

Pete's Family guise

ANIMATION

MIKEY CAHILL

PETE Michels is a fighter. The animator has *The Simpsons* and *Rugrats* to his credit, but his biggest victory is *The Family Guy*. Not only has this subversive piece inspired a bevy of other artists — now exhibiting their pictures in Melbourne — but *The Family Guy* fought its way back to the small screen after being cancelled twice.

"We ended up with 58 episodes before we got cancelled the second time. We were off air for three years," Michels says.

DVD sales were too good for the Fox network to ignore, so they commissioned a third series of the culture-lamprooning cartoon.

"Fortunately, I was available so I jumped right on it and got going on the new series," Michels says.

The Family Guy centres on the Griffin family in the fictional, dysfunctional town of Quahog. The Griffins are enfant terrible Stewie, disgruntled daughter Meg, slobbish son Chris, saucy but surviving wife Lois, talking dog Brian and Peter, the oafish father.

Their creator is Seth McFarlane, a former Hanna-Barbera animator who launched *The Family Guy* in 1999 and writes and voices many of the characters. Plenty of laughs and the physical comedy is well-executed, too.

"The most satisfying fight scene I ever worked on would be the last Chicken Fight," says Michels.

The Chicken Fight was a three-part duel that began when a fast food chain's chicken mascot gave Peter an expired food coupon. Bad move. An epic battle on trucks, helicopters and photocopiers ensued before the mascot was killed. Or was it?

"Peter and the chicken are fighting in sewers, on planes, then the chicken takes Peter out to



Family ties: a still from Pete Michels' *The Family Guy* and (below) artworks inspired by the series.



dinner, then they start fighting again," Michels recounts.

"We had to get editors from another show to come over and work and rework it. There were several passes of it where we added more jokes. It was so satisfying in the end. The storyboarders won an Emmy for that."

The Chicken Fights became so legendary Michels and his crew would refer to YouTube footage

and its number of hits to make sure they were keeping the show fresh.

The Family Guy has stepped out of the *Simpsons* and *South Park* shadows to become a global cult. Proof is the show's challenge to 21 cartoonists, illustrators and humourists to reinterpret Michels' *Family Guy* art. The result is the 70-piece touring collection *What the Deuce Are You Staring At?!*

All prints sold will include a special treat.

"With every purchase I'll be drawing a dedication on the card to go with the character," Michels says. "It'll be an original drawing — one of a kind."

WHAT THE DEUCE ARE YOU STARING AT?!

Where: Silver K Gallery,
1092 High St, Armadale, until
November 18