

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100

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## Ninja turtles

### Scriptwriter puts final touches on current movie

By Victor Swanson  
special writer

**C**OWABUNGA, DUDES and Dudettes. The Ninja Turtles are here.

That is, the movie "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" is now showing at a movie theater near you. And it's made possible in part because of a North Farmington High School graduate, Todd W. Langen, who wrote the final script.

"It's about four turtles who live in the sewers of New York City," said Todd Langen during a recent telephone interview from his home in North Hollywood, Calif. "They mutated through some radioactive ooze that was spilled into a sewer one time — from just regular, normal turtles to large human-size turtles. They're each about 15 years old."

"The general plotline of the movie is that it's about the turtles' first foray really into the outside world, the above world of New York City. And what happens in the movie is that they come across their arch-villain for the first time, who is known as the Shredder, something of a Darth Vaderish kind of figure with razor-sharp armor."

In the story, the turtles must rescue their mentor, a mutant rat called Splinter, who has been kidnapped by Shredder.

There are four turtles.

"FIRST OF ALL, there's Leonardo, who wears the blue mask," Langen said. "Each turtle is generally identified by the color of their mask and also the type of weapon which they wield. In Leonardo's case, he wears a blue mask and the weapons, which are known as katana, which

are ninja swords. Leonardo is sort of like the unofficial leader of the group.

"The next turtle would be Donatello, who wears a purple mask, and his weapon is called a bo, which is a ninja staff, about three-or-four-feet long. And Donatello is more of a quiet, introspective intellectual kind of turtle. He's very good at fixing things. He has a tendency to look on life with a little bit of a sense of wonder."

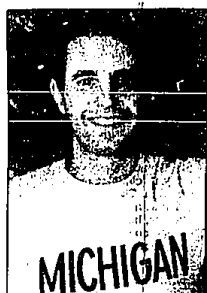
"The third turtle would be a turtle called Michelangelo. And he wears an orange mask, and his weapons are nunchucks. Michelangelo is kind of the wisecracking rock-and-roll surfer turtle. He speaks a little bit like a California Dude."

"Finally, there's Raphael, who wears the red mask, and his weapons are called sai, which are like ninja daggers. And Raphael — I describe — as Mr. Intensity, the turtle with an attitude."

ONE OF THE other good characters in the story is April O'Neil, a television news reporter for Channel Three. (In the syndication cartoon series, it's Channel Six.) Langen described April as "a very strong-willed kind of person, very good reporter. She enjoys having a good time with the turtles."

One of the other bad characters in the movie is Tatsu, who, as described by Langen, is the right-hand man to Shredder and "is sort of bulldogish, sort of a Japanese character."

Tatsu does not appear in the syndicated series, shown on WXON-TV, Channel 20, in the Detroit area. The TV series is less dark than the movie, in which has been made for adults, too.



*'I had never seen the syndicated series. In fact, purposely I avoided that because that's not the type of treatment that we were going for in the movie. What I did was, I did look at some of the early comic books.'*

— Todd Langen

"I had never seen the syndicated series," Langen said. "In fact, purposely I avoided that because that's not the type of treatment that we were going for in the movie. What I did was, I did look at some of the early comic books."

He declared, "I didn't have a lot of time to do research, 'cause they were in a big hurry to get the script out."

Langen became involved with "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" when the producers of the movie needed someone to rewrite the first script, which had been written by Bobby Herbeck.

During the writers' strike of 1988, Langen met people on the picket line, to whom he was able to show some of his sample scripts of shows. One day, he met an executive at

Paramount Studios, who saved one of his sample scripts, and when the producers of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" were looking for someone to rewrite their script, she suggested Langen.

Langen met with the producers and director and got the assignment.

"I BASICALLY came back to my apartment, sat down for two solid weeks and just wrote the screenplay. I was under the gun at the time. They wanted the script in like three weeks. And I just decided to sit down and work on it every waking hour of the day."

The strike of 1988 also was important for Langen in contributing to his working on "The Wonder Years" TV series. He wrote a sample script for the then-new series, and the pro-



Teenage mutant ninja turtles have gone from comics to television to the movie screen.

ducers liked it. He met with them and was able to write a real script for the show.

"I was nominated for an Emmy for that episode, and I just won the WGA (Writers Guild of America) award a week ago for Best Television Episode of 1989 for that episode."

Currently, Langen is the story editor on "The Wonder Years."

"A story editor is basically a writer," Langen explained. "In theory, a story editor has a few more responsibilities, which is to help develop other stories than the ones you yourself write and also to do a little bit of rewriting on other episodes

other than your own."

Langen's first work for television came through his showing of sample scripts for "Family Ties" to writer-producer Michael J. Welthorn, after Welthorn had left that series, when Welthorn was looking for writers to contribute to a series under development, "The Pursuit of Happiness" (which aired during the 1989-88 season and featured Brian Keith and Paul Provenza).

LANGEN, WHO earned a master's degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Michigan.

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## Restaurants get ready for Easter Sunday meals

### Medallion

### Pontchartrain

A New England Easter Buffet Brunch will be served from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Easter Sunday, April 15, at Medallion in West Bloomfield. Grilled chicken breast, country sliced ham with honey glaze, and rainbow trout almonds are some of the menu offerings. Brunch is \$14.95 for adults, \$6.95 for children 6-10; children under 5 are free. For reservations call 651-5540.

Traditional Easter Champagne Brunch at Hotel Pontchartrain in Detroit will be served from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Top of the Pontchartrain Room, Elaine's Restaurant and Versailles East Ballroom. The Pontchartrain bunny will pass out Easter treats. The buffet is \$18.95 for adults, \$9.95 for children under 10. For reservations call 965-0200, ext. 3767 or 3768.

### table talk

#### Townsend Hotel

A gourmet Easter Brunch, with a three-station gourmet buffet, is featured from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Easter Sunday, April 15, at the Townsend

Hotel in Birmingham. Children can meet and have their photographs taken with the Easter Bunny. Brunch is \$28 for adults, \$12.95 for children up to 12. Children under 5 are free. For those who prefer sit-down service, a special menu ranging from

\$16-\$28 will be offered at the hotel's Rugby Grille. Entree selections include choices of beverage, chef-selected appetizers and dessert. For reservations call 642-5999.

A prix fixe menu for the Easter brunch is priced at \$17.95 for adults and \$9.95 for children. Also, there will be a roving Easter Bunny and confetti for the youngsters. For reservations call 567-4400.

#### Rattlesnake Club

#### Radisson Plaza

An Easter celebration will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, April 15, at the Rattlesnake Club in Detroit overlooking the Detroit River.

A Champagne Easter Brunch Buffet with live music and gourmet dining.

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