



TELEVISION

The secret behind why parents — and kids — love 'Bluey'

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In the new season of *Bluey*, Bingo, Bluey and Mum surprise Dad with a birthday gift, breakfast in bed.

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If you have small children at home, you might just be waiting for the new season of *Bluey*, the Australian cartoon about a family of talking dogs named the Heelers. The series has won an International Emmy, attracted millions of viewers around the world, inspired podcasts, an upcoming musical and all kinds of merchandise.

The secret to *Bluey's* success might be its blend of knowing, parental humor, preschool silliness and deep humanity. Parents are known to be just as smitten with the show as kids.

"For a while, people didn't know if it was *Peppa Pig* or *Family Guy*," says Daley Pearson, executive producer of *Bluey* and the co-founder and director of Ludo Studio in Brisbane, Australia, where the show is created.

The situations in each roughly 10-minute episode of *Bluey* are simple: the excitement of keeping a balloon in the air, the fun of putting on a show or a tuckered-out child on a family walk.



The Heeler family is Dad (Bandit), Mum (Chilli), Bluey and Bingo (Bluey's sister). The show's creators loosely modeled the talking dogs after Australian blue heelers.

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Six-year-old Bluey and her little sister Bingo have rock star parents in Bandit and Chilli Heeler. They *always* seem to be playing with their kids, letting them climb all over them and enthusiastically partaking in a variety of make-believe scenarios.

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They're also resourceful, especially when they're tired. In a past season, when Bluey asks if they can play a game, Bandit responds, "As long as it's one where I don't have to move any part of my body or say anything with my mouth."

Dave McCormack, who voices Bandit, sees a lot of himself in the character. "There's some episodes where he tries to invent games where he gets to just lie on the couch and read the newspaper or watch cricket or something. I find in real life as a dad, I try and invent games that involve me lying on the couch and watching TV as well," he says, laughing.

Bluey's made-up games caught on

Allison Hasser, a mother of two small children who lives in Takoma Park, Md., says *Bluey* is one of the few shows she'll watch with her kids, "because the adults aren't

perfect." Hasser singles out an episode in which Bingo is dragging her feet on a family outing, complaining that she's tired and "can't walk another step." Bandit and Chilli divert her attention by instructing her to do fun things like race her sister or return a dropped pacifier to a baby's mom. Bingo instantly goes from sulking to perky with each new task.

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"I'm basically taking notes," jokes Hasser, "like next time we take a walk, I'm going to use this, too."

The parenting website Romper called the made-up games like "Ticklecrabs" and "Mountmumandad," ingenious and made a list of them.





Dad becomes a rag doll and Bluey and Bingo have to work out how to move him so they can get some ice cream.

Ludo Studio

"That's when we first started realizing it was catching on a bit," says Pearson, "families were recreating these games and that was a huge surprise for us."

Blue heeler dogs are "loyal, loving"

Even though Bluey and her family act human, they're modeled after blue heeler dogs (hence the family name).

"They're sort of the dog of Australia," Pearson says. "They're inexhaustible. They're very smart, loyal, loving."

Bluey doesn't shy away from tough topics, including death. When Bluey finds an injured bird on the ground in season 1, she and her dad take it to the vet. Even so, the budgie dies.

"In most kids' shows, the bird would miraculously recover and, you know, be the comedic family pet for the rest of the series," says McCormack. "But in this episode, the bird doesn't recover and dies, and for a kids show to be dealing with the death of an animal is pretty unusual. But it's good that it deals with real stuff."

Season 3 debuts on Disney+ on Aug. 10.

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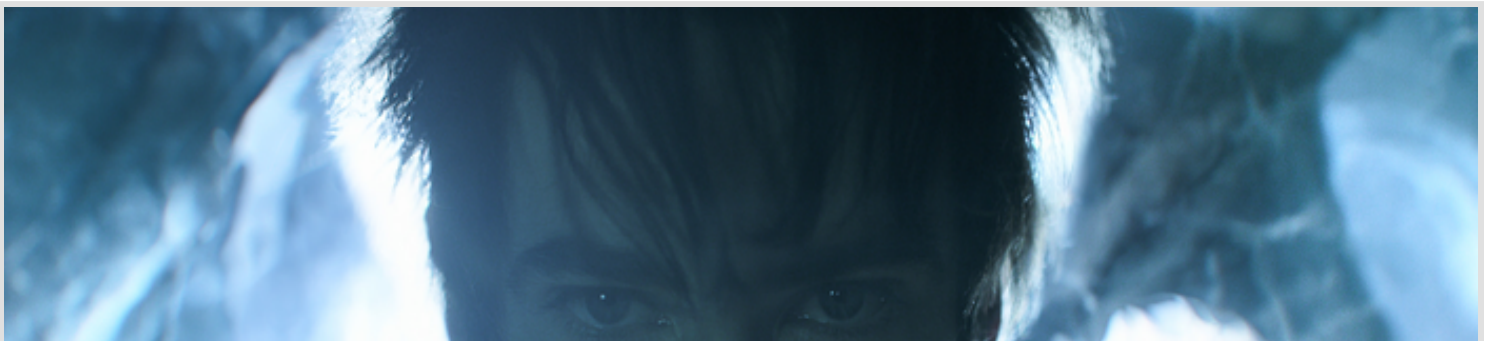
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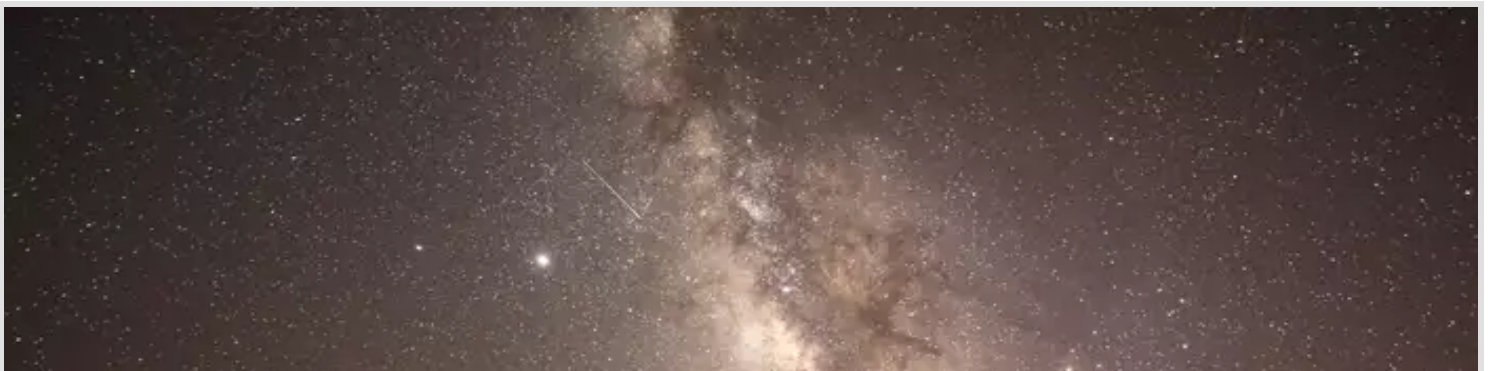
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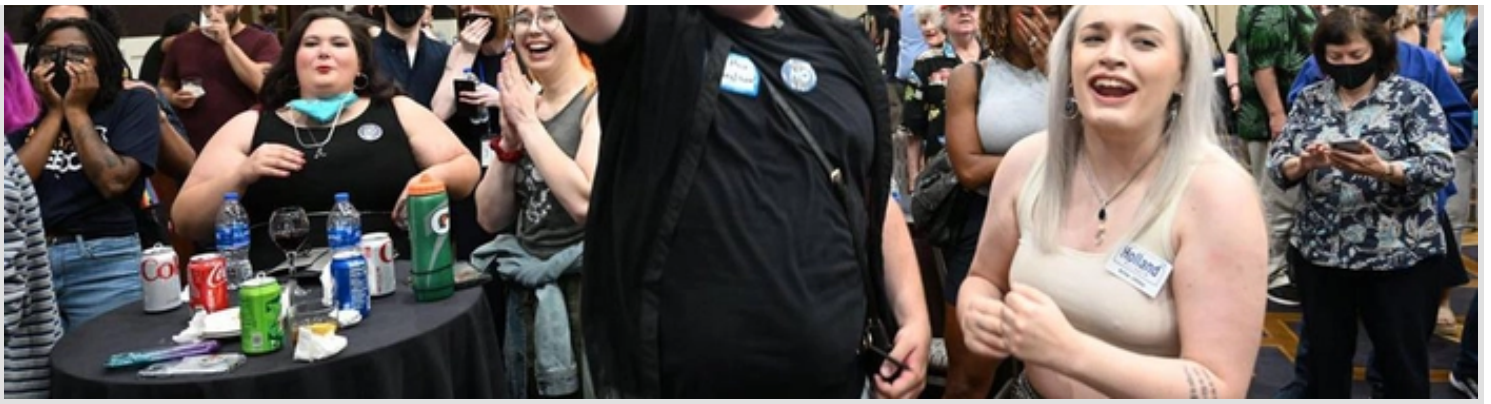
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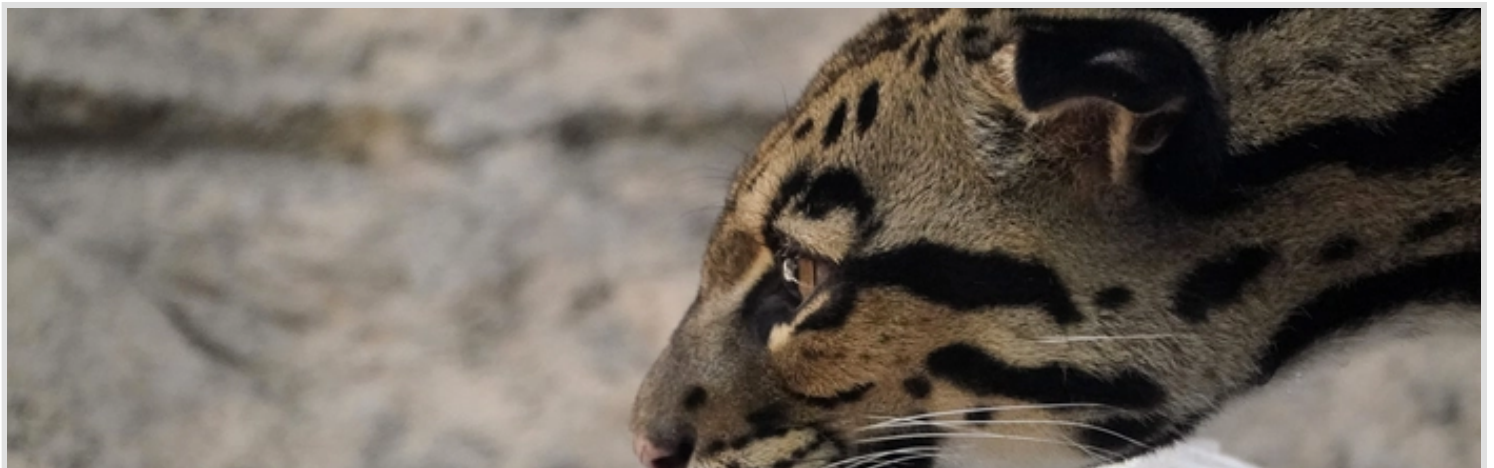
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