

ANIMATION

WORLD

Vol. 6 No. 2

MAGAZINE

May 2001

On The Path To Success



Shrek, Recruiting And Jobs, Focus On... Australia

Table of Contents

MAY 2001

Vol. 6 No. 2

NINE AND A HALF QUESTIONS...

4 With David Stephen Cohen

Will Ryan asks writer David Stephen Cohen 9 1/2 pointed questions regarding opera, Courage the Cowardly Dog and how many degrees of separation there are between he and Kevin Bacon.

RECRUITING AND JOBS

6 Choose Your Software Wisely

Which 3D packages will get you work and which ones will leave you feeling unwanted? You better choose carefully and John Edgar Park is here to help you out with the decision. ompares with the production of a movie — and so do their audiences. Jacque Kubin explains.

10 Time To Get Some Training

So, you've chosen your software program. What now? Well, there are a few different ways to approach training as John Edgar Park explains.

11 Producing Animation: Getting In The Door

This month's Producing Animation excerpt by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi discusses animation's three main job categories and a little about how to get started in each.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

13 On Co-Directing Shrek: Victoria Jensen

DreamWorks' next CG animated feature is soon to hit theaters nationwide. Chris Koseluk sits down with Victoria Jensen and discusses working with superstar comedians and the latest in technology.

16 Shrek: Something Old, Something New

DreamWorks' super successful film Shrek is being hailed as a departure from the typical fairy tale, however, Maureen Furniss investigates just how racy this re-telling is.

20 Walking to Toontown, Part 2

Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman finishes the tale of his trek from animation newbie to published author.

23 The Animation Pimp: Annecy, Audiences, Art and Sandwiches

This month, The Animation Pimp both critiques and applauds the heckling audiences of Annecy.

FOCUS ON... AUSTRALIA

25 The Australian Effects and Animation Festival 2001

Stephen Lynch visited Sydney's AEAF 2001 and found it to be a treasure trove of star talent presenting some of the most exciting effects coming to a screen near us soon.

28 The Magic Pudding: Making A Feature In Oz

Stephen Lynch interviews Robbert Smit, one of Australia's most experienced directors, on Energee Entertainment's latest feature and the trials and rewards of making a film in Oz.

31 Special Effects from Down Under: A Growing Proposition

While you might not realize it, you've probably already seen some of Australia's top effects houses in action. Stephen Lynch explains.

MAY 2001

© Animation World Network 2001. All rights reserved. No part of the periodical may be reproduced without the consent of Animation World Network.

Table of Contents

MAY 2001

VOL. 6 No. 1

STUDENT CORNER

34 **Having What It Takes: A Recruiting Survey**

What are the most important elements to have on your resume? Hear some responses and insights from the folks that do the hiring about what's crucial to be a strong contender in this tough market. Joan Kim reports.

37 **The Career Coach: Resumes That Work**

In today's competitive animation job market, make sure your marketing materials are current so you can stay competitive too. Here are some tips on how to craft a resume that will help you get the job you want.

INTERNET COMPANY PROFILE

39 **Come Together: Online and On-Air Converge on CartoonNetwork.com**

When it comes to convergence CartoonNetwork.com is pushing the envelope and reaping the rewards. Brett Rogers reveals the Website's winning philosophy and hopes of becoming extinct in the near future!

EVENTS

45 **MIPTV Was A Hit!**

John Morris reports on MIPTV 2001. What trends did he see from the market floor? Read on...

47 **Cartoons on the Bay: A Different Type of Festival**

Heather Kenyon discusses Cartoons on the Bay, the world's only television animation festival, a uniquely Italian event set in the midst of some of the earth's most beautiful scenery.

50 **MILIA 2001: An Alphanim Digital Perspective**

Julie Fox visited MILIA 2001 and reports on the shifting sands of the Internet animation economy.

REVIEWS

53 **New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews**

Fred Patten reviews the latest anime releases including: The Big O, Urusei Yatsura, Iria: Zeiram the Animation, Key, the Metal Idol and Ruin Explorers: Quest for the Ultimate Power!

MAY 2001

© Animation World Network 2001. All rights reserved. No part of the periodical may be reproduced without the consent of Animation World Network.

Nine And A Half Questions...

With David Stephen Cohen

Interview by Will Ryan

For many years, Will Ryan has engaged in short conversations during which he poses precisely 9.5 questions. Whether he does this as a tribute to Federico Fellini, as a meta-textual interactive haiku-like challenge, or as a wry commentary on these *Sesame Street*/*Whatever* times remains a matter of conjecture. We only know that we live in these times, and that his pithy interviews make ideal *filleurs de l'espace*.

* * *

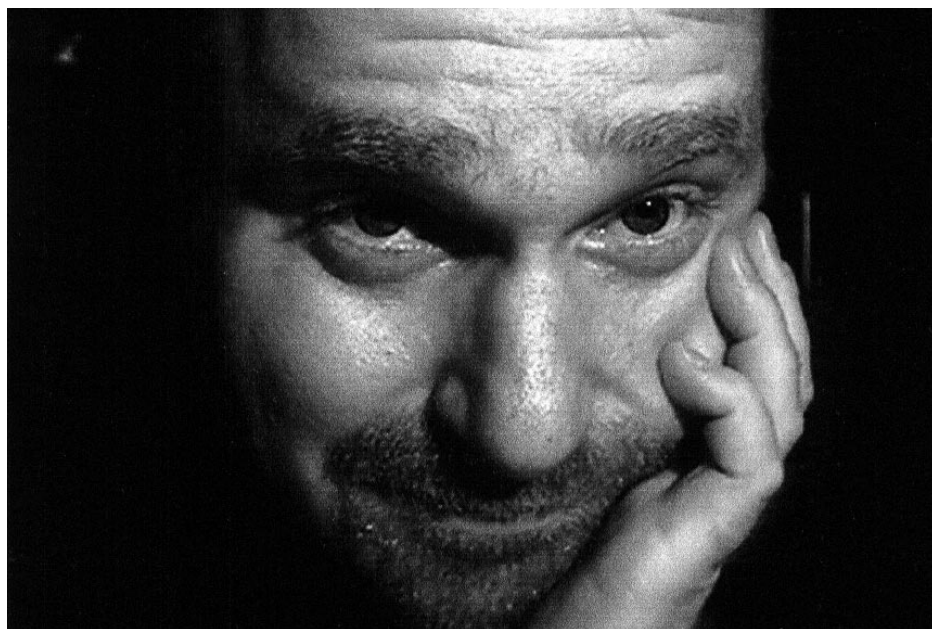
David Stephen Cohen (not to be confused with David S. Cohen, David X. Cohen, David Kohan, or 43 other similarly-monickered members of the Writer's Guild of America) is the award-winning head writer of the Cartoon Network's *Courage The Cowardly Dog*. Mr. Cohen has many other credits, some of which follow this bite-sized — but oh-so-nutritious — interview.

We caught up with the busy Mr. Cohen on his recent visit to Los Angeles, where, among other things, he was conferring with artist Everett Peck regarding a proposed animated television series.

* * *

Will Ryan: So, have you written any operas lately?

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



David Stephen Cohen.

David Stephen Cohen: Yes, a libretto.

WR: What's it about?

DSC: Adam's wife. Before Eve. Lilith.

WR: Is it a comedy?

DSC: No. Not a joke within miles.

WR: Did Colonel Klink have anything to do with this?

DSC: I bet you ask everyone these questions.

WR: Not really. This is the first in a series. But I'll consider the suggestion.

DSC: As a matter of fact, the late,

great Werner Klemperer did attend a concert performance of the work in progress. You may recall that you were sitting in front of him that evening.

WR: Ah, yes, that's right. Didn't he huddle with you in a corner afterwards?

DSC: Mm-hm.

WR: What exactly did he say?

DSC: His word to me was "Bravo."

WR: What do you think he meant by that?

DSC: I'm not sure, but I think it was, "It ain't no *Rigoletto*, but it'll do in a pinch."

WR: Does Courage the Cowardly Dog perform a cameo in this opera?

DSC: Well, you know what they say: Inside of every fat lady, there's a scared, pink dog trying to get out.

WR: That sounds like a quote from one of next season's scripts.

DSC: It is now!

WR: Say, you also co-wrote the animated feature *Balto* for Universal. What is it with you and dogs?

DSC: Pardon me, but in our version, *Balto* was half WOLF. He was, however, 100% bacon.

Kevin Bacon.

WR: Oh, that's right . . . Kevin Bacon did his voice.

DSC: Precisely.

WR: Well, does that mean that you're — ?

DSC: Yup. One degree.

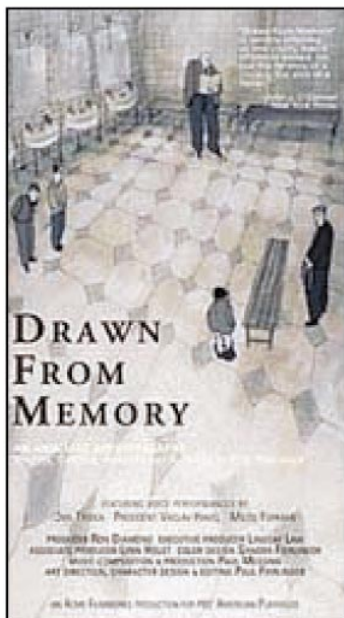
WR: Ooh.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Emmy-nominated David Stephen Cohen won the Writer's Guild Award for his work on The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss, for which he was executive producer. He is also a composer and lyricist. The opera Lilith, for which he wrote his first libretto, opens November 11, 2001 at Manhattan's Lincoln Center.

Emmy-nominated Will Ryan was also nominated for the Writer's Guild Award for his work on The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss, but David Stephen Cohen won it instead. And they still talk to each other — albeit in bite-sized, but oh-so-nutritious, banter. Mr. Ryan's libretto for West Of Catalina: A Horse Opera remains unproduced.

PAUL FIERLINGER'S DRAWN FROM MEMORY NOW AVAILABLE ON VIDEO !



"Drawn From Memory is an extraordinary reminiscence about an improbable but true life, rendered in pen-and-ink images as whimsical as those of James Thurber and words as piercing as those of Milan Kundera. The work, which could be called The Movie of Laughter and Forgiveness, uses the lighthearted medium of animation to heartbreaking effect."

--Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer



<http://www.awn.com/awnstore/acme/drawn.html>

Choose Your Software Wisely

by John Edgar Park



Maya, used to create this scene, leads the pack for character animation tools, but some say the latest version of 3D Studio Max will close the gap. © Alias|Wavefront.

As a 3D animator, you are probably an expert in one software package. You live or die by not only your artistic skills, but also your in-depth knowledge of your chosen animation package. Your ability to create great animation is only realized once you can control your tools effortlessly. Sometimes, however, it is this very same specialization that determines the companies or clients for which you can work. There are often postings on job boards that read: "LightWave Character Animator Wanted" or "Maya Effects Artist Needed." Most animators cannot afford the time or the money to become fluent in more than one 3D program, so it

is important to choose your killer app wisely. Which 3D packages will get you work, and which ones will leave you feeling unwanted?

For the purposes of this article, let's subdivide the 3D animation market into three categories: games, broadcast and film. Each of these industries has its own special requirements and tends to favor certain 3D software. 3D for games requires strong polygonal modeling and texturing tools, as well as an open SDK for hooking assets into the game code. Animation packages for broadcast rely on versatile effects, ease of use and beautiful, quick renderers. Finally, film animation software must have great animation con-

trols, customizable interfaces and the ability to interact with other software, such as RenderMan or in-house tools. These are general guidelines, of course, not hard-and-fast rules. Many games now include pre-rendered cinematics – creating them requires tools similar to those used for broadcast and film animation. Some film effects shots have been done with more mid-level packages than you might expect.

The Right Tool For the Job

Games: 3D Studio Max reigns supreme. With nearly every development house using it, the game artist needs to know Max. Two other strong applications in this field are Maya and Softimage, but even with Microsoft Xbox middleware commitments to Maya, listings on Gamasutra.com's job board reveal close to 90% Max penetration into the game art market.

Broadcast: There are some commercial studios who stick with Mac tools, so Electric Image and LightWave are strong here; with the release of Maya on the new Macintosh OS X we'll see how long this holds true. On the Windows side, LightWave, Max, Maya and Softimage come up most frequently, but this is still fairly open territory, as there are so many boutiques doing broadcast



While Oddworld, a top game producer, uses 3D Studio Max for real-time game play, Maya is used for their games' cinematics. © Oddworld.



From Big Red gum campaigns to screensavers for Wired, The ATTIK relies on Maya. Courtesy of The ATTIK.

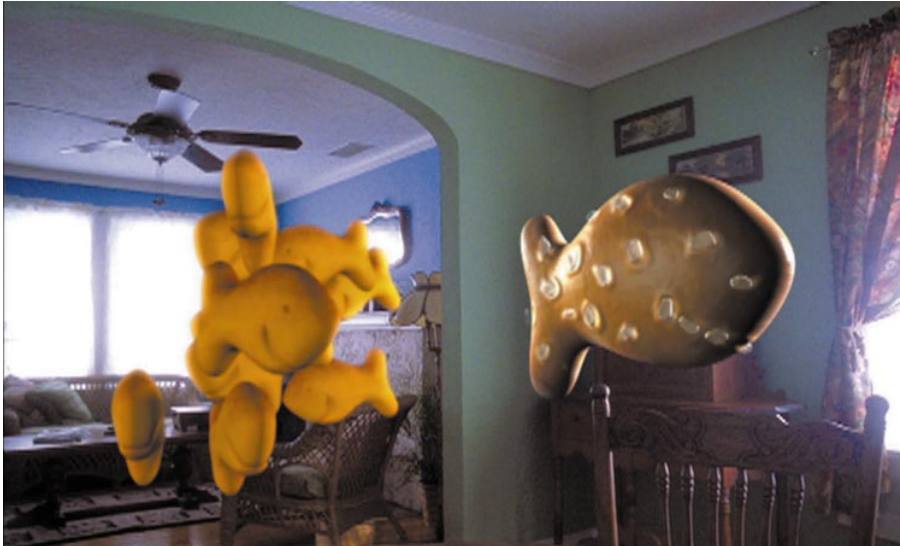
work, and the right artist can sometimes choose their toolset.

Gene Nazarov, 3D animator at commercial house ATTIK, says, "Maya is what we use. I started with 3D Studio Max, but soon realized how much more potential Maya has. The capabilities are broader and easier to digest, the animation is better and more reliable. No wonder all the movie studios are turning toward this application."

Film: While more films than ever are using LightWave and Max for effects and animation shots, there are really two main packages in this market: Maya and Softimage. Does that mean that you need to run out and learn Maya or Softimage if you want to work in film? The answer is yes and no.

Stuart Lowder, animation manager at Industrial Light & Magic, puts less emphasis on software knowledge and more on an applicant's animation skills. "I don't think it matters, which software you learn, as long as you get into a package and show the ability to animate. It's not the specific software — you can really demonstrate animation talent with puppets. What we would be looking for is the skill set of an animator, more than software knowledge.

"If you want to be an effects animator, Maya is what we use; on the character animation side it's Softimage. Once we've hired someone, [we provide] all the technical training they'll need. This runs about eight weeks, and assumes that the animation skills are there, so we don't have any support for teaching people how to animate. That said, the more technical skills you have the better off you're going to be. I compare technical skills in 3D animation to



A goldfish rampage was created by Spontaneous Combustion for Pepperidge Farms by using 3D Studio MAX, After Effects, PhotoShop and inferno*. Courtesy of Spontaneous Combustion.

having great drawing skills for traditional animators.”

And in most cases, a large production will involve the use of many different 3D packages. Michael David Smith of Softimage says, “Large companies use everyone’s software; if you look at the demo reel for any 3D program, they all share many of the same shots. It’s the smaller companies who choose just one package because of a tighter budget.”

The Numbers

Most of the employers’ listings on the job board at CreativePlanet.com link a specific 3D package to a job opening. Here are the percentages from the April listings:

Maya:	45%
Max:	21%
Any:	17%
LightWave:	6%
Softimage:	6%
Other:	5%

The 17% that responded “Any” usually require knowledge of at least one high-end 3D app, such as Maya, Max, Softimage,

LightWave, Houdini, Electric Image, Cinema 4D, etc.

Spontaneous Combustion is a digital studio specializing in design, visual effects and animation for advertising, broadcast and film with clients such as AT&T, Audi, Estee Lauder and ESPN. Sam DeWitt, head of CGI, says, “Maya is probably the most widespread in the post industry at the moment, but Softimage seems to be finally gaining back some lost ground. In terms of learning 3D, 3D Studio Max could be conceived of as the easiest, and with such a wide and diverse user base the resources for it are amazing. Max does seem to be slowly gaining ground in both film and television work, and its tight integration with other discrete products makes it a good bet for the future.”

In reality, all of these high-end packages can be used for projects in any of the three industry sectors. Phil Miller, senior director of Software Products at discrete, says that of the approximately 150,000 seats of 3D Studio Max worldwide he estimates that 50% of those are used in the game industry, 30% in film and

post-production and 20% in design, Web, architectural and science applications. His prognosis for Max’s future is good: “The number of seats of Max being sold to the commercial sector is increasing at a rate higher than all of the competition’s combined, so while there’s no doubt that Maya has swept the film industry – ousting Softimage – boutiques have switched over to Max.”

Keep An Eye On The Market

So, which one is right for you? There are no neat answers to this question. Michael Wharton, animator at Quiet Man NYC, explains: “A student needs to be concerned with marketability; that is to say, can a company you hope to work for afford to bring in a person who doesn’t know their particular software and train them? Or, do they need someone they can immediately drop into production? At Quiet Man we are heavily invested in Softimage, so for our own selfish reasons, we’d love to see this product take off and blow everything else away. However at this point in time, Maya is still *the* 3D stronghold, so much so that some clients have even used it in conversation as almost the...brand name of all 3D packages. As absurd as I think that may be, it seems to be the perception.”

It would be terrific if every studio could run a training program to bring in the best animators, regardless of software knowledge. Unfortunately most smaller shops don’t have that luxury. Constraints of time and money force them to hire animators who can jump right into the production pipeline. The bottom line is, for the majority of the positions out there, you will only get the job if you have the skills and you know the

right software. The numbers suggest that it's not a bad time to be an adept Maya animator. However, Max, Softimage and LightWave are good bets, too – but don't forget, first and foremost, to hone those animation skills!

John Edgar Park is a 3D animator, instructor and writer based in Los Angeles. He received his B.A. in Drama from the University of Virginia.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.



Softimage is Quiet Man's tool of choice and was used in this Conseco Insurance ad where a monkey talks. Courtesy of Quiet Man.

Stay current with all the latest AWN news, industry events, Flash headlines, job postings, product announcements and much more, delivered every week to your email box...

For Free!

Register Now!

It only takes a minute, so fill out our reader survey and register to receive the

AWN Spotlight

www.awn.com/survey

So, you've chosen your software program. What now? Well, there are a few different ways to approach training.

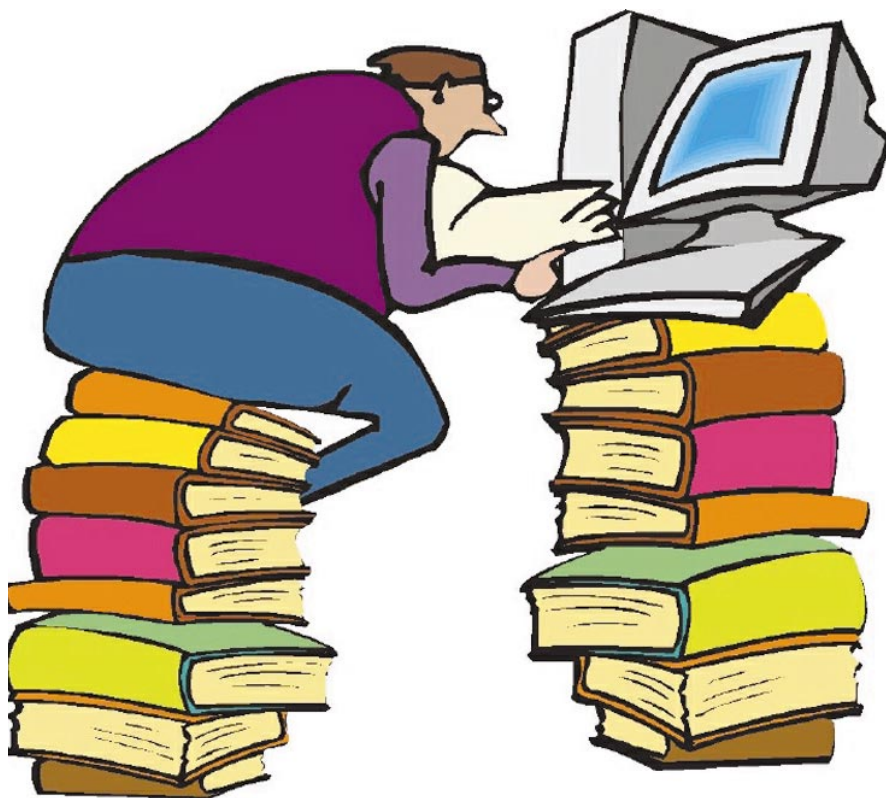
Some animators appreciate the hands-on approach of sitting in a classroom, in front of a workstation, learning from an expert. If you live near a big city, you may have a lot of choices. There are private training schools, programs taught at public schools and community colleges, and training programs certified by the manufacturers such as discreet, Alias and Softimage. Schools provide high-end workstations, the latest software, and instructors to answer questions and demonstrate the software firsthand.

For the adventurous, you can run out, buy the software and stock up on books to supplement training. Usually a beginner-to-intermediate level is covered in the training manuals. Beyond that, there are many third party books that teach more advanced topics. Project based books, like the New Riders Press *3D Studio Max Effects Magic* series for example, are good at teaching a range of techniques that are used for specific results in a short time. You'll find recipes for lava, exploding planets and winter storms. Character modeling, skeleton rigging and animation techniques are topics of great depth that can be coached by reading and following along as experts in the field describe their secrets. Of course, there is no substitute for simply logging hours on the application, be it with the direction of an instructor or the guidance of a manual.

In the space between schools and books lies videotape-based training. There are excellent tapes for most 3D packages, which can give the visual learner

Time To Get Some Training

by John Edgar Park



Courtesy of ArtToday.

an advantage over somewhat dry book learning. Trinity3D.com is a good source for tapes on Maya, LightWave and Max. Students should check the Journey Education Website (www.journeyed.com) for collections of these tapes at discounted prices.

Of special interest to the animator who has decided to switch from Max to Maya, is Trinity3D's *Max to Maya QuickStart* set. This video, book and CD-ROM set shows the Max animator where to find similar functions in Maya. A similar product is the

Maya Transition Guide: From Softimage-to-Maya, available from Alias|Wavefront's Website.

John Edgar Park is a 3D animator, instructor and writer based in Los Angeles. He received his B.A. in Drama from the University of Virginia.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Producing Animation: Getting In The Door

by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi

What kind of skills are required to get into the field of animation?

People often ask how to receive training in three main job categories: 1) an artist, 2) a member of the production staff, or 3) a voice over actor.



All images courtesy of ArtToday.

Artists

The most important tool artists can have is a portfolio (or a sampling of their best work). It is an artist's calling card. If you do not have a portfolio, you must prepare some initial artwork to start building one. A good way to begin accumulating samples of your work is by taking classes like those offered at animation colleges or the animation union. Some studios have training programs that generally last three months, but they are rare and difficult to get in to.

For those artists who

already have a portfolio, it is important for them to update it continuously. Keep copies of artwork from previous projects you have worked on. Recent sketchbooks should also be included. If you have many years of accumulated artwork, it is always wise to get help from fellow artists to select your strongest work. You should also research the show you are applying for and make sure that your portfolio includes artwork that is suitable for the project.

In hiring, every studio has its own specific requirements based on the status of their projects in production and pre-production. Initially, the best thing to do is to contact the studio's recruiting or Human Resources office and request information on their portfolio requirements. Follow the guidelines closely. Depending on your skill set (for example, whether you are an animator or a painter), the requirements for your portfolio pieces will vary. The following is an example of the portfolio require-

ments for an entry-level cleanup artist or a cleanup inbetweenner you may expect to see from a studio.

- Clean up drawings and original roughs
- Flippable inbetweened scenes
- Life drawing sketches
- Artwork from personal or school projects
- Videotape of animation exercises

When you have all your artwork prepared, set up a time to drop off your portfolio. Most studios have weekly or monthly reviews and will then return your portfolio to you. Some artists prefer to make copies of their work and leave the copies at the studio so that their work is available for multiple recruiting departments. You may be asked to take a test. This procedure is very common in most studios. A standardized test is often a fair gauge of judging an artist's aptitude for the project.

Production Staff

There are several ways to get into production. While a portfolio is an artist's calling card, a resume or curriculum vitae (CV) should be used when applying for a production staff position. Make sure you have a strong resume that emphasizes your abilities to organize, work with people, communicate and juggle many things at once. It is important that your resume is easy to read and can be understood at a glance. It should





not be more than two pages long. If you have listed individuals on your resume as references, it is wise to speak with them in advance to prepare them for a possible call. By doing so, you give your contacts a chance to review your work experience, and then, hopefully, they will be able to give you a glowing referral when the time comes.

If you have little or no production administration in your background, you should look to get on a project as an intern, production assistant or producer's assistant. If you attend a community college, you may be able to design a class in which you can get school credit in exchange for doing a studio internship. Computer skills are also an important asset. Having a working knowledge of software programs such as FileMaker Pro, Excel and Photoshop can give you the winning edge by setting you apart from other candidates applying for the same position.

Voice Over Actor

Most voice over actors have agents who send them to auditions. If you don't have an agent, it

is important that you assemble a tape that demonstrates your voice range and talent. You should then research voice agencies and send them a tape. Be sure that the tape quality is professional.

When a voice over actor is hired, the agent negotiates the deal and helps the actor with all of the contractual paperwork. The agent is then paid a percentage of the actor's negotiated fee. The average voice over session takes approximately 4 hours, depending on the role. Pay rates vary based on the type of voice over work being done, and whether the project is union or non-union (that is, Screen Actors Guild [SAG] or not). For union work, it is best to contact SAG directly to get the updated minimum rates. For non-union work, the amount paid is whatever you or your agent can negotiate.



Whether you have an agent or not, it is a good idea to take a voice over acting class, as it will help you hone your skills and make potential contacts. Many voice over coaches are professional voice over directors who are

looking for fresh talent.

For more information on auditions and casting, or for detailed information on previous experience needed for different job categories, see Chapters 8, "Pre-Production," and Chapter 9 "Production" respectively in *Producing Animation*.

Catherine Winder has worked as both an executive producer in television and feature animation. Her background in development, as well as production with studios from around the world has given her a rare global expertise in the field of animation. In her present position as vice president production for Fox Feature Animation, she is overseeing production of the studio's 2D traditional and 3D CGI animated movies. She has co-written Producing Animation with Zahra Dowlatabadi.

Zahra Dowlatabadi, an award-winning producer, started her animation career in 1986. Since then, Dowlatabadi has worked in almost every major studio in Los Angeles along with many internationally acclaimed animation studios and talent. Dowlatabadi is the founder of an organization entitled Animation Team, which assists studios with production staffing needs ranging from qualified line producers to experienced production assistants. She also has co-written a book entitled Producing Animation with Catherine Winder for Focal Press.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

On Co-Directing **SHREK**: Victoria Jenson

by Chris Koseluk

Expect to see some familiar faces in the new animated feature *Shrek*. Pinocchio puts in a brief appearance, as do the Seven Dwarfs, the Big Bad Wolf and the Three Blind Mice. Robin Hood and his Merry Men even pop up for a show-stopping musical number. But don't let this proliferation of fairy tale favorites fool you. This computer-generated comedy from DreamWorks Pictures is unlike anything that's come before it.

With a lime-green complexion, surly disposition and ogre-ugly features, Shrek is as far from your typical fairy tale hero as you can get. The circumstances propelling him on his journey to romance and adventure are just as unlikely.

Because of his monstrous appearance, Shrek is an outcast, resigned to a lonely life in a desolate swamp. That is until neighboring town ruler Lord Farquaad, in a



The unlikely face of a hero, Shrek. All images courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures.

quest to make his kingdom perfect, outlaws all mythical creatures. Facing certain imprisonment, hundreds of characters — everyone from the Three Little Pigs to Snow White — take refuge in Shrek's humble abode, throwing the ogre's home life into complete chaos.

To regain his peace and quiet, Shrek makes an agreement with Farquaad — he'll slay a fire-breathing dragon and rescue a beautiful princess for Farquaad and, in return, the Lord will let Shrek have his swamp all to himself. To his dismay, as Shrek sets out on his quest, he's accompanied by a wise-ass donkey who won't stop talking, and, despite all of the ogre's efforts, insists on befriending Shrek to help save the day.

Along the way, *Shrek* satirizes everything from pro wrestling and *The Dating Game* to martial

arts fight sequences and a certain unnamed amusement park fronted by a character with mouse ears. And if all of this sounds a little odd for a big screen cartoon feature, that's exactly what the filmmakers intended.

"We had some fun twisting fairy tales and turning them on their ear," says Victoria Jenson, who shared directing duties with Andrew Adamson. "The tone of our comedy is a bit irreverent and playful. We were able to play with certain expectations that you have about the characters."

This includes a particularly favorite scene of Jenson's in which Farquaad, desperate to know where the fairy tale creatures are hiding, interrogates the Gingerbread Man. "It's familiar in that it looks like a traditional torture sequence," she said. "But it's a cookie! He's on a baking pan! You just have to see it."



Despite unspeakable tortures, the Gingerbread Man does not crack under Lord Farquaad's interrogation.

Working with Megastars

Generating laughs was priority one for the creative team behind *Shrek*, so it's no surprise that some of today's biggest comic talents bring the characters to life. Mike Myers voices the title character while Eddie Murphy plays his verbose donkey sidekick. Cameron Diaz, as the beautiful Princess Fiona, and John Lithgow, as the pompous Farquaad, round out the principals.

With this group in the recording booth, laughter filled the sessions. Jenson reveals that Myers in particular couldn't resist an opportunity to clown. "He was just cracking us up all the time. He's got an amazingly intelligent sense of comedy and what makes something entertaining," she says. "When he'd explain a point, he'd go into character as Michael Caine or Christopher Walken, imitating how they would deliver a line. I know he was trying to make a point, but we were just laughing so hard."



Mike Myers brought a new depth to the title role.

While the directors were laughing at Myers, they also close-

ly listened to what he was saying. Many of Myers' offhanded comments became key to finding Shrek's character. "They certainly helped the character evolve. Because we were constantly working the sequences, some of his earliest ad-libs helped us find a direction for a particular sequence," explains Jenson. "Even after we layered some sequences, he'd say, 'You know what would be a great line right here?' and we'd go back and put it in."



No matter how hard Shrek tries, Eddie Murphy's smart-ass donkey just won't shut up!

Murphy, on the other hand, took a much more serious approach to his character. As the sassy, self-effacing sidekick, he gets most of the film's funniest punchlines. The comedian therefore focused the lion's share of his energy on his performance. "He almost had blinkers on until he got behind the microphone and then — boom — he was the character," says Jenson. "He would grill us on something if he didn't understand it. But once he got the concept, he would completely own it. Sometimes he'd end up with something we didn't expect, but it was always funnier than we'd expected."

On Co-Directing

Jenson describes her partnership with Adamson as being "kind of separate and kind of side-

by-side." During the early stages of story development, the duo was virtually inseparable as the action unfolded. As *Shrek* began to take shape and specific segments were agreed upon, the directors split the film in half — each working on a specific number of scenes.

"That way we could focus our attentions on all of the tiny details of each sequence; from story to production design through the editorial process where you are constantly with the animators," continues Jenson, who added that each director was also in charge of his or her particular scenes when the actors were in the recording studios.

The partnership also meant a constant dialogue between the two. Neither went very far in the process without input from the other. "I'd work on a sequence with a story artist for a week or so, then after it got to a certain stage we'd present it to Andrew and our producer," says Jenson. This also held true during the animation process where the directors reviewed all of the dailies together. "Even though there'd be a lead



Co-directors Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson.



This is the first CG cast to include humans as protagonists, and therefore, created a host of new challenges for PDI/DreamWorks.

director on a particular shot, we would discuss it," she continues. "We would discuss it with the other animators as well — what was working and what we could make better."

Jenson does admit she had a particular preference to which scenes ended up in her charge. "I tended to gravitate to some of the more goofy sequences," she says. "My background is 3D. I worked with Ralph Bakshi and John Kricfalusi. So I look at comedy just by itself. If it's entertaining — let's keep it. Let's never lose a laugh."

Pushing the Technology

Jenson and Adamson's main goal was to make *Shrek* as funny as possible. But the duo, along with a team of roughly 275, also set a mandate to push the art of computer animation to new heights. As amazing as such CG predecessors as *Toy Story*, *Antz* and *A Bug's Life* were, they were

still limited when it came to animating certain items in the computer. At a 'work-in-progress' sneak preview last March, DreamWorks' co-founder Jeffrey Katzenberg stated that there are three 'Holy Grails' of computer animation — hair, liquid and fire. *Shrek* brilliantly tackles each. But this is only a small part of the lavish storybook world the movie brings to life.

"This is the first time you really see humans appear in principal roles in a CG film," adds Jenson. "Nobody really knows what an ogre's supposed to look like or how a donkey talks, but everybody knows how humans move and speak. These characters needed more believability. We ended up building models with anatomy and muscles that the animators pulled to make an arm move or to shape a mouth."

The animators discovered the best way to heighten the realism of the princess, and Lord

Farquaad, and his subjects, was to concentrate on the subtleties of the human form. "We built translucent layers of skin so they wouldn't look like plastic," Jenson says. "You really see that in Fiona in her close-ups. Light could actually pass through to create a luminosity. We painted freckles or warm tones a couple of layers down and light would pass through the skin to them. It just looked a lot more believable."

Chris Koseluk has written for many entertainment publications such as The Hollywood Reporter and is a Los Angeles-based freelance journalist.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

When I saw *Shrek* at a promotional release in Southern California, the day before it opened nationally, I found myself laughing out loud several times and pleasantly surprised by both the writing and the visuals. I loved it! Obviously, I am not alone in feeling this way, as the film's success has been immense. Newspapers have been filled with statistics showing its first weekend box office take to be over US\$42 million (including two days of pre-release in New York and Los Angeles, as well as Friday through Sunday receipts). Statistically, it is the biggest opening for any animated film except *Toy Story*, which brought in \$57.3 million over the four-day Thanksgiving weekend in 1999. *Shrek* also beat out *Gladiator* (2000), the most successful film to date for its production company, DreamWorks/PDI. Helping it in this respect was the fact that *Shrek* opened extremely wide, appearing in 3,653 theaters, the second-largest spread of any film (only *Mission: Impossible 2* opened wider). Another reflecting of its critical acclaim is the fact that it is the first animated feature to appear at the Cannes Film Festival in France in over thirty years.

Gotta Have A Draw

More than a live-action film, animated features allow and even require a complex marketing strategy. Drawing huge crowds in to see, in this case, an animated ogre is the first and perhaps most important step in creating a feature that has 'legs,' as they say, and can spin its own web of self-perpetuating publicity and popularity. After that initial draw, that first weekend in which the film either makes headlines or falls flat,

SHREK:

Something Old, Something New

by Maureen Furniss



Shrek isn't your normal fairy tale and Princess Fiona isn't your usual damsel in distress. All images courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures.

it is more the construction of the film that propels it into a popular culture phenomenon. Word of mouth, as well as critical reviews, in this case tend to be based on the writing of the story and the technological advances, both of

which are impressive. Advances in showing fire, plants and hair are among the most noted accomplishments of the computer-generated animation.

A cast of great performers, including Mike Myers and Eddie

Murphy, add a lot to the film and no doubt have helped draw audiences of a wide demographic. The script is based on a children's book by William Steig; however, the adaptation is quite liberal. Steig's version of *Shrek* is a relatively short picture book tale, which begins when Shrek is kicked out of his family home. Soon after he goes on his way, he is told that his fortune is to marry a princess. Shrek is surprised, but enthusiastic, and takes off looking for a series of clues that will take him to her. Like his filmic counterpart, this Shrek revels in the fact that he frightens people with his looks. In fact, when he walks into a hall of mirrors at one point, he even scares himself, which makes him quite proud. Along the way to the princess's castle, Shrek has to deal with a dragon and a donkey, who helps him make the final leg of his trip. Once at the castle, he has to battle a guard in armor in order to get access to his bride-to-be. When he finally gets to her, he is thrilled to see that she is — not svelte and lovely — but stunningly ugly. When the two see each other, they instantly know that they are fated for each other. They

run together in an embrace and love conquers all.



Lord Farquoad dreams of his Princess Fiona.

Honing the Story

In film adaptations of novels, it is typical to cut out characters in order to streamline the story and to include just the most important (sometimes, different characters are compiled into one). The action is almost always simplified to create a single narrative plot that centers around action and conflict, with a final resolution that is clear-cut and satisfying. In the case of *Shrek*, the original children's story has too little action to sustain a feature-length film. It also has too little conflict, as the obstacles in Shrek's way are dealt with rather quickly and easily. Perhaps most significantly, though, the 'prize' at the end is in fact a really ugly woman — and from a

Hollywood point of view, that won't do at all. Even the Shrek character of Steig's tale is too ugly. Let me just put it this way: it's impossible to imagine either of them as plush toys, beanies, or even collectible figures.

The obvious solution is to complicate the plot and modify the character designs. By inserting the background story of fairy tale characters invading Shrek's territory, the writers have given themselves an almost limitless opportunity to create humorous scenarios, which they've fully exploited. My personal favorite is the spunky gingerbread man who yells, "You're a monster," and, "Bite me," as he refuses to give information to the evil Lord Farquoad. Weaving Princess Fiona into this fairy tale scenario works extremely well, as it solves another plot problem: the u-g-l-y factor. Make her into a beautiful princess who is under a spell and only becomes 'ugly' (in a cute sort of way) at night, when we hardly see her. In fact, she has to hide her ugliness from the other characters, so there is narrative motivation for not showing her ogre manifestation. There are practical reasons why Princess Fiona must be beautiful most of the time: why else would Prince Farquoad want to marry her? He is vain and the bottom line is that he wants to marry a princess, so he can rule the land. Nonetheless, he 'naturally' is taken by her beauty and she becomes his choice.

What about Farquoad? He is the only main character that does not appear in the original story. Farquoad works fantastically as an evil character who provides all the conflict for Shrek that is lacking from Steig's story. First, he moves the characters into Shrek's swamp. Then he makes a deal to



Reveling in a nice mud bath, Shrek enjoys his solitary life at film's beginning.

move them out if Shrek gets the princess. Finally, he provides conflict when Shrek falls in love with Fiona. Clearly, he is of central importance to the development of the adaptation's plot.

Fiona the Fearless?

Shrek has great fun with traditional characters and storylines of fairy tales. It clearly takes aim at Disney; Farquard's evil kingdom is unmistakably a deserted main street from Disneyland, complete with Small-Worldesque singers. The story of Fiona seems aimed at Disney animated features, in which a host of lovely princesses have been saved from horrible fates by their knights in shining armor. When Shrek comes to her rescue, she waits expectantly, taking a 'sleeping death' position, for "loves first kiss" (this sets her up for the first of several disappointments). Despite her attempt to fit herself into a fairy tale scenario, we see that Fiona is in fact far from a 'traditional' heroine. She is a skillful fighter, not above eating roasted rats, and known to emit uncouth noises from her body. What kind of princess is that? She looks like a princess, being tall, slender and lovely, but something tells us — and Shrek — that this one is different. But how different is she?

I was impressed by Fiona's ability to fight like female warriors from *The Matrix* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, but I sensed an unresolved contradiction in her need to seek authentication from a male romantic partner. I could make the argument that a highly trained martial artist/fighting machine probably has little concern for such worldly matters as physical appearance, but I won't (I'll think it in my head

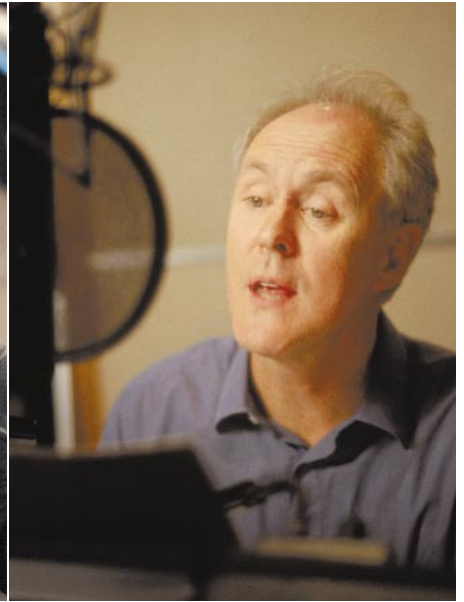


Shrek reworks the typical fairy tale but still relies on some old standards.

anyway). My point is this: while the film does contain a message that 'beauty is on the inside' and that women of all types are beautiful, it is significant that Fiona's understanding of this fact is filtered through male approval. First she seeks a union with Farquard, thinking it will solve her little 'problem' that happens every night. She realizes that she's in love with Shrek, but also thinks she's been rebuffed by him, so she follows through on marrying Farquard (note, significantly, that when things get rough, this incredible martial artist is unable to fight off a small band of Farquard's men). In any case, she doesn't become 'okay with herself' until Shrek kisses her and, ultimately, validates her appearance as acceptable; to me, it is disappointing that her character arc, being able to accept herself in a so-called 'ugly' physical manifestation, is in fact activated by the kiss of a man. However, this kiss is also significant for its affect on the main character of the film. By kissing Shrek, Fiona facilitates the completion of his character arc; he is no longer a social introvert, but instead looks forward to the company of a companion who has proven compatible with

his lifestyle and in fact mirrors his own appearance.

Here's another scenario that might help put this in perspective: Shrek kisses her, but decides that things are happening too fast and he needs his 'personal space' again, so he runs back to his swamp hut. Would Fiona still have found personal satisfaction with her permanent 'new look?' I don't think so. In contrast, Disney's *Mulan* was a self-confident woman even at the start of the film, understanding fully how to operate within a man's world. At the end of *Mulan*, she remains strong as an individual, while also experiencing love. Sure, viewers are happy when she and her man meet again, but the story ends before a clear 'union' is formed. Ultimately, *Mulan* remains a strong female character — outwardly beautiful throughout the story, of course — while Fiona is not so secure in her identity and also shifts in her physical appearance. As an audience, we always know that she is really a tall, slender, beautiful 'storybook princess;' even after her look changes. If nothing else we still have the voice of Cameron Diaz to remind us of her origins. In any case, even the



The voices behind the frivolity: Cameron Diaz, Eddie Murphy and John Lithgow.

'changed' Fiona hardly pushes the boundaries of true ugliness. One of my friends, Greg Singer, said that the audience around him collectively cooed "awwww" in reaction to her 'cuteness' as an ugly character.

Some Myths Remain

The characterization of Farquoad, who is voiced by John Lithgow, is also interesting, as it plays on conventional stereotypes of masculinity. He has the so-called 'Napoleon complex,' being a short man who needs to compensate by dominating everyone around him. In terms of masculinity, shortness applies in more than one context to a lack of virility. A short man cannot physically dominate a tall woman, so how can he keep her in line? Farquoad compensates with leg extensions, and as some 'short men' might do with a padded, well, you know (Fiona and no doubt countless others were shocked when the poser's real stature was revealed). My point is that Farquoad's shortness is a clear indicator of his 'difference' and overall unsuitability as a partner for the tall and lovely

Fiona. While many other 'myths' are being pulled apart, this myth of masculinity is vital in Farquoad's caricature.

I can see how these characters were determined by the film industry as much as the film's running time was. It is hard to imagine a 45-minute mini-feature or a 3-hour epic animation being screened in theaters; likewise, I can hardly see producers agreeing to an ugly female romantic lead. Even in a film about the need to see beyond the surface of a person, Hollywood makes sure there is a beautiful princess to admire. The fact that she is rendered so realistically, while the other characters are so clearly caricatures makes her 'perfect' appearance stand out in the film all the more. While the film tears at so many fond memories of childhood tales, it is nice to know that some things never change — isn't it?

Ultimately, the film's ability to question tradition is bound into its status as a commercial product within the highly competitive, ultra-risky industry of animated features. With performances of a 20-minute musical version of *Shrek*

performed daily at Universal Studios through summer, a 3D version planned for IMAX theaters to coincide with the fall release of *Shrek* on video, and plans for a *Shrek 2* already under way, clearly the road to success is not in deviation as much as repetition. Since the film contains innovative technological achievements, interesting characters, great performances and wonderful writing to delight us, at least the second-third-fourth-and-so-on times around should be pleasurable.

Maureen Furniss, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor and Program Director of Film Studies at Chapman University in Orange, California. She is the founding editor of Animation Journal and the author of Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics (John Libbey, 1998).

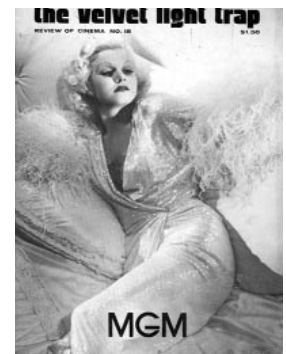
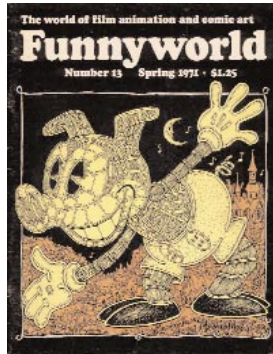
Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Walking to Toontown, Part Two

by Martin “Dr. Toon” Goodman

Journeys should not be aimless lest they lead to wasted lives; signposts are needed for guidance. Unfortunately, in 1977 these were few and widely spaced. There were no college courses on animation available to audit and little coverage of the subject in the media. A search through the university library showed few books concerned with animation on any level, and the ones I did find dealt with Walt Disney. The books conflicted considerably: Bob Thomas’ *Walt Disney: An American Original* and *The Disney Version* by Richard Schickel presented disparate sides of Disney, the latter book being a critical, revisionist look at Walt and his works. The fact that two different authors could be at such variance was fascinating, and reading these works represented my first real steps toward knowledgeable fandom. The only other tome I could find was the original edition of Leonard Maltin’s *The Disney Films* (Maltin would reappear with the exact book I was looking for, but that was still to come).

Some of the larger bookstores and kiosks around Cambridge carried magazines that I took notice of for the first time...mainly because I had learned of them and sought them out. Some of you may remember *Funnyworld*, *Mindrot* (yes, it did find its way out to Boston), and another magazine that frequently highlighted animation, *The Velvet Light Trap*. A journal search through the college library also turned up occasional articles in



Courtesy of Jerry Beck.

Film Comment and *The Journal of Popular Culture*. Both fanzines and journals served vital purposes during this phase of my journey: The fanzines introduced me to the animators and writers behind the cartoons and provided my first sketchy comprehension of animation history. The journals, despite their labyrinthine arguments, initiated my interest in linking animation to the larger arena of culture and society. It was a promising start, but it was at this point that the journey nearly ended forever.

A Special Bond

I was twenty-two when some cells in the depths of my bones celebrated 1978 by turning rogue; it was lymphoma. During my lengthy stay in a Boston research hospital, cartoons became a beacon of survival, providing me the most cheerful respite I could claim from the ravages of chemotherapy and radiation. I came to believe that if I could hold on each day until Woody Woodpecker showed up at 4:30, I would not die that evening. Until Woody made his

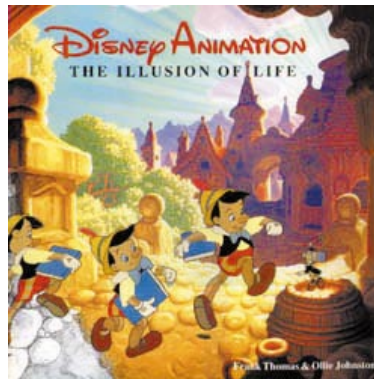
saving rounds there were books, brought to me from the public library, which kept my mind off daily travails while educating me at the same time: Joe Adamson’s biography of Tex Avery, Peary and Peary’s *The American Animated Cartoon*, and greatest of all, a new book that hit the shelves halfway through my treatment, Leonard Maltin’s classic work, *Of Mice and Magic*. The publication of this book defined the path of my journey; at last, in one volume, I found an entire history of animated cartoons. Maltin’s book tied together all the scraps I had been gathering and integrated them into a coherent timeline complete with places and personalities.

Woody Woodpecker kept his promise. The long, cyclic battle of health and relapse ended in 1981 when the usual tests could find no trace of disease anywhere. I had a second shot at life, and animation was to become a vital part of this new existence. As I recovered and planned my return to school, I began to attend my first animated film festivals. Some of them were nostalgic retrospectives

of American shorts, others featured the work of independents and some were foreign. I was exposed to such films as *Musical Pig* and *The Fifth One* from the Zagreb Studio, and it occurred to me that there were entirely different ways to present animated stories. I had begun to catch the sporadic Disney re-releases and was now able to view them through a different critical filter. Having kept an interest in cultural studies, I tried to view shorts and features as products of a specific society at a specific period in its history; meta-messages and sub-themes could be found in any given cartoon and it made animation all the more fascinating. Whether one was a proponent of the Frankfort school's neo-Marxian, hegemonic outlook, a proto-feminist, or a psychoanalytic acolyte, the fact remained the same, animated films were as open to subjective analysis as any live-action counterpart. The soppiest Casper cartoon had some sort of statement to make about common or divergent cultural values.

This stage of the journey, lasting from about 1982-86, was marked by an incessant search for books and articles that solidified my knowledge on the subject as well as study of film theory and criticism. Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnson published one of the industry's greatest books, *Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life*, and this awesome work taught me more about the process of making cartoons than anything I had studied up until then. Animation history was now my full-time hobby and I collected tapes by the mile. Combing through the dollar bins at cut-rate stores often netted me gems stuck on public domain compilations; I spent hours watch-

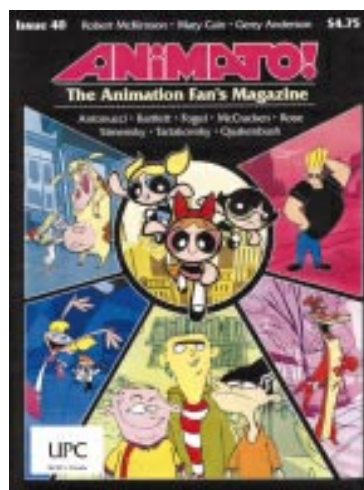
ing them. In 1987 I departed Massachusetts to pursue my doctoral studies in Indiana, but did not leave my passion for animation behind; several in my cohort began calling me "Dr. Toon" due to my propensity for relieving stress with videocassettes full of cartoons, and thus my *nom de plume*.



The Illusion of Life — long thought of as the bible of animation. Now out of print, copies sell for hundreds of dollars.

Taking the Plunge

I was a raw newbie when I got my first Internet-ready computer in 1995. Surfing for the first time at the age of forty, I discovered a broad new frontier of animation Websites and people. I tried to make up for lost time by going to every animation site I could find, and was shocked to discover that



Animato #40, featuring the famous article on Flip the Frog, one of publisher Patrick Duquette's favorites. Courtesy of Patrick Duquette.

some were filled with misinformation, poor research and apocryphal stories taken as verities. Some "official" sites seemed little more than shills. After learning how to surf more efficiently, I discovered the best and most informative animation Websites and increased my store of knowledge considerably. One of my favorite sites was Michelle Klein-Hass' *Animation Nerd's Paradise* (now lovingly archived on AWN). I vaguely remembered Michelle's name from back issues of *AniMato!*; soon her opinionated, outspoken style had me bookmarking the site for regular visits. Ms. Klein-Hass turned out to be the gatekeeper for the next segment of my journey.

I had always fantasized about publishing in a journal or fanzine someday; getting a piece into *AniMato!*, I imagined, would raise me at least to the level of James Agee. However, the thought of putting my work out there for others to read was as forbidding as a jaunt to Transylvania might be for Scooby Doo. It took considerable fortitude to answer Michelle's call for contributors, but on January 15, 1997, I shut my eyes and hit the "send" box. That week I was welcomed aboard ANP and given my first assignment: My new "employer" and I would tackle a joint review of *King of the Hill*. I still thank Michelle for her patience in dealing with my fumbling attempts to coordinate our efforts in cyberspace. She taught me how to work online efficiently, moderate my style, and develop the patience that is often needed when working with people with whom you can't see or speak immediately. Best of all, she helped me to develop the confidence that came with seeing your

name on material that people actually *wanted* to read and respond to.

One surprising response came in April of that year, after I had written a “rant” for Michelle concerning the DIC “Tex Avery” revival; it came from Michael Swanigan, editor of *TOON Magazine*, asking permission to run the piece in his next issue. A couple of months later, I saw my name in print for the first time. I remain with *TOON* today as a staff writer and cherish my unusual relationship with Michael, a generous man whom I have yet to meet, speak with, or see in person. The journey’s pace quickened; I began to receive e-mail from fans and those with questions about animation, and this was the most unexpected part of the journey. Some queries led to informal consulting duties for organizations such as the Danish Film Institute at Aarhus, The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. I was little prepared for this, but I did my best and provided the most cogent research and references I could muster. In December of 1997, one of my fantasies came true when Patrick Duquette accepted my first submission to *AniMatol*, a humble history of Flip the Frog.

Michelle Klein-Hass gave me my own column, “The Doctor Is In,” in May of 1997. For the next two years *Animation Nerd’s Paradise* was a happy home shared with Michelle and fellow columnist Tom Reed, but few things in life have permanence. Michelle made the decision to close ANP in the summer of 1999 but as always, she took good care of me; it was she who referred me to Dan Sarto and Heather Kenyon

at *Animation World Network*, and I signed on in June of 1999. I left behind twenty-one columns, including my most controversial: a defense of Bob Clampett’s *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (1998). I still receive e-mail about this piece, but the most startling response came from Robert Clampett Jr., who asked to post it (and a later column I had done on his father) on the official Bob Clampett Website. I was deeply honored to send the columns to Mr. Clampett; it was an act of gratitude for the happy hours his talented father had given me during my childhood.



“Working” for publications has allowed Dr. Toon to interview many cartoon greats, like Gene Deitch and Zdenka Deitchova. © AWN.

Many Rewards

In many ways, this past year has been the best of all. Research for a piece on *Tom Terrific* led to many warm exchanges with Gene Deitch, and while putting together an article on *The Mighty Heroes* I enjoyed a hilarious phone interview with Ralph Bakshi. Doing research with veterans like Buzz Potamkin and getting interviews with rising stars like Mo Willems have been the most recent and rewarding stops on the journey, but these are only experiences: the true reward comes when they are translated into columns and articles for the enjoyment of the animation community. There have been regrets

and frustrations, to be sure; a planned interview with Warners tuner George Daugherty was lost in a maze of missed calls and deadlines, and a two-year attempt to persuade a local university to let me teach a course in animation history and appreciation ended in failure. There is more animation out today than I can reasonably watch, especially in the realm of anime. Still, for a simple fan who holds down a day job and works outside of the industry, this journey has been among the most wonderful experiences of my life.

The most cherished aspect of this journey is the people I have met along the way. I am continually surprised at how friendly and forthcoming the animation community is. Producers, directors, editors, publicity people, animators, fellow journalists and the fans themselves have given generous support, assistance and interest throughout this enjoyable journey even though I am not a regular member of their circle. The fact that I have published nearly fifty pieces in four years has little to do with my own ability; it is rather a testimony to the kindness of those who have helped me along the path and guided me well. We are, after all, on the same journey. I’m the one beside you, taking notes, making calls and typing faster than Speedy Gonzales to make deadline. Together, we’ll keep on walking to Toontown.

Martin “Dr. Toon” Goodman is a longtime student and fan of animation. He lives in Anderson, Indiana.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.



Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

Annecy, Audiences, Art and Sandwiches

by Chris Robinson

I've never been a big fan of cinema audiences. Within those darkened, shadowed walls you can't help but see and hear a world that is a little bit fascistic. You either laugh or cry or applaud almost entirely in unison with the other seated souls. Emotions are suppressed so as not to disturb the others. It's entirely inappropriate to mock a film or laugh when others cry, or boo while the rest applaud. I just hate it. You can never truly be who you are. Emotions are tailored to the tune of your fellow audience members. It makes sense really and explains a lot of this society which carries the belief that, 'Rules say there is nothing more.' We live in a repressed era. The genuine or authentic are replaced by the mechanical or virtual. We cannot even laugh (on our own) at television. 'Canned' guffaws do that for us.

For this reason I always like two types of movie theatres. The first is kids' films. This is a wonderful experience. All these crazy little voices shouting an endless parade of grunts, guffaws and basic primary reactions unmediated and unconcerned with those around them. The second is the Annecy Animation Festival. It's great. They boo. They applaud sarcastically.

They whistle...throw beach balls around...and it's complimented by crazy closing ceremonies, generally poor film selection and, surprisingly, a general lack of 'taste.'

Contrary to the notion that the French have good taste, the audiences in Annecy seem devoid of any. They want bunny rabbits, ducks, farts and gag films. They loathe anything 'ambitious' or 'arty.' It's quite surprising given Annecy's roots, but reveals how far Annecy has strayed from those days of 'promoting the art of animation.' In particular I remember in Annecy '99 how the audience was merciless in watching Austrian artist, Barbel Neubauer's abstract film, *Firehouse*. They whistled and applauded throughout her film and then she had to stand on stage after it. It was a terrible experience and she was deeply hurt by it. Fortunately, the jury consisted of more open-minded people and Barbel received a prize in the end. Justice.

Festivals are the last haven for stimulating animation, but even within these walls this is becoming a threat. Christ, in Ottawa, I keep hearing the same ol' complaints: "How can you choose *The Night of the Carrots* over great animation like *Famous*

Fred?" What I loathe more than anything is that this mindset forces me to defend what is often an elitist group. When I became festival director I was eager to fight the apparent snob mentality of associations like ASIFA. For me, as long as a work stimulated me mentally, that was all I needed. I don't need to say this is ART and this is SHIT. But lately, I've found myself succumbing to the very elitism I loathe.

But hey, I may not agree with their taste, but I absolutely love this lovely crowd and wish other festival audiences would rise from the dead and respond. Animation festival theatres have become like the popular theatre of Brecht's time. He once said it was a world where the audience checked their head in at the door. The difference here is that the material being shown is usually high quality, provocative, challenging and innovative, but what we find is a case of over-polite, repressed audiences...and Christ, I don't know what life is like within commercial studio walls, but the independent crowd can be extremely conservative. It's part of this desperate attempt to project animation as a bourgeois art form. To applaud quietly and politely (like a golf clap wherein three fingers gently tap the palm of the other hand) and to cry over *Father and Daughter* is really about defining a notion of high art. To boo, heckle or applaud sarcastically is to reflect primitive, primate qualities attributed to low brow culture (eg. sports fans).

And yes animation is defined as entertainment and it needs to be more accepted as a stimulated form of expression. However these 'proper' artists (you know who they are) merely rein-

force the very social injustice and inequalities they often critique. As another Frenchman said, by creating a high and low in art, you are merely reinforcing social or class differences. And this is often the problem (I've been guilty of it at times too). Too often we divide animation into a polarization of art vs. industry. Disney vs. McLaren, etc. We frown upon those commercial 'twits' who are 'unrefined' and lack sophistication, while we golf clap a Frédéric Back, Raoul Servais or Yuri Norstein film. Yet, this very attitude only further distances 'artistic' animation from the general audience. No one wants to be told WHAT is proper. The high brow enthusiasts have created a colony where we are told that to enter this realm you must understand proper etiquette or the 'delicate sensibilities' of a Renoir. Yeah...well, whatever. I'm gonna go and clean the shit off my shoes and make a sandwich...and ya know what? I'm not going to properly slice the sandwich into four pieces. Just gonna eat the whole friggin' thing. This colony of supposed sophisticates is a creation of those in power. It makes them feel better about themselves. It makes them special.

It fills a bland materialist existence. Funny, but the irony of my bitching is that I had to go to University to learn that HIGH and LOW distinctions are silly.

We need to move beyond the extremes of art vs. industry. Yes, there are commercial crafts-folk who blindly reject anything with content, but there are also those so-called sophisticated folks who are just as blind in their assumptions. For example, *Father and Daughter*, *The Old Man and The Sea* and *The Mighty River* are considered beautiful, DELICATE, sophisticated works...in general...by the 'experts'...but shit *Father and Daughter* is a hollow effort. Yes, it's a beautifully designed film, but its story is sappy and emotional and really bares more resemblance to let's say *Geri's Game* than more provocative pieces like *The Hat* or *Flying Nansen*. Hell, I've seen episodes of *The Simpsons* and *South Park* that are more mentally stimulating and provide as scintillating a social critique as any Priit Parn film. It's like Charles Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Chaplin wanted to be a serious artist. Keaton wanted to make people laugh.

In the end, Keaton made more profound works.

Okay...rambling a bit... what's my point? 1. Annecy screenings are the best because you can be an individual. 2. Annecy audiences, however, can be very unsophisticated. 3. The word, ART and all the other slang associated with it (i.e. sophisticated) needs to be re-defined. 4. I do not cut my sandwiches.

Hottie Animator o' da Month

Well...he's not an animator, but Dr. Toon is a hottie. This man can write. Read it. Love it. Eat it. This month's Animation Pimp is sponsored by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Quebec police: "Nothing says police state like tear gas, pepper spray and designated protest areas."

Chris Robinson is a writer, festival director, programmer, junky and has been called the John Woo of diplomacy. His hobbies include horseback riding, pudpulling, canoeing and goat thumping.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Bonus HTML Features

Every on-line (HTML) issue of *Animation World Magazine* contains additional features not found in the download or print Acrobat version, such as QuickTime movies, links to Animation World Network sites, extended articles and special sections. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

- **Cartoons on the Bay: A Different Type of Festival**

Go on line to see more photos from Cartoons on the Bay, the world's only television animation festival, a uniquely Italian event set in the midst of some of the earth's most beautiful scenery, at:
http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=152

The Australian Effects and Animation Festival 2001

by Stephen Lynch

Australia's visual effects community gathered at Sydney's Darling Harbor Convention Centre for the 6th Australian Effects and Animation Festival (AEAF) from February 26 – 28, 2001. While their motives for attending may have been as diversified as the festival's sessions, all visitors left with the same outcome: an invaluable experience and insight into the digital world at large.



Hael Kobayashi and Tim Alexander from Industrial Light & Magic.
All photos courtesy and © AEAF.

"Our target audience consists of a broad range," stated festival chairman and editor of *Digital Media World*, Bill Dawes. "From students to craftspeople, animators, post-production professionals and technical experts within the industry." One of the major attractions for these attendees was the festival's line-up of guest speakers, which included a comprehensive gathering of local and international experience. "We got Hael Kobayashi from ILM to take Australian animators through the process of how to get a gig in this

industry, and how to structure their careers," enthused Dawes. "For an Australian animator to get that sort of information from ILM is a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Apart from such overseas talent, the festival also provided the chance for two Australian animators, who have made their mark overseas, to partake in a sort of homecoming. Karen Ansel, who has worked on such films as *The Mask*, *The Klumps* and *What Dreams May Come*, pondered on the differences between working locally and in America. "Australia makes you flexible, because you really have to do everything. You're not slotted into one particular area, whereas in the U.S. you might be working on one sequence for 2 years. The plus side of working in the States was that there is a greater sharing of technological knowledge. In Australia, where the competition is tougher, people tend to hold onto their information a little bit."

Also returning home was James Rogers, the composite supervisor for the upcoming film *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*. Opening with clips from the full motion videos of the *Final Fantasy* games, James pointed out that, "If you ever question why Square decided to make a movie, looking at those videos should give you a fairly good idea of the logical progression." Following on with exclusive clips from the film, including never-before-seen

behind the scenes footage, James gave an in-depth explanation of the process of creating a shot, from storyboard through to final composition. While the film had an average number of nine layers per shot, James shocked his audience when he recalled that the largest number of layers in one frame was 498. "That was a very bad day at the office."



Robyn Schremmer, design director, Digital Pictures, and Chris Nurse, CEO of Attik London, proved that people travelled to attend this event.

Undoubtedly a draw-card for the festival, *Final Fantasy's* inclusion in the line-up, coupled with Mark Coleran's glimpse of his work on *Tomb Raider*, highlighted the relationship between film animation and video games animation. As Bill Dawes confirmed, "Previously that quality of animation was limited to the opening cinematics of major computer games. Then when you would go

to the game play, where the animation has to be rendered in real-time by the graphics processor on the console or PC, [it wouldn't be as good]. Although it could not be of the quality of the pre-rendered sequence, I think we are now approaching that level with products like the X-Box and PS2. You are also seeing similar developments in the quality of animation produced for feature films. In terms of the presentation we saw of *Final Fantasy* and *Shrek*, we are close to photo-real capabilities, making animation of even two or three years ago appear second rate."



Mike and Jane Hollands from Act III in Melbourne were some of the award-winning local talent on the scene.

As someone who has worked on both film and video games, James Rogers believes the difference between the two mediums is minimal: "It's really in the way you approach the material. A game is on a small screen, a film is on a big screen, so your attention to detail and certain scenes is slightly shifted. Whereas on a film, you might fret about a freckle on the side of the actresses face, on a game you are less likely to worry about that." In fact, freckles and other blemishes are just some of the features that Square USA took pains to include in their 'actors' faces, resulting in a photo-realism that removes the 'china-doll' look which is so common in this type of

animation. "It's funny, because the ironic thing is that it's difficult to make hair dirty," joked James. "You may be able to see single strands, but you hope that some of them clump together like they do in real people."



Photon VFX was well represented by Michael Holzl on the left, head of 3D, and producer Soren Jensen.

Day 3 of the festival was set aside for master classes, which were designed to teach attendees about specific areas of digital effects and animation. Michael Sarkis of Photon VFX, who conducted a class on motion control, explained that: "It shows people who may specialize in one area how different technologies and different companies are using the tools that are available in order to solve problems. There is a lot of technology on display here, but the fundamental thing is that it is a tool that allows people to be creative and achieve results. Being able to broaden your horizons and find how different things on the market can be linked together, or how you can use a tool in a way you might not have known before, this will come out in these master classes. People through their experience can show you how to use these tools to create images."

The same could be said of the festival as a whole. Enabling Australia's visual effects community to be exposed not only to the

work being performed locally and internationally, but also to interact first hand with those responsible for that work, is a rare thing indeed. As Bill Dawes concluded, "When Laurence Treweek from Sony finished his session, he mentioned that he was currently recruiting for projects such as *Stuart Little 2* and *Harry Potter*. He was promptly swamped by half the studio audience getting his card and email address and providing him with their CVs. The fact that we can provide that sort of opportunity is unique."



Among the award winners was Momentum Animation Studios, represented here by Dylan Perry, director/CEO, and Stephanie Gilles, animator.

And the Winners Are...

On the final night of AEA, the festival announced its winners in an upscale ceremony hosted at the Sydney Convention Centre in Darling Harbour. Boasting a record number of submissions and judges like ILM's Rob Coleman and Peter Giles, head of digital media at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, Australian effects companies took home a number of prizes in categories filled with U.K. and U.S. competition.

- Feature Film: *The Grinch* (Digital Domain)
- Games: *Starship Troopers* (Act III)
- Commercials, Animation: Gatorade "Raptor vs. Raptor" (ILM)
- Commercials, VFX: TDK "Evolve"

(Digital Pictures)

■ Music Videos: Bardot "I Should've Never Let You Go" (Momentum Animation)

■ TV Series: *Curse of the Talisman* (Photon VFX)

■ Titles, Idents & Stings: Hoyts "Experience" (GMD)

■ Student: *Intransit* (Mike Daly)

■ Web Animation: *Westvale Road* (Momentum Animation)

■ Education & Training: *A Neural*

Journey (Animated Biomedical Productions)

■ Short Film: *For the Birds* (Pixar Animation Studios)

Stephen Lynch has written about the various aspects of filmmaking for books and magazines throughout Australia, England and America, as well as co-hosting Flicks, a weekly film review program.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

PLYMPMART



**Cels, videos,
books, t-shirts,
posters and more...
Now available
in the
AWN Store!**

<http://www.awn.com/awnstore>



Animation World Network, 5700 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600, Los Angeles, CA 90036
Phone (323) 634-3400 • Fax (323) 634 3301 • E-mail info@awn.com

The Magic Pudding: Making A Feature In Oz

by Stephen Lynch

Robbert Smit has been hailed as Australia's most experienced animation director. Not only has he worked on such television series as *Scooby Doo*, *Dark Wing Duck* and *Two Stupid Dogs*, but he has also directed the feature films *Footrot Flats* and *Blinky Bill*. As such, he is well-versed in the difficulties associated with adapting an Australian favourite into an animated feature film, a challenge he has risen to once more in his role as animation director of Energee Entertainment's production of *The Magic Pudding*. Recently I spoke to Robbert about this adaptation of Norman Lindsay's classic children's tale.

Stephen Lynch: Unlike some animated features, you've actually tried to keep very close to the original design of the characters from the book. What sort of problems did that pose?

Robbert Smit: That's a tricky one, because I actually wanted to make it even closer to the book drawings. More of a pencil sketch line, which in traditional animation you would achieve with cel artwork. However the requirement with this production was to push the boundaries and frontiers of digital application, so we had to modify the line work a little bit so that it could be more digital friendly. It's very difficult to do a sketch drawing and paint it on



Albert, The Magic Pudding, voiced by John Cleese, gets a hand from Bill Barnacle. All images courtesy and © Energee Entertainment.

digital, because the colours go everywhere, so we had to work with a clean line to contain the colour areas of the character design. To compensate for the loss of that rough Lindsay line look, we added a lot of body contour shadow, drop shadow and highlights to the final image.

SL: That was particularly evident in the character of Bill Barnacle.

RS: When characters are small you can get away with minimal



Left to right, Bill (Hugo Weaving), Sam Sawnoff (Sam Neill), Bunyip Bluegum (Geoffrey Rush) and Albert enjoy a chat, some pudding and lots of singing and dancing in the Outback.

body contour shadow. It's when you get up close to big characters and big body areas that you really need some additional moulding to break down the big flat areas, which on a cinematic screen can be very overwhelming.

SL: How were the CGI shots on the film achieved?

RS: They were all done on the Inferno system. That was probably the most extreme hi-tech equipment that we used on the film.

SL: Did they pose problems with regard to budget?

RS: Yes. We virtually had to go through the whole script, once we had the storyboard, and allocate areas where we could maximise the use of the 3D. Scenes, which with traditional animation would be very difficult to achieve, became quite achievable with the 3D format.

SL: Apart from the first appearance of the pudding where he drops through the clouds, what was the stand-out CGI shot for you?

RS: The one where he actually explodes. That was probably the biggest. It took 3 days to process, with each frame talking something like 1.4 minutes. It took some huge crunching. But all we did there was supply the artwork for six puddings and then we multiplied that over and over again. It was completely composited in Inferno using basic artwork and creating this massive explosion. To get that sort of quality and that amount of puddings would have been almost impossible to achieve in any traditional sense. There

were great benefits of having that facility available.

SL: How difficult was it creating new characters that were 'sympathetic' to the look of the original characters?

RS: Buncle went through quite a lot of changes. We came up with a human character first, which had some very good designs, but it just didn't quite gel. Then I thought Possum and Wombat, the innocent pudding thieves, were animal based and Buncle being the instigator of those two characters should have some kin relations. So then it became clear that Buncle should be an animal. I think we succeeded in making a villain, which looks like it could be a Norman Lindsay character. We derived a lot of the design work from Lindsay's other works, not just the book, but also his political cartoons of that time. We got a lot of inspiration for the other characters in the film from the other areas of work that he did.



Smit paid special attention to bringing the distinctive Australian landscape to *The Magic Pudding*.

SL: The landscapes in the film have quite a unique look about them.

RS: I love the countryside of Australia. Coming from Holland, I'm very aware of the moods and colour changes, the light, and the

shape of the mountains, and how they're different to Europe. Here they're rounded mountains, not sharp. It's an old continent, and the saturation of colour into the Australian light is so different than the European colour. The blues and the mauves that you see in the hills. Mauve is very much a basic theme colour all the way through the film. There's always a touch of mauve somewhere. It's that Blue Mountains-hazy backdrop. The difficulty was that Lindsay did not do too much color work. It was always black and white line work. So to get a sympathetic color scheme running through the film and still make it look like Lindsay was quite a challenge. As soon as you put colour to drawing it changes the whole feel.

With the advent of digital animation, there's a big gap between the traditional animator and the new digital animator.

SL: What are some of the challenges in making an animated feature film in Australia?

RS: It's an ongoing difficulty. There are several factors. If you have an established studio like Disney, you have overlapping productions, so that animators can refine their art and continue to get better as they move along, because they have a constant flow of work, constant training schemes for new talent,

constant handing down of information from older animators. Here we have this stop/start problem, where there is about six or seven years between productions. In that time you have huge changes. With the advent of digital animation, there's a big gap between the traditional animator and the new digital animator. That gap is actually creating a new breed of animator that hasn't got the traditional principles of animation, so you're constantly working with people who have knowledge, but of a different application. Therefore, it's difficult for us to get a good group together that can actually perform all the different aspects of animation as a cohesive form. And to get a group trained and working together, you need a lot of time, and we haven't got that time. So you have to appoint people to different positions of the film and hope that they can do the job to the best of their ability. That is a difficulty in this process.

SL: Am I right in saying that digital animators don't have that training in form and movement?



Because production in Australia is not steady, evolving an experienced crew in all production facets is tough.

RS: It's more timing. Timing is the problem. Just discipline in the application of animation. The procedures of getting to an end result without having too many re-shoots. You can't blame the digital

person because his area is so quick and easy to fix in comparison to the traditional animator, where everything has to be done right up front to get an end result.

SL: How much of the film was actually completed in Australia as opposed to off-shore work?

RS: All the pre-production was done here, as well as all the storyboarding, scripting, character design, layout, key animation scenes and character expressions. It was very imperative that we did that. However in this particular case we just could not get enough mature animators to animate up to feature film quality. So we had to go overseas for the bulk of the animation work. Then all the animation gets sent back here and we scan it and composite it all and do all the finishing art. We had to

do it that way to get it done.

SL: Are you concerned about the competition the bigger studios may throw at the film when it's released?

It's difficult for us to get a good group together that can actually perform all the different aspects of animation as a cohesive form.

RS: Well, I think dollar for dollar we are giving the audience a hell of a lot more than a 60 million dollar production. I can't see any other studio producing this kind of

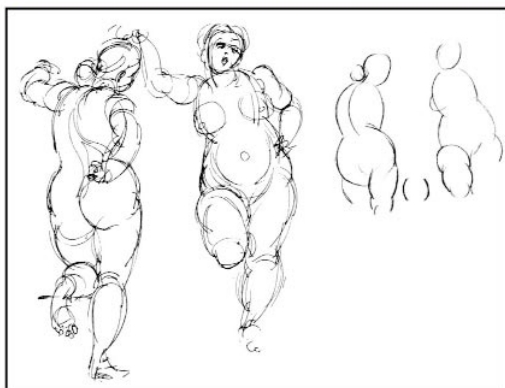
film, with the amount of work and quality that's in it, for a fifth of the price. I'm not saying that a fifth of the price is a good thing and that we should stick to that, but that's what we can manage to raise here and make something work. I think studios like Disney should take note that we made this for 10-12 million dollars, where they probably wouldn't touch this sort of project for less than 60 million dollars.

Stephen Lynch has written about the various aspects of film-making for books and magazines throughout Australia, England and America, as well as co-hosting Flicks, a weekly film review program.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Animation World Store

<http://www.awn.com/awnstore/vilppu>



Never before available!!!

Glenn Vilppu's drawing techniques manual and video tapes, used worldwide as course material for animation students.



Special Effects from Down Under: A Growing Proposition

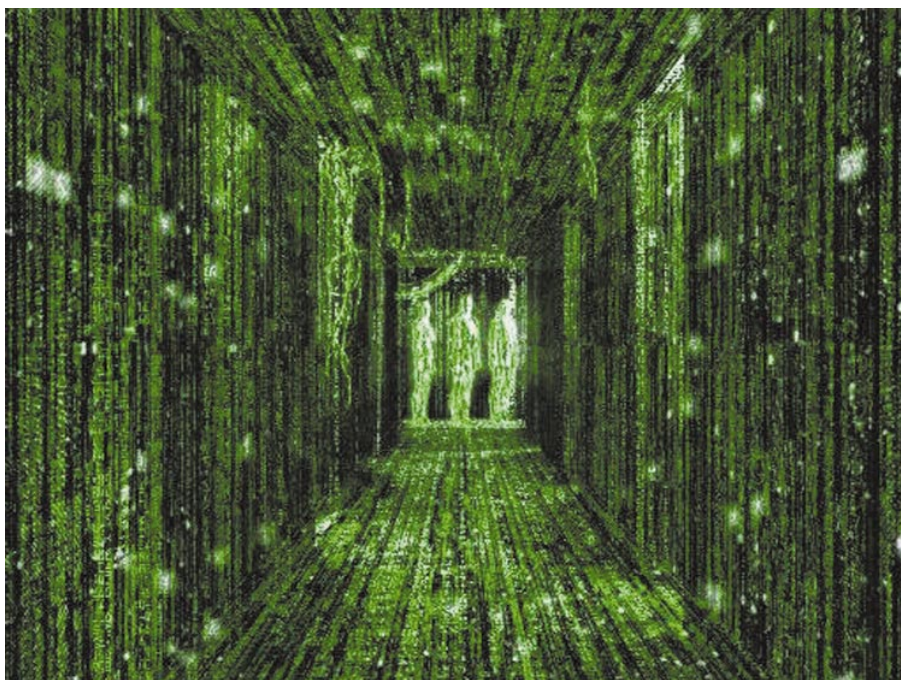
by Stephen Lynch

When the digital revolution swept through the filmmaking community, few could have foretold that some of its leading exponents would come from the land down under. Small budget films had long been the mainstay of Australian films and the cost involved in visual effects seemed to place it outside the reach of local filmmakers. Yet some effects houses saw the opportunity that lay ahead and geared up to take advantage of this new technology.

Breaking In

Rachael Turk, who is the communications manager of Animal Logic, recalls how the company first became involved in film visual effects. "It was around 1994. We started getting involved with Australian productions, doing title designs for films like *Dating the Enemy* and *Blackrock*, but it wasn't until 1997 that we actually formalized it by creating Animal Logic Film." That same year Animal Logic won the contract to provide the titles for the John Woo film *Face/Off*. "That was when we hit the big time. That credential became a calling card for our VFX supervisor Chris Godfrey, so when he went around knocking on doors, he was allowed through. The rest of course has been up to him."

Since their initial breakthrough Animal Logic have provid-



Australian effects companies are finding work on the biggest Hollywood pictures, as Animal Logic proved with their work on *The Matrix*. © Warner Bros. All rights reserved.

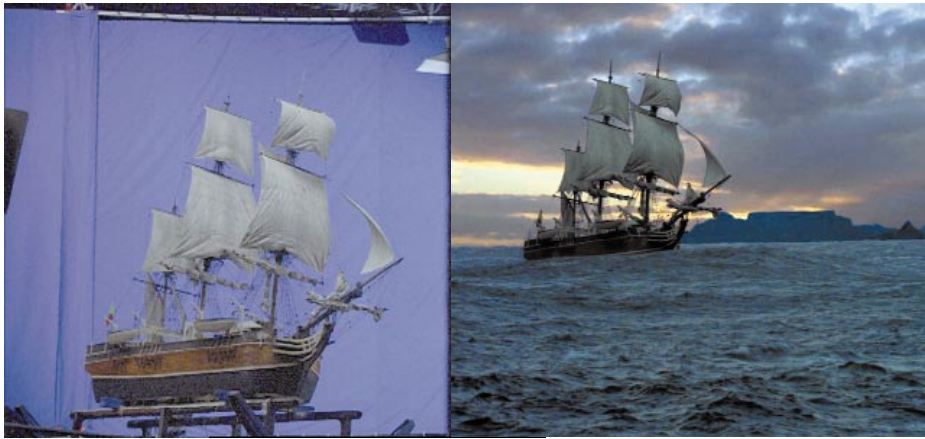
ed visual effects for such films as *The Thin Red Line*, *Babe 2* and *Holy Smoke*, illustrating just how successful they have been in capitalizing on this opportunity. Last year they were afforded the ultimate recognition when their work on *The Matrix*, for which they created over a hundred shots, won an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. "It's amazing how strong that film is," ponders Rachael. "We still get lots of inquiries about it. At the time it was released it had an enormous impact as far as box office and popular culture, so it's only natural that some of that fed directly back to Animal Logic and increased our business."

It is a theme taken up by

Soren Jensen of Photon VFX, a company whose credits over the last ten years include the television series *The Lost World*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and the Emmy-nominated *Moby Dick*. "We are totally reliant on return of business, so we have to make our stuff extra good. We basically care for our product. We massage material until we are all happy with it, whereas in a lot of the countries like the United States, there are so many FX companies they just spit it out at an enormous rate."

Many Factors

This difference in scale between Australia and America has also led to a different model of



**Photon VFX took to the high seas with their work on *Moby Dick*.
© Whale/Nine Network Australia.**

operation between the two countries. Peter Webb, who before starting work at local FX house Phenomena worked on such U.S. productions as *Batman Forever* and *Coneheads*, points out that, "American companies, because of the throughput, have to specialize and compartmentalize people, whereas in Australia you have to be more resourceful. Rather than spending 5 or 6 weeks in development, and then having a texture team working for 6 months to get a scene to look a certain way, here we just hit the ground running and come up with the results much more quickly. We're very resourceful through necessity, and I think that filmmakers like that."

It certainly is one of the reasons for the increasing work heading Australia's way, but there are many other contributing factors that have converged to put Australia in its current position. Some are beyond the control of the industry, such as the state of the Australian dollar, but other factors that were once seen as an impediment, are now viewed as an asset.

"Technical evolution has been part of the film globalization," explains Rachael Turk, "enabling us to transcend physical and geographical time zone barriers.

What we have now is a 24-hour workday, with half-day shifts between Australia and America. At the close of our day we can send over our output so that when the client wakes up, they're ready to do revisions and send back their comments. There's even an overlap of about 5 hours each morning where we can have direct contact over the phone to work things out."

Lower Budgets At Work

This technical evolution has also reaped benefits for the smaller-budgeted Australian films. Chris Schwarze, who together with wife Kerri founded Complete Post, recalls that, "Initially Australian producers were very reluctant to get involved with visual effects, but gradually they started to realize

that this stuff could actually save them money. Simple things like crowd generation to save on extras and set extensions to save on building enormous sets. So now people are using visual effects to get the look that they couldn't otherwise get and to save them money."

Peter Webb confirms this view: "With lower budgets you can't afford to just stay on set for another 3 days and wait for that perfect sunset, or move the whole crew 50 miles across country just to get that beautiful shore-line. With visual effects you can add that at a much lower cost. I guess the phrase I would use is less compromise. Less compromise visually, which translates into less compromise in the storytelling. If some important story point needs to be made we can look for ways to achieve that."

Yet smaller budgets obviously do influence to what extent visual effects are used in a film. Kerri Schwarz states that, "It is a challenge, but at the same time I think that's what makes us innovative in our industry. It's because we have to be, with the sort of budgets we have to work with. It's not a case of having a lot of money to splash around. It's trying to solve problems and coming up with



**Fox's wild spin on the classic tale *Romeo + Juliet* included the work of Complete Post.
™ and © 1996 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.**



Photon VFX proves that there is more than one way to sever a hand in *When Good Ghouls Go Bad*. © Fox Television.

ideas within the budget range that we have."

Offering Solutions

It is an opinion shared amongst Australia's effects houses. Soren Jensen, who has just wrapped work on the U.S. tele-movie *When Good Ghouls Go Bad*, states that, "We pride ourselves that there is always more than one way to achieve an effect. If our clients need a severed hand, we can let them know that you can make a 3D hand, or you can film a real hand and doctor it, or you can do it as a prosthetic hand with wire removal. There are always different methods of attacking the same problem."

The growing confidence in Australian visual effects has enabled some of these methods to be used together to make possible any complex shot required in a script. In the upcoming film *Subterano*, remote control toys terrorize humans trapped in an underground car park. Peter Webb, who is the film's VFX supervisor, states, "I always advocate that if you can achieve an effect in-camera for real, it's always the best way to go. However, if the drama calls for something that you can't do, then you use computer effects to do that. Peter Stubbs and Filmtrix developed animatronic

creatures that they used on set with remote controls, but at certain times there were things that they couldn't physically do. So we've created CG versions of these creatures to carry out those tasks, such as when they break down into little balls."

Another Australian visual effects film on the horizon is *Cubbyhouse*. Chris Schwarze believes, "It is actually one of the most intensive Australian visual effects films ever. We had to create the demon that inhabits the cubbyhouse, and vines that come out and attack people. Quite often you might get a large shot count in a feature film and a lot of it is simple work like wire removal, but basically every shot in this film was a challenge."

More Big Projects

Apart from the smaller budgeted films, Australian artistry is also showcased in Baz Luhrmann's upcoming musical *Moulin Rouge!* "It isn't like anything you've seen before," enthuses Rachael Turk. "It's not a period piece, it's not a blockbuster, and it's not art house. Animal Logic has created as many effects on this as *The Matrix* had in entirety, so it is by far the largest project we have ever undertaken. The biggest part was to create 19th century Paris, which was not just a matter of touching up a few archive photos. It's to actually build an interpretation of Paris at that time, which involves thousands of buildings at various degrees of proximity. It has been challenging, logistically and creatively, but obviously that's what we seek. That's what we thrive on."

Which is as good a reason as any to explain the popularity of Australian VFX companies. In summation, Turk concludes, "You've



Animal Logic helped bring Toulouse Lautrec's Paris to life in *Moulin Rouge!* © 2001 Fox and its related entities.

probably heard all the reasons; exchange rate, flexibility, methodology and attitude of Australian crews. These are all important factors in attracting foreign productions, but at the end of the day, major studios wouldn't risk big budgets and their reputations on anything less than marquee production skills."

To which Peter Webb adds, "They just wouldn't do it if the job that we did wasn't as good as what they could get back home. We've got fabulous locations here, and a talent pool that's the equal of the best. So it's a win-win situation."

Stephen Lynch has written about the various aspects of filmmaking for books and magazines throughout Australia, England and America, as well as co-hosting Flicks, a weekly film review program.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Having What It Takes: A Recruiting Survey

compiled by Joan Kim

What *must* you have on your résumé to ensure that you'll get in the door for an interview? And what does it really take to get the job? What are the folks behind the desks looking for? What is most important? With the development of new tools and the many changes taking place in the animation industry is there anything that an applicant absolutely needs to include on their résumé to make sure they will be considered? The dramatic shift from traditional to tradigital and digital production has potential job applicants puzzled over what today's animation employers are looking for. Here are some responses and insights from the folks that do the hiring about what's crucial to be a strong contender in this tough market.



Throughout its history, Blue Sky Studios has maintained a single-minded focus on creating high quality imagery, while upholding the highest production standards. Our animators work from a foundation of classic animation principles and are adept in Maya. When searching for animators, talent and passion are paramount over academic accomplishment.

When reviewing reels we look at the timing, acting and posing of the characters. The most

important thing to remember when pulling together a reel is that one must concentrate on the area in which one is interested. Animators should focus on animation and not worry about the textures or lighting of their piece.



Known for Oscar winning work like *Bunny*, *Blue Skies* is a prize to have on any resume. © Blue Sky Studios.

For those just starting in the field, the easiest way to "break in" is to find schools that have relationships and good track records with placing interns/graduates in one's field of interest — whether that be games, animation, stop-motion, etc. One should make sure to take courses including fine arts, animation, life drawing, film classes (filmmaking, storyboarding, video editing, special effects — anything around making and understanding films) and acting classes to help understand movement.

Laura A. Bellantoni
Human Resources Supervisor
Blue Sky Studios



In selecting a potential hire, we first look at the artist's ability exhibited in their portfolio or reel. Secondly, we'll look at the list of software programs on their résumé, which they're knowledgeable in since we're often looking for a specific program, such as LightWave or After Effects. Thirdly, we'll look for their range of professional experience.

Obviously, different skills are needed for different artistic areas. Basically, we want to see that you are oriented toward the kind of product we create here, so you'll be able to produce and contribute freely, from the heart. Plugging into people's instincts and interest delivers the best work.

Kat Fair
Head of Recruitment
Nickelodeon Animation Studio



Well, it is essential to have artistic talent and passion for the position that you are seeking. Having an eye for detail and a good sense of composition is what I look for first. Past experience, and the ability to work in a number of mediums and styles, would run a close second. Any computer skills are always an added bonus, but I tend to look at it as an added spice rather than the main ingredient. I

am often surprised when I receive resumes and reels that focus more on computer skills rather than artistic ability. I consider somebody with an overall understanding of the process and art history in general, as opposed to an artist well versed in the latest software. The ability to communicate and knowledge of art will always take you a long way. Ultimately it is about the applicants' ability to produce beautiful work on a consistent basis and in a timely fashion.



Everything You Want To Be.
© Acme Filmworks

One last thing, a fancy résumé never grabs my attention. Short, sweet and simple. Let your reel and experience do the talking for you.

Leonard Vasquez
Studio Manager
Acme Filmworks



One of, if not, *the* most important characteristics we look for in a 3D artist is the overall *feeling* for color and composition fully expressed in their work. A candidate always should be able to show at least a few examples they've created by and for themselves. The presented work has to show the commitment and motivation of the candidate, not a projection of his ego. Perfectionism is

not obligatory, but much appreciated.

Strong drawing skills are not necessary but a strong bonus. If an artist excels in drawing skills, even the knowledge of 3D software is not a must. However, note that being familiar with an extensive range of software is considered an enormous added value.

The type of software an artist uses is irrelevant, as long as the person is willing to use a variety of software. In addition, we look for someone who can keep an open mind to critics and enjoys being part of a constructive and positive thinking team.

Rudy Verbeeck
CEO and Co-founder
Imagination In Motion



Two things: Talent and the ability to play nicely with others.

In addition to having stop-motion and cel animation departments, curious pictures does 3D and 2D CG animation so we're always on the lookout for character animators, TDs and composers. In finding artists, résumés hardly get looked at. A good reel is the only thing that counts. While favorites do exist, we're not a software specific house. Our staffers are mostly multilingual in that capacity. Hence for new hires we will watch all reels and just look for the pure screaming talent that exists in the obvious — good performance from animators, believable comps from composers, etc. We also like to find people who bring in experience from other areas. We have CG artists on staff who came from cel animation, architecture, painting and even the vaulted task of wedding



These shots show the innovative type of work done at curious pictures.
© curious pictures.

videography.

Also, as a rule we do not bring an artist on staff unless we already have had an opportunity to work with them on a freelance or short term basis. We need to be sure that they fit well into our happy little group. We look for problem solvers who take initiative, people who can think outside of the box, as well as know to sometimes look beyond CG to find solutions.

On top of all that, serious interest in snowboarding is a plus.

Boo Wong
Head of CG
curious pictures



Regardless of our industry treating computer technology as an indispensable tool in aiding us in what we do, the fundamental basics still apply when evaluating potential employees. These are drawing talent, dedication/enthusiasm and the ability to work effectively with others. Mind you, we're a small studio specializing in 2D

animation, but we are entirely digital in our method of converting our “hands on” approach to animation. I’d be attracted to a résumé that includes PhotoShop, Premiere, CTP, etc., but I’m still going to look for basic art and film talent, lots of life drawing and initiative in completing their own projects. We work in several design and animation styles appropriate for any given project. A lot of the time we’re in the midst of developing an animation approach that’s never been done before, so I need people that are flexible and come without preconceived notions of how something should be done. I think that’s why I like the craft so much. It’s the artist/creator/visionary that matters — not the technology.

J.J. Sedelmaier
President and Director
J.J. Sedelmaier Productions, Inc.



Mainly we are looking for stop-motion animators. First of all we usually need an up-to-date demo-reel of their last work in this field of business and a CV. In addition, we talk with the animators about what they did on the production that the demo-reel didn’t really tell us. Sometimes we get a reel and the actual work of the animator was just a small part of the films. Besides this we also need statements from the producer or a reference and credits. But, in the end the best way to get a sense of the animator is to speak directly and have a conversation with them. After that we create a short-list of animators. Before we start the project we invite the animators for final test-animation. At this point the director and director of

animation will be together with the animators. The test will take 2-3 days and the director and director of animation will give a final statement about the skills and experience of the animators (it’s like a test at art school). The final test is very important in getting a clearer understanding for the time schedule that we will need to put together later on in the production of the show. The schedule says something about the output per day and the length of the production. Young animators are usually slow in the beginning and they get progressively faster toward the end. Animators with more experience are fast from the beginning but they may get tired after awhile. Generally, young animators are willing to learn a lot. The final crew will be a mixture out of both, young and experienced

animators.

For an animator we look on the demo-reel to see the quality of the character action. We want to see how the animator thinks as an actor. Also important is the technical standard in terms of puppet movement, smoothness and output of animation per day. In the end experience proves to be very important, and will be visible through the work they did on the CV (how many projects per year tells a lot about that — because the animator needs to be in training). Also a stop-motion animator should know some technical tools, like the video-line test, handling a camera (35mm or digital) and how to handle storage of the pictures, etc.

We only do a little bit of computer work — for that I cannot say as much! But definitely, I would be interested in the software they have used, how long they needed to complete a project and how the project was organized.

Thomas Schneider
Head of Animation
scopas Medien AG



Mo Gang, a series by scopas Medien AG.
© scopas Medien AG.

Joan Kim received her B.A. in English Literature from UCLA and is currently freelancing in Los Angeles completing writing and graphics related projects. Previously as a graphics consultant she produced several company reports and manuals and continues to pursue an education in computer graphics.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

The Career Coach: Resumes That Work

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

In today's competitive animation job market, make sure your marketing materials are current so you can stay competitive too. Your marketing materials are your resume, cover letter, portfolio and demo reel. Here are some tips on how to craft a resume that will help you get the job you want.

As a recruiter, career coach and consultant I have seen thousands of resumes. Most people write resumes based on their past, but your resume is the ticket to your future. Aim it at the job you want, not the job you've had. Whether you are an artist with many years experience or a production manager just starting your career, your resume is the key to getting the job you want. Here are some ways to make sure that it works for you.

A resume should include:

- Contact info
- Goal/Objective
- Skills
- Software knowledge
- Work experience
- Education
- Awards
- Organizations
- Other interests

Contact Info: Be sure to include your name, address, phone number with current area code, email address and Website address if you have one.

Goal/Objective: Be as specific as possible. Describe the job that



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

would give you the most satisfaction. All the content in your resume should support your goal/objective. Focus your resume on the job you want.

Skills: List them and be specific. Resumes are often scanned into computers now and searches are done by keywords. If you are a concept artist who does character designs as well as background designs and color key, state it in your skills list. If you don't, you may be passed over for a job.

Software Knowledge: Again, be specific. Don't use the phrase "a variety of 3D and 2D software." State specifically whether you know Maya, Lightwave or Photoshop and your level of expertise with each: expert, proficient, novice.

Work Experience: Besides listing the company, your job title and project, write what you did there.

What did you do day-to-day? Don't forget any internships or other unpaid work experiences if they relate to your goal/objective.

Be specific in any accomplishments and achievements. Use specific numbers whenever possible. If you supervised a team, how many people were on it? Don't hesitate to name names, specific clients or specific projects you worked on.

List your experience in reverse chronological order—most recent job first (at the top) and work backwards.

Education: Where you went to school, area of study, degrees.

Awards: Don't forget to mention awards or honors you have received. Your resume is a place to brag about yourself. Don't be modest.

Organizations: Are you a member or an officer in an industry related organization?

Other interests: Do you perform community service that is related to the job you want? If you are an avid video game player and you want a job with a game company, it would be good to mention it here.

Things not to include on a resume:

- Art work (you can attach some, if you want)
- A photo
- Personal information such as marital status, sexual orientation, health, religion, age, ethnic background, race or disabilities

Don't send a Web address to anyone and expect them to find your resume there. If you want someone to have your resume,

send it to them.

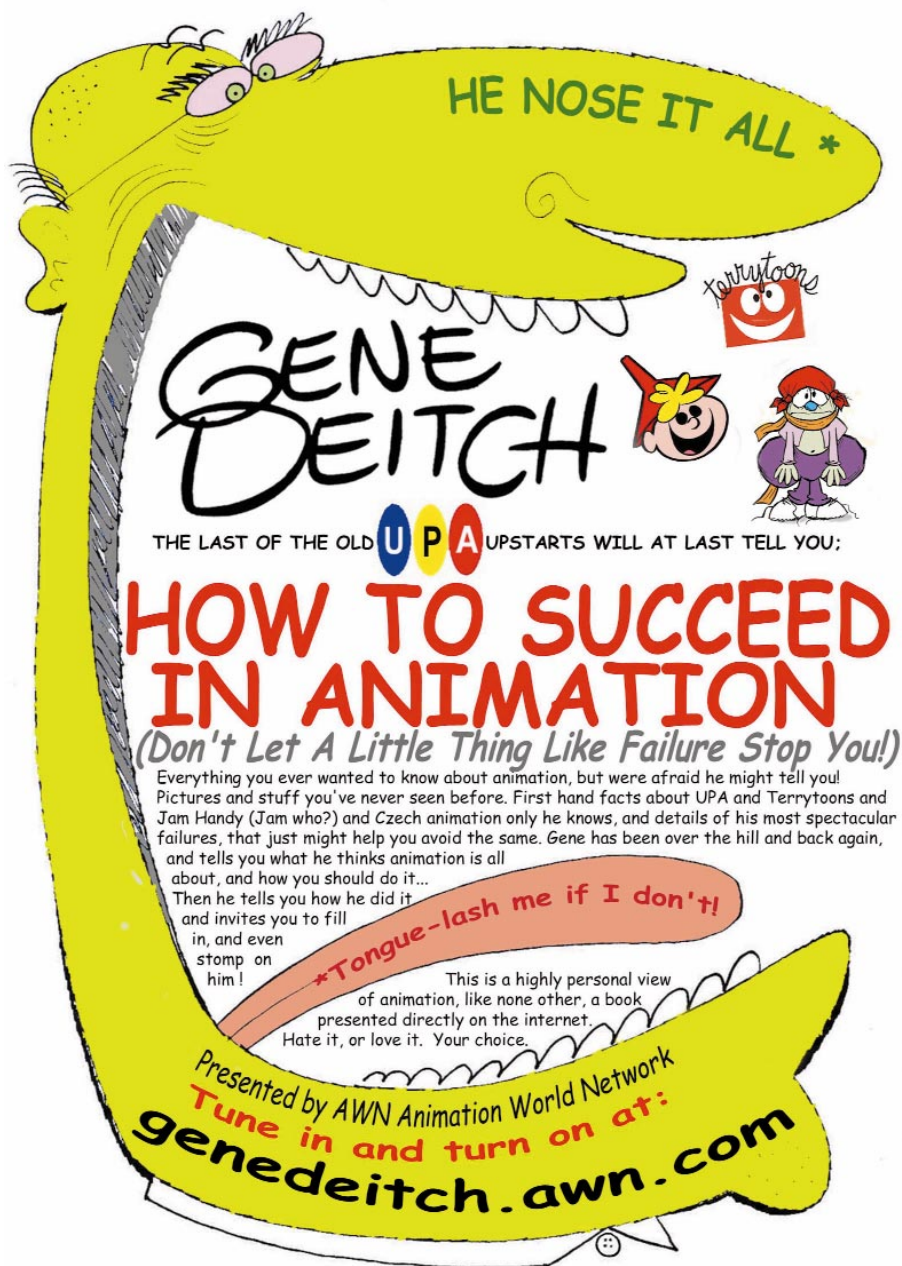
Review and update your resume every six months (more often if you move or change phone numbers or email providers). If you send a resume in response to a posting on the Web, make sure it includes your email address and name.

Resumes are marketing tools. Their purpose is to help you

get an interview. Emphasize your accomplishments and achievements and make sure your contact info is easy to find and read. Make sure the resume does its job and works to get you work.

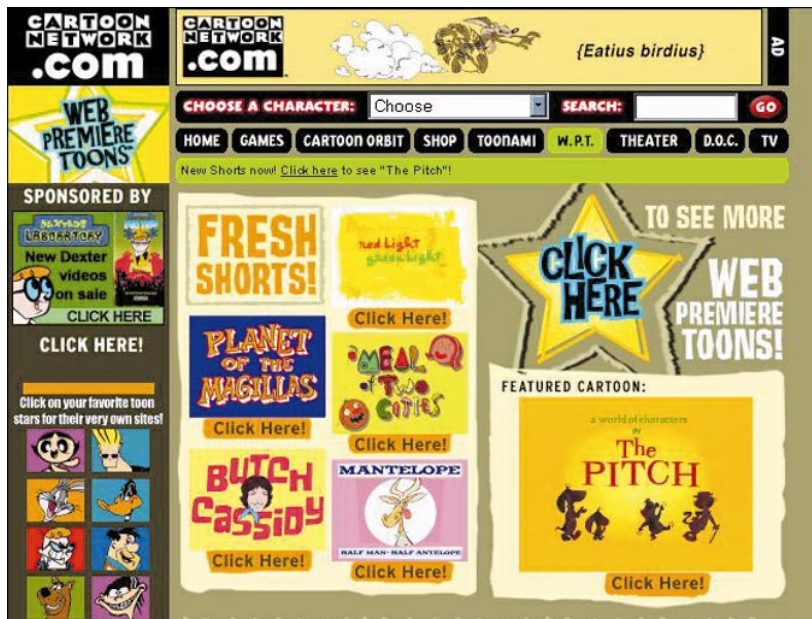
Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a career coach and recruiter. As a career coach, she helps clients develop strategies to achieve career goals. She is currently recruiting computer character animators for Framestore. She speaks regularly on careers in animation and entertainment at colleges and universities.



Come Together: Online and On-Air Converge on CartoonNetwork.com

by Brett Rogers



It is obvious that at CartoonNetwork.com there's plenty to do.
All images courtesy of and © CartoonNetwork.com.

"The Internet is the enemy."

"Spin off an online division and let them try to recapture some of the audience the Internet siphons away."

That was what most television networks were thinking as they worked furiously to capture a piece of the online pie. At the same time, start-up online entertainment companies sprouted up all over the Internet, flush with funding, new content and confidence in their abilities to compete on the Web.

As the dust settles on the initial Internet rush, it seems that both philosophies fell short. Television hasn't died and developing an identity online from the ground up is still expensive enough to bankrupt even the most innovative Websites.

Cartoon Network chose a

different path for its online presence. By working to exploit the strengths of both television and the Internet, CartoonNetwork.com has thrived, as much of the online animation and entertainment industry has gone back to the drawing board.

"What others have tried to do is put some animation online or try to have a game site... but they can't begin with the leverage of having a brand behind them. At the same time, they had to build the experience and build the brand. We had the brand built, so it was all about growing the experience and then letting people know about it through the network," explains Jim Samples, general manager of Cartoon Network Online.

"One of the things Cartoon Network has done better than anyone is to manage the site as a part of the overall brand. Some of

our competitors expected to create a separate entertainment company and spin it off around their Website. We never expected to do that. CartoonNetwork.com is a part of Cartoon Network. Almost every week there's a new tie-in between on-air and online. That's typical of our philosophy overall."



Sam Register has been with CartoonNetwork.com since before the site launched.

Revitalizing the Classics

Even with a robust brand and ample on-air support, building a Website that makes full use of the network's colossal library of animation is no small task. As vice president of Cartoon Network Online and creative director of CartoonNetwork.com, Sam Register is responsible for making sure cultural icons like Scooby-Doo look at home on the Web.

"We have a different job than other entertainment Websites in that we launched with a library. We had to take content that was



Boo Boo waves hello from a Web Premiere Toon.

new, like *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Dexter*, very old, like *Bugs* and *Tom and Jerry*, and everything in the middle, like *The Jetsons* and *The Flintstones*, from four different libraries and use the Internet to pump life into these characters," Register says.

"Web Premiere Toons," CartoonNetwork.com's original animation component, is one way Register has tried to knock the dust off the network's classic cartoon characters. In the past, "Web Premiere Toons" have focused on Cartoon Network's newer, original characters. This year, 40 new shorts will be introduced with a focus on reinventing classic characters from the network's library.

"You put a *Yogi Bear* cartoon from the Sixties next to a *Powerpuff Girls* cartoon and it is night and day. Those *Yogi* cartoons are great, they're beautiful, but they fall flat on a lot of the audiences today," says Register.

A roster of studios including Wild Brain and Funny Garbage will animate this year's "Web Premiere Toons," along with John K, who has signed on to produce six shorts of his own featuring the *Jetsons*, *Yogi Bear* and *Fred* and

Barney from *The Flintstones*. "We end up taking a character that we already have the rights to and finding a new place for it," Register says. "We went with a film festival metaphor for doing animation online. We try doing lots of different things that all look different from each other in nice, quick, short, little blasts. That's something we can do much cheaper online."



Dealing with classic characters can be tricky, as savvy viewers expect television quality.

While one of the advantages of producing new animated content on the Web rather than television is the relatively low cost, Register insists that the quality of animation will remain high. "I think the quality of animation

online on the whole needs to grow up. I just wish everything didn't look like it was done in Flash. I'm glad some of the entertainment-only sites went away because they weren't paying anything for it and it looked like it."

"I have a higher standard. The TV people at Cartoon Network are animation purists. I think that Cartoon Network does some of the best animation on television and I have to do the same thing online... I couldn't show my face at Cartoon Network if I did anything less."

Unfortunately, producing appealing animation online means dealing with a daunting array of technology limitations and high user expectations. Visitors to CartoonNetwork.com and other online entertainment sites have grown accustomed to seeing their favorite characters as they appear on television. They expect the animation to have a certain look and feel that in many situations is not possible.

"In all our minds when we watch animation or any entertainment online we think that it should look like TV or a movie. So, one of the biggest challenges is trying to deprogram what people think entertainment online should be. It doesn't have to be exactly like television," explains Register.

Innovation Through Immersion

Integrating online content with Cartoon Network's on-air programming is an approach that pervades everything CartoonNetwork.com does. When the online world is paired with television to behave like a single entertainment source, both sides can win. Through "Total Immersion Cartoon" events, the network and CartoonNetwork.com collaborate



"Toonami: The Intruder" was the stunt that started, and proved, the effectiveness of the "Total Immersion" method.

to allow interaction between visitors to the Website and the programming on television.

The week of September 18, 2000 marked the debut of this concept with "Toonami: The Intruder." Special episodes aired in which Tom, animated host of the network's *Toonami* block of cartoons, battled to save his spaceship from an alien threat. Intertwined with each episode were messages urging viewers to visit Toonami.com, where Nintendo-sponsored enhanced content, games and special contents awaited.

The ambitious stunt, which risked driving viewers away from the television to their computers in the middle of a popular block of programming, proved successful. Online traffic soared 72 percent from the previous week and on-air ratings jumped 50 percent for viewers ages 9-14. "It worked beautifully," recalls Jim Samples. "Nintendo was very happy with it, we were very happy with it. It was the highest trafficked week of the year."

The "Total Immersion"

experiment in enhanced television will reappear four times this year, hoping to capture the same success enjoyed by "Toonami: Intruder." Early indications show that "The Powerpuff Popularity Contest," which aired March 19-15, didn't disappoint. The Milk-sponsored event, in which viewers were given the opportunity to vote for their favorite girl by phone or online, featured *Powerpuff Girls* episodes on the network with advertisements driving viewers to CartoonNetwork.com, where a new pillow fight *Powerpuff* game awaited, along with special contest-related material.

Though Bubbles won the popularity contest, the real winner was network-online integration. CartoonNetwork.com experienced record traffic numbers and the network showed triple-digit ratings increases in most demographics, as visitors bounced between their televisions and computers. "[The Total Immersion' events] are the most important integrated campaigns we do," Samples says. "Everything that we do online is built in such a way that it is inti-

mately related with what's going on the air."

That, it seems, is something advertisers are looking for.

"As the media alternatives become increasingly fragmented it makes sense to create campaigns that reach across all of those media. That's what we're trying to do here... a virtuous cycle of entertainment experience and advertising appropriately intertwined with that," says Samples.

"[Advertisers] don't want banners, in most cases," says Sam Register. "I spend a lot of time figuring out how we can do partnerships with advertisers that make them happy and make us happy."

It is important to draw advertisers, especially in the current online marketing environment, but keeping the entertainment experience strong takes creative solutions. Using online content to enhance television programming is largely uncharted territory, but results from "Total Immersion" events indicate it's here to stay.



The three remaining "Total Immersion Cartoon" events are "The Big Pick II," which will allow viewers to interact with the television by choosing a new *Cartoon Cartoon* series for the fall of 2002 from 11 new shorts; "Toonami: Lockdown," featuring an online multi-player game where viewers can team up, use codes retrieved from the television and help save Tom; and "Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?," highlighted by on-air clues that viewers can use to unlock secret Scooby-Doo related content



Later this year, another special campaign called "Toonami: Lockdown" hopes to continue to push the convergence envelope.

online, such as games, icons and sounds. Each event will serve as a laboratory for new methods of letting viewers to use their computers to take part in the action on-air.

"There are a lot of different ways to do the enhancements. It's an ongoing process. The ones that do well we continue using. The ones that didn't do well, we either revise them or scrap them," Register says.

In Orbit

Although CartoonNetwork.com can make wider use of Cartoon Network's gargantuan library of characters than the television network, all the games, character pages, "Web Premiere Toons" and other content online can't make use of it all. So how do you effectively draw on all the characters in the combined libraries of four prolific animation studios? Turn them into online trading cards.

"Kids love to collect and love to trade," Samples observes.

"Those are just basic play habits that have been around forever. This is a way to allow kids to have that sort of play online. *Pokémon* is a great example of how powerful that is."

Last October, CartoonNetwork.com launched "Cartoon Orbit," a community for kids to collect and trade cToons, the site's online trading cards. Orbit members can display their cToon collections in cZones, or individual sites they create and customize.

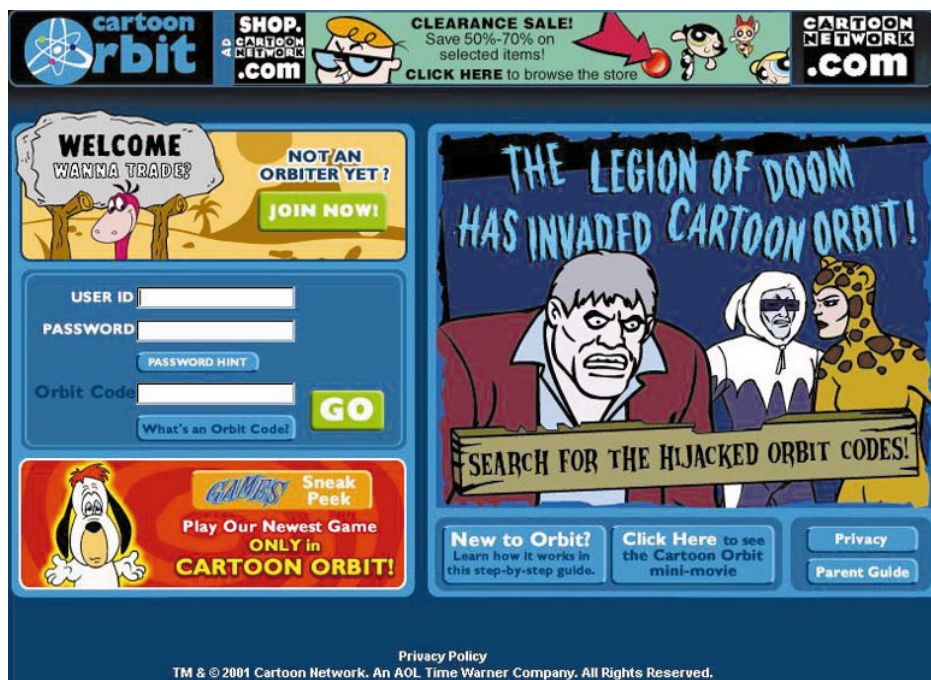
Over 650,000 users have joined Orbit since its launch, with an average of 20,000 more joining each week. Meshing nicely with its Web-television convergence campaign, codes appear every Friday night on Cartoon Network during *Cartoon Cartoon Fridays* that viewers can use to retrieve a limited edition cToon online. "The Powerpuff Popularity Contest" also featured secret codes viewers redeemed online for cToons of Buttercup, Blossom and Bubbles.

Two-way interaction already exists between users

and CartoonNetwork.com, but Cartoon Orbit introduces a new aspect of interaction between users. Because the experience is menu-driven, Orbit is safe, easy to use and expandable internationally across language barriers and other technology platforms, strategies that are still in development.

"There are key connection points between online and on-air. The network has a hard time using all the characters in its library because it's in a linear environment. We can use the whole library," Register explains.

The Cartoon Orbit has provided an appealing outlet for marketers, as well. The new Kellogg's Powerpuff Girls Cereal contains a secret code that sends kids to EetAndErn.com, a heavily promoted Kellogg's Website where kids earn points toward prizes, view additional *Powerpuff Girls* content and retrieve limited edition cToons. With the simultaneous appearance of Kellogg's and Milk as online and on-air Cartoon Network sponsors, kids could theoretically eat an all-Powerpuff Girls



Cartoon Orbit has been a huge hit with kids.



breakfast. Samples admits, however, that the meal marketing monopoly is just a happy coincidence.

Keeping the Big Kids Happy

CartoonNetwork.com's user breakdown indicates that about one-third of the audience is adults, one-third is teens and one-third is under 11, demographics that skew a bit older than the on-air network. According to Samples, *Toonami*, a block of mostly action-adventure anime, tends to attract the most teens and young 20s males. In an effort to appeal to that audience and demonstrate the full potential of interactive entertainment, CartoonNetwork.com introduced "Toonami Reactor" in late March 2001.

"Reactor" is a 12-week exhibition of enhanced *Toonami* programming online consisting of streaming *Dragonball Z* and *Star Blazers* episodes with synched commentary, games, content and trivia. The innovative split-screen format works well to allow viewers to move seamlessly between episodes and interactive content. The experience is best with a broadband connection, but a 56K modem is adequate to view most features and watch medium-quality

streaming video without a problem. As larger monitors and higher connection speeds become more prevalent, it's easy to see why CartoonNetwork.com thinks it will be at the forefront of television and online mixed media. Fans of the *Dragonball Z* introductory segment now absent from *Toonami* will be happy to find that it's present on "Toonami Reactor."

The fan-friendly features are by design, according to Samples. "In developing [Reactor] we've had active, ongoing conversations with the anime clubs at universities and with the bulletin boards and



Jim Samples.

fan clubs to develop what [the content] should look like. It's been a lot of fun to do it this way."

Reactor is scheduled to feature 40 episodes of *Dragonball Z's* Frieza Saga, 26 episodes of *Star Blazers*, two new *Dragonball Z* games and two new *Toonami*-specific games.

Predicting the Future

All the innovation at CartoonNetwork.com isn't just for the sake of forwarding the cause of online animation and entertainment, of course. Growth and profitability are the end goals. "We are expected to generate sufficient revenue to more than cover the expenses that we're incurring in building out the site," Samples points out. "It is an investment in a business, but the business is being managed as a part of the overall Cartoon Network business. I think that is one of our key advantages."

Page views, unique visitors and sticky content are the traditional measuring sticks for online entertainment sites, but recent events in the industry have cast doubt on this practice.

Register observes, "Visitors and page views don't seem to equal dollars like everyone thought they would. [...] None of this equals dollars. It's all great, it's all experimental, it's all very cool, but targeting people and audiences and all that, it doesn't matter. We've all found out that none of this equals dollars today. It may equal dollars later on, so we need to just keep plugging away and figuring out what seems to work and what doesn't and hopefully all entertainment Websites will become profitable someday. I'm in the same fix as everyone else."

The rewards of the future are where CartoonNetwork.com

has set its sights. While today it strives to maintain the freshest content of the moment, behind the scenes the site is looking forward. If all goes as planned, CartoonNetwork.com will render itself obsolete.

Global growth is one piece to the puzzle. Manifestations of CartoonNetwork.com are already available in 13 sites internationally in numerous languages. As the network and technology expand worldwide, the range of Cartoon Network Online will grow in tandem.

New technology should play into CartoonNetwork.com's plans as the television and online worlds converge into a single vehicle. Development on products for the next wave of interactive animation for products like Replay and Tevo has already commenced, with an eye toward enhanced TV boxes and concurrent Web-television devices.



With such hit characters as the Powerpuff Girls driving traffic to CartoonNetwork.com, the online division has the opportunity to highlight cartoon superstars and library classics alike.

"Down the road, between five and ten years, I think there is no Cartoon Network Online," muses Samples. "I hope we get to a situation where you sit down on your couch, you flip on your flat screen TV that's hanging on the wall in front of you, you flip to the Cartoon Network channel and you have an option of watching the linear network, a very sit-back

experience, or you take your remote and flip over to the games section, or chat with your friends using AOL Instant Messenger while on the Cartoon Network Channel talking about your favorite *Dragonball Z* episodes."

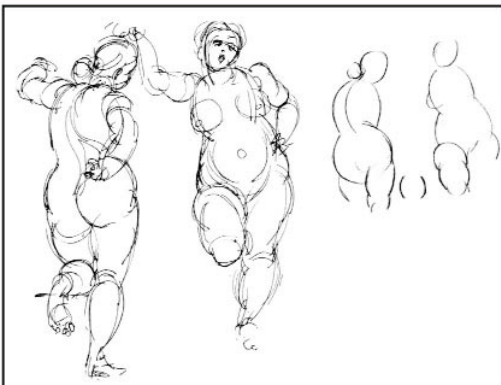
With the backing of powerhouse AOL Time Warner, that scenario has become more plausible. As Cartoon Network continues to develop its online products under a unified network-wide banner, it stands as an example of how to use online and on-air units effectively in harmony, something that shouldn't go unnoticed by its new parent company.

Brett Rogers is a freelance writer and law student based in Baltimore.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Animation World Store

<http://www.awn.com/awnstore/vilppu>



Never before available!!!

Glenn Vilppu's drawing techniques manual and video tapes, used worldwide as course material for animation students.



MIPTV Was A Hit!

by John Morris



France's INA booth was busy throughout the market. © MPA/MIPTV 2001.

My first impression of this year's MIPTV was that, despite the buzz from the withdrawal of Warner Bros., the market was extremely busy. We experienced a substantial amount of interest in our animation properties from all quarters, presumably driven by the established success of the genre across all age groups, from pre-preschool to adult.

More of Everything

Even documentary buyers' imaginations were caught by the possibilities of enhancing factual programs through the use of CGI, largely due to the success of *Walking with Dinosaurs*. This effect was very marked when I was pitching our own *Terrible Lizards of Oz* special feature documentary. It was also very interesting to note the strong buyer interest in animation from all of the var-

ious media platforms, be it general entertainment terrestrial broadcasters, or cutting edge t-commerce and broadband networks. This must be due in part to the cultural transparency of the genre, as well as the suitability for viewing animation in all sorts of conditions and formats (from hand-helds to wide screen, from 3-minute shorts to feature length specials). One clear area of unsatisfied demand was for animated shows targeted to 8-14 year-olds.

On another note, there was fierce competition among suppliers, with increased amounts of animation on offer. Two reasons spring to mind for this: first, because there seems to be more players in production than ever before; second, buyers appear more open to looking at a wider range of suppliers many of whom are independent of the major studios. For example, in Europe over

the last 18 months there have been many new entrants into the field, especially in Germany (TV Loonland, Kinowelt, RTV, EM.TV); while new suppliers have been added to the list of potential sources for buyers, notably now that *Pokemon* has opened the door to Japanese anime and similar styles of animation long disregarded in the West. Despite this, many buyers told me that there were more titles on offer but fewer must-buys, which simply goes to prove that volume doesn't equate to quality.

A Scarcity of Quality

In the pre-school programming category, there was certainly more programming offered than in previous markets. I see this as a result of the benefits of longevity, brand extension and the subsidiary earnings that pre-school programming generates in comparison to other programming categories. By the same token, the success of a few properties, our own among them in this area, has convinced many people to invest in productions of their own, without necessarily understanding that it is not such an easy thing to do



Japanese companies like NHK got a boost at the market due to the recent string of anime success stories.

© MPA/MIPTV 2001.



Booths with patios, like Paramount's, enjoyed MIP's fantastic weather.
© MPA/MIPTV 2001.

This year's market included the further distancing between commercial broadcasters and public broadcasters...

— at least to do well.

Unfortunately, quantity has not translated into quality, and there remains a lot of pre-school material that is derivative of leading brands like *Teletubbies* and *Bob the Builder*, but fall short in their concept and execution. What many of these shows lack is the conviction from the outset that without getting the TV show perfect, there will be no upside on the other rights, which is why HIT always concentrates first and foremost on the quality of the shows and not on the other products. So quite honestly, I did not see shows that compete with our best properties such as *Bob the Builder*, *Angelina Ballerina* or *Oswald*.

Other Changes

Other observations from this year's market included the further distancing between commercial broadcasters and public broadcasters in terms of how they approach deals on animation. Commercials were much more concerned about how programs can be used as vehicles for brand extension in TV and across other platforms, while pubcasters focused on the more traditional, straight TV license approach. I also noticed a more aggressive stance on rights issues by many broadcasters particularly in the interactive and broadband areas but equally, found a strong resolve by distributors to hold onto these,

especially when broadcasters are not even exploiting these rights yet. The broadband business seemed to gain greater visibility and momentum at this year's market, although with a smaller fee structure, it is too early to determine how big it will eventually become. On a closing note, there were fewer dot-coms than at MIP-COM and more sunshine!

John Morris joined HIT Entertainment plc in December 1998 as sales director. Morris manages the company's international sales division and its strategy to capitalize on new revenue opportunities within the television, video, publishing and consumer products industries for HIT's portfolio of signature-branded characters, which include Bob the Builder, Kipper, Angelina Ballerina and Percy the Park Keeper. Morris began his twenty-year entertainment career with Granada TV International, followed by several key sales, acquisition and operational management positions within BBC Worldwide. In 1993, Morris opened the BBC Worldwide office in Cologne, Germany, where he assembled a team of top media specialists to develop cross-media business within the European markets and handled all media rights deals and strategies for such brands as Noddy and Teletubbies.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Welcome to Positano, the site of the world's only television animation festival, a uniquely Italian festival set in the midst of some of the earth's most dramatic scenery.

For those used to the bustle of Annecy and the serious business nature of MIP, Cartoons on the Bay can take a little getting used to. Located on the beautiful Amalfi coast in the small, quaint town of Positano, the pace of Cartoons on the Bay is anything but hurried. After grabbing your bags at the Naples airport, pause a moment and take a deep breath. You are now on Positano time! Panel discussions may be listed as starting at 11 a.m. and they may start at 11 or 11:30. But don't worry about needing to re-schedule meetings or missing other events, at Cartoons on the Bay everything always seems to work out. Panel discussions are held at a lovely hotel, while screenings take place a stone's throw away in a huge tent constructed right on the beach especially for the event. Workmen construct a village on the sand that houses the screening tent, a meeting area and a few booths. The screening schedule is also quite relaxed, with breaks between programs for leisurely meals and the earliest program starting at 10 a.m.

Cartoons on the Bay feels like a small town festival even though there are plenty of familiar faces from the international animation scene. Swarms of kids were entertained by Kinder Sorpresa and Cartoon Network Italy. Crowding into the screenings they pushed back and forth, jostling one another, leaving to get this friend, coming back to get that one. All the time, laughing, clutching balloons and carrying on. The

Cartoons on the Bay: A Different Type of Festival

by Heather Kenyon



When they say Cartoons on the Bay, well they really mean it. ©AWN, Inc.

Cartoons on the Bay feels like a small town festival even though there are faces there from the international animation scene.

evening presentations are also predominately attended by local families, packs of school kids and young men and women on dates. With programs mostly in Italian (translation is always provided though) and featuring Italian television and other popular stars, it is a true immersion into Italian culture. Whereas most festivals have serious ministers of culture in gray suits pontificating on their region's

current policy, Cartoons on the Bay has a young, tightly-clad Italian television star conversationally clowning with guests, the audience and Tom and Jerry costumed characters alike.

Cartoons on the Bay is dedicated to screening television animation. And while some features, short films and Internet animation is shown, television definitely takes center stage. It is wonderful to be



The festival's Monica Tasciotti and Alfio Bastiancich listen to lifetime achievement winner Phil Roman. © Cartoons on the Bay.

Directly across from the festival's screening venue is a string of open air restaurants, a wonderful place for accidental meetings.

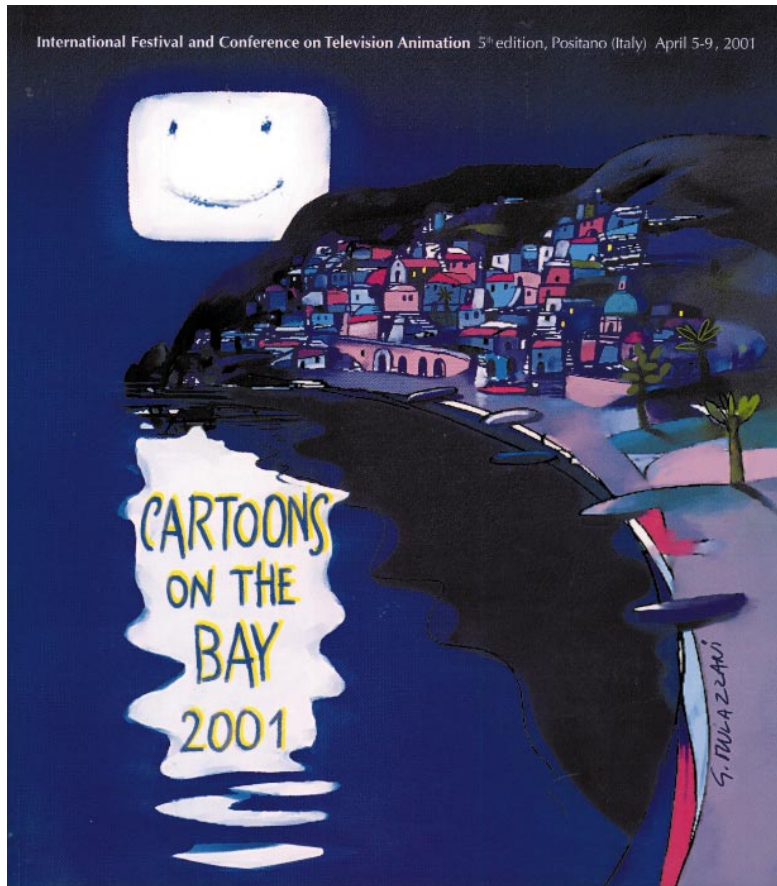
able to sit and see television shows, which aren't readily available at one's home. In fact I think it would be great if the festival would open up a string of late night panorama type screenings of some of the contenders that didn't quite make it into the competition. While I realize that the organizers can't have cartoons blasting away all night in this sleepy village, being the animation geek that I am I can't stand the thought of missing shows that might not otherwise get the chance to be seen. The festival does provide a screening "showcase" where tapes can be viewed, but it is always nice to see shows on the big screen and with an audience of fellow enthusiasts. Some remarkable programming was screened and awarded. Winner *Spud and the Vegetable Garden* is a wonderful piece by the brilliant folks at Folimage. A masked protest against bio-engineering, the show is a wonderful, high quality, intelligent product

that is also charming and endearing. On the technical side, award winners such as *Xcalibur* by Ellipsanime were indeed eye-opening. *Xcalibur's* quality and style were very impressive, especially for television CG animation. Festival goers were also treated to a selection of screenings by Phil Roman, who was presented with the Pulcinella Award for lifetime achievement.

Positano, a town built literally on the side of cliffs plunging into blue green waters, is wonderful. Trellises of wisteria cover walkways leading to the town's cathedral, beautiful hotels, restaurants and shops. This beauty also leads to one of the festival's problems for the visiting professional...finding people. With everyone flitting off for side trips to Pompeii, Amalfi and Capri, it is hard to always know who is at the festival and where to find them. I think it would be very helpful for the festival to publish a list of attendees and at which hotel they are stay-

ing. On the last night I was meeting people that had been there all week, but that I had no idea were present at the event — people that might have been too busy to meet at MIP the week before. What is wonderful about Cartoons on the Bay is that instead of the set 15 minute meeting in a booth that MIP sometimes dictates, Cartoons offers such a relaxed and casual atmosphere that while there may not be chock-a-block international guests, those that are present can truly be met and chatted with over a lunch, dinner, coffee or desert. Directly across from the festival's screening venue is a string of open air restaurants, a wonderful place for accidental meetings.

The one point of contention at this year's festival was the fact that an award was not given in the new Internet animation festival category. I like the fact that the Jury gives a reason for its decisions and in the case of the Internet category the reason was very interesting indeed. While I respect the Jury for taking a stand, it was a textbook case of how the Internet is still misunderstood as a unique form of communication. I feel Internet animation's main foe has been its easy comparison to television. The Jury stated that they didn't feel the content presented was fully formed; the shows did not present full, round characters or stories that relied on traditional strong beginning, middle and end story structures. While there are a lot of Webisodes out there that feature shock gag after shock gag, Positano's line-up of animated fair included such landmark pieces as *Stainboy* and *Romanov*, both highly touted shows from industry leaders Shockwave and Wild Brain. Shorts watched on a computer monitor



This year's festival catalog. © Cartoons on the Bay.

The panel on Internet animation that was held the final day of the festival was a regular all star line up...

after several minutes of download time, and within the Internet environment, are going to have a different structure and form than television programming. Internet animation is created with completely different parameters in mind and with completely different tools. The fact that the Jury didn't award a prize goes to show how far the Internet still needs to come, in terms of Internet content and people's understanding of it. The belief that the Web must mirror television in form and style is a misnomer that hasn't helped anyone (especially some companies producing Internet content). The day Web animation figures out why it

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

is different from television — what it has to offer due to its unique platform — is the day the audience will have a reason to reach for the mouse instead of the remote. I would be more understanding if they had decided not to award a prize due to the medium not yet fully using its interactive potential.

It is also interesting to note that the panel on Internet animation, held the final day of the festival, was a regular all star line up featuring major players from the U.S., France and Italy. Cartoons on the Bay deserves credit for putting together such a group. Christian Davin from Alphanim, Jeff Fino

from Wild Brain, Eric Oldrin from Atom Shockwave, Rick Mischel of Rumpus.com and Nico Piro of Rai Net were a few of the heavy hitters present. Anywhere on the globe such a group of experts would be considered a coup.

And that is the strength of Cartoons on the Bay. By gathering a select and powerful group of professionals in a relaxed and beautiful setting, the event allows its visitors the opportunity to take a deep breath and truly meet and discuss the issues as they come to mind or are prodded by the panels and screenings.

Go online to view more pictures from Cartoons on the Bay at: http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=152

Heather Kenyon is editor in chief of Animation World Network. After graduating magna cum laude with a BFA from the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television, Heather began her career in animation at Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, where she became manager of the Production Communications department. Recently, she has contributed a chapter to the upcoming book, Animation in Asia, to be published by John Libbey & Company, Ltd. Heather is also vice president of Women In Animation International and on the Board of Trustees of Trees for Life.

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

MILIA 2001 • An Alphanim Digital Perspective

by Julie Fox

The beginning of the end? That was the question...

The end of the beginning" was the proposition put forward by Gerd Leonhard of Sony Digital Pictures Entertainment, one of the most heartening speakers at MILIA's conference, "How will interactive content pay?" At Alphanim Digital monetising content is our main aim these days and our presence for the first time with a stand at MILIA 2001 was a nod to the above and a, "Yes, in spite of everything." As the sister company of Alphanim, a very successful television animation production company, the pre-market prospecting for Alphanim Digital brought with it more "how's" and "when's" than ever before, especially in the wake of the fates befalling very many of our biggest and best competitors in the gone.coms marketplace of recent months.

Alphanim Digital today counts at its studio in Angoulême in the southwest of France almost 20 Flash animators producing content essentially for the Webcasting window — VerrysmallTV — of our teens-young adults portal www.YAFOULE.COM. At the Paris headquarters, another 30 something bunch of mainly 20 somethings run the editorial sections of the "happenings" cultural magazine, supervise the chat platforms and organise the special events linked to promoting the community Website throughout Paris and France. Who's paying?

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



Despite the somber mood in the Internet animation market, MILIA was vibrant with untapped possibilities and potential. All photos © MPA/MILIA 2001.

Anyone who made it to MILIA was primarily concerned with letting people know they'd still be there next year...

We are. "Who's going to pay?" you ask? Next question.

A Different Kind of Market

MILIA brought its reality checks. Veterans of the TV markets such as NATPE, MIP TV and MIP-COM, we were aliens from another planet on the Croisette in Cannes in the month of February. Some preconceived ideas died quick deaths. MILIA = all creative types = cool compared to TV markets: WRONG! MILIA 2001's share of business suits with business plans was higher than ever before, resembling from a distance an

unusually male oriented TV market, where, comparatively, we knew no-one in the corridors or in the lunch line. The creative types in business suits had high price tags on their content as well. In a year where anyone who made it to MILIA was primarily concerned with letting people know they'd still be there next year, we felt lucky to have encountered the cold winds of the TV market place for some years before arriving in this place at this time.

There's Still Opportunity

We expected many TV ani-



Three typical MILIA participants enjoy the event's packed Techno Party.



Workstations inside MILIA 2001.

mation producers to be present paying their respects to the holy grail of convergence. We were one of the few. But our "old media" TV clients sent their "new media" people to us. Not rich, but not empty-handed. Scandinavian, French and German buyers were looking for added value by bringing products and not just programming to their channels. Some were looking for interactive content to parallel TV series they were acquiring, others were looking for "indie" animation to drive traffic to their sites. All were interested by the possibility of multi-platform Flash-based animation production capable of reducing traditional

animation production budgets by up to one third. Particularly interested was Tigi, the newest arrival in France's Canal J family and catering entirely to the very neglected area of pre-schoolers. Alphanim Digital is currently discussing Tigi's first commission of a pre-school series in Flash. Some German broadcasters seem certain to follow this road shortly as well.

But right now in France we're in an ADSL-less land right now so the format has to be short! However, despite these restrictions and the limitations of video streaming and the sophistication of animation, we saw at MILIA that Alphanim Digital delivers outstand-

ing content.

What MILIA also confirmed was the increased stirring from public broadcasters world-wide indicating that the era of "politically correct" content is teetering toward the end of its shelf life. Certain programmes once created specifically for the Net will find their place on TV in the not so distant future. Our own experience of this at Alphanim Digital has been with a series called *Shorts of Steel*, initially produced for Verysmalltv on yafoule.com. Now we have a Canadian co-producer on board to produce the television series. This very recent event has been the motor for us, as with many other Net producers, to revise our in-house production processes and produce Web-based properties in broadcast quality format in order to maximise multi-platform exploitations.

New media markets especially active at MILIA included Germany, Spain and Italy based portals acquiring content and discussing co-production opportunities. The over-riding feeling being that, as with TV co-productions, sourcing finance for Internet co-productions will require increased imagination, with smaller but more diverse and numerous revenue streams than initially expected.

Opportunities not available in the audio-visual sector reared their heads during the market in territories such as Japan where it can take years to establish an international co-production for television. Today — due to a lack of Japan-based Flash animation artists — an increased interest in international co-productions for the Internet has become apparent and, while we did not sign deals there, the doorways have opened.



Other avenues like advanced gaming seem the next step for some Flash animation companies.

Marketplace Trends

Whether it was syndicators such as Line Up, rights holders such as book publishing companies, Vivendi/Universal, Sony Pictures Digital Entertainment, or research organisations such as Forrester who hosted several of the conferences, the outlook was that people will pay for quality content in the future. (A representative of Bertelsmann repeatedly pleaded for understanding of his, "No comment," reply to almost all questions fielded to him at the conference held one day before the Napster decision was taken in L.A.)

Whether quality content meant tools to manipulate content, added value personalised content selection or merchandising, the concept differed from one sales person and buyer to the next.

Payment concepts and business models also differed — some seeing the way through aggregating micro-payments from diverse streams of small revenues, others viewing content as a utility

and not something to be paid for "every time you turn on the faucet," as Gerd Leonhard explained.

Who will pay? At MILIA conferences it was suggested that advertising revenue would continue to make up two-thirds of all revenue once critical mass is reached on a site. Other business models discussed were to be supported to the extent of 10% by ads, the rest split evenly between subscribers and direct sales.

Payment concepts and business models also differed...

All agreed however that the first and most important factor is that content has to be *worth* paying for and that demand based models will force business models to evolve.

Finding A Way

More reality checks for both

distributors and content producers came however in the weeks which followed MILIA as, in line with the troubled tech sectors of world stock markets, prices came tumbling to fit demand. Properties offered to us at MILIA were later re-offered at one-third of the S.M.P. (Suggested MILIA Price).

MILIA participants are still finding their way. But they were there and we were there. We hope that those who have inspired us along the way will be there in 2002. That we'll even see them in the corridors at NATPE, MIP TV and MIPCOM.

And as they say in France — against all recommendations of the Academie de la langue française — "Vive le Net!!"

Julie Fox is director of the international distribution entity of Alphanim, one of France's most successful animation producers. Overseeing worldwide sales for TV, video and merchandising, Julie is also responsible for distribution of on-line content originating from Alphanim's Flash animation studio at sister company Alphanim Digital. Prior to joining Alphanim, Julie headed up international sales and acquisitions at Dargaud-Marina over a period of 5 years and started in the kids' business in another life as a grade-school teacher!

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

Around 1995, Japanese animation (anime) began pouring into North America, Europe and across the globe in video form. Most of these titles were unknown outside of Japan and never covered by animation journals. Whether a title is highly popular or very obscure, a high-quality theatrical feature or a cheap and unimaginative direct-to-video release, they all look the same on a store shelf. Therefore, *Animation World Magazine* will regularly review several new releases (including re-releases not previously covered) that have merit and about which our readers should know.

The Big O. Volumes 1 - 4.

TV series, 1999 - 2000. Director: Kazuyoshi Katayama. V.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes. V.2 - 4, 3 episodes/75 minutes each. Price & format: bilingual DVD \$24.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

The Big O, 13 TV episodes, appeared on Japan's WOWOW

cable channel from October 13, 1999 to January 19, 2000. It began in America on The Cartoon Network's Toonami bloc on April 5, 2001. Fans instantly noted its resemblance to both America's recent *Batman Beyond* and Japan's 1992-'95 OAV series *Giant Robo*. Director Katayama was the animation director on *Giant Robo*; and Sunrise, *The Big O*'s production studio, has been a subcontractor for Warner Bros.' *Batman: The Animated Series* and other *Batman/Superman* TV cartoons.

The Fleischer/Famous Studio's old *Superman* theatrical cartoons might also be acknowledged. *The Big O* actually fits into Japanese cartoonists' recent love affair with "retro chic" or "steampunk" style science-fiction, with a 1930s look of giant circuit breakers, slamming pistons, vacuum tubes and noisily sparking electric arcs. Other popular examples during the past decade have been *Steam Detectives*, *Kishin Corps* and *Giant Robo* itself. *The Big O* may be set a hundred years

in the future, with Asimovian androids almost indistinguishable from humans (with an R. for "robot" in front of their names), but it is a visual feast for connoisseurs of Art Deco, double-breasted suits, and the type of swank night clubs seen in 1930s movies, complete with a cocktail-lounge blues score. The plot of humanity rediscovering itself after being struck with total amnesia also goes back to the 1930s; the 1934 sci-fi novel *Rebirth*, by Thomas Calvert McClary.

The real star of *The Big O* is not its main hero, Roger Smith, but its setting. Paradigm City is a glass-domed city, which for the past forty years has been struggling out of the darkness of its inhabitants' complete memory loss. Each episode is both an individual adventure and part of a serial, which gradually reveals what really happened to the city's inhabitants. There are clues that the truth is more bizarre than anyone suspects. The architecture and clothing styles are 1930s but there are both giant humanoid vehicles (the "giant robots") and intelligent androids. It is mentioned in episode 1 that nobody uses the city's old subway system any more, but it is not revealed until episode 4 that people *cannot* go into the subways; they have been psycho-



The Big O. Volumes 1 - 4.

logically conditioned with an unreasonable fear of going underground.

Roger Smith (the twin of Batman's alter ego, Bruce Wayne, complete with mansion, loyal butler Norman and the Big O giant mechanical man replacing the Batmobile) is a public Negotiator. In episode 1, he is hired as the go-between in a kidnapping to deliver the ransom and get a rich industrialist's daughter back. There are doublecrosses on both sides, and the rescued Dorothy turns out to be a robot good enough to pass for human. She was presumably built by her industrialist "father," who had regained part of his pre-amnesia memory; but Roger knows that the technology level was never high enough to build intelligent robots. With the industrialist murdered, R. Dorothy attaches herself to Roger for lack of anywhere else to go. Roger's effort to learn where R. Dorothy really came from leads him to look increasingly like a 1930s private eye, with Dorothy as his sardonic secretary. Not surprisingly, Dorothy's secret leads to the greater mystery of Paradigm City's lost past.

Urusei Yatsura. TV Series, #1.

TV series, 1981-1986. Directors: Mamoru Oshii, Kyoji Harada, Tamiko Kojima. 4 episodes/100 minutes each. Price & format: subtitled; video \$24.95, DVD \$24.95. Distributor: AnimEigo.

The importance of *Urusei Yatsura* to anime in general or to the development of its fandom in America, cannot be overestimated. *UY* began as a comic book by a neophyte cartoonist. Today Rumiko Takahashi is one of the wealthiest women in the world,



Urusei Yatsura.

and her 1978-87 *UY* comics are internationally available in hundreds of printings. (Takahashi moved on to create other comic-book serials which also became anime mega-hits, notably *Maison Ikkoku* and *Ranma 1/2*.) *UY*'s anime version ran as a TV series from October 14, 1981 through March 19, 1986 (197 episodes), and spun off six theatrical features (1983 - 1991), plus eleven direct-to-video releases (1986 - 1991). Many of Japan's current top anime directors and character designers got their start on *UY*. It was a learning experience for a brand-new animation studio, Studio Pierrot, and it shows, but few productions ever made it more clear how much fun everyone was having. (The goofiest-looking characters in any crowd scene are usually the animators' self-caricatures.) In America, the mostly teenaged fans just discovering anime felt that the mildly raunchy campus humor of *UY* was tailored especially for them. The comedy soap-opera follows Japanese high-school students after Earth is invaded by friendly aliens, whose tiger-stripe bikini'ed Princess Lum enters Tomobiki High as an exchange student and likes it so much that her alien teen friends decide it is "cool" to join her in

Tokyo. Teachers, parents and other adults freak out, but the human and alien boys and girls get along fine. The human teens find all kinds of ways to misuse the space people's sci-fi technology, such as when wannabe-loverboy Ataru Moroboshi uses a galactic photocopy machine to duplicate himself so he can chase numerous girls at the same time. Many of *UY*'s aliens were very thinly disguised parodies of Japanese gods and goddesses, demons, fairy-tale heroes, historical personages and current popular notables; or of the friendly but overwhelming Western culture with its technological innovations. Just as Japanese teens loved seeing themselves portrayed as an in-crowd who are the first to discover the cool aliens, the American fans reveled in being the first to learn and tell their friends about the Japanese cultural origins behind the jokes. (The title, *Urusei Yatsura*, is a slang pun weakly translated as *Those Obnoxious Aliens*; any 1980s fan would gladly spend five minutes explaining all the levels of the wordplay.) *UY* was one of the earliest titles to be illegally subtitled as evolving computer technology made amateur subtitled practical, and one of the first to be licensed commercially by the new American anime specialty companies. AnimEigo has been slowly releasing *UY* since 1992, at four subtitled episodes per video with extensive notes explaining the cultural background to each joke and identifying the caricatures of Japanese politicians or sports stars. It was up to video volume 25 (episodes #97-#100) by 2000 when the DVD market took off. *UY* is now starting a new edition on DVD, beginning February 27, 2001 and released at bimonthly

intervals. AnimEigo's plan is to keep the 25 videos in print until they are all also on DVD, then continue in DVD format alone.

Iria: Zeiram the Animation.

OAV series, 1994. Director: Tetsurou Amino. 162 minutes. Price & format: bilingual DVD \$34.99. Distributor: U.S. Manga Corps/Central Park Media.

In the U.S., popular movies like *Star Wars* generate TV cartoon spinoffs. Ditto in Japan, though the spinoffs are more likely to be direct-to-video releases.

Zeiram was a 1991 live-action sci-fi hit (by writer-director Keita Amemiya) similar to *Alien*, showing the climax of a long-running hunt-to-the-death between Zeiram, an invulnerable space monster, and the galactic bounty hunter Iria, played by Sigourney Weaver-esque Yuko Moriyama. Fans wanted to know more about the back-story alluded to during the movie: how did Iria and Zeiram become such implacable adversaries; what were some of their previous battles; how did Iria become such a hardened bounty hunter; how did Iria gain her computer hologram partner, Bob?

Iria: Zeiram the Animation was an Original Animation Video series (six monthly half-hour releases between June and November 1994) that answered these questions. Iria is a teenager who hero-worships her older brother Gren and his human boss, Bob — two interstellar security guards/bounty hunters. They are hired to rescue a corporate executive held hostage on a terrorist-hijacked cargo spaceship. But the menace is actually an unkillable monster being illegally shipped for study as a potential

super-weapon. Gren disappears, either killed or captured by Zeiram, while Bob is doublecrossed by their employer who wants no witnesses. The mortally wounded Bob transfers his mind to a computer just before dying. Iria, carrying him as a mini-computer mentor, sets out to destroy both Zeiram and the ruthless Tedan Tippedai Corporation, and to rescue Gren if it is not too late.

The 1991 movie was set in a "warp zone" arena, which, despite suspenseful direction, was clearly little more than a simplistic sound stage. Animation (by Ashi Production Co.) allowed this 1994 prequel to present limitless galactic starfields, numerous exotic locales on the planets Myce and Taowajan (futuristic cityscapes are imaginatively extrapolated from traditional Indonesian architectural styles), a limitless horde of Zeiramoid creatures and acrobatics beyond the range of most live actors. The character designs are very colorful, although the elaborate costumes look rather warm for such a tropical setting. Iria's transition from a talented but naive imitation of her brother into a skilled professional hunter is handled nicely, wisely stopping short of making her the cold killer of the theatrical feature. The DVD presentation of *Iria* as a feature suffers slightly from the original need to divide it into six neat sub-adventures within the overall story; and since this is the beginning of the *Zeiram* saga (there is also a 1994 live-action *Zeiram 2*, again written & directed by Keita Amemiya and starring Yuko Moriyama), the conclusion is naturally open-ended. But *Iria: Zeiram the Animation* stands well on its own. It should fully satisfy moviegoers looking for action-packed cinematic space

sagas. (The U.S. Manga Corps 1996 video releases of *Iria* in three videotape volumes, two episodes per volume, are still available at \$19.95 each dubbed or \$29.95 each subtitled.)

Key, the Metal Idol. V.1, Awakening. V.2, Dreaming. V.3, Singing.

OAV series, 1994-1997. Director & author: Hiroaki Sato. V.1, 7 half-hour episodes, 210 minutes. V.2, 6 half-hour episodes, 180 minutes. V.3, 2 90-minute features, 180 minutes. Price & format: bilingual DVD \$29.98. Distributor: Viz Video through Pioneer Entertainment.

Key, an instant hit as an OAV serial (15 episodes, the last two feature-length, released between December 1994 and June 1997 in Japan), has been compared with titles as disparate as *Pinocchio* and *Astro Boy*, *Peter Pan*, *Edward Scissorhands* and *A Star is Born*. Dr. Murao Mima, a reclusive expert in robotics, is funded by industrial magnate Jinsaku Ajo who is secretly developing robotic super-soldiers. Mima tests his research by building a robot granddaughter, Tokiko (Key), realistic enough to pass as human. (Ajo does not care as long as he gets the research for his own goals.) The gamin-like Key has a glassy stare and monotone voice, but she is accepted by the community as just a weird girl with delusions of being a robot due to her grandfather's work. Mima gradually comes to love Key enough to want to transform her into a real girl. She is 17 when he dies. His dying message to her is that she will also die soon when her current artificial body breaks down. Her only hope is to complete her transformation by herself, by gain-



Key, the Metal Idol. V.1, Awakening. V.2, Dreaming. V.3, Singing.

ing the love of human friends. But she will need lots of friends; at least 30,000! Key's only hope of winning so many friends seems to be through becoming a hit idol singer; a new pop star. She is coached by her only human friend, Sakura Kuriyagawa, a high school classmate whose part-time job at a video store has brought her into contact with Shuichi Tataka, president of a fan club for current idol super-star Miho Utsuse. Unknown to the three, Key is being protected secretly by Tomoyo Wakagi, her grandfather's loyal assistant who knows how the scientist really died, from industrialist Ajo who seeks to capture her, both because her body may contain Mima's last research, and because he fears her blundering around Tokyo will call attention to the existence of robots. Key's venture into the world of media stardom under the tutelage of Sakura and Shuichi introduces them all to the sleazier side of the entertainment industry: talent scouts looking for fodder for porno films, the bleak hell of cattle-call interviews, and prima-donna directors who treat hopeful teen talent as disposable raw material for their productions.

This summary does not mention some well-integrated major subplots. Writer-director

Sato keeps the story twisting in new directions, deflecting skepticism over improbable plot elements by anticipating questions. "Key, how can you be a real robot? Robots can't sweat! Even if it was true, how would getting 30,000 fans turn you into a real girl?" The desperation of Ajo and Wakagi to control Key, and the early revelation that the genuine pop idol Utsuse has been replaced by a robot duplicate in Ajo's control, lends enough plausibility to keep the suspense at a high level. The haunting mood music by Tamiya Terashima also helps immeasurably, as does an excellent cast of voice actors in the Japanese dub. The story seems to lead toward a smooth conclusion by the end of the 13th half-hour episode. Then Wakagi says, "We still have some ways to go," and the feature-length 14th episode introduces new elements that drastically change the meaning of everything that has gone before! The animation by Studio Pierrot is obviously limited, but Sato's direction is so skillful that you hardly notice.

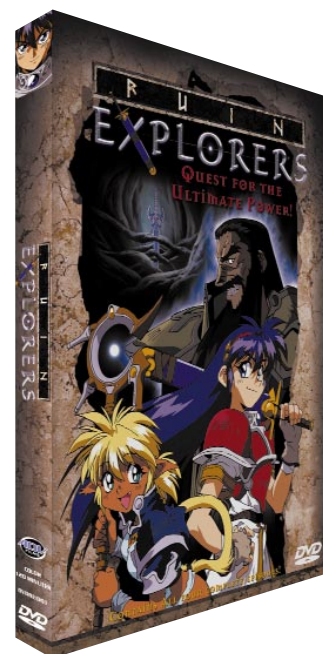
Ruin Explorers: Quest for the Ultimate Power!

OAV series, 1995-96. Director/Screenplay: Takeshi Mori. 4 episodes/120 minutes. Price & format: bilingual DVD \$29.98.

Distributor: A. D. Vision Films.

Ruin Explorers is a light-weight comedy/adventure very obviously inspired by *Dungeons & Dragons*; an animated adaptation (four half-hour episodes, released 6/25/95, 8/25/95, 11/25/95 and 2/25/96) of a comic-book serial by Kunihiro Tanaka in a Japanese gaming magazine. It demonstrates the Original Animation Video market's ability to take advantage of a pleasant story that is not strong enough to be made into a TV cartoon series or theatrical feature, but does quite well in the direct-to-video market for a niche audience (in this case, role-playing gaming fans). Also, this is a complete story, unlike some anime "movies" that end in mid-story because they are really releases of OAV serials that sold so poorly they were never finished.

In the story, a stereotypical fantasy world has so many ruins of past civilizations that a whole industry has grown up of "ruin explorers" who plunder them for



Ruin Explorers: Quest for the Ultimate Power!

lost treasures. Fam and Ihrie, two mid-teen girls, are getting into it earlier than most. Ihrie, human, is determined to prove that they are just as good as the more experienced explorers who mock them. Fam, her elf friend, is her hesitant follower. Both have magic powers, but due to a spell earlier cast on Ihrie, she cannot use her magic without turning into a mouse. Ihrie must urge Fam to use her Wiccan powers, which she does so hesitantly that it is usually too little, too late. Ihrie's exasperation with Fam finally blows up into a spat at just the wrong time. A search for a magic talisman pits them against rivals, the arrogant Rasha (sorceress) and Migel (swordsman), plus a conniving merchant, Galuff, who sold a map to the treasure to both teams in the hope that they will set off all the traps and kill each other off, leaving the treasure for him. New players enter in episode 2, and the story veers into a new and more

serious direction. The five are forced to become reluctant allies in support of handsome Prince Lyle who needs the talisman to stop the mad enchanter Rugudorull from destroying all life on Earth.

Ruin Explorers is also an example of the Japanese penchant for throwing references to American pop culture into their productions. These may indicate the introduction of those images into Japan. When the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise moved into Japan in the mid-1980s, American anime fans wondered why there were suddenly so many brief sightings of Col. Sanders in anime productions. This anime adaptation of *Ruin Explorers* (animated by Animate Films studio) has a new character not in Tanaka's comic book; merchant Galuff's pet dog, Gil, who is a dead ringer for Hanna-Barbera's snickering Muttley. Why? Who knows? Gil contributes nothing to the plot, but his appearance is

undeniably amusing, not least because of how he clashes so much with the character design of the others. (Presumably this is part of the joke.)

A.D. Vision Films previously released *Ruin Explorers* on two videos of two episodes apiece in June and September 1998, in both dubbed and subtitled versions. Due to the anime market's new demand for bilingual DVD releases (both English-dubbed and in Japanese with English subtitles), A.D. Vision is now remaindering those two video versions. Video releases of anime in subtitled form alone have become virtually extinct over the past year.

Fred Patten has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Animation World Store

<http://www.awn.com/awnstore>



Never before available!!
Original Production cels from the Oscar nominated film *The Big Snit* by director Richard Condie

