

ANIMATION

WORLD

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• MAGAZINE •

June 2001

The Sweet Sound of Independence

Plus: Atlantis,
E3 and Mo Willems

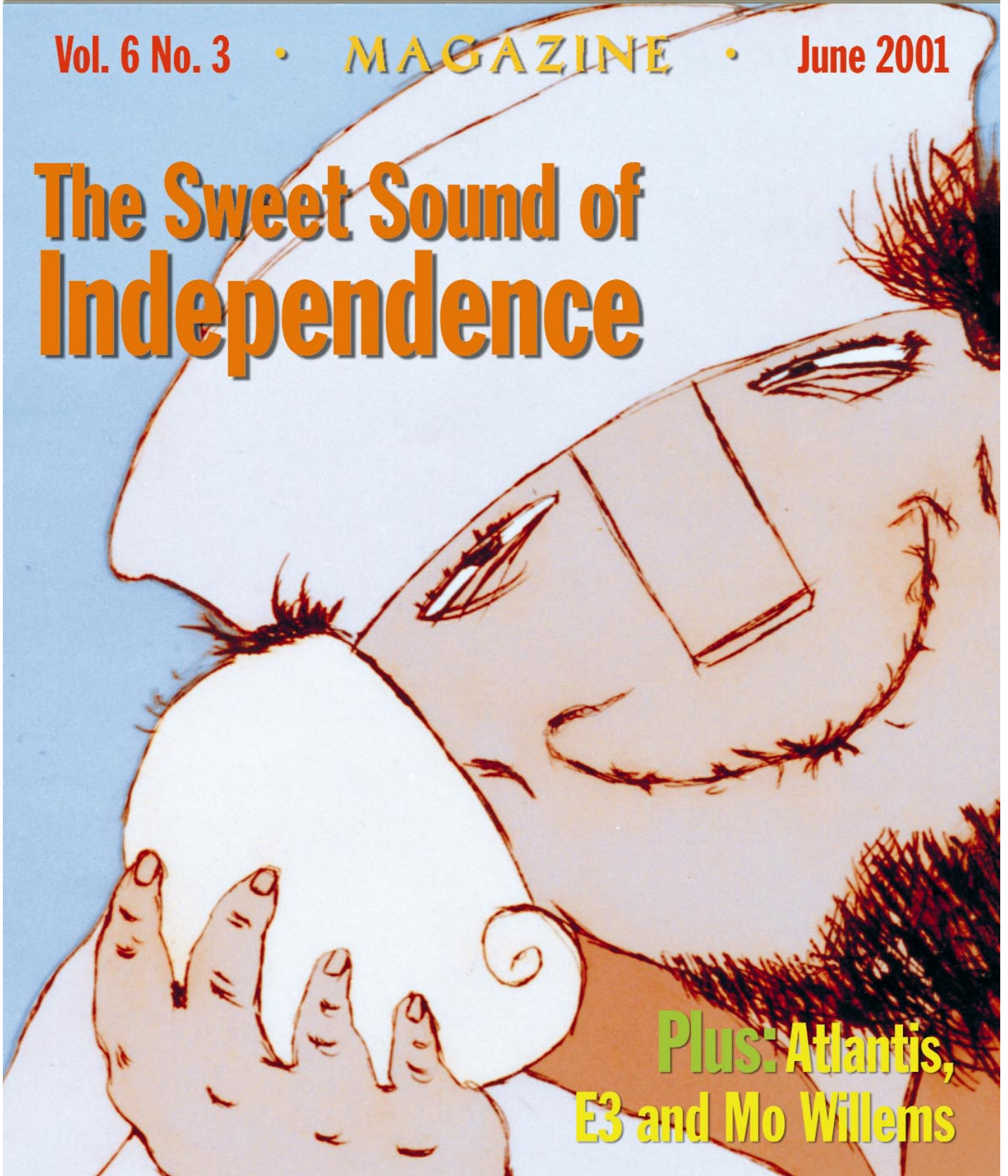


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Nine And A Half Questions... With Janet Waldo

by Will Ryan

Nine and a half questions? Why not ten? According to Will Ryan, everyone does ten questions. Today's hectic society expects concision. Brevity. Terseness. In short, un-lengthy-osity-ous-ism-ness!

* * *

Janet Waldo has starred in more animated series than most people are aware of. From *Josie and The Pussycats* to *Precious Pupp* to *Penelope Pitstop*, the oddly monickered spinoff character from Hanna-Barbera's *Wacky Races* series. She also had the lead role in *Alice In Wonderland*, an amazing one-hour prime-time special written by Bill Dana and featuring a backup cast which included Sammy Davis Jr., Zsa Zsa Gabor, Howie Morris and Hedda Hopper! A couple decades later she reprised the role in *Through The Looking Glass*, the first American made-for-video animated feature film (which included songs composed by her present interrogator). Her backup cast in this production included George Gobel, Phyllis Diller, Jonathan Winters and Mr. T! Janet also starred opposite a live-action Gene Kelly in the animated prime-time network special *Jack And The Beanstalk*.

This interview was conducted in the kitchen of her home in the San Fernando Valley, just
ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



PENELOPE
PITSTOP



JUDY
JETSON



JOSIE
AND THE PUSSYCATS



MORTICIA
ADDAMS
FAMILY



GRANNY
ADDAMS
FAMILY



FRED FLINTSTONE'S
MOTHER-IN-LAW



Janet Waldo



GRANNY
SWEET



ALICE
IN WONDERLAND

The many faces of Janet Waldo.

down the street from the domicile of actor Richard Crenna, with whom she appeared on a classic episode of *I Love Lucy* (as opposed to all those non-classic episodes of *I Love Lucy*).

* * *

Will Ryan: Are you familiar with the Scopes Monkey Trial?

Janet Waldo: Yes. As a matter of fact, my husband Bob co-wrote *Inherit The Wind*.

WR: Do you mean the world-
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famous play/movie/TV drama co-written by Jerome Lawrence and — ?

JW: — and Robert E. Lee.

WR: Do you ever get Janet Leigh's mail?

JW: Not really. But I certainly get good tables in restaurants! Whenever I make a reservation I make it as Janet Lee. They're just so sweet to me!

WR: A few years ago, Capitol released a Frank Sinatra "Duet" album, featuring performances by him and people he had never even met. I cannot ask them the following question, but I can ask it of you. What's it like, singing with Frank Sinatra?

JW: Oh! That was the greatest fun! You're talking about when I played Teenaged Tina on his radio show. Benny Goodman was on that one and that's the only time Frankie and Benny performed together.

WR: Ever sing with the Velvet Fog?

JW: Oh, yes! When I sang with Frankie it was a medley — we took turns — but with Mel Torme it was a real duet.

WR: Whatever happened to some singer named Tiffany?

JW: Who?

WR: Is it true that you do a radio

series where you're married to a man with a talking horse?

JW: Of course, of course! Alan Young plays my husband in the weekly radio drama *Adventures In Odyssey*, currently heard in over 1,600 stations in North America. You're on that show, too.

WR: Sometimes. Is your mom Blondie?

JW: In a way. Penny Singleton, who played my mom on *The Jetsons*, is the star of all those *Blondie* films. You know, she and Alan Young and I were doing an autograph session at the Beverly Garland hotel last month and instead of bringing her cartoon 8x10s, she brought a lot of her pin-ups. They went like hotcakes!

WR: We're now in the 21st Century. Do you have any robots that help you with the housework?

JW: Everything on *The Jetsons* is happening now or coming soon! What I'm looking for is the Seeing Eye Vacuum Cleaner that we had, and they're finally about to come out with it! Videophones, moving sidewalks, Food-a-ry-ca-cycles (now known as microwave ovens)! It's just so exciting! It's like we were . . . Nostradamus!

WR: Have you seen this new movie *Josie and the Pussycats*?

JW: Not yet.

WR: Me neither.

JW: Hmmm.

WR: Wanna go?

JW: That's one question too many.

Janet Waldo is currently heard on dozens of radio commercials throughout the country, as well as hundreds of animated episodes on the Cartoon Network and Boomerang. In the movie The Jetsons, Universal Studios (former home of the Blondie pictures) insisted that Joe Barbera cast a singer du jour named Tiffany in the role of Judy Jetson rather than Janet. The public outcry was overwhelming. Tiffany, with her rather husky voice, was terribly miscast in the part of the perky teenager. By the time the picture was released, Tiffany's top-ten career was pretty much but a memory. To this day Joe Barbera apologizes to Janet every time he sees or talks to her.

Will Ryan works with robots on the Annie Award-winning series Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective! He is also president of Snappytoons Amusement Company, a production and design firm now affiliated with Eyth, Outcalt and Cabarga and specializing in the creation of animated films, theme parks and creative consumer environments.

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FLASH

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Those Who Shall Be:

The New Faces Under The Animation Sun

by Chris J. Robinson

When Ooheleth/Ecclesiastes breathed that there were "no new things under the sun," no doubt he stole it from someone before him just as I steal this thought from a voice before mine. Things aside, there are always new combinations and imaginings under the sun.

In animation there are fewer fresh voices every year. With state support in decline, it is more difficult to carve out a career as an independent animator. Increasingly, we see one great first film followed by nothingness. The newcomer moves to a studio where they fall under the spell of 18-hour days hacking away for 'steady' pay.

Under my sun newcomers are those who've managed to make at least three films and meet with some degree of critical and popular success (i.e. win shining trophies). With this in mind, let's meet a quartet of the newest, hip, happenin' coolsters.

Don Hertzfeldt (U.S.A.)

Don Hertzfeldt has been drawing since he smashed Lacan's mirror. He's self-taught and when he did go to school, he went to a sanctuary for eggheads (Santa Barbara) where talking about a film was more important than actually making one. However, the school did have an animation camera. For four years, the camera was Hertzfeldt's best friend and together they made a film each year.



Rejected, Hertzfeldt's Oscar nominated short. © Bitter Films.



Like Bill Plympton, Hertzfeldt self-finances his work using profits from his past films. "I made *Ah, L'Amour* in 1995, the first thing I ever shot on film. Spike 'n' Mike picked it up and turned it into a giant cult hit." *L'Amour* funded *Genre* (1996), which bred *Lily and Jim* (1997) and...you get the idea. "I've never lost money on a film and have never had to have a traditional job, never had to do commercial work out of necessity."

At 24, Hertzfeldt's already an animation veteran and the landscape has changed since his school days. The biggest change he's seen is the onslaught of technology: "When I recently told some students I made cartoons, they immediately asked what kind of software I used. I said I didn't use computers, I shot them traditionally. They looked at me bewildered. That's a scary thing."

No, a scary thing is the thought of Don Hertzfeldt not being able to make films. Be very, very happy that he's an animator. His films drip violence. His stick figure characters often stab, saw, beat, shoot and gut each other. My initial tendency was to write

Hertzfeldt's work off as an empty and juvenile celebration of violence. I was wrong. Hertzfeldt like Michael Dudok de Wit, Igor Kovalyov, Michele Cournoyer or any other supposedly legitimate artist is simply working through internal emotions and thoughts. Hertzfeldt's characters (*Genre, Ah, L'Amour*) are anguished souls simply longing to be accepted, to be loved, to be. The fierce frankness of these violent emotions are legitimate feelings. Hertzfeldt's work shares a strange sort of kinship with the writing of Hubert Selby Jr. (*The Room, Requiem for a Dream*) in their unearthing of the rage of existence that creeps and crawls within each of us. There are times when it howls to be unleashed upon the world. Often it spurts out in a small shout, a dirty look or a middle finger. It's never enough, so we find caged releases through exercise, alcohol, drugs or art. These are spaces where we uninhibitedly articulate the beasts within, where we let them out to play in a confined area to examine, confront and understand. Some do it in a bar. Some do it on a hockey rink. Don Hertzfeldt does it

on a piece of paper. Thank Christ, because to paraphrase the words of that same Christ, "If you don't shit, you're gonna blow."

Ülo Pikkov (Estonia)

Twenty-five year old Ülo Pikkov never intended to make animation films. He only became interested in animation after he started his studies at Turku Arts Academy in 1994. "I first applied for some live-action film schools, but didn't get accepted." Grasping that final straw, Pikkov applied at an animation school, just to stay close to the world of film. He was accepted and since then, Pikkov's work has received wide acclaim from voices that matter. His student film, *Cappuccino* (1997), played in Zagreb and won a Best Design award at SAFO '97, while *Bermuda* (1998) was accepted at numerous international festivals, won prizes at Ottawa '98 and SAFO '99, and was recently purchased by AtomFilms.

Cappuccino is a tale of broken love. A man sits at a desk with a torn photo of the woman who ditched him. At the same time, a nearby mosquito sees his life smashed as the man's hand slams down on Mrs. Mosquito. The two 'men' confront their losses with drastic measures. Given that Pikkov was 19 when he made the film, it contains surprising maturity, a sharp wit and smooth timing.

His graduation film, *Bermuda* showed further promise while breaking away (just a bit) from his mentor, Priit Pärn. In the middle of a dried up ocean, a sailor (with a wooden leg of course) lives with a mermaid. She relies on the sailor to bring her water everyday. The sailor, relishing this domineering position, screams daily at the threatening



Bermuda by Ülo Pikkov.
© 1998 Eesti Joonisfilm.

clouds to keep the rain away. Life proceeds until a flute playing centaur arrives and shifts the power balance. Within this simple love triangle (*Bermuda Triangle*), Pikkov suggests that the deafening reverberations of the past engulf people as they attempt to make changes and move forward with their lives.

Pikkov's most recent film, *The Headless Horseman* (2001), is his first film for Estonia's Joonisfilm studio. Taking the Headless Horseman myth and the Western genre as its starting point, this frenetic film (featuring a soundtrack by Sven Grunberg) is loaded with a mouthful of absurd eye candy as Pikkov explores the relationship between the individual and society. A typical Western town is calm and ordered. Sure, a shark flies by with a balloon wrapped around his body and cows perform a pyramid, but other than that, it's a pretty normal Western town. Unfortunately, the Headless Horseman just doesn't fit in. Feeling unloved, the Horseman and his nose-picking horse wreck havoc on the town. Finally, after virtually destroying the town, the Horseman finds the moon and uses it as a head. He's smiling. He's calm. He's still alone. Sometimes things just are.

Graphically it is impossible to isolate Pikkov's style, yet one does immediately recognize the

simple, but strong drawing style that is undoubtedly Estonian. There is also that recognizable Estonian thread of the absurd and comic. Pikkov's films deal with individuals finding their place in society without being assimilated. His characters fear alienation and loneliness, yet reject the sweeping sameness of society. The search for a balance between the individual and community squirms at the core of Pikkov's work.

Pikkov still yearns to make feature films, but until he can get feature money, will stick to short films. Meanwhile, he hopes that despite his artistic shortcomings, he has the opportunity to meet as many women (preferably tall) as possible. His next project, *Year of the Monkey* draws again on the theme of the individual and society. The film is about a monkey who shaves his fur off in order to become human. He finds domestic and material bliss until one day he decides to escape from it all and move back to the jungle. "It's actually a little bit autobiographical," says Pikkov. Umm...ok.

Andreas Hykade (Germany)

Andreas Hykade learned to draw in a Bavarian pub. His father was a frequent visitor and little Hykade was dragged along so Mother could have time to herself. The men wanted to play cards. To keep the boy quiet they gave him some pencils and paper. He stayed quiet. The men played. He kept drawing. Life was good.

Since the bar days, Hykade has emerged as one of the most important animators around. His epic films, *We Lived in Grass* (1995) and *Ring of Fire* (2000) have received awards and acclaim around the world for their startling, uncompromising insights



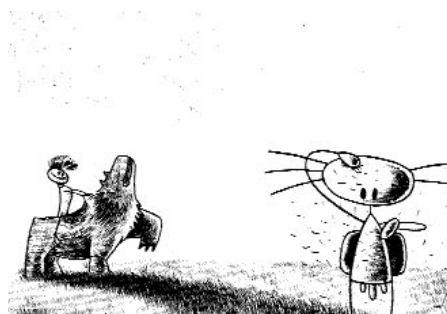
The bizarre sexual world of *Ring of Fire*. © Gambit.

into the deep, dark recesses lurking beneath the flesh.

Brought up in the countryside of Bavaria, Hykade had no formal contact with art until he studied animation at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg in Stuttgart, Germany. "It was the only thing to do. I couldn't stay in the village because I would have become a freak. I had this artist myth in my mind that you go to art school and smoke, drink and have discussions about deep things, but it was nothing like that. It was just bored kids hanging around." Any hope Hykade had that art would save his life drifted away in the smoke that he lazily blew from his stale cigarette.

Between puffs Hykade made little drawings based on his life in the village. "We had this neighbour who was a complete alcoholic. He had six or seven children and he had testicular cancer.

He died in 1974, when I was six years old. Our doors were always open and you could see their life." Soon Hykade found that there was a thread connecting the images, a vocabulary from within which he could create a portrait of his childhood village. This became the basis for the film *We Lived in Grass*.



We Lived in Grass.

© Gambit, Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg and Film Bilder.

We Lived in Grass is told from a young boy's point of view as he describes his life in a small village. This fifteen-minute film is

superbly animated and drawn in an almost child like style; a drawing style that reflects the frenzied, fragmentary nature of the young boy's mind. Hykade talks about his regret that he never had the chance to scribble like other kids. His drawings were mostly copies of *The Flintstones* or whatever photos or comic books were around. *We Lived in Grass* gave him a chance to explore the child scribble he missed out on.

Ring of Fire catches a few moments in the life of two cowboys who've arrived at a bazaar in search of sex. They are ignorant boys who view the world as a playground for their dicks. However, after the protagonist violently beats and rapes one of the women, his sidekick aids the woman and soon discovers that there is a vibrant soul beneath the flesh he once so desired.

As might be expected, Hykade's Felliniesque neo-noir Western, *Ring of Fire*, has many interesting stories behind it. The root of the film derived from a real life love triangle. "I had a very good friend and we went out to get pissed every night. And then I fell in love with his wife." The love was lost. The friendship was redeemed. A film was found. Hykade spent 1 1/2 years on the script and knew that the setting would be a bazaar with all sorts of sexual figures. In order to create original images, Hykade placed ads asking people to draw figures of their sexual desires. "I sent it to prisons, art magazines, schools and friends." Together with colleague, Sabine Huber, Hykade sorted through the 350 drawings they received and created thirty figures for the film.

Hykade's work has not been without controversy. A few

voices have whispered the words 'sexism' in relation to Hykade's work and especially *Ring of Fire*. "Sexist comments are nothing new," says Hykade, "but it's obvious that they get it wrong." Sexism generally means to be against something and it's clear to those who wish to see that *Ring of Fire* is a portrait of sexuality from a male point of view. "They are kids," says Hykade, "who have a desire for flesh and learn that there is a soul behind the flesh. That's it. It's nothing more." When people are given the choice between beauty and honesty, most will take beauty. Beauty is simple. Honesty is complex, frustrating and often ugly.

Hykade is currently working on an animated feature called, *Jesus*. I asked Hykade to describe it in one sentence: "It's about the kingdom being amongst us all the time...but people just don't see it."

People see what they want to see and it's apparent with Hykade's work, as it was with many of Christ's interpreters, that those with eyes are often the most blind.

Priit Tender (Estonia)

Until the day he found animation, Priit Tender was seduced and swallowed by the lure of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. His entire life changed 99 years after the birth of cinema when he discovered animation. Sex was not sex anymore, drugs were not drugs and rock and roll merely white man blues. Five years have passed. Little has changed.

He graduated as an art teacher from the Tallinn Polytechnical College in 1995 and his first job was as an animator on Priit Pärn and Janno Poldma's masterpiece, *1895* (1995). Since then,

Tender has made three drawn films (*Gravitation*, *Viola* and *Mont Blanc*) all engraved with those Estonian traditions of a strong graphic style, absurd actions and symbolism.



Gravitation by Priit Tender.
© 1996 Eesti Joonisfilm.

Gravitation confronts the arrogance and naivete of youth as a young man decides he will fly no matter what the laws say. *Viola* echoes the triangle themes of *Bermuda* and Priit Pärn's *Triangle*. Set on an island, a composer, dancer and one-handed chairman come to grips with their respective prisons. Tender's most recent film, *Mont Blanc* is his strongest work to date. A man wakes up, packs his bags, leaves his family and heads for a mountain. Using a strong graphic design loaded with symbolism and the comforting sounds of the narrator from Pärn's *1895*, Tender gives us a portrait of those many everymen who flee the domestic for higher aspirations only to find that they destroy themselves along the way. In this fleeting world, the human heart and all that it carries stands as the last remaining flower of stability. *Mont Blanc* is truly one of the most magnificent and poetic films of 2001.

Twenty-eight year old Tender's aims are modest and he remains a humble creator: "You can never be too confident because I never know the result of

the film that I'm starting. It's always a surprise to see what comes out of your original idea. It seems that from a certain point the film starts to live its own life. Maybe when the film starts to be completely under your control, it's time to quit. But maybe I'm wrong."

Animation, as Tender explains tongue-in-cheek, is less about artistic creation and more about basic survival. "Animation is a job. I have seven children and I earn my living through filmmaking. I don't have any artistic aims, it's all about food and money." Hearing that there is an abundance of both food and money in America, Tender hopes that one day his Hollywood tinged films will carry him to the shores of California. "So far I have had to make short films because of the lack of money but in Hollywood I would make full-length movies. I already have several scripts waiting. They are about a cat and a dog. But with these short films I have made, I just want to say 'Hello everybody!' or 'C'mon everybody!'"

Joking aside (?), Tender is currently in pre-production on a film tentatively titled, *Boogie Woogie*. Based on Stravinsky's music, this 45-minute comedy will use a wood engraving technique and feature a fox and many rabbits. Tender hopes to complete this musical comedy by 2016.

These are by no means the only fresh faces on the circuit. There are others I've overlooked (e.g. Daniel Suljic, Marie Paccou) and there are also a number of other masters-in-waiting on the horizon including Fran Krause (Mister Smile), Lorelei Pepi (Grace), Sonia Bridge (The Day Stashi Ran Out of Honey) and Sandra Gibson

(Edgeways).

These voices of youth sing songs of the ancient Ionian philosophers. Each asks what is the Stuff that makes us?

Hertzfeldt's characters are rejected, punished or attacked without cause. They exist in a world of randomness in a constant state of flux. They respond with the wisdom of violence.

Pikkov explores the breezes of the past and the manner in which his characters allow it to control the present. Tender's characters ignore the voices of the possible so that they can crash test into the wall for themselves. Hykade's boys discover Stuff they were never told and only learn too late. "All woman is whore. All man is soldier," the father teaches the boy.



Viola by Priit Tender.
© 1999 Eesti Joonisfilm.

What father didn't tell him was that there were other possibilities. He did not tell him about the dandelion girl and the love, tranquility, and the soul that lives within her, and within him.

Each artist steps into different waters, yet reaches the same conclusions: the fight we wage is against themselves. "I am as I am not," said Heraclitus. It is only here

that we can really find the strains of harmony.

Chris Robinson is a writer and programmer. He is the artistic director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival and the Ottawa International Student Animation Festival. His frank and often iconoclastic opinions on animation (notably his monthly column, The Animation Pimp, on Animation World Network) have met with some controversy and recently he was deemed the "enfant terrible of animation" by Take One magazine (he thinks it's a compliment).

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Talking in His Sheep:

A Conversation with Mo Willems

by Martin “Dr. Toon” Goodman



In *Sheep In The Big City*, poor Sheep is always on the lam.
All images courtesy of and © Cartoon Network.

For those of you not familiar with Cartoon Network's hit series *Sheep In The Big City*, some advice: Don't try to figure it out — just enjoy the ride. This hilarious, unpredictable show stars a sheep that doesn't speak and may disappear from sight for most of an episode. "Sheep" is trying to avoid capture by an incompetent top-secret military organization, but incidental characters may commandeer the action in order to parody Russian playwrights, pitch ludicrous products, or simply demand attention. When the story resumes, the intrusive narrator or the main cast may turn it upside-down for the sake of a wild pun. Now...picture all this as interpreted through John Hubley by way of Picasso. Who's responsible for this stylish mayhem? It's Curious

Pictures' director Mo Willems. In March of 2001, Mo talked with me about his career, his inspirations and a small sheep in a big city.

Dr. Toon: There have been many interests in your life that could have led to different careers; cartooning, screenwriting, performance art, sculpture — even toy-making. What led you to decide on a career in animation, especially during the lean decade of the 1980s?

Mo Willems: It was a selfish decision, and what it came down to is, in animation you can do everything yourself; you don't have to depend on other people. When I was doing stage comedy I couldn't afford sets, props, things like that. So it was the ability to create

your own world — by yourself — in motion that made animation appealing. Things evolve also. You end up animating because people ask you to animate, and that builds to a certain degree. My desire as a kid was to find a way to be funny and draw. Animation turned out to be the best way for me to do that.

Dr. T: Well, it certainly seems to be working. You were schooled at the Tisch NYU School of Arts — that had to be a very exciting place with instructors like John Canemaker and Richard Protovin on hand.



Mo Willems.

MW: It was a very exciting time — even though back then it made about as much sense to study animation as to take a couple hundred thousand dollars and burn it! We were a scraggly little group of guys and gals making our own films, and it was very fun. I was fortunate in that the other students

were really good and very dedicated; one of my directors on *Sheep* is somebody I graduated with. And there was hope — this was in the late Eighties, so MTV was getting big and we said to ourselves, “Hey, look at all these different styles folks are animating in, and somebody’s making a living at it.” We weren’t overly pessimistic.

Dr. T: How did your training at NYU influence your later work?

MW: The best thing that NYU did for me was to give me a sense of animation history. They exposed me to all sorts of stuff. Zagreb films, *Ubu Roi*. I first saw *Gerald McBoing Boing* there. The Hubleys’ films, Oskar Fischinger, etc. I discovered animation as an art form where abstract artists influenced people who were making cartoons at UPA. And then John Canemaker encouraged me to make my own films in my own voice, which I did.

Dr. T: Talk about your first work following animation school.

MW: Probably my first watchable film is the last film I made at school, *The Man Who Yelled*. That was my calling card for many years. It got into a couple of festivals, got shown around and that’s how I found other work. The first film that I did on my own after that was *Iddy Biddy Beat Boy* — and that came about because Spike and Mike had seen *The Man Who Yelled* and wanted the rights to it. I told them that somebody else had the rights. So they said, “Okay, we’ll give you some money — make your own film!” After that I was lucky enough to find work with *Sesame Street*, which was a great fit because the kind of films I

wanted to make were very close to the kind of films they wanted to air. I really felt that I was making personal work, even though I was teaching “the letter of the day” or something like that.

Dr. T: How did you end up on *Sesame Street*?

I think that limitations are essential to the creative process.

MW: Luck and hard work. I had been working at CTW drawing “smiley faces” for the research department; they would ask kids: “How did you feel about this show you just saw?” and the kids could point to different characters with different emotions. So I was doing this for a couple of bucks an hour down in some hallway and hawking my flyers for a comedy show I did. Of course, nobody ever came to the shows, but they knew I was doing comedy, and somebody invited me to audition as a writer for *Sesame Street*. I handed in some sketches I’d written and about eight months later they said, “Okay, we’re gonna let you become a *Sesame Street* auditioner,” a process that took another half year or so. At the same time, Arlene Sherman saw my films; I had given them to CTW some two years before and they had finally reached her desk. She said, “Oh, you’re auditioning and you’re the guy who made *Iddy Biddy Beat Boy* — let’s talk.” Within the year I was making films for them and writing for *The Muppets*. It was a very good year.

Dr. T: One of the challenges you really enjoyed while working on *Sesame Street* was having to work within limitations.

MW: Absolutely. I think that limitations are essential to the creative process. They can be any kind of limitations: budgetary, time limitations or conceptual. On *Sesame Street* you have to teach a particular concept in a particular way, yet make it entertaining and original. And they’ve got a library of — I don’t how many films they’ve commissioned over the last thirty-three years — coming up with an idea that hasn’t been done before can be a challenge.

Dr. T: The UPA studio was obviously a major artistic influence on your work; it’s uncanny how you captured the feel of Bobe Cannon’s work in *The Off-Beats* — the series you did for Nickelodeon. Are you generally attracted to a minimalist style of animation?

MW: I find the fact that I can’t draw very well attracts me to a minimalist style. While I enjoy all forms of drawing, a single line, simply done, is more beautiful than a hundred little lines sort of approximating the right thing. I like my characters to be two-dimensional. Just because you can do something in 3-D doesn’t make it better. I want my line to be focused, so the emotions of a character are clear.

Dr. T: You seem to admire other cartoonists who use an economy of line as well. You’ve mentioned that you enjoy the work of the famous *New Yorker* cartoonists such as Ronald Searle and Saul Steinberg.

MW: Steinberg in particular — absolutely. Another great artist who has an economy of line is, of course, Charles Schulz. His drawings, especially in the Fifties and the Sixties are very spare, but filled with emotion. Ronald Searle, Schulz and Steinberg, those guys, more than any animator, have influenced me deeply. Not only in their stylistic decisions, but in their content. With all of those artists there's humor, but also a pervasive melancholy that I find very attractive...and universal.

Dr. T: I wondered if you were also a great fan of Jules Feiffer.

MW: I am a fan of Jules Feiffer. I have a lot of his work. I think the vibrancy of his line is amazing. I loved *Munro*...but he's not in my triumvirate.

Dr. T: Are you a fan of Peter Arno as well?

MW: I would never pretend to have that sort of breezy sophistication. I'm a fan, but he's not a major influence. He travels in a better-dressed world than I do.

Dr. T: Well, I was thinking of your characters Lady Richington and Swanky and they reminded me of Arno.

MW: Well, I'm quite happy to steal from anyone, and yes, you could say that Lady Richington and Swanky have that sort of Thirties-Forties Arno feel to them.

Dr. T: You have also mentioned some modernist artistic influences such as Picasso and Paul Klee. Their styles seem to show up in *Sheep in the Big City* quite often.

MW: For sure. Actually, one of the most fun films I did on *Sesame Street* is of two sort of Picasso abstraction cartoon characters going through a museum of photorealistic drawings and not being able to figure out what they are! I think of fine art simply as cartoons with really nice frames.



Dr. T: I've noticed that, in the background changes and designs in the opening credits of *Sheep in the Big City* one can pick up a lot of the Paul Klee influence.

MW: Yes, and also Oskar Fischinger in its abstraction and jazz. The reason that UPA is so key to me is that they were the first studio to come around and synthesize all of these different things that I admire - to take the humor of James Thurber, the music of Dizzy Gillespie, the palette and the textures of Paul Klee — and to spin those around and spit out a cartoon. And it's still a cartoon! It's accessible without being simple.

Dr. T: I've seen some homage in your cartoons to such films as *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Rise of Dutton Lang*. It's very entertaining picking out some of these great UPA influences!

MW: What I'm doing is contemporary but the themes in my films,

hopefully, are as universal as UPA's were. A great cartoon is timeless. Chuck Jones for example, his cartoons are as fresh today as they were when they were made. And that's what you're striving for.

Dr. T: You stated on the Cartoon Network Website that one of your major comedy influences was *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. That's pretty evident to anyone who's seen *Sheep in the Big City*!

MW: Absolutely. I think of the Angry Scientist as sort of a Basil Fawlty! *Monty Python* and particularly John Cleese broke almost all of the rules, did all sorts of wild things without becoming malicious. There was great, goofy fun to it all. I think popular entertainment should have some depth to it, but at the end of the day, the point is to have fun. How often do you get to have fun in a day?

Dr. T: That self-reflexive humor really works great in *Sheep*; having a character refer to the plot device and then having a mechanical plot device show up, or the Narrator who is greatly embroiled in the script —

MW: Yeah, the Narrator is one of my favorite characters because frankly, he's an asshole! Who hired him? How did this guy get this job? One of the things I wanted to do with *Sheep* was to create an improvisational feel: I hope that the Narrator, from time to time, gives the sense that he's just speaking off the cuff. Of course, it's animation and it can't be "spontaneous" because there are tens of thousands of drawings involved in it, but it should feel like it's happening "live." It's a fun challenge.

Dr. T: Even though it's improvisational, I think that people who have a familiarity with the show keep getting more and more of the in-jokes, such as when General Specific exclaims, "Great Scot!" and the Great Scot (who tends to pop up instantly in his kilts) doesn't show up, the General asks, "Ah, where's the Great Scot?" That might throw a first-time viewer, but for those who keep watching the show there's this great continuity of incidental characters and in-jokes to enjoy.

MW: Hopefully our world is fully formed, and the crew keeps me honest about that. We call our "B" characters "Dick and Janes." If we reuse a stock character you've got to remember what he did in a previous show, and that should affect what he's doing now. Everyone at the studio looks at *The Big City* as an alternate, living world.

Dr. T: Were you also a fan of the Zucker brothers films?

MW: Yeah...but not really. Not to be too critical, but those films didn't have character; it was joke after joke, and the jokes are funny, but hopefully at the end of *Sheep*, you're laughing more at the fact that General Specific is a crazy, spoiled brat, not just a joke we made along the way.

Dr. T: That's for sure! Hasn't he caught Sheep about four times, trying to stick him in that sheep-powered ray gun?

MW: Yeah, but then he starts talking to himself or something, and Sheep just walks away! As the shows are now progressing, he's also becoming more petulant; he



gets pouty because the other soldiers forget his birthday!

Dr. T: Those UPA cartoons you admired were very notable for their stunning graphic design and novel uses of color and texture, but sometimes this came at the price of character development and humor. How do you avoid those pitfalls yourself and come up with a funny cartoon filled with memorable characters?

MW: Well, another large influence on me is the storytelling of Bill Cosby. Essentially, what I'm trying to do is tell stories and I want to take my characters seriously. They're ridiculous...but *they* don't



know that they're ridiculous. If General Specific is upset, let him *really* be upset; if Lady Richington is outraged, really have her be outraged. I think that's how you weld a story. And you try and find a theme for each story — friendship, the cost of fame, or family relationships...

Dr. T: I've been reading a few reviews of your show and most of the reviewers seem to draw a comparison to the *Rocky and Bullwinkle* series. Coincidentally, that's a show that had a lot of old UPA veterans on hand. Do you see many similarities between your show and that one?

MW: You know, I've got to be honest — I'm asked this quite a bit — and it wasn't really an influence for me. We're definitely coming from the same source and *Bullwinkle* was a great show, but I never watched it as a kid. I never saw the connection until people started saying, "Oh yeah, *Sheep's* like *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, only updated!" I first thought, "What?" So, I went back and watched a few episodes. Similarities are there — the adult sensibility, the UPA connection, its graphic qualities, being primarily a human world inhabited by a few animals — but the connections are more coincidental than you might think.

Dr. T: Actually, I had some problems with the comparison myself, but in a way I think it's sort of a tribute in the sense that, your show is so novel it doesn't beg an easy comparison to any animated precedent.

MW: Well, that's very nice to hear. Makes me feel warm all over.

Dr. T: Oh, *do go on!* Mo, much of your work - *Iddy Biddy Beat Boy*, *The Off-Beats* and now *Sheep in the Big City* - seem to deal with alienation and the pain of being an outsider who has a hard time finding acceptance. Is that a theme that has particular resonance for you?

MW: Yes, absolutely. I have always felt alienated: my folks are immigrants; I grew up in a very closed society in the South; my father stayed home and threw pottery; my mother had a career, which was very unusual in New Orleans; I decided to become an animator as opposed to a banker. There's a lot of ways in which I was an outsider. But this theme keeps coming back, not because of me, but because I think we are *all* alienated. It's universal. It's part of the culture that we live in, where religion has less of a hold on us and science too has been discredited as the road to a glorious future. Politically, this world seems to be in shambles because you don't have the ironically stabilizing forces of the Cold War. Now each sub-group can manifest their pettiness with mini-wars. So I really think that people *are* alienated.

Dr. T: You hope that your films have the same sort of resonance for everybody?

MW: At least everybody who has cable.

Dr. T: While we're on the subject, I'm just curious: did you direct the Cartoon Network bumper featuring *Sheep in the CN commissary*? The one where the other toons tell him that they don't want "his kind" here?

MW: No I didn't, but I thought it was a great piece. Cartoon Network has a good handle on what this show is about, and kudos to them because it's a hard sell. It's adult and kid, there's a huge cast, there are sketches in between — it breaks all kinds of formats — and the lead character doesn't speak. Since Harpo Marx, when have you got a lead character that doesn't speak? *Sheep* has all those odd things and the Network still "gets" it. Yes, I did like the spot.

I really don't see a difference between my independent work and my commercial work.

Dr. T: Who did it, Michael Ouwelien?

MW: I think he did that one, yeah.

Dr. T: He does some really funny stuff. You worked with him on the *Shorties* program, isn't that right?

MW: Yes, briefly, on the *Quick Draw McGraw*.

Dr. T: You've had a very successful and prolific run as an independent animator and director. What led you to pitch ideas to the more mainstream cable networks like Nick and Cartoon Network?

MW: I may be a heretic for saying this, but I really don't see a difference between my independent work and my commercial work. I

am making the sort of films that I want to make, and if other people will pay me to make them, then I'm very happy to take their money. With the exception of a few scattered commercial projects I've done, there is very little that I would have done much differently. Sometimes that's led to discussions with the networks, but as a general rule I've been very lucky enough to prevail. Take *The Off-Beats* — I don't think I'd do it any differently if the cash came out of my own pocket. I also fundamentally want — and this has always been my frustration with my independent films — my animation to be seen by as many people as possible. I made a film a couple of years ago called *Life*. I like it; it's a nice project but it's frustrating when I think of the amount of time, effort and money that I put into that piece and it's not really being seen.

Dr. T: That would be a frustration to anyone who creatively gives his heart to a project. It's got to be tough knowing that there's an audience out there, but it's just not reaching them.

MW: When I was doing downtown performance, I always felt it was pointless if you were in some small room on the lower East Side with a few people and you're doing jokes saying, "George Bush is a bad President" — so what? If you don't like Bush go to Staten Island or the suburbs and do your bit there! A large part of being an artist, or whatever we want to call ourselves, is communication. And the way to communicate is to have people hear you.

Dr. T: A few words about how *Sheep in the Big City* came to

Cartoon Network.

MW: It was serendipitous. Right around the time it seemed obvious that *The Off-Beats* wasn't going any further, I got a call from the Network and they said, "If you have anything, we'd like to see it." They came to New York, and I had two ideas: one was a "superhero" idea, and the other was a "space" idea. They said, "We can't wait to hear what you have to say, but we have two rules: no superheroes, no space." I was sure that it was going to be the worst pitch of my career! So, instead of talking about the specifics, I talked about the *type* of show that I wanted to do. We went out to dinner and talked about what we liked and what kind of cartoons were fun to make. I enjoyed *The Off-Beats* but I wanted to go back to something more like *The Man Who Yelled*, like the performance art and sketch I did when I was younger. Fortunately, Linda Simensky had seen many of those performances, so she knew what I was talking about. From there, the idea of a sheep being in a show somehow came out. I went away for a month with my wife to Amsterdam, where I worked on ideas.

Dr. T: Why a sheep?

MW: Because they're *funny*! Because they're *stupid*! And "sheep" is easier to pun than "hipopotamus." I like the idea of a pack animal, that always needs to be in a group, having to be alone — it's so much more painful for a sheep to be alone in a big city than an eagle or a solitary animal.

Dr. T: Yeah, well if I had that therapy group refugee of a farmer as my owner, I would have left, too!

Some of your creative ensemble on *Sheep* — Joey Mazzarino for example — have worked with you for nearly a decade.

One of the keys, I find, to recording any animation is to have fun and to be loose because if we're having fun you can hear it.

MW: Joey? Yes, Joey is a writer on *Sesame Street* and a puppeteer. I've known and worked with him for about eight years. Kevin Seal and Ken Schatz are the guys with whom I've worked for about a decade. I did a live show called "The Monotony Variety Show." At this stage of my career, more people have read about the show than ever actually saw a performance — it was a very small thing. We did sketches and all kinds of quirky bits. Did you see "The Cherry Orchard" sketch in *Sheep*? That was one of the sketches we did there. I've been working with

these guys a long time — I like to keep it in the family.

Dr. T: You trust your cast and crew to come up with a lot of good improvisation and solid contributions to the show.

MW: One of the keys, I find, to recording any animation is to have fun and to be loose because if we're having fun you can hear it. That "fun" somehow gets stuck to the tapes somewhere. I felt strongly about that in *The Off-Beats*; we wore party hats, played games, did stupid stuff... And the *Sheep* actors are *all* very, very funny people. The Ranting Swede, I would say, is 50-60 percent improvisational. I just give Kevin a premise, talk a couple of bullet points, he does it two or three times, and then we cut it together. Kevin Seal is incredibly funny — he used to be a VJ, so he's used to thinking on his feet. Ken Schatz sometimes does upwards of ten voices a show in one take. He and I do the Sombrero Brothers together, which also has that improvisational feel. The vocal performances are frustrating on one level because it takes up to eight months and all these drawings to do the animation, and the actors can come in for half an hour and make or break it. But you can't make decent animation without good acting.

Dr. T: I think that's true. I also differ with what John Kricfalusi has said; I do think you need good, solid writing in order for animation to work.

MW: I'm directly in the middle of the "John K. — *Simpsons*" argument. While animation is moving drawings, funny drawings aren't



enough. I think it's naive to ignore story, writing and language.

Dr. T: What's in the future for the series?

MW: I have no idea what's in the future. We're working on the second season now and I think we have some fun shows. The characters are definitely growing. I'm just waiting for the live-action feature to come out!

Dr. T: Oh no! You don't want to see that!

MW: With a real sheep! Any-hoo: I believe the future is tomorrow, so I'm concentrating on the show and making it as funny as possible in the here and now. If people watch it and want me to make more — I'll be happy to do it.

Dr. T: And I'll be happy to watch them. You're involved in a number of projects: producing animation

jams such as *Life*; attending festivals; contributing to the annual *Monkeysuit* comic book; you're even doing cartoons for the *Waterfront Week*. Do the demands of producing a regular TV series still allow you to make the creative rounds as much as you'd like?

MW: No. Having a show can be a sacrifice — one that I'm very happy to make — but a sacrifice. The last couple months or so I have been diligent about carving out some time for me. I'm working on some comics and some other personal works, sculpture, and things like that. I hadn't been doing that for a while and I was really starting to miss it. I haven't been down to New Orleans to do ceramics with my father in over a year. That's the trade off. You know, it's very weird; I got into animation so I could be by myself, and now I'm in an office with fifty people. But I'm still doing *Sesame*

Street, which at least makes me feel like I'm doing at least some good at the end of the day.

Mo Willems has made more than 70 short films and has won four Emmy awards as a writer for Sesame Street. He is the creator and director of Sheep In The Big City, The Off-Beats and Suzie Kabloolie. The winner of several ASIFA East awards for his animation, Mo is not quite sure what one could actually do with a sheep-powered ray gun. He's also the proud new papa of Trixie Willems, "the most beautiful girl in the history of humanity."

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

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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:

- **Producing Animation: The Producer's Thinking Map**

This month's *Producing Animation* excerpt by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi features a visual guide that summarizes the main steps involved in producing an animated project, be it feature, television or direct-to-video. You can download your version of "The Producer's Thinking Map" now at:

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Atlantis: Ushering in a New Era



by Gerard Raiti

The spectacle of Atlantis. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

Atlantis: *The Lost Empire*, the first summertime animated feature by Disney in the new millennium, looks to be a hit that will establish the bedrock for a new era in animated storytelling. It continues the recent trend at Disney to avoid musicals, as demonstrated with *Tarzan* and *The Emperor's New Groove*, and to concentrate instead on more action-laden stories. *Atlantis* is an ambitious behemoth in every sense of the word. From its widescreen CinemaScope (C-Scope) format to its multitude of digital effects, *Atlantis* propels Disney's animated features into a new realm of action/adventure. Hang on to your seats this summer because the House of Mouse has a manifold of inspiring tricks up its sleeve!

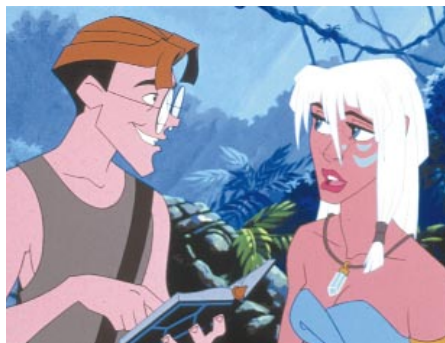
The last decade provided such a renaissance for Disney animated features that names like Gary Trousdale, Don Hahn, Kirk Wise and Alan Menken, among others, now carry tremendous respect within the animation com-

munity. Hahn, Trousdale and Wise, the men at the helm of such films as *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, reunited on *Atlantis* as producer and directors respectively to conquer a new kingdom. "We as film makers felt we had done musicals as good as we could. We couldn't do something better than *Lion King* or *Beauty* or *Hunchback*," explains Trousdale and Wise. "We felt we had to try something new. We had to do something different."

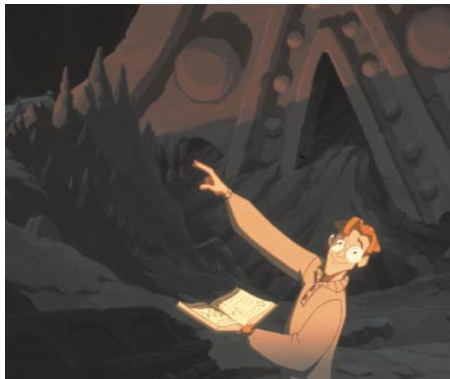
The directors' desire to delve into the genre stemmed

from their respect of great action/adventure films like George Lucas' *Indiana Jones* trilogy. Moreover, Walt Disney himself established the criteria for the genre decades ago with classics like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. "We visited Fantasyland so often," says Hahn, "It was time we took a turn towards Adventureland to add to its legacy."

In keeping with *Hercules* and *The Emperor's New Groove*, Disney used a nontraditional looking style of animation in *Atlantis*. To best capture the aquatic and exploratory motif, Disney approached comic book artist Mike Mignola of *Hellboy* fame to influence the Disney animators with his Southeast Asian-like style of drawing. Hahn, Trousdale and Wise were all fans of Mignola's work and they combined his style with the look found in propaganda posters from the early 20th century, creating a wild, unusual foundation from which *Atlantis'* graphic world evolves.



Milo Thatch (Michael J. Fox) and Princess Kida (Cree Summer) bring a new face to Disney features. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.



Milo leads the way to high action and adventure through sets inspired by real life locales. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

As they typically do for their feature films, Disney animators took several field trips across the U.S.A. to derive inspiration and observe similar items and locations to those they would be bringing to life on paper. They started at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. to get a sense of the characters' clothing. Another stop on their voyage was the Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico where the Disney crew discovered that caves can be very, very big. Some of the caves in New Mexico, for example, are large enough to contain small cities. So, it is by no stretch of the imagination that a lost island nation like Atlantis could exist in such locales under the ocean...

Atlantis also represents Disney's first animated film since 1985's *The Black Cauldron* to bear a PG rating. *The Black Cauldron* was also not a musical, and despite being the brainchild of Roy E. Disney, was as close to a veritable disaster as Disney Animation has ever produced. Although *Atlantis* shares its motion picture rating with *The Black Cauldron* that does not predetermine its fate. As Hahn states, "A funny thing has happened over the last few years. Families are so thankful there are movies they can see

together that they don't mind the PG rating. Movies like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Snow White* are scary at times. That makes for drama. Animation is drama and storytelling. You need to have conflict. That's what makes these movies great." The PG rating only further solidifies *Atlantis* in its role as a legitimate action/adventure movie and a new step in Disney's regime.

If You're Going to Go Big...Go Real Big

The widescreen format is indicative of spectacle and action, so it is not surprising that from the inception of *Atlantis* the directors knew they wanted to work in widescreen. "If we're going to be true to the genre," explain Trousdale and Wise, "then let's press for making a widescreen movie. It's not something you can get on a TV at home. It's worth getting popcorn for. It fills your field of vision." The executives at Disney were highly supportive of the directors' prerogative. "We needed a wider canvas. There was some fear and trepidation at Disney. There are lots of old wives tales that a 30% bigger screen means 30% more money. That's not the case at all. It's just a change in the shape of the canvas."

The resulting change in canvas required other modifications for the perennial team of Disney animators. Of course one discussed area was the root of all animation — the animation paper. "The fear was bigger paper," says Wise. However Disney used traditional animation paper for the hand-drawn scenes and altered the storyboard paper instead. "It's really easy to use bigger paper, but we restricted ourselves — so we weren't animating on bed sheets. We recut the pads so we were



Just a few of the exciting vehicles in store. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

always storyboarding on CinemaScope pads. Once you got used to it people didn't want to come back."

From a technical standpoint, as digital productions supervisor Kiran Joshi explains, "Using C-Scope really helped [the digital animators] out and saved us a lot of time." For example, to animate an abundance of vehicles using a traditional format, it would have been impossible to fit them all on the screen at a respectable size, so the camera would have had to pan across them which takes more time to design and render. With CinemaScope, all the vehicles fit simultaneously, so they can literally roll across the screen.

And myriads of vehicles there are! In addition to those used by the exploration party and the Atlanteans, there are a lot of other neat gadgets and mechanical creatures. The most notable of which is the Leviathan, which is Atlantis' gigantic mechanical guardian. Also, the flying Stone Fish vehicles used by Atlanteans are crucial to the film's plot and are powered by crystals, which make for amazing, subtle digital effects. Even the *Ulysses* submarine used by Milo's (voiced by Michael J. Fox) squadron of explorers is the



Milo's cast of explorers. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

impressive equivalent of an aquatic *Star Wars* battleship.

A New Wavefront

So besides the widescreen format, which has not been used since *Lady and the Tramp*, what makes *Atlantis* so special? Technically, it boasts the largest and most advanced type of computer graphics to date of any traditionally animated film. According to Joshi, 27% of *Atlantis* is digital and every scene contains computer effects. Hahn explains that the need for such large-scale computer sequences is attributable to *Atlantis* not being a musical: "In a musical we'd call the songs the set pieces and they'd carry the story forward. They'd be the tent poles that hold the movie up. We went to the computer graphics to create something the audience has never seen before. It's the thrill ride aspect of the film."

Computer effects in Disney animated features began with the Big Ben climax in *The Great Mouse Detective*, which was steered by *Toy Story* mastermind John Lasseter. Effects were used sparingly in ensuing films mainly due to budget restrictions and software limitations. The decisive moment in Disney's timeline came with the ballroom dance scene in

Beauty and the Beast, where the entire background was rendered. Disney took this a step further in *Aladdin* with Carpet, the first Disney feature character to be completely computer generated. *The Lion King* flaunted the now infamous wildebeest stampede; the detail and fluidity of the nearly entire CGI scene was unparalleled in 1994. Of course Disney and Pixar united in the ensuing years for *Toy Story*, its sequel, and *A Bug's Life*. Deep Canvas, a technique created for *Tarzan*, uses digital paint effects to augment traditional 2D backgrounds in order to create a sense of depth and realism unattainable through traditional means.

Dinosaur, despite having a terribly predictable and silly story, represented the epitome of computer effects by seamlessly blending live-action scenery with stupendously crafted CGI dinosaurs.

"One goal [with *Atlantis*] was to hybridize the two types of animation," says Wise. "Often the digital animation sticks out, so we had an ambition to bridge that flaw." Fortunately, *Atlantis* culminates the various digital effects incorporated in the last two decades of Disney animation. In fact, the technology used to create *Dinosaur* was a modified version of the hybrid techniques that were being developed in the early stages of *Atlantis*. Animators modeled and animated elements like backgrounds, vehicles and landscapes using Alias|Wavefront's Maya. As Joshi explains, "In a particular scene there are a whole series of 3D elements. We wanted to set it up so the animator had all the elements in the Maya window in order to be able to animate. That enabled our more traditional canvas animators not to need to know how to use all the features of the program."



Integrating *The Ulysses* into the film called for the careful meshing of 2D and 3D.
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**Atlantis features spectacular effects animation. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.
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Disney Feature Animation also had a special computer program, Inka, made uniquely for *Atlantis*. Inka creates hidden lines that mesh 2D and 3D animation. Similarly subtle digital effects appear in the particle animation of bubbles in water and swarms of fireflies.

As always, the basis for all

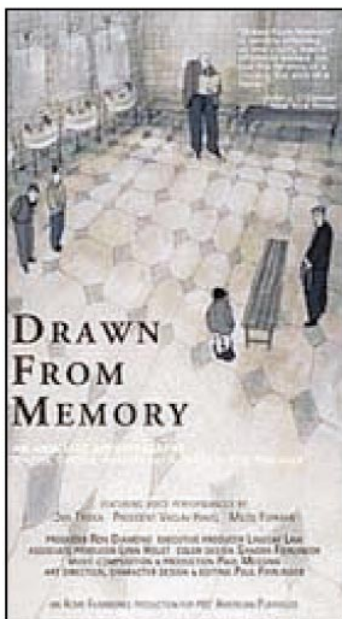
good movies is an intriguing story which the computer graphics and CinemaScope supplement. *Atlantis* rekindles a subject entrenched in history; everyone is familiar with the myth of the lost city, and Disney has approached the subject in a manner certain to elevate it to blockbuster status in addition to re-stimulating interest in the his-

torical myth. The graphics are impeccable and the musical score is intense. Hahn, Trousdale and Wise set out four years ago to return Disney action/adventure films to the forefront of the genre and they have succeeded in a film destined to become a classic worthy of George Lucas himself.

Gerard Raiti, a native of Baltimore currently residing in Nashville, has reported on animation, Broadway musicals and comic books for various publications. He also holds the Diploma of the Royal Schools of Music, U.K. in classical piano and music.

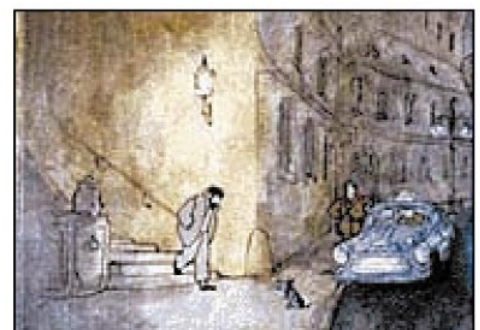
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--Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer



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Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

...Speaking of sex...

by Chris Robinson

"What is peculiar to modern societies is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it ad infinitum, while exploiting it as the secret." — Michel Foucault

In Philip Roth's book, *The Human Stain*, he talks about the Clinton scandal and how it brought out "the righteous, grandstanding creeps, crazy to blame, deplore, and punish, [who] were everywhere out moralizing to beat the band." This is an era when cocksucking offends people more than the sale of weapons to Taiwan or the increasing fragility of global peace in the hands of G.W. Bush.

The Clinton affair not only reminds us how hypocritical our society is, but also how repressed we are. We are all intimate with illicit sex in some form or other, yet we keep it under lock and key because we are told it is indecent and taboo. This is a prime example of how many of us take history for granted. We assume something is natural when it is indeed linked to power and authority. Besides if it isn't repressed why do we need to talk about it all the time? Why are the Presidents (Jefferson, Kennedy

and Clinton to name a few) of the 'free world' doin' other women? Why is there an increase in sex crimes, divorces and adultery? Why is sex used to seduce consumers? Why does Vince McMahon use barely dressed women to sell football? That I even notice this stuff and talk about it shows how ingrained we are with Victorian codes of sex.

French egghead, Michel Foucault, links this stifling view of sex back to the 17th century. There was a time, he says, when "sexual practices had little need of secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit." (Notice how even Foucault uses the safe words 'practices,' 'things,' 'words,' 'the illicit.')

Then came the Victorians. Sex was confined to the home under the custody of the family and specifically the heterosexual couple. Sex as pleasure was replaced by sex as a function of reproduction. Sex outside of this accepted realm was deemed taboo. It became silenced or moved to acceptable, confined places like mental hospitals and brothels.

How does this relate to animation? Since I became a dad, I've

been watching a lot of kid's animation and specifically Disney films. I've watched *Toy Story 2* about thirty times and the other day I noticed something: coupling, specifically heterosexual coupling. From *Snow White* on down the line, we are inundated with the implied romantic pairing of a man and woman. Almost every film ends with the union of a heterosexual couple. The funny thing is that these are relationships formed primarily on superficial attractions. Check it out. In *Jungle Book*, the kid abandons his friends for a girl he doesn't even know. John Smith just wants to poke her hontas...and *Toy Story 2* just baffles me. It's a buddy movie. There is no need for a damn couple, yet there it is at the end. We have a nice little family gathering with Woody and Mary (no lambs) and Buzz and Jessie. It doesn't make any sense. If anything, Woody and Buzz should be lovers. They've spent a lot of time with each other and got to know each other intimately, but no, the message we want to give our children is the one reflected in Buzz's erect wings after seeing Jessie show her stunt-girl side. I mean Buzz wants to do Jessie. All this nonsense about how he likes her yarn of hair, etc... He's fumbling with the words cause he doesn't give a shit about her hair. He wants some lovin', that's it, that's all. And that's okay, but why hide SEX? If I have to watch Al eat and burp, why can't I watch Jessie and Buzz do da deed (our obsession with using animals and toys as human replacements is for another time)? *Snow White* is maybe the worst example. The dwarves, despite having dedicated themselves to helping and protecting Snow White, are rejected because they are ugly, poor and

"deformed." All this for a damn prince with mullah...a man ol' White has never met.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I hear you all shouting, "They're kid's films, Mr. Pimp, don't take them so seriously." Ok. I can dig that. But first off, why should sex be kept from children? "Because they're not interested!" "Because they're kids!" Bullshit. That's an inherited assumption. We are a society that treats children like simpletons. We should be treating them like little adults. But hey...that's another argument. Let's go back to the kid's film bit. So you're gonna tell me that having Snow White leave the dwarves for money is a good message? These films are telling children that romance is based on superficial attractions. That what is normal is a man and a woman being together. It doesn't matter if they know each other. What matters is how good they look. Is that what we should be telling the children? We are defining what is right and wrong without even being aware of it. We are so ingrained with codes of sex that we are not even aware that these films ARE actually talking about sex by virtue of keeping silent.

Sex is connected with power. A power so complex and intricate that we are rarely aware of its influence. Sex is a function of reproduction that ensures population, which in turn maintains a labour force, which in turn maintains the social structure. Sex is an economic and political tool used to maintain and reinforce the power structure. Marriage is merely a system for governing sex.

Film, cinema, movies, animation, whatever you want to call it, is all about sex. Since Edison's *The Kiss*, cinema has become a projection of, and haven for, our desires; a voyeuristic pleasure. Yet paradoxically, Hollywood cinema also projects acceptable codes back onto us, so at once we are escaping into a controlled world of fantasy that we believe is our own but is really a controlled world dictated by relations of power. (Basically...it's like this concept of 'designated' protest areas. I mean how absurd and contradictory is that?) The pleasures (eg. Woody and Mary) being projected into our minds are those that reinforce codes rooted in the Victorian age. Our desire to see these heterosexual couplings stem from a

system of beliefs and are not, as we often believe, necessarily a Truth. As the dead egghead says: "The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us."

Well...I'm gonna go and jerk off.

Hottie Animators o'da Month

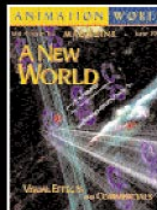
Heather Kenyon and Dan Sarto for being humans as they clash with the mundane powers that be.

Next Month: Speaking of Sex, Part 2: The bizarre sexual politics of *Shrek*.

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.

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Producing Animation: The Producer's Thinking Map

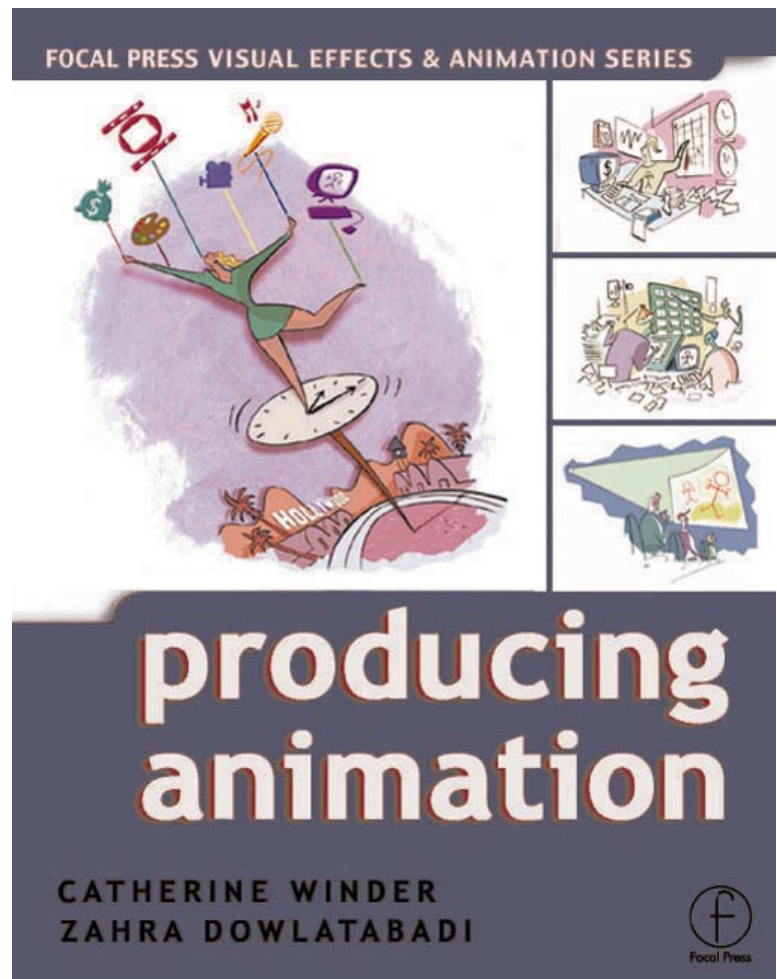
by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi

Given the complex nature of animation, we felt it was important to have a visual guide that summarized the main steps involved in producing an animated project for the three formats discussed: feature, television and post-production. To do this, we developed "The Producer's Thinking Map." For each topic listed in the chart, you will find a more detailed discussion in the corresponding section of the book. All three formats — feature, television, and direct-to-video — go through similar steps during the pre-production and post-production stages. The most significant difference is where and how the production phase itself is handled. Features are often animated in-house, while direct-to-video and television series are usually outsourced to subcontracting studios. We have illustrated these differences by allocating separate columns under the production category for feature versus television and direct-to-video.

One way of comparing the three formats is to look at their respective production pace, which is based on the time and costs necessary to produce each product. (More details are available in Chapter 1, "Introduction.") When producing a television show, whether it is 13 episodes or 65, the speed of the project is like that of a sprinter. Knowing how to get

all the elements in place, shipped out in time, and put through post-production to meet air dates is similar to running at top speed at all times. With a short schedule and limited resources, there is little time for revisions and alternate versions. The key to success in producing for television is being quick on your feet and delivering fast.

Direct-to-video projects enjoy a slightly more flexible schedule than television productions do, but overall they are also fast-paced. In features, an attempt is made in just about every stage of production to refine the story further. Whether in the storyboard phase or color styling (a.k.a. selecting colors; see Chapter 9,



You can purchase *Producing Animation* now by visiting
<http://producinganimation.com>.

"Production," for more information), time is spent on tweaking each scene in order to "plus" the project creatively as much as possible. Unlike episodic television, where the turnaround allows you to view the fruits of your labor in just weeks, in features, the pace is much slower and you will not see your hard work on the big screen until two or three years have elapsed. This method of filmmaking is equivalent to running a marathon. It is crucial to have stamina and to pace yourself on a project so you can hit the end line still standing. In all formats, the producer needs to be a master juggler. The Producer's Thinking Map is a visual tool to help guide you through the elements that come into play.

You can download your version of The Producer's Thinking Map using Adobe Acrobat by visiting <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue6.03/TM.PDF>.

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.

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Sketching on Location: Drawing Groups of Figures

by Glenn Vilppu



All drawings in this article are by and © Glenn Vilppu.

from which everything else grows.

Quite often when we start sketching, we focus on one particular figure and then decide to expand the drawing to include other figures and the background. In the above drawing, I started with the seated figure in the center. I quickly decided to expand on the drawing as a demonstration to my students who were sketching with me. The people sitting around us appeared to be staying for a while, waiting for a church to open, just as we were. On the following pages you will see the various stages the drawing went through.



Above, you see the figure with which I started the drawing. When I decided to develop the drawing further, I quickly added the wall and step behind her as a solid reference point in case she left.

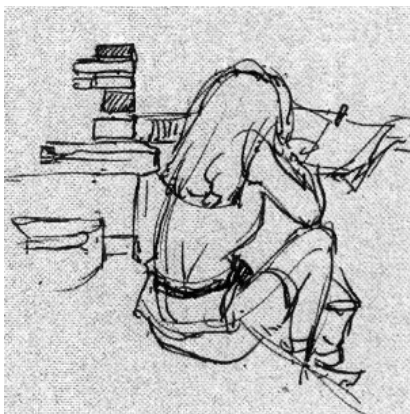
Then I started drawing the

This is the seventh in a new series of bi-monthly articles about sketching on location. The articles are based on my *Sketching on Location Manual*. The manual was developed as a series of lessons that I use on my guided sketching tours of Europe, and that I use as material in my regular drawing classes. As such the lessons can be part of a regular course or can be used by individual students as a practical learning guide. In the last chapter we worked on "Pencil Technique." If you have not seen the previous lessons starting in the June 2000 issue of *Animation World* **ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE**

Magazine, it is recommended that you do. The lessons are progressive and expand on basic ideas. It is suggested that you start from the beginning for a better understanding of my approach. If you really want to start at the beginning open with the lessons based on the *Vilppu Drawing Manual*.

Back to Point to Point

Crowds or groups of figures are approached in much the same way as we did starting out in Chapter One. In Chapter One we drew from point to point. In this lesson the individual figure becomes our point of departure



seated man behind her. At this point she got up and walked away. Since I had the figure behind her giving me the scale for the other figure and the wall in reference to her, I was ready to continue adding to the picture.

The difficulty in composing a picture this way is placing other figures and elements in the drawing in such a way that they seem natural and unposed.

The two main points that I tried to look out for were, first, to get differences in the spacing of the figures and, second, to get a natural feel to the arrangement.



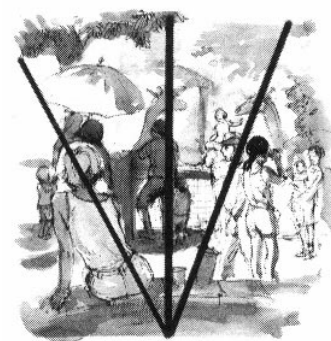
As the crowd was passing by, I would pick out figures that I could use in the drawing. Since they were walking for the most part, I had to do most of the drawing from memory imagining the figures as types. As I added each figure, I paid particular attention to place them so that they had a natural feeling among the group. The architectural elements in the background were used to tie the figures together and help in getting the proper scale of the figures,

one to the other. The addition of the paving stones helped to give a sense of space. Look at the completed drawing at the beginning of this chapter. The final large figures in the right foreground of the first picture, help give depth to the whole.

Using Compositional Concepts

The drawing on the next page was done quite differently than this one. The location was at the Los Angeles Zoo where I often go with my animal drawing class. While you are out sketching, you will often find situations that have a natural sense of order to them and suggest formal compositions. In this drawing I was able to use several traditional compositional concepts, so, in a sense, the total was set from the start, contrary to going from point to point (as I did in the drawing just discussed).

I still consider this drawing a sketch as it was done rather quickly. The overall design of the picture was conceived more by recognizing it, rather than creating it. Then it was completed by improvising on the main idea.



As I added the elements to the drawing, I worked in much the same way as the previous drawing, except I had formal compositional elements into which to fit the parts. While the people and the animals were rearranging themselves, they gave me oppor-

tunities to work them into my decided ideas about the composition.

The first thing that caught my eye was the way the seated figure in the foreground was leaning to the left and her drink was leaning to the right. This suggested to me the idea of using the play of opposites as a theme for the drawing. Also the clear division of the foreground, middleground and background, as we have been studying, was already clearly defined.

Next, there was a general

strong vertical and horizontal structure that I would develop further if I were to make this into a painting. In a more developed composition these divisions would be very carefully worked out.



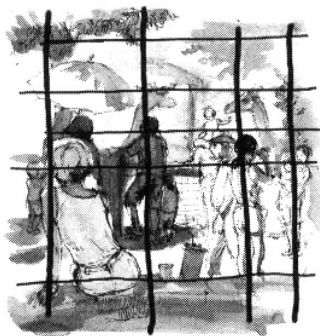
Part of this basic structure was the way the foreground figure led into the tree and the figures directly in front of her. The umbrella gave a further direction to the movement with the tree heading to the left in a play of opposites. The leading of the eye by the forms described above and the interaction between the move-

ments of these forms is what I refer to as "composition," rather than the mathematical breakup of the space. The dynamics, or play of the parts, one against the other, and the orchestration of the whole, is what interests me.

Now look at how the head of the giraffe has kept the movement going.



In the diagram above, I now indicate opposite elements. Below I indicate yet another set of opposites. Throughout the drawing I have tried to find a variety of contrasting elements: darks against lights, complex against simple, etc.



Using these elements of composition in the sketch gives the drawing a feeling of completeness. Though this drawing was loosely done, it was guided by fundamental ideas of composition.

In a future manual I will

develop more compositional ideas along with a general study of traditional figure composition.

Glenn Vilppu first wrote for *Animation World Magazine* in the June 1997 issue, "Never Underestimate the Power of Life Drawing." His drawing manuals and video tapes may be purchased in the Animation World Store at <http://www.awn.com/awnstore/vilppu>.

Glenn Vilppu teaches figure drawing at the American Animation Institute, the Masters program of the UCLA Animation Dept., Walt Disney Feature Animation and Warner Bros. Feature Animation, and has been sent to teach artists at Disney TV studios in Japan, Canada and the Philippines. Vilppu has also worked in the animation industry for 18 years as a layout, storyboard and presentation artist. His drawing manual and video tapes are being used worldwide as course materials for animation students.

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The Career Coach: Coping With Layoffs

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

Don't be ashamed of losing your job. Chuck Jones, Glen Keane and Steve Jobs were all out on the street once. Just regroup and take it as an opportunity to move up. Sometimes getting laid off gives you a chance to move up. If summer brings an involuntary vacation from work due to a layoff or downsizing, there are a few ways to get in shape and cope.

Before you leave:

Before you exit the company, gather some samples of your work. You should have been working on your portfolio all along and putting recent work in there but if you haven't been, this is the time to collect any recent work you are proud of and get it in your portfolio or on your reel. If you have been working on a project that is not due to be released for some time, get the shots that you worked on onto your reel. If the company doesn't want work shown early to the public, respect that and keep that work out of your reel and portfolio. Ask for a letter from the company indicating what your position was and your role on the project.

Take advantage of your break:

Don't be ashamed of losing your job. Just regroup and take it as an opportunity to move up. Sometimes getting laid off gives you that chance. Think about applying for a job in a category the last company never wanted to



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

promote you to.

Give yourself a chance to grieve over losing your job, if you need to. But don't let your self-esteem suffer. Being laid off or fired is not a crime. Just realize that the skills you have to offer are no longer pertinent to the company. It doesn't mean you are bad or your work was bad, just that the company doesn't need your skills anymore at this time. (I've had so many jobs that I now do career coaching since I have become an expert at changing careers.)

Don't start looking for work immediately. You need to be refreshed to start looking for a job so take a two-week vacation to get away from your normal stomping grounds. The place you go doesn't have to be exotic or expensive. Another reason for getting away is that a vacation will give you a different perspective. During your vacation, your assignment is to daydream. Make a list of what you liked about your last job and what

you didn't like. What do you want on your next job? What kind of company do you want to work for?

Take stock of your attributes. What do you like doing at work? What do you like doing outside of work? Evaluate what you want to do. If you have always dreamed about developing your own show, building a Website, or writing a children's book "when you have the time," guess what—you've got the time! You don't want to do anything other than get another job? OK.

Examine your skill set. Make a list of all the skills you've learned and the things you've accomplished. This list will be useful in composing your resume. If you have trouble making your list and thinking positively about yourself, get some friends to help you.

Prepare yourself:

If you feel you are lacking in skills, take some courses. Whether it's learning how to use new software, finishing a degree, working on life drawing or learning about design, the classes you take can also help you expand your network. Perhaps someone in the class knows about a job. Even if you don't hear of any jobs, you will be improving your skills and that will make you more attractive and interesting to new employers.

Network. Go to all those functions and meetings you never had time for when you were working. Don't spend all your time at home worrying about where the next paycheck is coming from. Call your friends you haven't seen in ages because you have been so swamped with work. Invite them to get out of the office and take them to lunch. You can check out their company and see if it's the kind of environment you would

like. Ask your friends if they have any leads and be willing to share information with them as well. If you meet with anyone, be sure to send thank you notes.

Visit Websites like Animation World Network (www.awn.com) regularly and read trades like *Animation Magazine*. Visit company Websites. If you don't own a computer you may gain access to the Web through local libraries and colleges. Libraries also often subscribe to many trade publications like *Variety* and *Hollywood Reporter*. Most jobs aren't advertised but news articles offer clues for work. Look at announcements about new company launches, people changing jobs, or special projects.

Do some research to find the employers that offer the kind of work you want to do. Target employers that offer that kind of work. This research will help prepare you for interviews.

Organize your portfolio

and clean out old work. If you have used work as an excuse for not spending time on life drawing, now is the time to visit the zoo. Try to capture the personalities of the people or animals you see.

Customize your resume and portfolio to target the job you want. You may want to customize your portfolio for each company you target. Your cover letter, resume, portfolio, demo reel and shot list are your marketing materials. Make sure you put your best work up front on your reel and you'll have to alter your demo reel breakdown list accordingly. Remember to include your name, phone number and email address on everything.

Take massive action:

When your resume, portfolio, demo reel and shot list are ready, make lots of copies and lots of calls. When calling potential employers keep conversations brief and to the point. Find out if they are hiring in your category

and whom to address a package to. Each call should last no longer than a minute or two. Spend at least two hours a day making contacts/calls and get those packages in the mail. Follow up in 3 to 6 weeks. It takes work to find work. Even if you have never experienced a layoff before or been out of work, you'll find these tips will help you get through the down times and back in action at a job you want.

Having held every job in the entertainment industry and weathered many layoffs, Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is uniquely qualified as a career coach, independent recruiter and management consultant. She frequently speaks about careers at colleges and universities. She can be reached at PamRecruit@aol.com.

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New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten



Martian Successor Nadesico. Volumes 1 – 6.

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.

Martian Successor Nadesico. V.1, Chronicle I. V.2, Mission to

Mars. V.3, Danger Zones. V.4, Paradigm Shifts. V.5, Secrets & Lies. V.6, End Game.

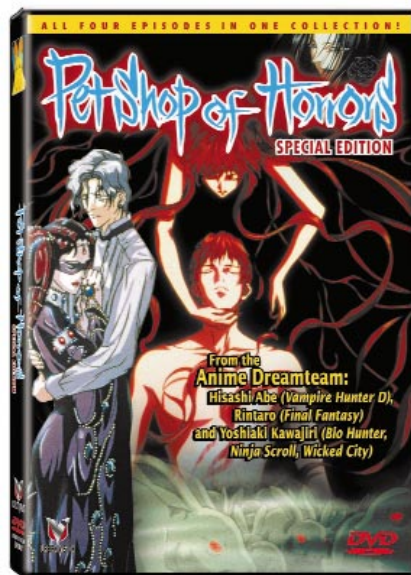
TV series, 1996 — 1997. Director: Tatsuo Sato. V.1 — 4, 4 episodes/100 minutes; v.5 — 6, 5 episodes/125 minutes. Price & format: DVD \$29.98 bilingual. Distributor: A.D. Vision Films.

As a 26-episode weekly serial on TV Tokyo from October 1, 1996 through March 25, 1997 (produced by Xebec and Studio Tron), *Nadesico* was so popular that it won a major 1998 Japanese fan survey as, “The best anime show of all time.” It also spun off a 1998 theatrical feature sequel, *Nadesico the Movie: The Prince of Darkness* (not included in this video release). *Nadesico* combines comedy, suspense, giant robots,

an interplanetary sci-fi plot that mixes both simplistic and complex elements, and above all a human interest drama with likeable characters. In 2195 A.D. humanity has settled the Moon and Mars. Suddenly a mysterious space armada destroys the Martian colony and begins to attack the Moon and Earth. The United Earth Forces space fleet is consistently defeated, so one of Earth’s largest corporations, Nergal Heavy Industries, builds a private battleship, the *Nadesico*, using its own technological innovations. Nergal selects a crew based on special talents rather than willingness to conform to military discipline. The government, highly displeased, plots to get control of the *Nadesico* and add it to the space navy. Most of the crew is young and introverted, each obsessed with his or her special interest. Part of the serial’s appeal is how the main cast — Akito Tenkawa, Yurika Misumaru, Ruri Hoshino, Megumi Reinard, Ryoko Subaru and others — evolve in their emotions and relationships from a collection of loners into a community. There are many surprises; for example, Gai Daigouji, who shows all the signs in the first two episodes of becoming a major character, is unexpectedly killed in episode #3. When Nergal’s top management and the UEF come to an accommodation that seems to put the *Nadesico* under the command that it was created to avoid, the young crew must decide whether their superiors know best or whether they have a higher duty to humanity to follow their original mission. One of *Nadesico*’s most popular elements is its inclusion of *Gekigangar*, a fictional giant robot TV cartoon series that is the favorite of many of the *Nadesico*’s

crew. *Gekigangar* starts out as merely a broad parody of giant robot anime TV stereotypes (Go Nagai's *Getter Robo* in particular), and of anime fandom itself. As the *Nadesico* crew becomes increasingly disillusioned by the arrogant incompetence and self-interest among their superiors, some adopt *Gekigangar* as their new role model. Even though the crew knows that it is really only a TV program designed to sell toys to children, are the virtues of truth and honor espoused by its fictional incorruptible heroes better as ideals, than the cover-ups and cynical platitudes they see from the real government? Or is such an attitude an immature avoidance of reality? (The fragments of fictional *Gekigangar* episodes shown in *Nadesico* became so popular that a real *Gekigangar* series was made in 1997.) This is just one subplot woven amidst the main action as the *Nadesico* battles the "Jovian Lizard" menace from the Asteroid Belt to Earth itself. (However, to make such emotional soul-searching convincing requires really good voice acting. A.D. Vision's English dub unfortunately does not measure up.)

A.D. Vision's DVD release is recommended for offering four (or five) episodes in both English and Japanese with English subtitles, plus some good bonus extras. A video release is also available in dubbed (\$19.98) or subtitled (\$29.95) editions; 2 episodes/60 minutes each. V.1, Invasion! V.2, Desperate Journey. V.3, Turnabout Attacker. V.4, Deadly Encounters. V.5, The Mind of the Machine. V.6, Between Heaven & Hell. V.7, Contact! V.8, Memories. V.9, Heavenly Bodies. V.10, Friend or Foe? V.11, Code of Honor. V.12, Full Circle.



Pet Shop of Horrors.

Pet Shop of Horrors. Special Edition.

TV series, 1999. Director: Toshio Hirata. Four episodes; 95 mins. Price & format: DVD \$29.95 bilingual. Distributor: Urban Vision Entertainment.

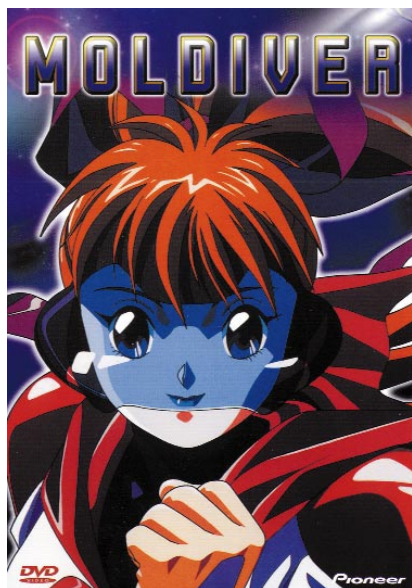
Horror fantasy anthologies, usually hosted by a comically creepy Master of Ceremonies, are an American comic-book tradition going back to the famous EC comics of the 1950s with their later TV/movie spinoff *Tales from the Crypt*. In Japan the *Pet Shop of Horrors* 1990s romantic fantasy manga by Matsuri "Mari" Akino ran to forty short stories with a more coherent storyline. The anime version returned to the American model, picking just four tales from early in the series and presenting them without any continuity development. Considering the popularity of Akino's manga and the prestige of the creative team at the Madhouse production studio (including theatrical directors Yoshiaki Kawajiri and Rintaro), everyone was puzzled when this was limited to a four-episode mid-night half-hour TV series, shown weekly on Tokyo Broadcasting

System during March 1999.

In the Chinatown of a large American city is a tiny but luxurious pet shop managed by a aesthetically effeminate young man called Count D. He sells only the rarest exotic animals and insists that they must be cared for exactly according to instructions specified in a contract. Obviously each purchaser will disregard these instructions and meet a supernaturally gruesome fate. What makes each story interesting are the details, tailored to the slowly revealed character flaw of the story's protagonist: arrogance, uncritical devotion, carelessness, egotism. Usually the victims foolishly assume that the instructions are not important, though in one a despairing man deliberately disregards the instructions as a romantic way to commit suicide. Series continuity is provided by Count D, who sells the fantasy animal at the beginning of each episode, and by rookie plainclothes police detective Leon, who is sure that the grotesque fatalities plaguing the city are somehow attributable to the Count since all the victims were customers of his shop, although he cannot prove a connection.

The four cautionary parables chosen for the anime series, "Daughter," "Delicious," "Despair" and "Dual" (all forty of Akino's stories have titles beginning with D), are deliberately staged to be generic horror mini-movies. They leave unanswered such questions as whether "Count D" stands for Dracula; whether the handsomely languorous Count is homosexual; how close does the relationship between the Count and Leon get; and which large American city is the locale. (In the manga Leon is a Los Angeles police detective, but Akino's depiction is such a vague

Oriental fantasy-vision of big-city America that it makes better sense to leave it unidentified as the anime version has.) Akino's *Pet Shop of Horrors* manga was published in ten volumes in Japan from 1995 to 1998 but has not been translated into English yet.



Moldiver.

Moldiver.

OAV series, 1993. Director: Hiroyuki Kitazume. 6 half-hour episodes; 180 minutes. Price & format: DVD \$19.98 bilingual. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

Gundam has been one of the hottest anime titles in Japan for over twenty years. The attractive character designs by Hiroyuki Kitazume are one reason for its popularity. *Gundam* is not his sole work however. *Moldiver* is more of a personal *tour de force* for Kitazume, since he directed it and created the story concept, as well as designed its characters. *Moldiver*, produced by the A.I.C. studio as a six episode OAV series, released in Japan between February and October 1993, was also one of Japanese company Pioneer's first U.S. releases from May through October 1994. Its

success as a popular sci-fi comedy led to Pioneer's rapid expansion to become one of America's major anime distributors today.

Moldiver is a giddy teen comedy, partly satire on American costumed heroes and partly Japanese destruction-derby slapstick mayhem. Tokyo in 2045 is a shiny utopia, thanks to miracles in computer technology developed by famous Professor Hiroshi Amagi — until the city is suddenly hit by a crime wave masterminded by mad scientist/supervillain Dr. Machingal and his team of android "Superdolls" built to resemble famous 20th century actresses (Brooke, Vivien, Jennifer, Elizabeth, etc.). Just as suddenly, an American-style costumed superhero appears to oppose them: Captain Tokyo! Their battles (and Captain Tokyo's dynamic posing for cameras) make for great TV news coverage. The fact that each confrontation leaves several blocks in rubble is glossed over.

Mirai Ozora, a 17-year-old airhead who loves to tease her geeky techno-nerd older brother Hiroshi, discovers while snooping through his room that he is Captain Tokyo! His discovery of molecular rearrangement controlled by brain waves (there is a "scientific explanation" full of amusing technobabble) is so simple to control that Mirai reprograms it to offer a second setting for herself as Moldiver, a superheroine in a stylish frilly skirt to catch the eye of hunky dreamboat Kaoru Misaki, Hiroshi's best friend. Much comedy results as the siblings squabble over which of them will get to use the Mol-unit. Each accidentally becomes the other's hero. The "fighting for justice" evolves into a series of catfights between Mirai and one or more of

the robotic movie star lookalikes. Plus, Mirai and/or Hiroshi constantly end up embarrassingly nude when the Mol-unit's timer unexpectedly shuts off.

Much of the humor is actually infantile. Hiroshi, an idealistic researcher who wants to improve mankind through technological advance, cannot think of anything better to do with his discovery than model himself after comic-book heroes. Dr. Machingal is revealed at the outset to be Prof. Amagi, in his second childhood, smarting at hints that it is past time to retire, and out to prove with his Superdolls and spectacular thefts that he can still out-think anyone else. Then Hiroshi's and Mirai's little brother Nozomu finds the Mol-unit and wants to turn himself into a super-character stronger than anybody else — and he doesn't care how many fatalities he leaves among innocent bystanders while showing off. Most of the characters, determined to prove how smart or adult they are, end up looking like omnipotent four-year-olds throwing temper tantrums.

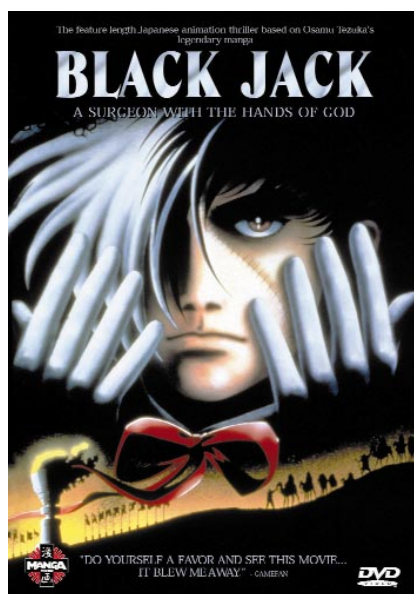
Pioneer's 1994 six individual videos are still available, \$19.98 each dubbed or \$24.98 subtitled; although since the new DVD release offers all six both dubbed and subtitled, plus DVD bonuses, for the price of a single dubbed video episode, they will probably disappear in a blowout sale soon.

Black Jack.

Theatrical feature, 1996. Director: Osamu Dezaki. 90 minutes. Price & format: video \$19.95 dubbed, \$24.95 subtitled; DVD \$29.95 bilingual. Distributor: Manga Entertainment.

Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989) is best-known in America for his

juvenile animation *Astro Boy* and *Kimba the White Lion*. Tezuka had completed his medical studies and gotten his surgeon's license before deciding upon a cartoonist's career in the early 1950s. From 1973 to 1978 he used his medical expertise to create the adult cartoon melodrama *Black Jack*, about a mysterious "outlaw surgeon," the equivalent of a Western's drifting cowboy hero, who uses his scalpel to achieve moral justice beyond the medical profession's regulations. Tezuka's comic-book series was popular enough to spin off four *Black Jack* live-action theatrical features and nine OAVs from 1977 to 1995 before this animated theatrical feature's release in November 1996.



Black Jack.

This biological suspense drama in the vein of *Outbreak* is a new story, carefully crafted to be faithful to Tezuka's plots and produced by his Tezuka Productions. Osamu Dezaki, the veteran theatrical anime director who also supervised the *Black Jack* OAVs, story-boarded this feature and co-wrote the screenplay as well as directed it. Dezaki's characteristic soft-pastel

"beautiful" look — upper-class people, elegant clothing, rich homes and offices, lush landscapes, neon-lit urban nightscapes — makes the horrific ravages of the "Moira syndrome" especially graphic. The realistic operating-room close-ups (there is a medical supervisor credit) are not for the squeamish.

Set in the then-future, an international sensation is caused at the 2000 Olympics when numerous new records are set by teen athletes from around the world. During the next couple of years so many young geniuses appear in sports, art and literature that many believe a new advance in human evolution is beginning; "Super-Humans for the 21st Century!" But suddenly they begin dying, their internal organs rotting inside their bodies. A top medical research center in New York controlled by beautiful but proud Dr. Jo Carol Brane starts a crash project to cure the mystery disease before it becomes an epidemic. When they are stymied, she uses unethical pressure to force the reclusive Black Jack to join their team. Being a genius, it does not take long for him to discover a human origin behind both the disease and the super-human talents. Black Jack must battle corporate greed and professional arrogance as well as the new virus to forestall a deadly plague.

Black Jack has the disadvantage for Americans of assuming that the audience will be familiar with the background of Tezuka's series. There is no explanation of why Black Jack is so hideously scarred, why he and the medical profession are at odds, or why he lives as a recluse except for a hyperactive young child as his housekeeper and medical assis-

tant. If American viewers will not mind leaving these questions unanswered, the movie otherwise is a winning showpiece of both Tezuka's adult storytelling style and Dezaki's directorial style.

Amon Saga.

OAV movie, 1986. Director: Shunji Oga. 68 minutes. Price & format: video \$19.95 dubbed; DVD \$24.95 bilingual. Distributor: Manga Entertainment.



Amon Saga.

One of the most prestigious artists associated with anime is Yoshitaka Amano. He began as a 15-year-old character designer for Japanese TV cartoons in the early 1970s. Today he is a fantasy artist of international repute far beyond anime. Among his recent American projects are the art design for *1001 Nights*, a 1999 fine-art film commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, and the full-color art plates for Neil Gaiman's 1999 *de luxe* fantasy novel *Sandman: The Dream Hunters*. Most previous Amano anime works like *Vampire Hunter D* are available in America, but *Amon Saga*, a July 1986 video

feature, has not been; although those who have seen the Japanese release have said that it was a big disappointment.

Amon Saga is now available and the rumor is confirmed. Amano had wanted to try his hand at drawing an adventure comic book, and teamed up with writer Baku Yumemakura to produce this manga novel in the 1980s. This is an animated movie adaptation of that novel. Amano receives screen credits as co-author and character design supervisor, though the actual character designers are Shingo Araki and Michi Himeno working from Amano's manga art designs.

Amano's original art on the video cover is about the only thing *Amon Saga* has going for it. The adventure is a pedestrian chain of sword-and-sorcery clichés. The fantasy world of Granmall is being brutally conquered by evil Emperor Valhiss (who bears a strong resemblance to Jack Kirby's

master supervillain, Darkseid) through his sadistic henchmen, warlord Denon and wizard Mabo. Amon, a handsome lone warrior, joins a group of bravos being recruited into Valhiss' army. Amon wants revenge against the three tyrants for killing his mother during their conquest of his homeland. Amon forms a friendship among several of his fellow recruits (a brawny giant, a thief, an archer — all the stereotypical roles for a fantasy quest). The heroic band hack and slash their way through an hour's worth of monsters and sorcerous deathtraps to get to the villains, not incidentally rescuing Valhiss' beautiful prisoner, Princess Lichia, on the way. Amano's exquisitely detailed art (based upon roughly 10th century A.D. Central Asian and Hindi architecture and costuming) has had to be so simplified for this very limited animation production that little remains besides the outlines. Animation production credit is

given to Cente Studio, though judging by the names of so many other studios in the credits, Cente's role must have been in the basic planning and the editing together of individual scenes farmed out to small animation studios all around Tokyo.

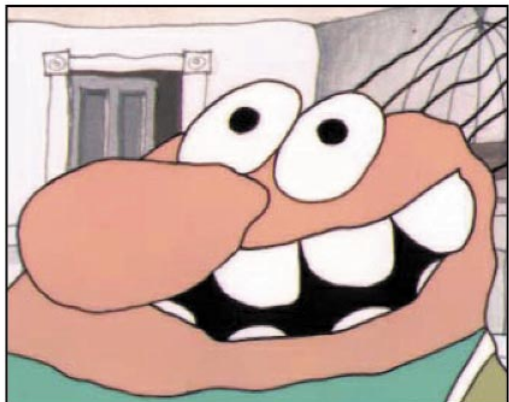
9- to 14-year-old boys may enjoy the nonstop action of a battle every five minutes against sea monsters, wolfmen, giant spiders, dragons, demonic sorcerers and lots of Romanesque swordsmen. *Amon Saga* is otherwise worthwhile only to completists of Amano's art. It is *not* a valid sample of his talent.

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

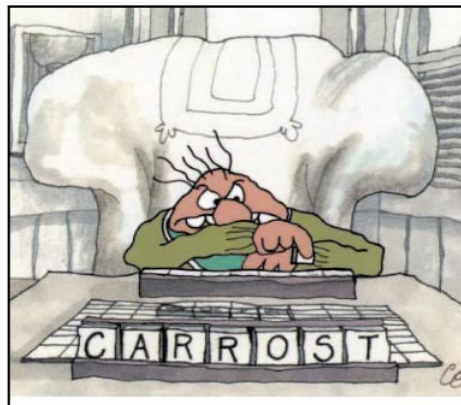
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Well, it was inevitable. The video game industry is growing up. Either that, or the depressed economic climate has really put a damper on PR and marketing budgets. I mention it because this year's E3 was a pretty darned sedate event by comparison to years past. Number of booth babes — down. Number of guys in suits — up. Number of multi-storied mega-booths — down. Number of companies holding their meetings behind closed doors — up. Amount of free T-shirts being thrown at me — down. Number of gaming platforms being represented — up.

Is this a bad sign? Not necessarily. As the industry continues to grow, and games become more mainstream, E3 will evolve into a more typical trade-show. I once accompanied a friend to the Forestry and Wood Products Convention. Not terribly exciting. But you know what, the wood-products business is a heck of a lot larger than the games business, and the purpose of that convention was for the industry to get together and make deals. E3 has always resembled a fan convention more than a trade show. While I'll always go with the anticipation of trying out the next crop of great games, I can't say that I'll miss the spectacle of greasy-palmed fan-boys ogling half-naked models dressed up like Lara Croft. Sacrilege, I know.

Is maturing a good sign? Yes, in light of the general economic slump surrounding all things technological, the continued growth of the industry is good. Currently estimated at \$7 billion annual worldwide, and projected to reach \$11 billion by the year 2005, this is a big industry.

E3 2001: Not Old, Mature

by John Edgar Park



E3 filled the Los Angeles Convention Center from May 16 – 19, 2001. © IDSA.



E3 drew more than 62,000 retailers, developers, investors, distributors and media representatives from the U.S. and over 100 other countries. © IDSA.

While E3 isn't the job feeding frenzy it once was, there are many jobs to be had for animators willing to consider shifting from film and television into something more interactive. The upcoming

release of Microsoft's Xbox console and Nintendo's GameCube, coupled with the continuing development of PlayStation, PlayStation2, Nintendo64 and PC games equals a ton of overall development.

The Trends

Looking around the show floor reveals a few general trends in gaming. One of the most welcome is the use of cartoon-shaded real-time rendering in 3D games. Sega's *Jet Grind Radio* and Infogrames' *Looney Toons Space Race* employed this cel animation look last year, and now many others are following suit. Why do I jump up and down when I see great cell-shading? Well, let's face it, most non-realistic games looked more stylish and colorful on the old 16-bit systems like Genesis and SuperNintendo than they did when they made the leap to 3D on the PlayStation and Nintendo64. Yeah, the gameplay is arguably more interesting in the third dimension, but the visuals really suffered. A well-painted sprite (think Capcom's *Street Fighter*) still has more going on stylistically than a low-polygon 3D equivalent (think *Tekken*). But as the poly counts rise and the programmers code better real-time renderers, the 3D games are starting to win out. Just take a look at Ubi Soft's upcoming *Batman Vengeance* for PlayStation2. It's toon-shaded in the style of *Batman: The Animated Series* and it looks gorgeous. Sierra's original property, *Jonny Drama* promises to bring a swank, martini-lounge spy-guy feel to the Xbox. Speaking of Xbox, *Jet Set Radio Future* from Sega will push this look to the next level with its beautiful hand-drawn style motion blurs and seamless toon-shaded environments.

The Sega Dreamcast didn't fair too well in light of Microsoft's planned \$500 million marketing budget for their Xbox launch. This, coupled with the muscle of Nintendo and Sony's own platforms has forced them to concede

defeat in the console war. Sega's departure from the hardware business will leave it breathing room to do what it does best — software development. They have completed publishing deals with all of the major video game hardware manufacturers — promising to bring the joy of such games as *Super Monkey Ball*, *Crazy Taxi Next*, *Jet Set Radio Future*, *Ooga Booga*, *NFL2K3*, *Phantasy Star Online v.2*, and even the venerable *Sonic the Hedgehog*, to PlayStation2, GameCube and Xbox. And with many hotly anticipated titles still headed for Dreamcast, like *Crazy Taxi 2*, *Virtual Tennis 2K2*, *Floigan Brothers* and the epic *Shenmue 2*, there are many reasons to think that Sega will come out of all this in very good shape indeed.

The Games

Nintendo GameCube

OK, so I headed straight for the Nintendo booth when the doors opened on Thursday morning at E3, expecting to lay my hands on the new GameCube controller, play a few games, avoid being bombarded with Pokemon crap and then run off to the Xbox and PS2 booths. Well, I was surprised on two counts. One, there were no Pocket Monsters to avoid and two, the launch titles are so good that I stayed and played for more than an hour. *Luigi's*



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Mansion, *Wave Race: Blue Storm* and *Star Wars Rogue Leader: Rogue Squadron 2* must be played to be believed. They are generational advances beyond most other console games. Where many of us were expecting the Xbox to be the 800-pound gorilla of graphics technology, it was the GameCube that blew us away — this hardware is powerful.

The quality (and quantity!) of the graphics in *Rogue Squadron 2* is astounding. Imagine the polygon power to display every last detail of a star destroyer in geometry! The little greebles on the Death Star really stand out from the surface and even catch colored lighting from the explosions caused when you down an enemy fighter. On all previous games of this type the texture and bump maps were used to convey such detail. Only when you see it done with real polygonal geometry can you fully appreciate what we've been missing all this time.

Nintendo's *Wave Race: Blue Storm* was another that elevated the visuals of an already great jet-ski race game. The real-time reflections in the water and the distortions seen as drops of water hit the "camera" are breathtaking and drew crowds all day.

Luigi's Mansion is a terribly cute, nicely animated, expertly textured adventure game. Based on a

familiar “ghost-busting” premise, the player takes control of Mario’s less famous brother Luigi in order to eradicate a haunted mansion of its spooky spirits. The level of artistry put into this launch title is evident from the care given to small details like lighting, shadows and special effects.

Sony PlayStation2

The PS2 was boasting some interesting second-generation titles like *Herdy Gerdy*, *Gran Turismo 3*, *Devil May Cry* and *Metal Gear Solid 2*. The level of artistic sophistication found in such titles as Konami’s *Silent Hill 2* is impressive, bringing to mind Square’s upcoming feature film *Final Fantasy: The Movie*.

Blending fantasy and real-life, Infogrames’ *Stuntman* will allow players to take on the role of a stuntman who must perfect outrageous stunts in front of the camera to create the awesome chases, jumps, powerslides and near-collisions we see in the summer blockbusters. Not only will you get to live out your stuntman fantasy, but you will also get a chance to act as director — with the in-game movie making tool you’ll have the chance to place cameras, make cuts and build your own mini-film of your favorite stunts.

Microsoft Xbox

So what did the Xbox have to offer? Well, the best looking title from an art direction standpoint was the latest in the Oddworld series, *Munch’s Oddysee*. In this third installment of the adventures the gameplay is familiar to those who played *Abe’s Oddysee* on PlayStation — guide Abe through his very alien world as he tries to figure out, “What’s goin’ on?” — only now the platforming is in 3D



Oddworld’s Munch’s Oddysee continues Abe’s quest to free his fellow Mudokons with improved breathtaking graphics.
© Oddworld.

and the visuals are simply beautiful. Rich terrains, silky-smooth animation and a continued evolution of the innovative “Gamespeak” system in which Abe talks with other characters in order to solve puzzles and save his fellow Mudokons mark this new title.

Making an attempt to be the other king of the Xbox, *Halo* by Bungie (who doesn’t fondly remember wasting many hours playing *Marathon*, an early Bungie hit?) is a sci-fi shooter offering huge outdoor vistas, first- and third-person infantry and vehicular combat and four-player death-matches. While no one else seems to have figured out their online multiplayer strategy yet either, it was surprising to learn that *Halo* will probably not offer online play until the next version.

The Future

So, as the retail marketplace braces for the upcoming launches of these new hardware and software offerings, we should take a moment to think about the future. What will gaming hold in store for us at the next E3? Where is all of this going? One thing that seems to be true is that people love to

play games against other people. Multiplayer PC games are doing incredibly well, but the consoles have yet to figure out a way to set up and manage these systems. Of the current and upcoming consoles only the Xbox is shipping with a broadband connection (onboard 10/100 Ethernet NIC). Most research indicates that console gamers rarely purchase add-on peripherals. How Sony and Nintendo plan to get people to buy a broadband connector in any kind of numbers remains to be seen, but the recent announcements of Macromedia Flash, Netscape, SSL encryption and Real’s RealPlayer for PlayStation2 indicate that they have big plans for set-top convergence.

This is the year that analysts project the game business will overtake movies in terms of sales. Will the titles offered need to be dumbed down to appeal to this wider market? Or can *Barbie Fashion Designer* and *Deer Hunter* co-exist with hardcore titles like *Soldier of Fortune 2* and *Grand Theft Auto 3*? Chances are, yes. As E3, and the games industry itself, matures it will become more like other entertainment businesses. This is a good thing. Just don’t mourn the booth babes too much, okay?

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.

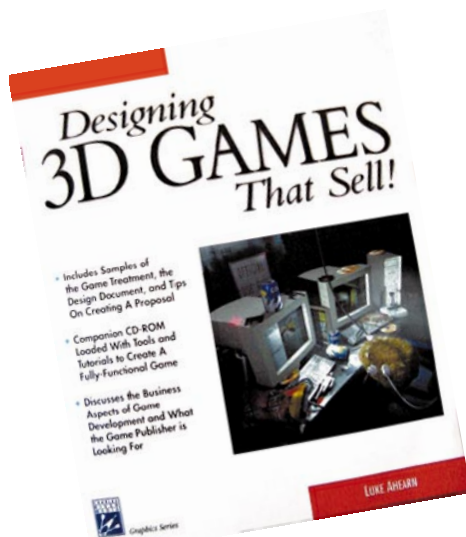
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Designing 3D Games That Sell!

by John Edgar Park

Designing 3D Games That Sell! is an interesting overview of both the business of getting a game published and some aspects of game development, but don't expect it to teach you many specifics about game design. The first half of this book discusses game proposals, budgets, marketing, scheduling and meeting with publishers; while only a lean 15-page chapter on design documents makes mention of game design. While the title is intended to attract your attention at the bookstore, it is a bit inaccurate. *Selling 3D Games That You've Designed!* would have been a more honest title.

The second half of the book consists mainly of tutorials for using the excellent Genesis 3D game engine, as well as a reprint of a Paul Steed (formerly a *Quake* character builder from id software) article on low-polygon modeling and a sample game design document. While I found this to be a good overview of level building tools and low-poly creation methods, it doesn't discuss how to design compelling gameplay.



Part I

The author, Luke Ahearn, has worked on a number of successful game development projects and is very knowledgeable about going out and getting a publisher. His clear writing style and wealth of experience allows him to present a very informative breakdown of the game industry, from developer to publisher to retailer to consumer. Everything from writing and submitting a proposal to negotiating a deal is covered. Here you will find many case studies and examples of competitive analysis, how to focus on the

end-users' needs and good advice on creating a game proposal. Since the retail market likes to pigeonhole things, there are also some definitions of the major game genres to help you see where your game design fits into the grand scheme.

If you already have a game design in mind this first part of the book may help you determine your next steps. There is no such thing as a "garage" game developer anymore – \$1 to \$5 million dollars is a pretty realistic game budget these days – so finding a publisher to fund your development is a must. In addition to the excellent advice on getting your game published, Ahearn also provides information on how to secure alternate methods of funding. Is it possible to get this kind of funding if you are an inexperienced developer? Not too likely. So what do you do now? Ahearn offers some good advice – get a job in the game industry in order to gain experience without the financial risk of funding your own game. Here he adds some pointers on breaking into the industry including creating demo reels and targeting your search toward the right specialty within a game company.

Part II

Designing a 3D game hinges on one important piece of technology: the 3D game engine. If you are already on your way to programming your own 3D engine you probably aren't reading this. For the rest of us, the only realistic way to do a proof-of-concept for a 3D game is with a pre-existing engine. There are a few of them out there that are commonly licensed for big releases, namely *Quake*, *Unreal* and *LithTech*. For example, Disney Interactive

licensed the Unreal engine for its upcoming *Atlantis* game. The cost of licensing these high-profile engines can be anywhere from \$100,000 to \$500,000 per title, so many small development shops are forced to write their own or look elsewhere for a low-cost or free engine.

One such engine is Genesis 3D. It's free, high quality and can be found on the book's included CD-ROM. So in Part II, the author takes you through the installation and use of the Genesis 3D level editor. The editor is very similar to the tools used for level design in commercial game engines. Most of Part II of this book is spent teaching you how to design and build a simple level, including animated doors and effects, sound and A.I. Using 3D Studio Max or the freeware modeler MilkShape 3D, it is possible to import your own characters and props into the levels you build. For the more advanced features you may want

to install Rabid Games' Reality Factory, which is also included.

Of course, not all games are first-person shooters. This is the only type of game the lessons in this book cover. It would have been nice to see info on game design within other genres such as third-person adventure and platforming or role-playing games.

Therefore...

As evidenced by all of the excellent "mods" and total conversions being made as free add-ons to commercial games, such as *Counter-Strike* for Sierra's *Half-Life*, there is no reason an ambitious crew of game designers can't make a great game proposal in their free time. This is a great way to get your feet wet in the game industry. This book helps fill in the blanks about the business end of turning your free mod into a money-making product.

If you are interested in pure game design theory and advice

Mark Louis Rybczyk's *Game Design: Theory and Practice*, Chris Crawford's *The Art of Computer Game Design* and his other work *Understanding Interactivity* may be more up your alley. But if you really want to learn about the business of getting a game developed and published, with a little level design thrown in, then grab a copy of *Designing 3D Games That Sell!*

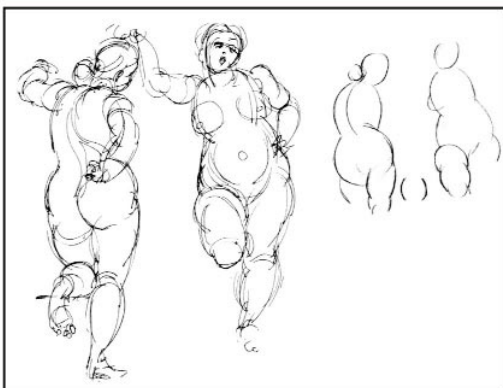
Designing 3D Games That Sell! by Luke Ahearn. Hingham, MA: Charles River Media, 2001. 550 pages. ISBN: 1-58450-043-3. (Paperback and CD-Rom, \$49.95)

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