



## BEHIND THE SCENES

### Avenue Q's under construction

Apparently, *Avenue Q* is the road to success. John Tartaglia—one of the stars of that Tony-winning Broadway musical—heads to Las Vegas for its much-anticipated bow in September.

"I've actually never been there," says Tartaglia, who has won audiences over with his winning portrayal of puppets Princeton and closeted Republican Rod in the hilarious show, still doing blockbuster business in New York City.

Tartaglia will make an even bigger bow when *Johnny and the Sprites*—a kids' show he created and stars in—begins airing on the Disney Channel in October.

"It's very musical, very funny. My character is named Johnny, so it's a big leap for me," laughs Tartaglia. "I'm a singer-songwriter who moves to this place in the woods and meets all these fantasy characters. It's right where the real world meets the fantasy world."

Look for tunes by Broadway legend Stephen Schwartz (who wrote the theme song) as well as Gary Adler and Michael Patrick Walker (the talent behind the off-Broadway hit *Altar Boyz*) and others. With *Johnny and the Sprites*, Tartaglia becomes perhaps the first openly gay artist ever to star in a TV show geared to kids. The initial airings will be in the form of "interstitials"—three- and four-minute segments—and if all goes well, half-hour episodes will start shooting in the spring.

"I was asked to create something, and I wanted to deal with differences and emotional development," says Tartaglia. "A lot of kids' shows are about letters and numbers and colors, but they're not preparing kids to deal with the world. I wanted to celebrate who we are and the things that make us unique and the things that we share together." —Michael Giltz