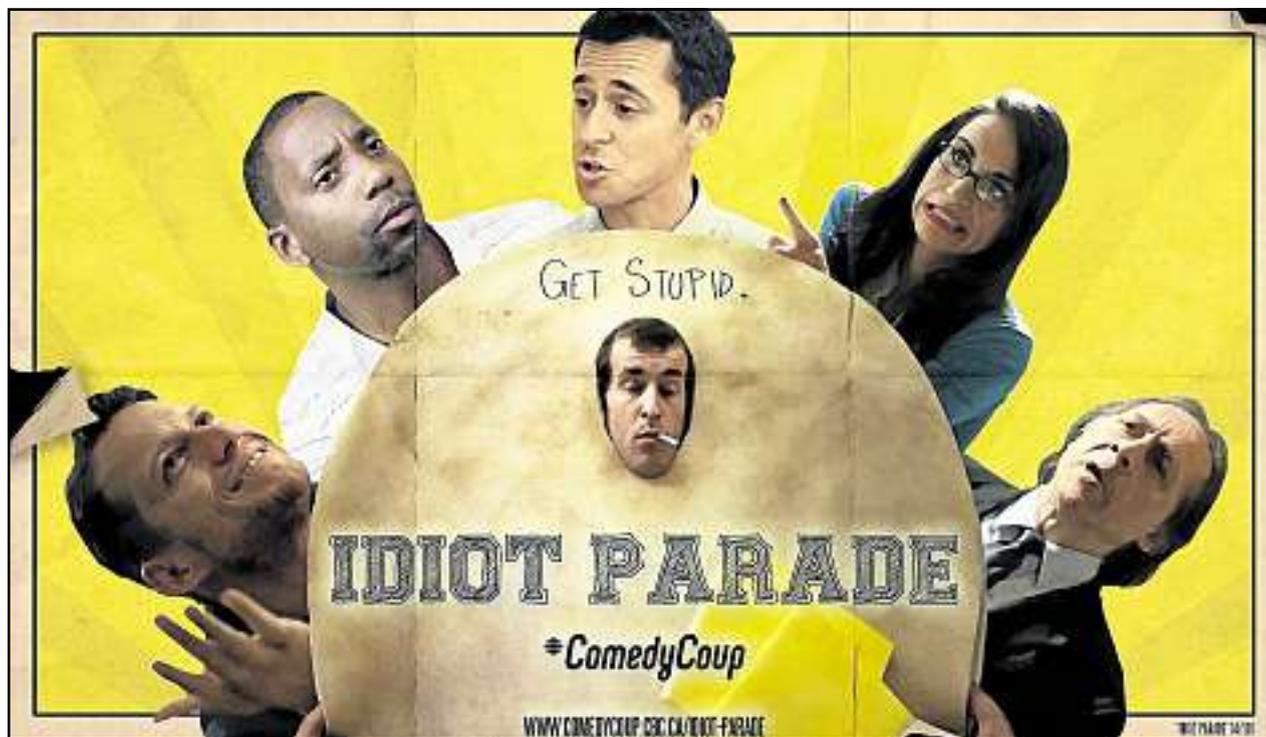
In addition to writing and producing the show, Wood and Nicolaou are also playing the roles of some of the lead characters, along with comedians Nigel Downer, Tony Rosato, Robert Salvador, Guy Bradford and director Saxon deCocq.

Halfway through the 10-week competition, all but 55 projects have been eliminated but *Idiot Parade* continues to be a contender.

Although their show didn't have enough votes to make it into the top 55, Nicolaou said CBC producers liked it enough to keep it in the competition as a "wildcard."

And that was "super encouraging," she added.

But now, Nicolaou is asking the people of her hometown to help support



SUBMITTED IMAGE

A poster promoting a comedy called *Idiot Parade, Get Stupid*, produced by Pelham couple Blair Wood and Christina Nicolaou. From left are Robert Salvador, Nigel Downer, Wood, Nicolaou, Tony Rosato and Guy Bradford (Pancake Man).

their efforts and visit the Comedy Coup website — [comedycoup.cbc.ca/idiot-parade](http://comedycoup.cbc.ca/idiot-parade) — sign up, watch the trailers and vote for *Idiot Parade*.

The next round of voting takes place from Nov. 6 to 9. When it's over, the number of competitors will be cut from 55 to the top 15. Nicolaou and Wood also have an *Idiot Parade* Facebook page they're asking people to visit.

At the end of the competition, up to five projects will be chosen and invited

to negotiate a two-year deal with the broadcaster while the producers of the top program will be given \$500,000 to develop a half-hour show to air on CBC next fall.

The project actually began as a short film, shot at a now defunct sandwich shop in Toronto in the summer of 2013.

"On our first day we shot for 22-hours straight," Wood recalled. "It was awfully grueling."

That film received a nomination for best comedy at

the Yorkton Film Festival in Saskatchewan.

"We were put up against these heavy-hitters," Wood said, referring to the quality of films they were competing against. "It was kind of neat. It was like, 'What are we doing here?'"

The nomination gave them the encouragement they needed to work towards developing a television series based on Wood's concept of "these three goof-balls, two brothers and a sister."

The characters, Ben,

Grace and Dale Belmont, inherit a diner from a grandmother with the stipulation that if they don't continue to run the diner together, their inheritance would instead go to a foundation for horses. Their grandmother, Wood explained, "always thought they were lazy, incompetent and totally stupid, but she wanted to see them make something of themselves."

The catch is, they need to raise \$500 to keep the diner's doors open. While it

doesn't seem like a lot of money, it's more than the characters have.

"The three of us are such losers we don't have five bucks between us," Wood said. "My plan is just to take a homeless guy around the corner, put him in a pancake suit and try and drum up business for the diner."

"It's very slap-sticky," Nicolaou added.

And although the show is entitled *Idiot Parade*, she said the term is used "with love."

"They're like loving idiots," she said. "They're characters that you root for because they're not mean. They just want to do their best, but their best is never really good enough."

*Idiot Parade* is one of a few Niagara-produced entries in the competition. *Fruit Farm*, a comedy based in Niagara-on-the-Lake, has also made it to the top 55.

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