

# The New York Times

## ***Cleveland on 'Family Guy' to Be Voiced by Arif Zahir***

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**By Dave Izkoff**

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Cleveland Brown has found his new voice: The actor Arif Zahir will take over the role of this friendly “Family Guy” neighbor on the Fox animated series.

On Friday, 20th Television, the studio that produces “Family Guy,” said that Zahir, a prolific YouTube performer, will succeed the actor Mike Henry in the part. Henry, who is white, said in June that he would no longer play Cleveland, a Black man who lives down the street from the show’s lunkheaded protagonist, Peter Griffin. “I love this character, but persons of color should play characters of color,” Henry said at the time.

Zahir said in a statement on Friday: “When I heard that Mike Henry was stepping down from the role of Cleveland Brown — my favorite cartoon character of all time — I was shocked and saddened, assuming we’d never see him again. When I learned I would get to take over the role? Overabundant gratitude.”

Zahir also gave his thanks to Henry and the “Family Guy” producers, adding, for the show’s fans: “I promise not to let you down.”

Henry said in his own statement that he welcomed Zahir to the show. “Arif’s vocal talent is obvious, but his understanding of Cleveland and his respect for the character

give me confidence that he is in the right hands,” he said. “I look forward to getting to know Arif and working with him to make sure Cleveland stays every bit as awesome as he has always been.”

20th Television said that Henry, who is continuing to voice other characters on “Family Guy,” will still play Cleveland in episodes for the show’s coming 18th season, which begins on Sunday, and that Zahir will take over the character in episodes for the 19th season, which has just gone into production.

The change at “Family Guy” comes amid wider moves in animation to stop using white actors to play nonwhite characters. The shows “Big Mouth,” on Netflix, and “Central Park,” on Apple TV Plus, recently replaced the white voice actors who were playing biracial characters on these programs. And the producers of “The Simpsons,” another long-running Fox animated comedy, said over the summer that they would no longer have white actors voice nonwhite characters