

ANIMATION

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The Latest in Technology

SIGGRAPH News

**Akira, Anime Reviews,
Osmosis Jones and More!**



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Nine And A Half Questions...

With Dallas McKennon



Dallas McKennon.

by Will Ryan

the planning stages, with his son Joe producing and Arthur handling the animation. And we just started work on a whole series of promotional spots plugging ABC's new network shows.

WR: You mean, he's become a spokes-gumb-person for ABC?

DMcK: There's no other. 'Cept maybe Pokey and he'd be the spokes-gumb-horse.

WR: Speaking of ABC, aren't you in Los Angeles to do some work for some other division of Disney's?

DMcK: I'm doing some voices for the parks — Disneyland, Disney World, Epcot Center. I'm doing Ben Franklin for the robot in Epcot Center. I don't mean robot. It's not a robot. It's an audio-animatronic-controlled presentation.

WR: How did you get started at Disney's?

DMcK: I did a picture — *The Bend of the River* — on location with Jimmy Stewart. After shooting, he invited me to come to Hollywood. Helped me get my first agent, Isabelle Draesmer, who opened the doors to Disney Studio. She got me started. Later on, I was represented by Jack Wormser, who was the top voice talent guy in town.

WR: Did Walt Disney ever personally rescue you from a moment of embarrassment?

DMcK: He certainly did. It was when I was working with the British stage and cinema artiste David Tomlinson on *Mary Poppins*. We were on Scoring Stage A doing dialogue together all morn-

In a busy world, who has time for Ten Questions, let alone Twenty? Not Will Ryan. Here he offers you the Nine And A Half Question interview: mini-interrogations for you busy moderns.

* * *

Today's subject is Dallas McKennon, famous as the one-and-only original voice of Gumby, the voices of half of *Riverdale* on the *Filmation Archie* series (Archie, Mr. Weatherbee, Reggie, et alter), and voices in many Disney, Lantz and Tex Avery cartoons. Dal is also

highly recognizable to the general public as the actor who portrayed Cincinnatus on Fess Parker's *Daniel Boone* series from 1963 through 1970. Dal's visits to Los Angeles are a rare treat nowadays. This interview was conducted in the library of the Elmo Aardvark Aarchives.

* * *

Will Ryan: So, Dal, what's new with Gumby?

Dallas McKennon: Gumby is coming back to life. There are a lot of new Art Clokey-related projects in

ing — I was playing a whole bunch of British-accented characters in the horse-racing scene — when he turned to me and inquired, “I say, old boy, what part of England do you come from?” Walt, who had been in the booth, suddenly interrupted by getting on the speaker and asking David if he’d like to join him for lunch in the penthouse. Whew! Saved my neck. I’d been hired as a Britisher, you see, but being an Oregonian I’d merely been copying the British dialects. Walt saved the day.

WR: Speaking of sound stages, does Stage 30 at Universal Studios bring up any memories?

DMcK: It sure does. That’s where we shot *The Birds*. I’m the chef in the restaurant scene before the gasoline pump explosion — with Alfred Hitchcock directing.

WR: Didn’t you get into a pie fight or something on that same sound stage?

DMcK: A few years later, there was a wrap party on Stage 30 for a picture called *Clambake*. They wheeled in a five-foot high cake.

Layer upon layer of fresh, gooey, beautiful chocolate. See, Elvis and I are standing on one side of this great big cake, and his entourage is over on the other. So one of his fellas threw a piece of that big ol’ cake at Elvis. Missed Elvis, but it got me. So I picked up a piece and heaved it back at him. And a giant food fight started. By the end of it that big cake was just a bunch of crumbs. Elvis was laughing his head off. Said it was the best wrap party he’d ever had in his life.

WR: *Clambake*. Hmmm. I’ve never seen that one.

DMcK: As far as Elvis is concerned . . . well, he didn’t care if anyone ever saw it. He HATED that picture.

WR: What did you think of it?

DMcK: I thought it was a piece of cheese.

WR: A piece of — ?

DMcK: Fulla holes.

WR: Ah.

Dallas McKennon is the world’s foremost dramatic interpreter of the poetry of Robert W. Service. He has just returned to the contiguous forty-eight from an Alaskan tour. When in Los Angeles he stays in the fabulous guest facilities of Casa Loco, also known as “my place.” Between Disney films, television shows and records, Dal McKennon has done more voices for Disney’s than you can shake a stick at. Why, in dalmatians alone . . .

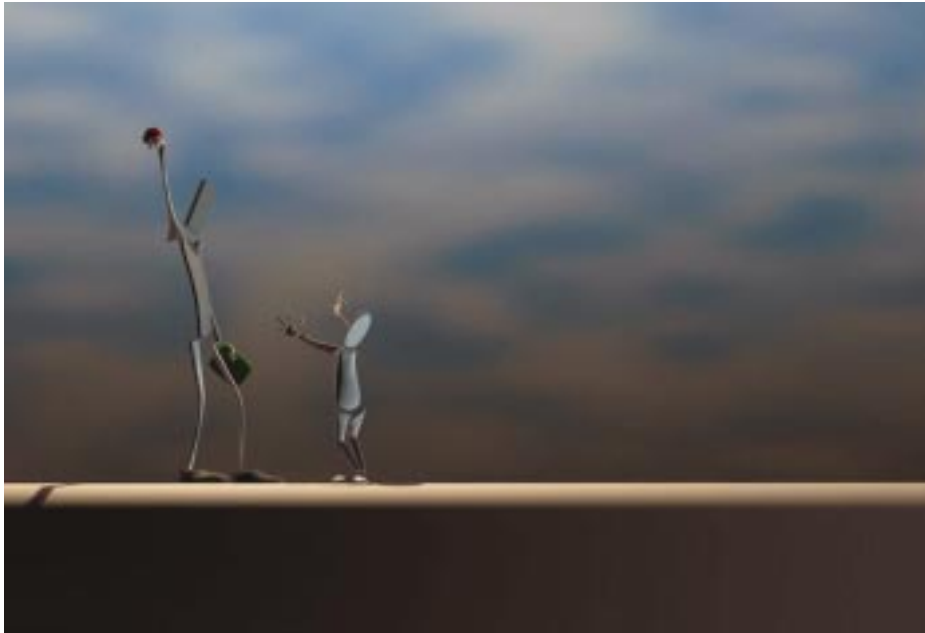
Will Ryan is the world’s foremost dramatic interpreter of the poetry of Edwin Carp. But as the poet left precious little material behind, Mr. Carp’s interpreters are, alas, forced to depend upon inference, innuendo and fuliginous surmise. When Dallas McKennon is in Los Angeles, Mr. Ryan is invariably awakened each morning at dawn by the authentic voice of the Kellogg’s rooster, followed by the authentic voices of most of the 101 dalmatians.

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What's New in Maya 4

by John Edgar Park



Values, which won the Siggraph computer animation festival, was created using Maya and uses simple shapes to depict a story about parent-child relationships. © 2000 Van Phan.



Kleiser-Walczak transformed David Kirk's 2-D oil paintings of *Little Miss Spider* into a stylized 3-D world. Maya was used for character and scene modeling as well as animation and rendering. Composer and After Effects were used for compositing. © 2001 Callaway & Kirk Company LLC. All rights reserved.

Alias|Wavefront recently hosted a Maya 4 launch event to showcase the new features and fixes found in the latest version of this 3D animation powerhouse. While not a major feature release — you won't see anything as radical as Artisan,

Paint Effects or Trax were when they launched — this "stabilization" release has many of the enhancements users have been asking for. It's only been a year since version 3, so what's changed?

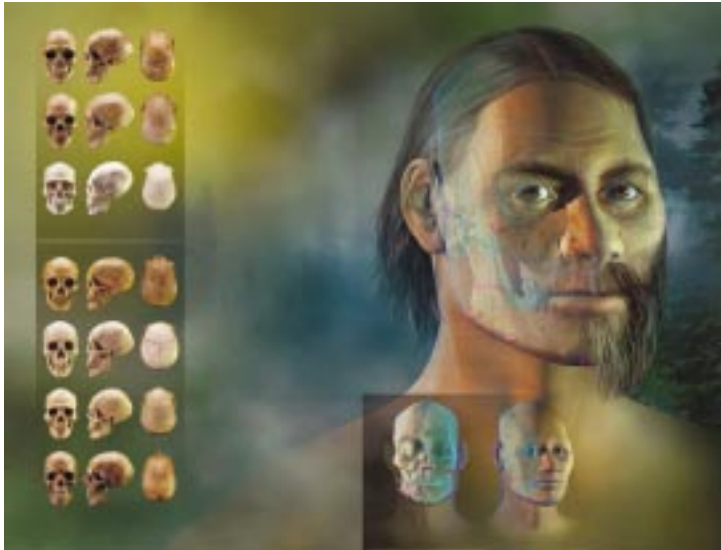
First off, the user interface

(UI). Nothing has been totally overhauled here, but there are differences. Along the left side of the UI there now resides the Toolbox (formerly named the Minibar), evicted from its former residence next to the Shelf. Just below the Toolbox are the Quick Layout buttons, which allow you to switch your panels and layouts quickly. To be honest, these changes seem to be aimed at making the interface friendlier to novices, rather than at helping the seasoned user (who probably uses marking menus, MEL scripts or hotkeys for this type of operation).

Enhancements to animation are plentiful.

Other additions to the UI include a progress bar when opening files, a lasso selection tool, a "name#.ext" option for file names, the option to open the Attribute Editor in the Channel Box area, and a number of new HUD display options like a frames-per-second counter and Character name. These small details add up to an environment that can be nicely tailored to your particular working style, increasing your speed, efficiency and chances to spend time with friends and family.

Navigation and manipulation of objects has been improved with the inclusion of rotation snapping, object alignment, Edit Invert Selection and... (drum roll please)... (finally)... ghosting/onion



National Geographic Magazine used both Maya and StudioTools to create this forensic reconstruction of the famous Kennewick Man skull. © 2000 National Geographic Society.



Maya takes on a painterly look in DYGRA: The Living Forest. © DYGRA © 2001.

skinning. Now all your 3D Studio Max-using friends will stop picking on you! The way ghosting works is that you can choose a number of frames before or after your current frame for which you will see a copy of the character. These time-travelling iterations of your model have different wireframe colors to distinguish them from the genuine one, and you can set your frame spacing to fine-tune the feedback.

Enhancements to animation are plentiful. The new Jiggle deformer is a great way to add secondary motion such as floppy ears or a wiggling belly. Motion trails give you a trajectory spline for an object's animation (they are informational only; you can't edit them). Perhaps one of the most important animation changes is the new FK/IK switcher. This allows you to animate an arm, say, using both forward and inverse kinematics. Sometimes you just can't get the pose exactly right with IK, but you don't want the tedium of a full FK animation. You may now keyframe the switch between the two systems.

In the modeling arena, sub-division surfaces have continued

to evolve. You may now create Sub-D primitives, instead of first making a polygon or NURBS primitive and then converting it. Texture UV commands now work directly on Sub-D objects, as do the paint selection tools. Maya 4 has definitely stepped up the commitment to sub-division surfaces.

On the rendering and shading fronts there are some very cool new features and fixes.

On the rendering and shading fronts there are some very cool new features and fixes. If you have ever used Illusion the Magic of Pixels (www.coolfun.com), you will be interested in the new Maya Sprite Wizard. This tool lets you create particle systems using lots of individual 2D sprites (like snowflakes or leaves) that can grow, rotate, decay and spawn other sprites. It is a quick and fun

way to generate particle effects with a stylized look. The Hypershader has been overhauled; gone is the visor, in is a new thumbnail browser. The renderer is now much better at keeping bump maps looking good at the terminator of an object and deals with texture correction more effectively when objects like roads run off into the distance. The addition of a Display Render Globals window button to the status line is terrific.

These things probably don't seem like major features, but overall, Alias|Wavefront has listened to user feedback and built a very solid, easier-to-use Maya.

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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A Taste of SIGGRAPH 2001

by John Edgar Park

OK, I'll admit that I find it disturbing that SIGGRAPH is shrinking. Why is it that the CG industry seems to be getting bigger all the time — more shows are using 3D characters and effects than ever, we have a whole slate of all-CG feature films in the theaters and in production — yet SIGGRAPH, the pre-eminent trade show for all things CG is getting smaller? Well, I, for one, saw more interesting developments at this year's show than ever, so here is my theory on the size problem: no vapor.

You see, with the economy spinning into a nosedive, companies tend to wise up and focus on their core products. Leaving aside the consolidations, mergers and buyouts rampant in the hardware business, many businesses that were tempted to hype a load of vapor-ware during our economic boom are pulling back. SIGGRAPH 2001 may have seemed a bit more sedate, but I'm willing to bet that a larger percentage than ever of the products shown will actually be launched and deliver as promised.



Rendering translucent materials by Henrik Wann Jensen, Stanford University. Image courtesy of Henrik Wann Jensen and SIGGRAPH.

Research

As Jean Prudent, president



SIGGRAPH is always a magic combination of technology, art and learning as seen in *Tentacular Continuum, Detail 3* by Kent Oberheu. Image courtesy of Ken Oberheu and SIGGRAPH.

of Reflex Systems, remarked, "The people at this year's show seem more serious about doing business, but you have to remember that SIGGRAPH is not here for business. It is for the researchers." Good point: SIGGRAPH is a non-profit organization. The trade show portion of it gets a lot of press, but it is the scientific papers and presentations that really drive the innovation in the industry.

An area of research to watch is the subsurface light scattering work of Henrik Wann Jensen, Research Associate at Stanford University's Computer Graphics Laboratory. By accurately calculating the way light rays bounce and scatter just below the surface of a non-metallic object before reflecting back out, his new shading model will have a great effect on the realistic rendering of translucent objects such as marble, skin and even a simple glass

of milk. (<http://graphics.stanford.edu/~henrik/papers/bssrdf/>)



Alpha Wolf by Bill Tomlinson, Synthetic Characters Group, The Media Lab, MIT. Image courtesy of Bill Tomlinson and SIGGRAPH.

Learning

SIGGRAPH is as much about education as it is about research. The Birds of a Feather sessions, User Group meetings for nearly every major software package and informal get togethers are rampant. Learning from the vast experiences of others or hearing things directly from the people who write the software is one of the best reasons to attend.

One such opportunity was the 2001 Alias|Wavefront Global Users Association Seminar. A few hundred Maya users packed into a conference room at the Westin Bonaventure each day for four sessions with topics ranging from "Integrating a Creature Animation Rig Within a Production Pipeline" to "Lighting and Rendering in Maya 4.0" led by Jeremy Birn of Tippett Studio. It is always amazing to watch people have breakthrough "Ah-ha!" moments and there were plenty of these during the seminars as the speakers revealed their hard-learned methods.

These master classes were accompanied by an excellent support CD-ROM with sample files and notes from the seminars, making for a complete take-home educational package. Plus, they gave out really groovy Alias | Wavefront backpacks! Who says you can't score free stuff at trade shows anymore?!

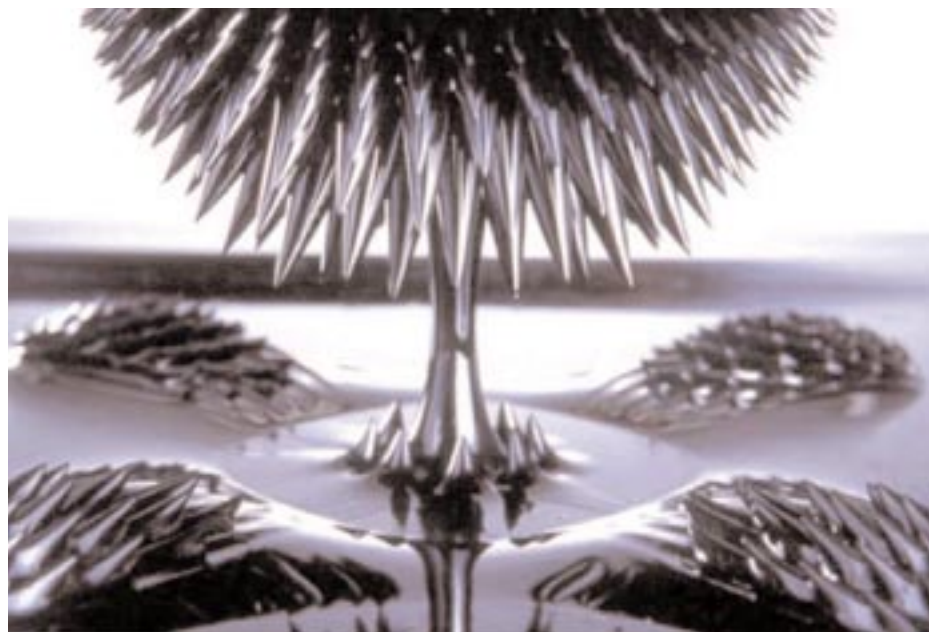
Art

The Art Gallery and Emerging Technology exhibits explore

some of the ways artists combine technology and creativity.

The MIT Media Lab Synthetic Characters Group was demonstrating *Alpha Wolf*, a technical innovation in the area of interactive synthetic social behavior. Three users could control the emotional state of wolf pups by whimpering, growling, baying and barking into microphones. In turn, the wolves would develop their own social hierarchy and behaviors. (Badger.www.media.mit.edu/people/badger/alphaWolf.html)

By far, the most mesmerizing display in the Art Gallery was the high-tech lava lamp called *Protrude, Flow*. Designed by Minako Takeno and Sachiko Kodama of Tokyo's University of Electro-Communications, this otherworldly installation consists of a pool of electro-magnetically charged black oil that moves, spikes, flows and roves around like sentient goo. Anyone who stared at it for long wanted one in their living room! (<http://oz.hc.uec.ac.jp/~kodama/proflo.html>)



Protrude Flow by Sachiko Kodama, Dept. of Human Communications, The University of Electro-Communications. Image provided by Kodama and SIGGRAPH.

Products

On to the products of the SIGGRAPH exhibit floor! This year's trends included the refinement of existing products, a move toward automation of tasks like motion tracking and 3D data capture, and the inclusion of Macromedia Flash output in every program under the sun! Here are some of the more interesting products on display.



Houdini has long been part of Disney Feature Animation's arsenal and was used in *Fantasia/2000*'s finale, "The Firebird." © Disney Enterprises Inc.

Houdini 5

Side Effects Software will soon be releasing Houdini 5, the latest version of its 3D animation and effects software. Long regarded as an elite program for visual effects gurus (Walt Disney Feature Animation has recently announced a significant integration of Houdini into its animation production pipeline), this new version hopes to attract artists who were scared off by Houdini's reputation as a tool for Technical Directors only. The interface has been overhauled to accommodate artists and the immersive modeling tools have been revamped for a friendlier, more hands-on workflow through the addition of "persistent handle" technology.

Houdini 5 geometry is focused on subdivision surfaces built with poly split/extrude tools



Pixel Magic used LightWave 3D and MatchMover to create many shots in *Driven*.
Images courtesy of REALVIZ.

— this seems to be emerging as an industry-wide standard. Houdini's integrated compositor (which is functionally similar to Nothing Real's Shake) has received its first major rewrite in over six years. The speed gains are quite

evident when building elaborate composites.

This release promises to be more powerful, yet more accessible and easier to learn than previous versions. It has a new shader preview mode that uses OpenGL

to calculate displacement, refraction and shadows in near real-time. Plus, these shaders can be used during export to the excellent mental ray renderer, thanks to a new agreement between Side Effects and mental images.

Side Effects also plans to release a stripped-down, \$2000 version called *Houdini Select*, which will offer the same interface and workflow as *H5* minus some of the most powerful particle, character, rendering and compositing tools. Additionally, a Sun Solaris port of Houdini 5 has been announced.

Match Mover 3.0

New from REALVIZ comes *Match Mover 3.0*, an automated motion tracking package. *Match Mover 3.0* can now automatically generate camera data from a length of footage without any manual point setting or camera data input. It's amazing to see it in action and claims to be a 100% solution for match moving, since you can manually add or adjust points if you don't get a perfect match the first time.

With the ability to export 3D camera or object track data to any major 3D application, this release will surely find its way into the pipeline of many studios and post-production houses.

Softimage xsi 2.0

In their gigantic red booth, just left of center on the SIGGRAPH show floor, Softimage was showing off *xsi 2.0*. With a planned release at the end of October 2001, Softimage has really upped the ante with this version. There are many, many additions and improvements in version 2.0, from cage deformers to text tools, from the beautiful UI to multi-pass ren-



A shot of RAYZ 1.2's new, easier to use, customizable UI. © Silicon Grail.

dering, from .eps imports to envelope painting tools. But the three largest features of xsi 2.0 are the real-time shaders, the new compositor and hair.

Real-time shaders use many of the advanced OpenGL and nVidia specific drivers and render routines to give you realistic previews of surfaces before rendering. This includes true environment reflections, bump mapping, multiply maps and more. It seems to be quite a time saver, and a case of video game technology bleeding into graphics applications.

The brand new compositor that debuts in xsi 2.0 is a drag-n-drop, node-based 2D/3D compositor reminiscent of Softimage's Eddie product. Anyone familiar with discreet's combustion, Nothing Real's Shake or any of a host of others will be right at home with the xsi 2.0 compositor. Pulling all scene data directly from the PIC rich file format, such as Z-depth, shader assignments, alpha channels, etc. allows for very quick

editing of scene elements without leaving the program.

The Hair plug-in being added for xsi 2.0 is an implementation of Joe Alter's excellent Shave and a Haircut (www.joealter.com) but with one twist — the xsi version will be the only one hooked into the Mental Ray renderer, allowing for high-quality, fast rendering fur and hair on your characters.

One other new feature I really like is the Synoptic view. The synoptic view lets you render a viewport and then add HTML-like hotspots to it. Using the script editor, the hot spots can become a whole new interface for selecting IK handles, invoking facial animation sliders, performing macros and so forth. TDs will love this feature, since it allows you to generate any interface you want for speeding up animator workflows.

RAYZ 1.2

Silicon Grail, the company founded by multiple Academy

Award-winner Ray Feeney, unveiled RAYZ 1.2. This compositor, used on countless features films, and already respected for its power, speed and versatility, will now add Kodak Cineon and a newly customizable interface.

Being the first compositor with full Cineon support brings film grain matching and film stocks to RAYZ 1.2. Matching shots has never been easier.

Says Feeney, "We have gone to our customers for feedback on this product and found that what they want is ease-of-use." With this in mind, RAYZ 1.2 now supports a customizable UI, real-time rotoscoping updates, a new image morphing feature and terrific interactivity while making changes to D1 or proxy images.

ReflexDRAMA

I was pleasantly surprised to see something at SIGGRAPH that has the potential to be both revolutionary and time-saving. Reflex|DRAMA is a realistic human creation engine that may help studios forgo the lengthy R&D cycle necessary to create realistic CG actors from scratch. Reflex|DNA is the "PostScript" of the human body. The DNA defines the skeletal, muscular, fat and skin layers of the body, rather than the traditional "shell" data approach.

Still in alpha (betas are headed to the major studios and game companies in a few months), DRAMA's workflow will be to choose skeletal building blocks (i.e.: mandible, skull shape, rib cage size, etc.), then add the muscle and fat layer, then the skin. These layers are adjustable and have influence on each other. The movement of the IK-based skeleton (which contains all of the bones of the human body and are

interconnected with ligaments, tendons and muscles) will deform the muscle, fat and skin layers realistically, requiring no lengthy deformer set-up process. If you choose to make the character fatter, the amount of secondary motion (or jiggle) in the belly will increase in kind. It's really fun to play with and amazing to behold!

Based on potential-client feedback, Reflex has included a plug-in API for all of the major 3D applications, .rib export for RenderMan and full motion-capture support. Reflex|DRAMA could be a real contender for the production pipeline, and you may see Reflex actors in upcoming CGI features.

messiah:studio

This former LightWave plug-in for character animation is now close to release as a stand-alone product. Already in use on

the feature film *Jimmy Neutron*, the incredibly fast skeletal IK system is lauded by animators. It includes character animation and rigging, a global illumination renderer (formerly Arnold) and a new development environment.

The **messiah:develop** module will be used for creating new plugins within **messiah**. Lyle Milton, partner pmG Worldwide, says, "Since this is the tool we used to create the lion's share of **messiah:animate**, you'll have the very same development tool that we use, not a watered-down version. This means that you'll be able to create your own custom Edit, Play and Customize extensions, as well as Effects (e.g. Melt, BoneDeform, etc.) and Tools (e.g. Skeleton, Curve, Slider, etc.). You can also create function libraries; these are the functions that appear in the functions pop-up in Command mode and are used in our new

script system! In addition, we'll be adding the capability to create custom shaders."

SIGGRAPH 2001 was a bit smaller than in years past, but by no means less important. The hard economic times have slowed the flow of venture capital and marketing expenditure, but not the amount of high level research and innovation in the CG hardware and software industry. Look for these products in a studio near you; and see you in San Antonio for SIGGRAPH 2002!

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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The Akira DVD Special Edition: An Anime Classic

review by Jerry Beck



Tetsuo, prior to becoming embroiled in a secret government experiment.
All images courtesy of Pioneer Entertainment. Produced by Akira Committee
Kodansha. " © 1987 Akira Committee.

There's no doubt about it. Thirteen years after its release in Japan, *Akira* is the quintessential cyber-punk anime feature — and a bonafide classic science fiction film on any level.

Based on the original multi-part manga by Katsuhiro Otomo, Kodansha Publishing put together a consortium of Japan's finest animation studios, under Otomo's direction and a banner called the Akira Committee, to create this modern masterpiece. It was the most expensive anime feature ever created (costing \$8 million, a pittance compared to Disney features

of the era), and no punches were pulled. The film retains Otomo's adult point of view; the violence, sex and raw language that properly set the story in post-apocalyptic Neo-Tokyo.

In 1989 *Akira* was looking for U.S. distribution just as Carl Macek and I started Streamline Pictures, a small U.S. theatrical and video operation specializing in Japanese anime. Kodansha had dubbed the film rather quickly in an effort to interest Paramount, Fox, Universal... anyone... in picking up the film for a U.S. release. Unfortunately, small-minded Hollywood had no idea how to

sell an adult animation (they still don't) and had no idea there was any U.S. audience for this sort of thing.

That was a lucky break for Streamline Pictures. We enthusiastically booked the film (with 8 prints!) into art houses across the U.S. I had many great experiences with *Akira*, including two days in New York City, which I'll never forget. I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Otomo and introduce him to our sold out movie audiences, present him to the press, escort him to a book signing and go out to dinner with him and his entourage.

I must have seen our version of *Akira* over 100 times, at least 50 times in theaters across the U.S. and just as many times when we later released it to video.



Neo-Tokyo's stunning skyline.

New and Improved!

Fast forward ten years later. Pioneer has now released a \$1 million restoration of *Akira* on DVD — and it is truly a must-have for anyone seriously interested in animation. This is *Akira* as you haven't seen it — or heard it — before.

Where do I begin? First I must recount, very briefly, the storyline. This is an adult science fiction story, set in the future, about members of a teenage motorcycle gang who get involved with a secret military experiment to contain a telekinetic force, the same force that destroyed Tokyo years before. When one of the gang becomes empowered with teleki-



Akira creates a violent world of gangs and warfare coupled with telekinetic powers, mystery and secret military experiments.

netic powers all hell breaks loose.

Akira is loaded with spectacular images, beautiful art and animation, and an amazing musical score. Pioneer's new English dub is wonderful. The original "Streamline release" dub was flat and perfunctory — now the character voices are alive with personality and good acting. For once the voices not only suit the characters, but they also match the mouth movements! And of course you have the option of watching the disc in Japanese with or without subtitles.

The picture is sharp, bright and colorful. The amount of details in the art — the explosions, the buildings in the city and the effects animation, to name a few — are crystal clear and perfect. As stated, I had seen *Akira* dozens of times, but watching this restored edition was like watching a new film... the original film! The film as Otomo intended!



Gang leader Kaneda battles many forces as he tries to save his friend Tetsuo.



Tetsuo at the end of a very hard, long day.

The picture is letterboxed in its original theatrical 1:85 to 1 screen ratio. The THX stereo sound is crisp. And a special feature allows the viewer to translate instantly any Japanese writing that appears untranslated in the backgrounds and original art. This is the ultimate way to see a Japanese animated film.

The second disc provided is loaded with extra goodies including *The Akira Production Report*, a behind-the-scenes documentary on the making of the film. Other extras include an interview with Otomo, the theatrical trailers and TV spots, interviews with the guys who restored the film, the voice over actors, as well as musical selections and a plethora of production materials like storyboards, original (unused) background art, theatrical posters, comic books and merchandise — damn near everything!

Everything in fact, except

anything to do with the original dub or Streamline's efforts to promote the film in 1990-1. Oh well, perhaps that's as it should be. This is the definitive edition of *Akira*, and I'm certain it looks better here than it ever did in a theater, in the U.S. or Japan.

Akira is a landmark anime feature that will stand with the works of Tezuka and Miyazaki as one of the most influential animations ever to come from Japan. Grab this DVD while you can.

The Special Edition DVD has a suggested retail price of \$39.98 and includes a second full DVD of supplemental materials. A standard DVD of the restored film is also available for \$24.98. Two VHS versions of Akira, the new, English dubbed version and the English subtitled version, are available with Dolby Surround Stereo audio for \$19.98 each.

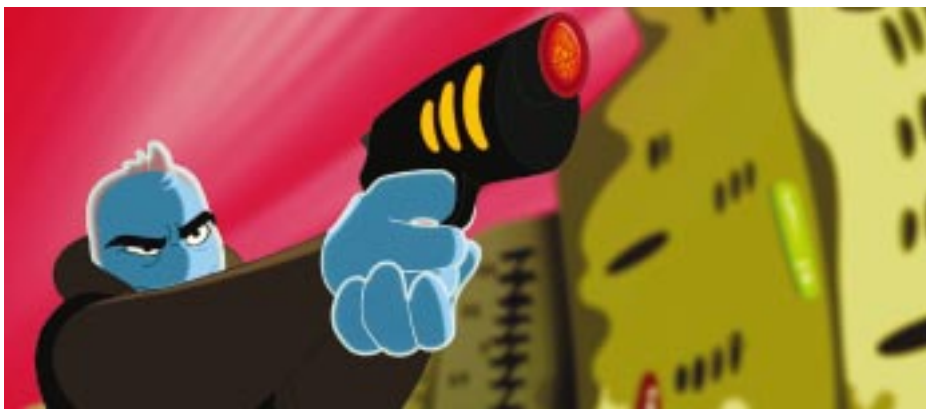
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OSMOSIS JONES

Cops Anatomy Award

by J. Paul Peszko



Osmosis Jones, one mean white blood cell. © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

Yes, folks, the cells have been counted, and this year's winner of the Anatomy Award for Animation is none other than *Osmosis Jones*, one cell of a cop. Accepting the award for Mr. Jones in the City of Frank are animation directors Piet Kroon and Tom Sito and producer Zak Penn. Perhaps, most deserving is Penn (Antz, *Men in Black*), who never saw the scope of this anatomical spoof of the mismatched buddy cop genre as anything but big.

"I think those places where I was pushing had less to do with the comedy of the movie but the scope of the movie," states Penn. "That's what I was always trying to keep my eye on, keeping it big. I

would say close to *Men in Black*. That was what I was shooting for. I pushed for a much more fantasy, science fiction feel to the whole thing not just in terms of the story but in terms of the design and the characters, making Drix look more Robocop and not funny."

Spoofing with Complexity

Drix (voiced by David Hyde Pierce) is the Phi Beta Capsule version of the straight, by-the-book cop, who is teamed with Osmosis Jones (voiced by Chris Rock), the streetwise virus cop, who is trying to redeem himself. Their mission is to find and destroy Thrax, the Red Death (voiced by Laurence Fishburne), who in turn is threatening to destroy the City of Frank,

the slovenly human (Bill Murray) whom all of them inhabit. Moreover, Thrax is out to break his own record by bringing Frank down in 48 hours flat.

"I really didn't want the characters to look funny," Penn continues. "I wanted them to look cool. And that is where I pushed and pushed and pushed."

"Drix is a character raised in a lab, and all his experience comes from reading about it but not actually doing it," Tom Sito observes. "So, he had a little bit of that fish out of water naiveté. We wanted to show the difference between that veteran street cop and the academy, by-the-book guy, which are classic archetypes in action movies."

"It was really hard to design the pill character," Piet Kroon recalls. "We worked on the assumption that this big gigantic pill arrives in the stomach, but for the most part it's sugar. It's 99.9999 percent sugar, and there's this tiny active ingredient. That's our character."



Our heroes, Osmosis and Drix, are as charming as any crime fighting duo.

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Sito adds, "One of the issues we had early on in the development, working with the classic cop movie archetypes, was to get a lot of the artists to not be afraid of the cliché. Artists want every character to be multifaceted. But, if you look at the clas-



No doubt about it, Thrax would make any organism in his path cower. © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

sic movies like *On the Waterfront*, for every Marlon Brando character that's very deep, the hoods around him are very stereotypical. You have to let some archetypes through. If you look at action movies, you see the same characters. You see the hot-headed sergeant, the corrupt politician, the career woman who's turned on by the guy from the streets. Basically, we had to tell people, don't be afraid to embrace those archetypes as long as our main characters have complexity."

Penn spent the bulk of his time working on the storyboard-ing process, getting the story into shape and trying to bring some of what he had learned from working on larger-budget, more traditional action movies to bear in the

process. As a producer he at once recognized the contributions of the various members of the team: "When you see the final movie, you're seeing a combination of Marc Hyman's [the screenwriter] skill as a comedy writer, Piet Kroon's skill as a designer and animator, and Tom Sito's skill as a visual humorist and storyteller, and my skills in terms of action and plot structure, trying to give it that big movie sheen."

Balancing Two Worlds

Some may argue that its big action movie sheen caused the animation to outshine its live-action counterpart, directed by the Farrelly Brothers, throwing the finished film out of balance. But, on the other hand, by underplaying

the live-action, Peter and Bobby Farrelly, along with veteran comedian Bill Murray, made the contrast between Frank's inner and outer worlds ring especially true. After all, what lazy, beer-guzzling slob on a steady diet of junk food could be anything but out of balance? If you think about it, his lymphocytes would probably be on constant red alert 24/7 trying to fight off free radicals and carcinogens. Pure frenzy inside and couch potato outside.

"It makes a certain amount of sense in the film because you have two different types of stories going on at the same time," Kroon points out. "You have this action-adventure, high-energy, life-and-death struggle happening on the inside. On the outside it's a guy who's sort of gradually getting sick. He's a really dumpy guy, and he doesn't take good care of himself. He's quite appalling to look at most of the time. It's a small story. There aren't big stakes in it because he doesn't realize how seriously ill he's getting. It's about a father and his daughter, and the daughter's trying to get through to him to change his ways. So, I think in a way it's fitting that there's a different energy in the different parts."

Kroon contends that fast-paced action is inherent in the very process of animation. "Animation is by nature more frantic and higher paced [than live action] because you boil things down to the essential message you want to convey. You don't let the scene meander because it's too much work." Having to draw and paint individual cels for each frame of film forces the animators to keep things brief and furthers the contrast between animated and live-action footage when they



Steve Pilcher is credited for being a major force behind the envisioning of the City of Frank. © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

Tom Sito agrees, “I think that’s always a pitfall in an animated/live-action film like *Pete’s Dragon* or *The Incredible Mr. Limpit*. The bright colors and the fantasy are always more fun. So, the live-action guys had a pretty hard task trying to keep up with us. You know, it’s like the old W. C. Fields’ thing, ‘Never act next to children or animals.’ It’s [live-action] very easily upstaged.”

Multiple locations, not usually standard fare in feature animation, further heightens the contrast between the hectic, fast-paced animated story taking place within Frank and the lethargic, real life grunge ball that Frank is. Penn, who pitched the project to Warner Bros. from screenwriter Marc Hyman's original idea, is perhaps most responsible for that aspect. He comments, "One of the things we wanted to do with *Osmosis* is have every scene set in a different location and hit as many parts of the body as we can and keep you constantly on your



ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



toes. Other than being in a car, which we had to do, we just wanted to get in as many locations as we could. I do think that is one thing that separates *Osmosis* [from other animated features]. There's a tremendous amount of subplots for an animated movie."

Though the contrasts between the two worlds of Frank are immense, the amazing fact is that the transitions between those two worlds are virtually seamless. But as Sito points out, those transitions had everyone concerned from the outset. "We were worried it was looking schizophrenic at a certain point and we spent a lot of attention trying to make sure those felt right, those felt natural. So, it's very satisfying to hear that people got the logic of it right

away. But the other thing we did too was because it's an urban landscape and also an organic landscape, buildings and stuff needed to stay away from hard edges. And we also did a lot of ER, elastic reality, where the buildings kind of sway and breathe and move so that they feel organic."

Creating an Indoor City

Much of the credit in that regard goes to the animation team's production designer, Steve Pilcher, as Piet Kroon attests. "Steve Pilcher, our art director, came up with texture maps. He made hundreds of marbled-paper paintings, just structures basically, and they tended to look kind of organic, and he would digitize them and wrap them around the shapes in the image. So, suddenly this really simple shape takes on a much more interesting structure. That's how we achieved this really simple look that has all this sophistication. It looks like you're looking at real tissue."

Sito also had a special regard for Pilcher's contribution. "Steve was sort of the point man on creating the design elements of this fantasy world. Especially the color palette where he opted for colors that have gotten a lot of play right now. People have

noticed the bold colors and bold styling.” Zak Penn called Pilcher, “the author of the look of the movie.”

“I think Steve Pilcher in designing the color scheme of the film really made sure to use these primary colors so they would pop from the screen,” Kroon adds. “It’s very vibrant and alive. The style, for the first two or three minutes, you’re probably getting used to it, but after that, I think people just take it for granted. And the performance really shines through those designs because there’s nothing hampering them. The animators didn’t have to focus on the creases and follow through on the closing. They could just sort of throw the characters around. If you look at the old designs of Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck, those characters are really simple. They’re vehicles for great animation. And we had a really young crew, and they were ready to go for it. And they did.”

The animation was eighty percent complete when the Farrelly Brothers and their live-action crew came onto the project. But according to Kroon there was no real compulsion for Sidney Jackson Bartholomew, Jr., production designer for the live-action sequences, to reduce the contrasts between the realism of the outside world and the stylized world on the inside. “Sidney looked at the color scheme Steve was going for, and there are scenes where it matches quite well because Sidney uses the overall oranges and reds. But we were so far ahead of them there was no point in them trying to mimic the look of our film because on the outside it has to look like the real world. It has to look like this guy who lives in this dumpy house. It’s not like he



If you’ve seen the movie you are probably feeling a little uneasy right now... Duck Molly! Duck! © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

[Bartholomew] was looking at our art direction to get some tips on his.”

“I was one of the people on the design crew that was always pushing for more urban landscapes, more cityscapes,” Sito recalls. “Then as the live-action began to come in and we understood how extensive it would be, I started to go in the other direction because we wanted to make a real difference between the animated world and the live-action world. If the live-action world was going to have a lot of realism in it, then we should go more stylized and colorful to create that sharp distinction.”

Enter the Live-Action Superstars

As originally conceived, *Osmosis Jones* was only to have five minutes of live-action to frame the animation. However, when the Farrellys became involved, it was a given that the live-action sequences would become much more extensive. The story and its characters immediately underwent revisions. Frank’s wife sank into back story, killed off by poor nutrition, and was replaced by

Shane (Elena Franklin), Frank’s pre-teen daughter. Another new character soon emerged, Shane’s teacher, Mrs. Boyd (Molly Shannon), who becomes the target of Frank’s slovenly mishaps and the brunt of the Farrellys’ gross-out humor, some pretty sleazy stuff. So, how did all this new material affect the completed animation?

“They’re wacky, goofy directors [the Farrellys], but they make sure the film has heart,” Sito contends. “And we needed to have something in this film that wasn’t spoofing or outrageous. And I think without the girl character [Shane], it would’ve been really hard for people to sympathize with Frank. As an audience, you understand the little girl. You say, ‘Yes, this guy is worth saving.’”

Kroon concurs, “I think it was a really smart move on their [the Farrellys] part because it really grounds the picture. We have sort of a spoof on the inside. On the outside, it’s anchored in emotion in the sense that you can understand this little girl who’s looking at her dad sinking deeper and deeper into his vegetative state. You can understand that she wants



The live-action sequences added heart as Shane (Elena Franklin) tries to get her father, Frank (Bill Murray), to be more healthy. © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

ment you win, there are always one or two that go by the way-side. "I really wanted there to be car chases in this movie," Penn remarks. "We had this pretty amazing idea for a car chase, which was a car chase in 3-D, where the cars get knocked off the road then land upside down and backwards on a different vein. There was all this stuff that we had beat out and actually boarded and started to animate that mostly got cut for a lot of reasons. So, some of that stuff we didn't win the arguments on, and maybe it was for the better. Maybe it made the movie tighter and funnier."

The Harsh Reality

Regardless of whether the film is tighter or funnier, today's box office heavily depends on advertising dollars and marketing tie-ins. Big bucks, big box office. No bucks, no box office. No amount of time-release capsules or blood transfusions can save *Osmosis Jones* if Warner Bros. did not learn a lesson from its ill-fated experience with *The Iron Giant*.

"I think the studio understood what went wrong with *The Iron Giant* campaign," suggests Sito. "Even though they spent money, it was aimed at a very young audience. So, if you were like six and under and watching TV on a weekday morning, you saw a lot of *Iron Giant* ads while most of the movie was geared toward adults. I think they revised their commitments and used a lot of *Osmosis Jones* ads in prime time and running on VH1 and MTV late night trying to find that other audience. In that respect we owe a debt of gratitude to *Shrek* in that we were getting resistance in some quarters from those who really felt animation was for children."

him to live. That was a really good call, but it did mean that we had to tweak some of our scenes. Other scenes we had to cut because we didn't get the live-action to make the scenes work."

"The Farrellys came up with a lot of those ideas, but they definitely kept Marc [Hyman, the screenwriter] in the loop," states producer Zak Penn. "They would give him pages to rewrite. They were very collaborative in that sense. It wasn't: 'Here's what we're doing, take it or leave it.' They definitely heard our notes. But with that said, those guys are writers, and they pretty much came up with the take they wanted to do. So now we had three writers working on it, Peter, Bobby and Marc. Even earlier, as a writer, I felt it was good for him [Marc Hyman] to have another writer standing over his shoulder to pitch ideas because Piet and Tom are very talented guys, but I don't think they would call themselves writers per se. They're more pure artists rather than writers, I would argue. Whereas, Peter and Bobby are much more writers than they are anything else. So, once they got

involved, I did have to take a step back. I didn't want to get in the way of their process."

Their process, however, came from a live-action perspective, which is often based on the logic of seeing is believing. Therefore, the other twenty percent of the animation that had been storyboarded but not shot was then under review. "What I did end up doing was arguing a lot for keeping stuff in the animation," explains Penn. "There was a big argument at one point about cutting the subconscious. But to be fair, there was a point at which it was very hard to relate that idea in a storyboard. It was very difficult to explain to everyone what we had in mind. I particularly remember getting a lot of arguments and saying, 'You have to trust us. When we finish this, it's going to look fantastic.' That came up a lot because they [the Farrellys] did come into the process a lot later. So, there would be things where I would have to step in and say, 'Look, guys, I've worked on a lot of movies also, and I really think we should give this its day in court.'"

Of course, for every argu-



Everyone has been concerned over *Osmosis*' performance at the box office. © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

"On our film, for my money, I would love to have seen more advertising," Kroon counters. "It's really weird to see all these ads out now for *Harry Potter*, which isn't opening until November, and it's probably the one film that could open with a little line in a newspaper saying it's finished. But our film by comparison needs a lot more nurturing because it's original characters and not based on a book or anything. I think they should have been pumping it a lot harder. But compared to *The Iron Giant*, we're getting a really great deal."

But *The Iron Giant* is dead

and buried and, unfortunately, so is *Osmosis Jones*; ten days and \$10.3 million (even though the film remains on over 2,300 screens in the U.S.). So, great deal or not, the City of Frank and *Osmosis Jones* didn't survive their crowded, highly competitive August release (pushed back from an April, Spring Break release). Furthermore, it has little to do with its imaginative story structure and slick, stylized animation. It has everything to do with the growing pains of the American animated feature as filmmakers try to coax the public into believing there is life after Disney. Animated projects can be huge

blockbusters as *Shrek* recently proved, but they must be handled with great attention and care. (Was there a child in America that didn't love *Shrek* before it even hit the theatres? Is there a child that doesn't go to the grocery store with their parents, where they were cleverly bombarded with marketing?) When it comes to nurturing animated products, Warner Bros.' marketing department lies comatose with their vital signs about to flat-line. Let's hope they get yet another chance.

J. Paul Peszko is a freelance writer and screenwriter living in Los Angeles. He writes feature articles, interviews and reviews for regional publications. He currently has two scripts under option and is working on a feature comedy, in addition to just completing his first novel. When he isn't writing, he teaches communications courses.

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I Am Scamp

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman



How could one little DVD cause so much ruckus? " Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Not long ago movie audiences were treated to not one, but two blockbuster films in the same year that featured large chunks of space rock threatening to obliterate all life on Earth. While neither film made a deep impact on theatergoers (possibly signaling Armageddon for the genre), the directors could have made much better films had they used the following material: A direct-to-video sequel to a 1955 Walt Disney film is released in

2001. It is sent hurtling toward legions of animation fans, students, professionals and critics, and the resultant collision threatens to shatter the last bastions of purist traditionalism — if not the very sanctity of animation itself. We watch as this awesome phenomenon enters the cultural atmosphere, breaking up into millions of pieces that strike every Wal-Mart in America with unerring accuracy as fans scream their outrage or descend into a benumbed

state of shock. Tsunamis of unimaginable force inundate the animation community, and readings on the Richter scale become meaningless in the face of such abject devastation. But wait! Deep in the recesses of this deadly video, animation survivors have found evidence that another OAV sequel, this time to a 1950 Disney film, is streaking into their world's fragile orbit...

Betrayed!

For some reason (or perhaps many of them), *Lady and the Tramp II: Scamp's Adventure* has many hardcore animation fans shaking with anger, disgust...and yes, a sense of betrayal. 'How could Disney do such a thing?' they sputter. I should know; I was among them back in January of 1999 when I poured forth my vituperation in a column for the late *Animation Nerd's Paradise* Website. Let's see, now...oh, yes: "Nothing could equal the shock of this wanton sacrilege... Abomination!" I then went on to create farcical titles for future Disney sequels to their animated classics, but this is no longer a joke; as we now know, *Cinderella II: Dreams Come True* actually exists and will be on shelves next year. In fact, The Mouse has announced plans to produce OAV sequels to every Disney classic that ever graced a silver screen. Oh, the kiddies won't mind; a cartoon is a cartoon. No, the apoplectic screams one hears are issuing from the older fans, who seem to see their loving memories sullied in the name of mega-corporate greed.

Animation journalist Michelle-Klein Hass, for example, let Disney have it in a recent piece for *TOON Magazine*, averring that "Eisner's Disney Hits a New Low."

Ms. Klein-Hass decries the cheapening of the medium in general, including Warners commercially successful but much-despised *Space Jam*, the spate of live-action features based on cartoons, and now the sequelization of the “most treasured of the Disney features.” This is equivalent to a “slap in the face” and “one more sucker punch” to animation’s devoted fandom, all done “strictly for the almighty dollar.” With a final plea to Michael Eisner to “stop the madness,” Ms. Klein-Hass sums up most, if not all, of the reactions typical of animation aficionados everywhere. Yet beneath her anger is a genuine sense of hurt, shock and sadness; the special, unforgettable films of her — and our — childhood have been reduced to set-up pieces for modern, quickly made commodities that are pre-sold by the power of the Disney logo. It is as if some malevolent Medusa gazed back in time and turned the original classics into soulless reels of stone by linking them to these modernized sequels, leaving us forever unable to look upon them without feelings of grief and revulsion.

Fear Factors

As I sit back and ponder the implications of OAV sequels to every Disney masterpiece ever made, I am trying, despite the difficulties, to retain some analytical objectivity. For someone who bleeds ink and paint, I admit that this is one of the toughest columns I have ever written. There is no doubt that Disney had a choice *not* to make these sequels and that an insatiable hunger for profits likely played a significant part in their eventual decision to do so. However, a number of related factors may have made this

“madness” both inevitable and unstoppable. These factors, evidenced in cultural and technological change, will be examined shortly; first, let us look at the artifact in question.

What has Disney truly wrought, and why was it produced at this particular time?

The narrative of *Lady and the Tramp II* is a simple one: This is the story of a rowdy young pup named Scamp living in turn-of-the-century New England. Scamp longs for adventure and independence. Despite the most well-intentioned warnings of his father Tramp, a reformed “street dog,” Scamp refuses to follow a life of domestic conformity and escapes from his loving home to join a gang of strays. Scamp’s merry adventures include a romance with a tough but comely canine named Angel, but when the gang’s adventures get out of hand Scamp is betrayed and impounded. His father rides to the rescue and is forced to reveal his hidden past — to his son’s amazement. All ends happily as Scamp returns home, Angel is adopted by the Darlings, and Tramp promises to be more attentive to his son’s emotional needs.

There are a number of ways to examine this narrative, and each one is open to a different ideological construction. A capitalist reading would define this OAV as a marketable consumer commodity with high probability of generating a positive profit margin; the narrative

and presentation are of no consequence. An artistic interpretation reveals the film to be a fair-to-mediocre continuation of a 1955 Disney production created during a time when Walt himself had largely abandoned interest in his own animated films. The original characters have been reinterpreted without revision by a well-trained, though inferior, production team to the one Disney had on hand for the progenitive feature.

Left-wing Marxists may interpret this film as a parable of autonomy, which must be tamed and channeled into domesticated, controllable forms of social behavior. This would, of course, benefit agents of the covert ruling class by enforcing their hegemony over the masses and keeping them ripe for economic exploitation. Right-wing adherents of “family values” may construct a meaning in which society is warned that a child without the love and acceptance of committed, monogamous parents will have street gangs decide that child’s future; after all, this OAV made its debut at the same time a political administration trucking with the Religious Right took control of the White House. A feminist interpretation may archly note that Lady has no role in the film save to fret helplessly, that her young bitches are bath-happy primpers, and that Angel willingly abandons her wolfette within to become a house pet. Kids see a colorful video brimming with cheerful (if forgettable) songs and *lots n’ lots of puppies!* Animation fans and purists see... oh, let’s don’t go there again.

Clear and Plain

Each of these viewpoints may hold some validity, but what has Disney truly wrought, and

why was it produced at this particular time? I have gone to some pains to present varied interpretations, but only to highlight the following point: The reason for this film's existence (and by extension the existence of sequels to come) is not tied to any particular idea or ideology, and an interpretive search reveals virtually nothing. *Lady and the Tramp II* is with us because We The People gave it our explicit permission to exist, because we have been conditioned to accept such artifacts, and because due to advances in entertainment technology we're able to exploit the above two reasons much more rapidly. Of course, to admit to any of this is extremely painful. Far better to rant than to admit our complicity in having these "abominations" descend upon us in countless clamshells. Better still to embrace the belief that we are hip, cynically detached audiences secure in our sense of what's cool. We will evade any snares set by entertainment moguls and their marketing drones, and so will our kids.

Who stampeded Disney when Timon and Pumbaa came to the small screen, or raised waves of protest over Ariel cavorting on cable?

"Just a minute!" you may scream, "I didn't give my permission!" No one individual did; our guilt is collective. How did we permit this OAV to exist? First, while

we may abhor the idea of Disney making sequels to their Golden or Silver Age films, we had little to say when the company released OAV follow-ups to their "Silicon Age" (*Little Mermaid* to present) films, or turned them into prequels via Disney TV. To be fair, Ms. Klein-Hass did vent her bile over *Hunchback of Notre Dame II*, and I have received e-mail from at least one fan who considers *Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas* the equal of the Manichean heresy. However, where was our outrage over *Simba's Pride*, *The Return of Jafar*, or *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World*? I didn't protest; neither did many others. Who stampeded Disney when Timon and Pumbaa came to the small screen, or raised waves of protest over Ariel cavorting on cable? Where was our muscle when Hercules alit on Earth for the first of his twenty-six weekly labors? If we did not boycott the sequels or refuse to watch the prequels, why then do we complain when Disney reaches into its past and gives us more of them?

This is, after all, nothing out of the ordinary. American cinema is notorious for cursing us with sequels each time audiences pour \$120 million into the tills for any particular film. The fact is, there have been perhaps five worthy sequels in the past twenty-five years, and nearly half of them comprise *The Godfather Trilogy*. Some unworthy films, in which disfigured maniacs shred their victims into teenfetti get multiple reprises... only to have films which parody them sequelized. The endless parade of IIs, IIIs, and often IVs, are now an accepted fact of life, and as long as we are willing to keep these corrupt bloodlines flowing with our dollars, then so

shall it remain. We are conditioned to accept sequels, even though they may be as wretched as *Batman and Robin* or *Exorcist II: The Heretic*. We would react with puzzlement if we did not get them. As reprehensible as a follow-up to *Pinocchio* may be, sequelization is one of the most successful economic strategies ever pursued by Hollywood. We are the people that pay to see these products, thus sealing our pact with the devil. Why should Disney expect an entire nation to change its predilections when said nation has already shelled out over \$160 million for *Hannibal*?

I joined the many who inherently told Disney: "Thank you sir, may I have another!"

The final factor making *Lady and the Tramp II* inevitable has to do with modern entertainment technology. Today's children do not wait five years for re-releases of Disney films; parents purchase the movies and plug them into VCRs and DVD players (or, if frugal, record them off the cable or the dish). Technology has sundered the line between classic animated features and their modern counterparts, and the generation that most welcomes Disney's blasphemies has no idea that *Lady and the Tramp* was made at a time when the concept of a DVD was straight out of Harlan Ellison. Kids will be able to watch *Cinderella* and its sequel back-to-back, five times running if they are so inclined. As long as Gus and

Jacques stay on-model, those kids will never even know the two films were made decades apart. This is their reality, and it is an indiscriminate one. If Jasmine — or Bambi — is in the movie, the video sequels and the TV show at the same time, it makes little difference. The big picture is one great blur of past and present, ink and CGI, paint and pixel, Tytla, Keane, Moore and Goldberg...and no child truly cares. Perhaps one could explain to their progeny that these videos are *doo-doo* and shouldn't be seen, but the chances of getting through are unlikely in the face of tantrums, marketing and the fact that their all friends have copies anyway.

I am Scamp

I have now watched *Lady and the Tramp II* three times. If nothing else, this video puts forth a monumental effort in presenting itself as an authentic *II*. The first scene is an elaborate musical number built around preparations for a Fourth of July celebration, and this device allows every major and incidental character from the first film

to pour out into the street while introducing the newly created characters at the same time. No one is omitted (including Si and Am), and there are several shots of the Darling home, painstakingly recreated down to the smallest gable. One can almost see the young animators squinting beneath wrinkled brows, or hear the drops of their sweat spattering on yellowed model sheets dredged up from the Disney archives. In watching this establishing scene, I was reminded of nothing more than a transplant team working feverishly to prevent their sinking patient from rejecting an experimental baboon heart.

That patient's life or death, however, depended on us. Judging from the sales of *Lady and the Tramp II*, we have voted for a full recovery. In doing so, we have given our benighted blessing to future experiments, and we have chosen to live with the consequences. Ms. Klein-Hass brings up the cogent point that Disney has the resources and talent to create entirely original OAV series. She's right, but we have already

demonstrated our willingness to invest in sequels and knock-offs, thus saving Disney quite a bit of time and trouble. If this is what the people truly want — if they do not protest the productions or vote with their wallets — then reserve your copy of *Snow White II* now. As for me, I am as guilty as anyone. I kept my mouth shut. I paid my \$16.95, and when I added *Lady and the Tramp II* to my collection I joined the many who inherently told Disney: "Thank you sir, may I have another!" I am Scamp. You are Scamp. God help us, we are all Scamp.

This column marks the completion of my second year with the fine folks at AWN; my thanks to them and to you, my esteemed readers. — Dr. Toon

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

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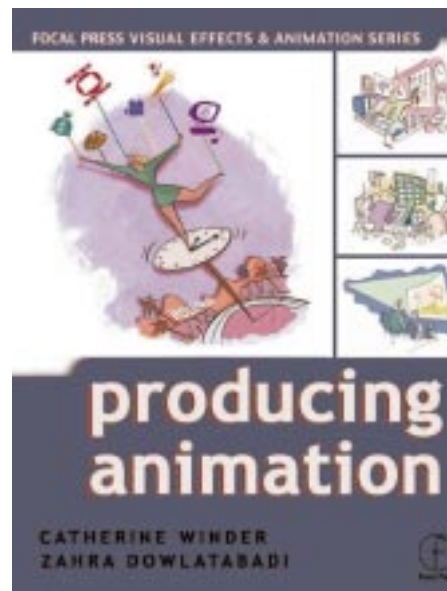


Producing Animation: Building the Budget

by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi

Once a preliminary schedule and crew plan are in place, the producer can begin the task of building the budget. There are two levels to a budget: detail and summary. The summary is usually no more than two pages long, while the detailed budget lists each and every line item and the specific costs associated with it. The summary groups the line items into major categories to illustrate simply where the money is allocated from a macro point of view. On the summary sheet for example, there is one line devoted to the "storyboard" category and next to it, there is a sum total of costs for this phase of production. The detail budget is further divided into storyboard supervisor, storyboard artist(s), storyboard clean-up artist(s), overtime, materials and supplies, and fringe benefits. Each item has its own separate dollar amount listed, with the sum total matching the number under "storyboard" in the summary budget.

Most budgets are divided into two sections: above and below the line. The above-the-line numbers are commonly those numbers based on contracts. Such numbers include rights payments, options, royalties and script fees. Also included are deals and payments to be made to producers, directors and writers as well as any other key talent associated with



You can purchase *Producing Animation* now.

the project (such as actors). These figures are considered the creative costs of the production. The below-the-line items are all other monies required to produce the project, such as the crew, equipment, subcontractors and so on. Such expenses are generally fixed in terms of what the production itself will cost in order to be completed. The distinction is made between the two categories because some of the above-the-line costs may be deferred. Above-the-line talent often participate in backend profits or have points. It also makes it easier for executives to review the budget and easily see the differences between the talent and actual production costs.

The producer also needs to establish what the fringe benefits or fringes will be for the project so

that they can assign these costs throughout the budgeting process. Fringes are those costs above and beyond the actual contracted or purchase price of an item. Standard items are guild and/or union pensions, health and welfare contributions, FICA, employer matching contributions, Medicare, unemployment taxes, etc. Fringe rates must be paid and range between 20 to 30 percent of labor costs depending on the studio. The percentage charged for each individual item varies depending on the location of the studio, benefits provided and whether it is union or non-union.

Chart of Accounts

One of the most important steps to selling any show is a producer's ability to create an accurate and realistic preliminary budget. We built the following chart of accounts (C of A) as a template for this purpose. This all-encompassing C of A can be utilized for 2D, 3D and hybrid productions. It lists all possible line items including personnel, equipment, etc., to be budgeted for and their respective account codes (e.g., 0200 Producer's Unit). Once in production, these account codes are utilized by the production accountant and crew to assign and track costs for each line item. Depending on the studio, there may already be a standard numbering system in place, in which case these codes will need to be adjusted accordingly. No matter how your project is produced, the purpose of having all items included in the C of A is to remind you of all potential costs to be incurred on your production. As with all templates, the producer should tailor the information to suit his or her particular production require-

ments. There are different ways to create a budget. For example, you can build your own spreadsheets using software such as Microsoft® Excel. However, the most commonly used budgeting system in the entertainment industry is called Movie Magic. It is an interactive software application that is specially designed for production accounting. This chart of accounts on the next page, named the "Animation Budget Builder," is available on Movie Magic budgeting software.

Here is a sampling of the type of response we have received in relation to the Animation Budget Builder:

You guys have made my day! Thank goodness for the animation add-on for Movie Magic!!!! I have called them a million times

asking why there was no such thing in Movie Magic! YOU'RE WONDERFUL!

Randi Yaffa
Executive Producer
Red Rover Studios Ltd.

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 Dowlatbadi.

Zahra Dowlatbadi, an award-winning producer, started her animation career in 1986. Since then, Dowlatbadi has worked in almost every major studio in Los Angeles along with many internationally acclaimed animation studios and talent. Dowlatbadi 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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Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

On the Condition Known as Aural Allochezia

by Chris Robinson

In general, music today is a piece of shit as r its anoiac listeners. The Top 40 has always been a stinking pile of fumosities, but there was a time when you could find The Kinks, The Who, Big Joe Turner and other semi-legitimate musicians. Today, it's a combination of blatantly manufactured boy/girl groups or a sad series of minstrels disguised as genuine reps of black urban experience. Bull cud, all of it.

Naturally (naturally because corporations have horizontal integration now — owning film studios, music labels, television stations), music in film, and specifically animation, reflects the cud quality of the Top 40. In fact, music has become the canned laughter of movies today. Movie music has always been pretty bad except when used properly as either diagetic material (part of the mise-en-scene) or as an integral component of the film that set a tone or mood without overdoing it (e.g. Warner Bros., UPA or John Hubley). Today, music is in a sense the motherboard of most movies. It doesn't just suggest a tone or mood; it pinpoints EXACTLY how you should be responding to a scene. Hey maybe U enjoy this. Not me. When I go to a movie I

would like to have the option of figuring it for myself. I don't need to be told when I should laugh, cry, hurt, shit and sigh. It's bad enough that I have to endure this canned laughter nonsense on television. "Umm...just in case you forget, we're hoping you'll laugh right about here." It drives me INSANE. Needless to say (but I will), the music produced in film is the sort of bad noise (there is GOOD noise) you're gonna be listening to in the 7th circle of hell alongside that toe-tapping Riverdance asshole.

But hey forget about me; think about yourselves. Movie music is the BIGGEST slap in YOUR mug. Soundtracks are not only telling you that you are stupid, but they are also controlling your reaction to their product. There's a long line of suckers who, moved to tears by a Stink song in *Emperor's New Groove*, rush out to the nearest mall and pick up the soundtrack in order to recreate that plastic feeling they thought they felt in the theatre.

On a strictly financial level, soundtracks are an ideal way to generate some extra mullah for a failed piece of cinematic cud, save some asshole's career (see Elton John, Stink and Phil Collins), and

get mom and pops into the mix. Timmy and Susie won't know Stink and the 2 fat guys, but eternal hipsters Mom and Dad will remember them when they were 'cool' (heh heh heh...right) and rush out to re-live their lost youth, which would never have been lost if they'd just avoided Disney films, organized religion and alcohol-inspired unprotected sex to begin with. You are what u eat I guess. This is perhaps THE 2nd major problem with animation soundtracks. They're trying to sell the music to the parents. Look at *The Iron Giant's* '50s soundtrack, *Shrek* (John Cale!) and those ultimate pseudo-hipsters, Klasky Csupo. Just because you get the B52s dickhead, Patti Smith and other uncool visions of what makes COOL, to sing in *The Rugrats* does not make it any better than Stink and the others. Anyway...if Patti Smith were COOL she'd never have agreed to it in the first place (btw, she was NEVER cool).

Targeting parents has probably done the most damage to the overall quality of music. I mean...while it ain't Robert Wilkins or Bud Powell, earlier Disney films (*Winnie the Pooh*, *Jungle Book*, *Aristocats*) had some catchy melodies that kids and adults grooved to. The closest any film's come recently is *Toy Story*. Yeah...there's some annoying mood music and that cow cud of a Jessie/Sarah McLaughlin interlude, but they got Randy Newman (who was and sometimes is cooler than Patti Smith) contributing a slightly not so terrible song, "You've Got a Friend in Me" (although why do I sense that one of those NAMBLA sickos uses this as a theme song?**), and *Riders in the Sky* do a decent ol' howdy doody stylin' for "Woody's Roundup."

And hey, bad scores are not just a 'commercial' problem. Let's take *The Old Man and The Sea* (sorry...I'm always picking on it), *Father and Daughter* and *The Night* (Regina Pessoa). The adaptation of *Old Man* is bad, but the music is even worse. *Father and Daughter* is a decent enough film, but when the old broad dies and runs to her father (becoming a young girl again in the process), the music reaches this icky crescendo that destroys the simplicity and authenticity of the rest of the film. The culprit in both cases is Normand Roger, but I doubt it's his fault. Dudok de Wit, like Petrov (or maybe Pascal Bland), lost confidence in his ability to convey emotions simply through his images (picture = 1000 words).

Another film that irked me was festival fave, *The Night*. A young girl is having trouble sleeping because of the shadows and sounds she imagines in the night. Pessoa creates a really creepy atmosphere and boosts it with the sounds of doors creaking and other house noises...but not feeling this is enough, we get a "UMM...I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU SHOULD BE SCARED RIGHT NOW" soundtrack. Pop...there goes the tire on this

baby. Another flat.

And hey...even my man, Priit Pärn suffers from the occasional lame soundtrack, but in his case it's not the use of the music, but the cheesy, synth sound.

Conversely, take a look at the films of Igor Kovalyov. Until *Flying Nansen*, he'd never used music in any of his films (and even in *Nansen* it's very brief)...and yet his films convey so much through movement...the movement of the characters, the camera and the editing.

In a strange sort of way, the commercial reasoning for damaging our aural senses is understandable: they're trying to sell CDs. While the kids are playing with their *Atlantis* toys and porking out on *Atlantis* happy meals... mom and dad can enjoy a nice little number from that ex-punk rocker Stink. But what's with Petrov, Dudok de Wit and Pessoa? They ain't selling soundtracks. Hell, being impoverished indie animators, they could have saved some bucks by avoiding music altogether.

Aside from the greed element, the OVERUSE of music shows how utterly unconfident the image-makers are. They're supposed to be visual-visionaries and yet NONE of these modern dip-

shits seem to understand the power of a silent image. Before they spend their money on music, maybe some of these ARTISTES should take a walk to the video store and pick up a Buster Keaton film or better yet, Carl Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc*. Watch. Learn. Listen.

*allochezia/a/ o KEE zee uh/n: Defecation from somewhere other than the anus. Also, defecation of something other than feces.

** just in case it's not clear I think that NAMBLA and anyone associated with it should be fustigated.

Hottie Animator of the Month

Perry Kiefer. The guy short-circuited. I didn't know him. It's too bad 'cause it seems like he was more than an 'unemployed transient.'

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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Sketching on Location: The Quick Sketch

by Glenn Vilppu

This is the eighth 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 as material in my regular drawing classes. As such the lessons can be part of a regular course or used by individual students as a practical learning guide. In the last chapter we worked on

"Drawing Groups of Figures." If you have not seen the previous lessons starting in the June 2000 issue of *Animation World 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*.

Everything we have done

so far can probably be called "quick sketches." In this chapter I am using the term to describe the capturing of an individual or group of figures as quick notations. In the classroom we might call it gesture drawing. When drawing in the field, the quick sketch is more than just capturing the gesture of an individual. There is usually something about what we are drawing that grabs our attention. This "hook" can be any number of things: the tender way



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

a mother is holding a child, a funny clown in the park, or the romantic couple at the table next to you. The late Isabel Bishop almost made a career out of drawing people walking. It is what catches your eye and interests you that counts.

Another Approach

As usual, there are no rules. What I am presenting in this chapter is another general procedural approach to drawing. The first step is to identify to yourself what the subject of the drawing is. By subject, I'm referring to that particular element that has caught your eye. The subject can be a particu-

lar pose or action, an interesting shape, or an expression.

The next step is to capture the totality of that element as broadly and as quickly as you can. In doing this, you must make your point as clear as possible. I have found that if I try to exaggerate what I see, I usually end up getting closer to reality. Following are a few examples of this first stage of the drawing.

Below you will see a variety of approaches for indicating the subject. Notice how loose and open the drawing in the upper left corner is. Compare it with the same subject to the right. These two drawings were done when

my wife and I were at the airport in Toronto, Canada, and she was doing a little last minute shopping. The one on the left is very general, but it still captures the basic attitude and shapes, plus a suggestion of the background. The second one goes a bit further by the development of the shapes of her raincoat, luggage and display case. Its evolution was determined by the length of time she was standing there. Both drawings captured the whole of what I wanted.

In the drawing in the lower left, the whole point of it was determined by the shape of the woman shopper. In the drawing of the standing man, the pose was what caught my eye. The interesting point of the group in the lower right corner was the grouping itself.

In all of these drawings you see very little detail. The general overall shapes of the forms tell the story. In the end, what makes the drawings interesting is the fact that they all have an individuality about them. What you see is a traveler shopping, a rather plump middle-aged woman; a man holding a cap over his heart, probably for the flag salute; and students sketching. You are less conscious of the method than the subject itself.

To take the drawing a little further, you can take two directions. First, you might want to bring out the subject more clearly and, second, clarify the form in space. Saying this more simply, first, capture the action. Next, develop the form.

By developing the form, you essentially make it feel roundish or three dimensional. Look at the drawing on the next page and its reproduction to see





where I have diagrammed how I used the simple idea of the cylinder to draw the lines going around the arms and waist. Notice the head where the lines of the glasses work in the same way as the lines on the side of a box, which create the illusion of three dimensions and the feeling of going back in space.



Now notice how I have selectively developed the detail in the drawing on the right. The legs and most of the body are very simply indicated, while the head and the large bag over her shoulder attract our attention. In the draw-

ing below of the clown twisting balloons, the hands are only barely indicated; it is the expressive shape and overall liveliness of the drawing that attracts us.



In the drawing below, look at how the lines going around the cylinder of the neck give it volume. You should try to feel the lines wrapping around the form. Try to follow through and make the lines go over the edges of the contours, as if you can see around the corners.



A Different Take

Another helpful idea, which has often been called the "T" principle, is to create unambiguous lines that make obvious junctions so that we see them as belonging to separate forms and avoiding tangent lines.

In the drawing below, look at how this "T" principle was used. First, in the visor part of the cap, you see a clear overlapping of the two sides. As the ponytail comes out of the hat in back, I have used the same approach as I did in the above drawing of the neck. The lines go around the hair clearly defining it as a cylinder, and also create clear "T" connections as they go behind.

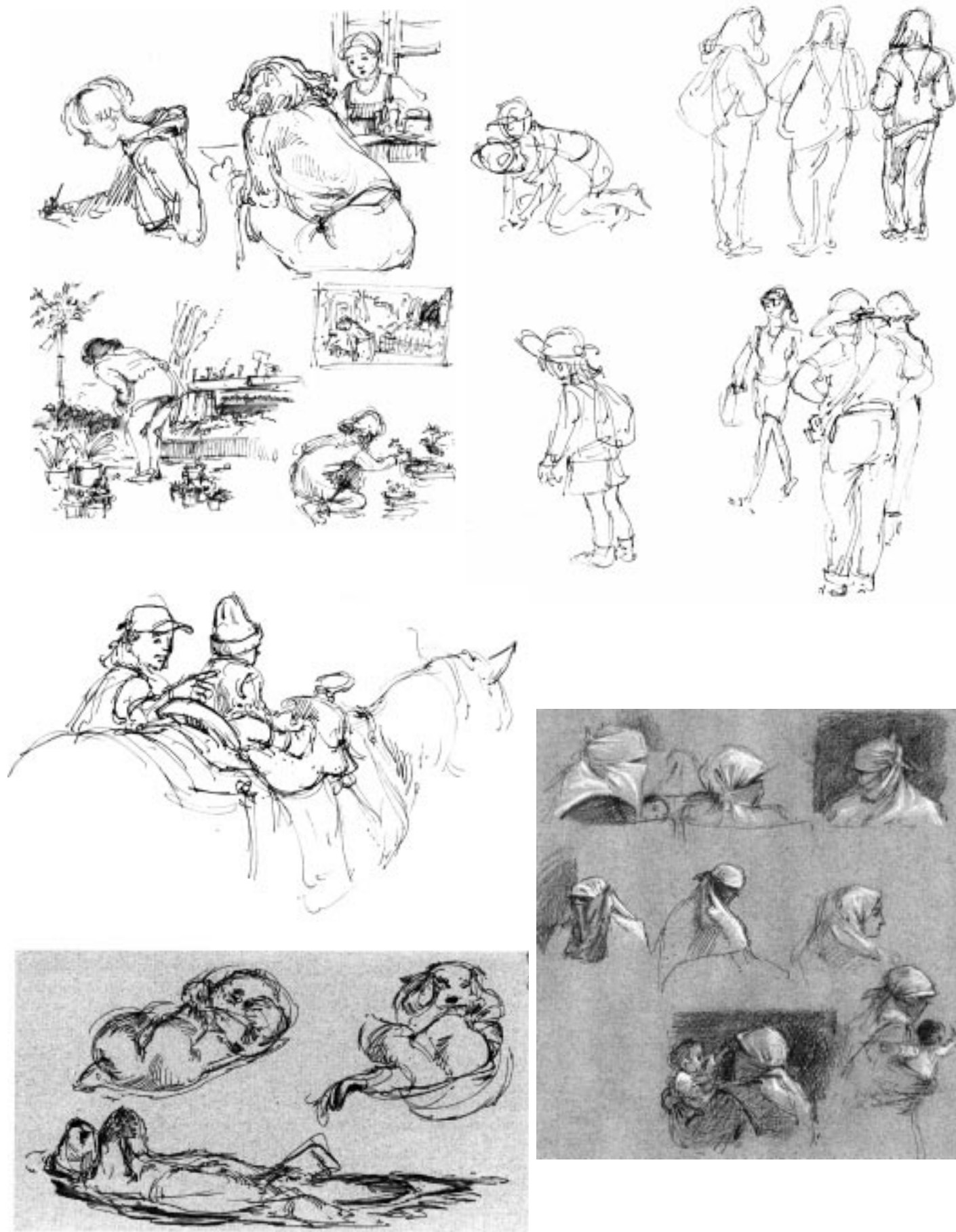


In drawing the shoulder area, the combination of seam, shoulder strap and folds going under the arm all work together to bring a feeling of roundness to the form.

Clear examples of the "T" and "wrapping" idea are indicated where the jacket goes around the leg and where the pack and leg come together forming angles.

Look at the drawings and diagrams throughout the following pages in the context of what we have discussed. Most of these drawings are shown at actual size.

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.





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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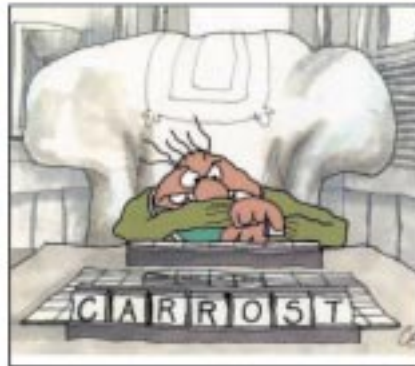
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The Jobs In A Visual Effects House — Defined

Part Two of Three: Texturing and Animation

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

There are two major conferences for animation happening this month: The World Animation Celebration (August 7-12) in Hollywood and SIGGRAPH (August 12-17) at the Los Angeles Convention Center. Both of these will be attended by visual effects companies looking for employees. You may want a job at one of these companies, but you have no idea what the jobs are.

This series of three articles describes the specific sequence of steps in any visual effects shot using computer graphics — modeling, skeleton/bones/set-up, texturing, animation, lighting and compositing/rendering. You will also learn what skills are required. If you are skilled or talented in three or more of these areas you may want to consider a job with a smaller company that uses generalists. You'll have an opportunity to do many different jobs. If you are a specialist, you'll probably be happier at a larger company where you will do one specific job and develop a specific skill set that you do well.

Last month, we talked about modeling and skeleton/bones/set-up. This month you will learn about texturing and ani-



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

mation, and what the studio wants to see in a portfolio and demo reel for these jobs. Next month, we'll discuss lighting and compositing/rendering.

Texturing

Texture painters play a crucial role in the creative process between concept and the final rendered image by helping to define the surface qualities of an object, including colors and textures of the characters, props and environments. Some studios may call this a render artist or a look development artist.

Texture painters create the look of more complex CG elements such as principle characters.

This could include painting texture maps (e.g., color maps, specular maps, displacement maps, etc.), working with TDs to enhance the look and creating lighting setups. This artist typically has previous production experience or has demonstrated exceptional skills/abilities in CGI/traditional artwork.

Skill set: Have a strong art background and expertise with digital paint programs such as Photoshop and experience with 3D paint applications. Understand CG lighting (ambient, specular, diffuse, bump, etc.). Some studios prefer familiarity with UNIX as well.

Portfolio Tips: Use good textures that are appropriate for the model. Show that you can create your own textures and have good judgment on how to use them. Your textures should add detail that otherwise would have to be modeled.

Animation

Animation is the creation of the illusion of motion. By displaying sequential images one after another in rapid succession, items drawn or recorded on the images appear to move. Character animation is animation in which objects or characters are animated to give the illusion of personality, life and character. Character animators use the computer to bring digital characters to life.

Computer character animators may have a background in traditional (hand-drawn) or stop-motion animation in addition to training in computer animation. The sensibilities and mindset of a good animator should transfer between mediums. Character animators are concerned with performance.

Skill set: Demonstrate a strong background in traditional

animation and traditional character development. Character animators need to have story telling ability and acting ability. An art background in life drawing, painting or sculpting is also helpful. Training should cover anatomy, perspective and composition, including solving problems in weight, balance, movement, space, construction and proportion. Artistic sensibility in the areas of modeling, lighting and rendering is a plus. A knowledge of inverse kinematics systems, constraints and expressions is a plus, as is character animation experience with demonstrated abilities in facial animation and lip synching.

Demo Reel Tips: A video reel of animated scenes, which demonstrate digital acting and performance, is required. The reel should convey nuances of emotion and personality, show weight, balance and timing. It should include basic motions like lifting, sawing, pulling, pushing and interacting with scene elements as opposed to simply running, jumping, or walking. Work should demonstrate ability to define character personality, create fluid motion, organic movement and storytelling.

Effects animators animate the non-character aspects of the shot including vehicles, natural effects like water, dust, tornadoes, hurricanes and any other effects like lasers, explosions or bullets. Effects animators add the forces of nature to an animated film, as well as animate props, furniture, or other objects.

Skill set: Demonstrate expertise in the realistic creation of wind, rain, sunlight, mist, fog, shadows and fire, which aid in producing a believable world and setting the mood for the story. In addition to having a passion for the elements of nature, requirements for artists interested in this area of animation match those for a character animation artist.

Demo Reel Tips: A video reel showing a variety of effects is required. Show proficiency in modeling, lighting, particle systems, rendering and texturing.

Many American studios have the same basic requirements for submission: a reel in VHS NTSC format, a resume, a cover letter specifying your area of interest, samples of traditional work and a demo reel breakdown. The demo reel breakdown identifying your responsibility on each sequence

and shot and software used (if applicable) must be included.

Demo Reel Breakdown
Example: Shot 1: Laser fight — animated the laser beams using Softimage; modeled the alien using Maya; created the textures on the alien using Photoshop. If you did everything on your reel, say so.

If you submit your materials to companies at SIGGRAPH or WAC, it may be a few months before your work is reviewed, as companies get swamped with submissions during this time. Please be patient and keep working at improving your skills.

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a career coach/mentor for hire/recruiter and management consultant. She produced the world-famous Career Boot Camp for computer animation and is a frequent speaker at trade shows, seminars and colleges. She can be contacted at PamRecruit@aol.com.

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Tough Eye:

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INTERNATIONAL TURKU ANIMATED FILM FESTIVAL

by Fran Krause



Circus Mundus Abusurdus performed during the "Endless Night of Animation," offering festival-goers a decidedly non-corporate experience.
All images courtesy of and © Tough Eye.

It's always nice to go to a festival and see signs of it before you get there. There were funny "Tough Eye" posters all over town. The newspapers were running a bunch of articles too. There was even a bit about it in the "Fun Things To Do" guide in my hotel room. The Tough Eye staff did a great job of getting the word out.

Turku is a good, unique place to have a festival. It was, however, strange to be heading off to a festival party at eleven in the evening with the sun still out, then getting back to the hotel to take a nap before the sun came up at three in the morning. You might want to bring a sleeping mask. The festival center was in an old converted school that had great food, nice places to sit around and chat, and e-mail access. The theaters were all pretty close to the hotel, and it was always nice to take a walk along the water. Being an American who could only speak English never seemed to be a problem, though I did have to explain the whole "President Bush" thing a few times.

The corporate presence at the festival was very small. There weren't any areas set aside for booths. No tables selling animation equipment and computer stuff. It was nice. The biggest presence felt at the festival was the Turku Polytechnic school, where most of the festival workers, and films, were from. It made the young festival feel even younger.

As for the screenings, I tried to see all I could. There were a few programs that were great just because I felt like I couldn't see them anywhere else. There were two programs of new Finnish animation, and a program of films from the aforementioned Turku Polytechnic. It was great to see



The Estonians celebrated "Fifty Years of Estonian Animation" by throwing a party with great food and drink for all!

what all the festival volunteers were up to! The programs of Finnish Kid's Stuff were difficult at times for folks who can't understand Finnish, but the unfamiliar graphics made up for it. Also included with one of the Kid's Stuff screenings were films that had been produced by area kids as part of a festival sponsored workshop.

Of course, there were also a whole bunch of Estonians. They live right across the water. There was a retrospective of Estonian Animation, which included the first Estonian animation and the latest (Ulo Pikkov's *Headless Horseman*, was my favorite of the festival).

Also there were programs organized by representatives from other festivals: Ottawa, Anima Mundi, Fantoche and Brisbane, each with a theme. The folks at Brisbane put together a program all about the use of dogs in cartoons, with everything from Tex Avery to Robert Breer. Fiery Mr. Robinson, from the Ottawa International Animation Festival, put together a program about the depiction of hell and hellish settings through various animators'

interpretations. Lea Zagury, from Anima Mundi, put together "Love and Lust" — a series of feisty Brazilian animations. The folks from Fantoche put together a program that was simply a slice of the films shown at Fantoche.



Michael Helmerhorst and Franz Winzentsen at their press conference.

The most inspiring screening I went to, however, was a retrospective of Franz Winzentsen's work. I had never heard of his work before the festival and, after seeing the screening, I have no idea why. It was a great screening and worth the trip to Finland. The films were all very simply made. *Dust* was just black and white sand on photos, moving through landscapes. Most of the films were series of short films put together in diary form, like a short documentary on rabbits that had learned a form of semaphore, or an animated study of a cactus, distorting

and twisting itself. There was also an exhibit of Winzentsen's cels, production work and sculpture put together by the festival.

One thing that confused me greatly was the "Timeless Competition." For one thing, there was no time limit on what films could be entered. So when I was looking through the catalog, I saw two of the films in competition against my film were ones that I'd seen in my Animation I class. The competition ranged from recent animations clear back to the early Sixties! On the other hand it was nice to see a selection of films in competition that was so varied. After a year of travelling with a film, I felt like I'd seen the same group of films pop up over and over again. Allowing films from all years to compete broke that up somewhat. And it's always great to see *Revolver* on 35 mm.

So I'm hoping I get to attend Tough Eye again. It will be interesting to see what happens with the submissions to the "Timeless Competition" — whether they get older or newer. Also I'm curious to see what sort of image the festival will develop for itself. I'm glad I could be at the first.





The audience during Tough Eye 2001's opening ceremony.



Mette Peters and Stanislav Ulver enjoy the festival's official opening party, held in Turku's City Hall.



Frank Mouris at the opening party – little did he know that by week's end he'd be a prize winner.



Chris Robinson, Ottawa Festival's creative director and AWN columnist, hams it up.



The winners of the Timeless Competition 2001: The Brothers Quay separated by Igor Kovalyov.



Special Jury Prize winner Jerzy Kucia with the Quays and Igor Kovalyov.



Members of the Jury: Jayne Pilling, Stanislav Ulver, Edwin Carels and Mette Peters. On the left is Tauno Gabriel.



Circus Mundus Absurdus' Antti Kervinen performed during the "Endless Night of Animation."



Every evening Tough Eye hosted a festival club. Here is a shot of "Animation by Puppet Theatre."

Who were the winners at Tough Eye? Read "Kovalyov and the Quay Bros. Win At Tough Eye Festival" in AWN's Headline News for all the information.

Fran Krause - billionaire gentleman or dime-store hood? Growing up in a home half in Yorkville and half in Utica, New York, Fran grew to embody a mix of both places. After attending the Rhode Island School of Design, his graduation film, Mister Smile, drew the attention of the Cartoon Network. Now done with his first pilot for the network, Utica Cartoon, Fran has devoted his time to creating a Website (www.uticacartoon.com) and writing short autobiographies. Utica Cartoon will be shown several times this week-end on Cartoon Network's "Big Pick" August 17-25, 2001.

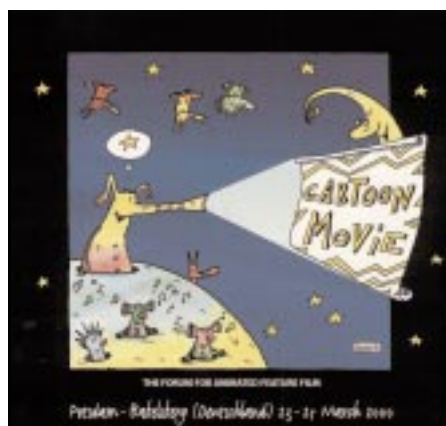
Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.

Cartoon Movie's New Visitors: U.S. Distributors

by Ron Diamond

The third edition of Cartoon Movie, held in Potsdam-Babelsberg, Germany from Thursday, March 15 - Saturday, March 17, 2001, embraced a new presence. This year's newly welcomed guests? U.S. distributors. Surprised? A joint effort between AWN and Cartoon Forum, a delegation consisting of five representatives from leading American distribution companies were invited. In an effort to bring even more opportunity to its members at the already successful Cartoon Movie, this first ever U.S. delegation was invited to learn from and participate in the three days of intensive sessions, presentations and meetings.

The delegation included:



Artisan Entertainment representatives, Lori Nahama, Director of Family Home Entertainment Development & Acquisitions, and Todd Schwartz, Manager of Acquisitions & Production; DreamWorks SKG's Fritz Meier; Twentieth Century Fox Feature Animation's Vice President of

Production, Catherine Winder; Universal Pictures' President of Visual Programming, Hugh Rees-Parnall; and myself, delegation organizer and leader, Animation World Network President and Co-Founder Ron Diamond.

The intent behind inviting a U.S. delegation was to introduce Americans to Cartoon's unique sales marketplace, in hopes of facilitating the sale of European features to the U.S. mainstream theatrical market. The delegation attended most of the sessions and despite the lack of immediate commitments, valuable contacts were made and many European producers went away with strong U.S. contacts.



The bustle of Cartoon Forum.
Photo courtesy of and © Cartoon, the European Association of Animation Film.



The coalition and friends. Right side of table (front to back): Catherine Winder, Todd Schwartz, Marie Beardmore, Hugh Rees-Parnall and the BBC's Colin Rose. Left side of table (front to back): Ron Diamond, Fritz Meier and Lori Nahama

The six person delegation was interviewed privately by the Cartoon organizers about their candid impressions. The collective opinion was that the event was extremely well organized and that it was the best of its kind. This is due primarily to the positive nature of the presentation sessions, the excellent moderators and preparedness of the producers. What kept these distributors from signing on the bottom line was the level of productions presented did not compete with the sophistication of the American marketplace. This is not to say the stories or the production values were less than



Fritz Meier, Catherine Winder and Ron Diamond. © AWN, Inc.

marketable, but it was discussed that the majors' approach to the theatrical release of animated feature films in the U.S. was only open to anticipated blockbuster successes. The leading U.S. distribution companies were not interested in releasing movies that had a maximum potential of earning only 25 to 50 million U.S. dollars.

Recognizing that the works presented at Cartoon Movie could indeed earn as much as 50 million dollars in the U.S. theatrical marketplace, the Cartoon organizers determined that it would be worthwhile to pursue another delegation for next year's Cartoon Movie. However, this time they will focus on U.S. distributors who want to release theatrical features in art film cinemas. Cartoon Movie producers need not write off mainstream American distributors right away though due to the need for potential Oscar nominees.



As a newcomer to the world of European animation what most impressed me was the

quality and variety of the films presented. The organizers of Cartoon Movie did an outstanding job of presenting a wide array of films that fit the varying needs of the distributors. The films themselves were a joy to watch and represented the high quality of European animation. I found that the open atmosphere of Cartoon Movie helped foster work that is expressive, bold and innovative. This supportive environment provided an incredible opportunity for productions to find the right distributor for their product. It was a wonderful experience to meet with so many different people from so many countries all sharing their love and enthusiasm for animation.

*Fritz Meier
DreamWorks Animation Development*



Cartoon Movie was a well-organized, truly impressive event. The basic underlying philosophy behind the conference was that of collaboration. Cartoon Movie pro-

vides an opportunity for producers to pitch projects and spend time together with distributors and financiers in a casual yet professional atmosphere. By getting these various parties together, it is inevitable that strategic relationships, critical to getting a project off the ground, will be forged. This approach has been instrumental in building the animated television business in Europe and I believe that it will, over time, have the same positive affect on their movie industry.

Personally, Cartoon Movie was a beneficial experience in that it provided me with a clear overview of the European animation industry. It also gave me insights into how the development and story process works in Europe in comparison to that in North America. I believe these insights will be beneficial in doing business together in the future. Finally and most importantly, I got to meet many talented individuals with whom I have begun to build, what I hope to be long-term relations.

*Catherine Winder
Vice President Production,
Fox Feature Animation*

Ron Diamond is the co-founder and co-publisher of Animation World Network. He also serves as executive producer and founder of Los Angeles-based Acme Filmworks, an animation commercial production company.

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Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

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



Harlock Saga. © 1999 Leiji Matsumoto-Shinchosa/ Bandai Visual / 81 Produce.

Harlock Saga.

OAV series, 1999. Director: Yoshio Takeuchi. 180 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.99. Distributor: U.S. Manga Corps/Central Park Media. (This is a combination of the earlier video edition in two volumes; **Harlock Saga, v.1, Clash of the Space**

Pirates and v.2, Wrath of the Gods. Dubbed only, 90 minutes and \$19.99 each.)

One of the seminal influences in anime was cartoonist Leiji Matsumoto, who virtually created the interstellar sci-fi action/adventure genre in the 1970s. *Space Battleship Yamato* (1974) spun off numerous TV and theatrical sequels, which overlapped several other Matsumoto deep-space creations, notably *Space Pirate Captain Harlock* and *Galaxy Express 999*. *Captain Harlock*, starring a charismatic “good guy” space pirate who is actually fighting to save Earth from a corrupt planetary government and tyrannical space invaders, originally appeared as a 42-episode TV serial from March 14, 1978 through February 13, 1979. This was followed by several TV and theatrical sequels in the 1980s (plus guest appearances of Harlock in the *Galaxy Express 999* series), tapering off to a few direct-to-video titles during the 1990s. Bootleg *Harlock* videos were a major influence in the early days of American anime fandom.

Harlock Saga, a six-episode OAV series released bimonthly from January through November 1999, sounded in its full Japanese title like an attempt at serious culture: *Harlock Saga: Der Ring des Nibelungen - Das Rheingold*. Yes, a transformation of Wagner's *Ring Cycle* into an interstellar saga for the fate of the universe. This sort of thing has worked well with sci-fi novels (there have been numer-

ous reworkings of *The Odyssey* or *The Argonautica* as a heroic space explorer's discovery of exotic new planets), but a visual production like *Harlock Saga* suffers badly. If the 81 Produce production group (the animation studios credited are Studio March and Sono Sun Planning) thought that basing the story on operas would justify limiting the animation to only three or four characters in any scene, they were wrong. A mighty space dreadnought with a crew of just three or four, or planets with populations of less than a half-dozen each, are simply not convincing. Audiences of operas can accept characters who die while singing melodramatically when their parts are finished. In a “serious” adventure drama, having each planet self-destruct in a spectacular cataclysm just as the hero and his crew blast off for the next world is less convincing, and quickly becomes monotonous as well. The music is rich (performed by the Moscow International Symphonic Orchestra), and is mostly re-scored from Wagner's original to work effectively with each scene (the “Ride of the Valkyries” does not need any re-scoring to make great music for the space battles), but it sounds unoriginal. Finally, *Harlock Saga* is one of those productions designed for an audience that is already familiar with the cast and background story. American viewers will be more familiar with the supporting characters from the Teutonic operas than with such strangers as Harlock (standing in for Siegfried, roughly speaking), Tochio, Emeraldas, Meeme & Daiba who have the major roles here.

Space Pirate Alberich, leader of the Nibelung people from the planet Nibelheim [sic],



The four volumes of *Angel Links*. © Morning Star o Sunrise.

steals the gold from the planet Rhein because its unique molecular structure makes it the most powerful weapon in the universe. Alberich plans to use it to overthrow Wotan, leader of the Immortals of the planet Valhalla who is having an invincible space fortress built for him by Fasolt & Fafnir, two giant engineers from the planet Risenheim. Harlock and his loyal crew realize that the conflict between Alberich's Nibelung space armada and Wotan's Death Star is likely to result in the destruction of all humanity. Their duty is to steal the gold back from Alberich and return it to Rhein. Lots of minimally-animated *Sturm und Drang* result.

Angel Links. V.1, Avenging Angel. V.2, Fallen Angel. V.3, Broken Angel. V.4, Eternal Angel.

TV series, 1999. Director: Yoshikazu Yamaguchi. DVD (bilingual), v.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes; v.2 - v.4, 3 episodes/75 minutes each. Price & format: DVD (bilingual), \$29.98 each. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

If you liked *Outlaw Star*, will you like *Angel Links: The Stellar Angels*? Bandai (sponsor) and the Sunrise animation studio followed up the former (their popular 1998

TV 26-episode space opera adventure serial) with the latter, a prime-time (Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.) 13-episode series from April 7 through June 30, 1999. *Angel Links* is "set in the universe of *Outlaw Star*." It is not a sequel but it shares the same colorful background (postulating a space colonization led by China rather than the West) and costume and architectural designs. Some of the minor characters from *Outlaw Star* appear briefly in walk-on roles.

There is one big difference. *Outlaw Star* is a typical boys' adventure serial. *Angel Links* takes the same elements and turns them into a girls' romance adventure, with (hopefully) enough elements to also hold an adolescent male audience. In America, boys don't mind a Wonder Woman-type protagonist as long as she is easy on the eyes but acts like a typical male action-hero. A space adventure with a woman's romance plot — that hasn't really been tried in America yet.

Angel Links begins like a preadolescent girl's wish-fulfillment fantasy of teenhood. Li Meifon is 16 years old; beautiful, wealthy and with a figure to make Lara Croft look flat-chested. She is commander of *Angel Links*, an anti-pirate security force that provides

protection to space merchant ships; in other words, she has a socially acceptable reason to spend all her time patrolling her Oracion star system in her super-dreadnaught battlecruiser, blasting bad guys. She was handed this when her fabulously wealthy business-mogul grandfather died and set up *Angel Links* in his will for Meifon to command. She picks a crew weighted toward athletic, independent young women like herself, commanded by her brisk Tactical Officer Valeria Vertone. The only males in her inner circle are Duuz, a reptilian Dragonite warrior (the obligatory colorful alien sidekick), and Kosei Hida, a young man written into her grandfather's will as her guardian. (Meifon uses him as her major-domo.) In the first episode, Meifon saves the life of Leon Lau, a handsome young patron of an orphanage, thereby both proving her mettle and acquiring a potential ideal boyfriend.

The emphasis of the first few episodes is on Meifon's inexperience and Kosei's efforts to make her take her leadership responsibilities more seriously. The plot turns darker as hints emerge that Meifon's grandfather had guilty motives in setting up *Angel Links*, and that Leon Lau is not

really the benevolent philanthropist that he poses as. The audience's point-of-view gradually swings from Meifon to Kosei, who becomes aware that Meifon has her own secrets linked to a grave that mysteriously appeared next to her grandfather's, with her name and next year's date on it. Meifon becomes simultaneously an action-adventure heroine and a damsel needing to be rescued by her true friends among her crew. Much of *Angel Links* is straight-faced exaggerated romantic melodrama (notably Episode #5's replay of *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragic romance between a space pirate's daughter and a handsome space patrolman) aimed primarily at adolescent women, but there are enough space battles and futuristic secret agent-type skullduggery to appeal to teen boys as well.



Assemble Insert. © 2001 Masami Yuuki/Tohokushinsha Film Corporation.

Assemble Insert.

OAV series, 1989-1990. Director: Ayumi Chibuki. 60 minutes. Price & format: DVD \$24.95 bilingual; video \$19.98 dubbed. Distributor: The Right Stuf International.

1989 was a good year for cartoonist Masami Yuuki. Two of his popular comic book series about powered armor suits ("giant

robots") used to commit crime in Tokyo were adapted for direct to video animated series. One, *Patlabor*, a drama (but with lots of human-interest humor), became a major hit. The other, *Assemble Insert*, was a screwball comedy. It only lasted for two half-hour OAVs (released in December 1989 and February 1990, animated by Studio Coa — or maybe Koa or Core; as long as you pronounce it "ko-a," they're happy), but it was never intended as more than a light diversion.

Tokyo is in the throes of a crime wave. Demon Seed, a diabolical gang dressed in business suits with Ku Klux Klan headdresses, under the leadership of Dr. Demon ("I am a very traditional mad scientist!"), is robbing banks and smashing up police cars with their mighty powered armor suits. They are opposed by the Counter-Demon Seed Special Operations Agents, a squad whose Chief Hattori is glumly aware that he has been given the oddballs and losers from throughout the Japanese police force. He decides that what they need is a superhero, so he stages a Hollywood-type talent contest to pick one. They end up with 15-year-old Maron Namikaze, a shy high school student whose mother pushed her into it. Since Special Operations is so poorly funded that they cannot even afford air conditioning in their sweltering office, Hattori decides to develop Maron simultaneously as a superhero (with an invulnerable costume developed by Dr. Shimokobe, an obsessed comic-book fan) and as a teen pop singing star. Maron's first encounter with Demon Seed is so devastating to them that they disappear into hiding. With no crime left to fight, Special Operations

concentrates on turning Maron into an Idol Singer. This displeases Dr. Shimokobe, who wants to see lots of classic battles between superheroes and supervillains; so he invents even better giant robots and gives them to Demon Seed so they can return to crime. (Shimokobe dumps the robot suits at their *Addams Family*-esque haunted house headquarters while wearing a Santa Claus suit. "But it's Summer...") Well, you get the idea.

Assemble Insert was a hit at American anime fan meetings in the early 1990s as a hilarious bootleg video. Screenings were usually interrupted every couple of minutes so fans in the know could explain the in-group jokes to the rest of the audience. It is reasonable that the American commercial video release does not keep stopping to explain these jokes, but here is where the DVD could have really taken advantage of its "extras" capabilities to annotate the story. Alas, this American release does not even translate the title song lyrics (which include Maron's apology for forgetting her lines). Enough of the humor will be understood by anime fans to keep them laughing, notably the visual references to *Gigantor*, *Atragon* and other Japanese sci-fi hits, the lampoon of show-biz pressure to create and merchandise new teen Idol Singer sensations, and comparisons of Yuuki's character designs here with those in his *Patlabor*. But without an explanation, who will know that chain-smoking Chief Hattori is a caricature of the editor of the comic book that published *Assemble Insert*, and his buffoonish cops are caricatures of Yuuki himself and his cartoonist pals (including now-famous anime

director Shoji Kawamori)? Or that the two girls who appear in a brief live-action parody of a really low-budget TV commercial are the real voice actresses of Maron and her Idol Singer rival? Licensed anime releases are supposed to replace old bootleg fan videos, but this release of *Assemble Insert* may create a market for the notes from the early '90s fannish translations.

Hermes: Winds of Love.

Theatrical feature, 1997. Director: Tetzuo Imazawa. 117 minutes. Format: Japanese with English subtitles. Price & distributor: VHS \$29.95, Vanguard Cinema. DVD \$24.99, Image Entertainment.

Movies based on ancient tales of the gods like Disney's *Hercules* are usually considered as mythology, distinct from such as DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt*, which is based on a living religion's true history. *Hermes* is superficially like any other movie version of a Greek heroic legend, but it was commissioned by the Institute for Research in Human Happiness (Kofuku no Kagaku), a modern Japanese evangelical church which considers itself the direct successor through reincarnation to the events in Greek mythology. The result is a grand spectacle like DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*; good entertainment whether you are a believer or not.

The IRH put up a \$14 million budget for a high-quality feature from Toei Animation, directed by Tetzuo Imazawa (*Transformers* and *Digimon Adventures*) and blending cartoon and CGI imagery. The ancient world is shown as improbably clean and pretty, but the costuming and architecture are true to what is known about Greek and Cretan styles. Released in April 1997,

Hermes became Japan's highest-grossing animated theatrical feature; until the release of Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke* three months later.



Hermes: Winds of Love. © 2001 Vanguard Cinema. All Rights Reserved.

The story is basically that of Theseus and the Minotaur. In 2300 B.C., the individual kingdoms of the Eastern Mediterranean have been reduced to vassalage by despotic King Minos of Crete. In Sitia, an island-kingdom too tiny for Minos to bother with, a prince is born who is destined to lead the Greek people to freedom. Twenty-six years after this prologue, Prince Hermes begins his career as a hero by rescuing beautiful Princess Aphrodite of Delos, who has grown up as a hostage of King Kaipeia of Lindos. Minos has wanted Aphrodite as a sacrifice to the Minotaur, so Hermes' rash act forces Sitia into a confrontation with mighty Crete. Hermes realizes his only chance is to rally Crete's conquered kingdoms into revolt. Theseus, son of the King of Athens, becomes

Hermes' loyal aide-de-camp. It is while General Hermes is leading the army of rebellion against Minos and his warriors that Theseus enters the Labyrinth beneath Minos' palace, and the famous slaying of the Minotaur takes place.

These two dramatic adventures occupy the first hour of the movie. Hermes is now king of Crete by conquest, and concerned with restructuring the kingdom for the benefit of the people. Ophealis, the God of Creation, appears and enlightens him with the teaching of the gods. This includes a tour of Heaven, full of ethereal beauty with enough fantasy such as soaring winged horses and mermaids to entertain children in the audience, while adults are given generic advice to "Do good," and "Be kind to others," if you want to live there in your afterlife. Drama reappears when the dead Minos in Hell, who has fought his way up to become a major demon, leads an attack of the damned against Heaven. Hermes must once again battle his old enemy who is now a huge bull-monster. The movie ends with Hermes' return to his earthly life, ready to become a wise philosopher-king of ancient Greece. If you liked Harryhausen's *Clash of the Titans*, you should enjoy *Hermes: Winds of Love*.

Image's DVD release does not offer an English-language dub, but its extras include a short completely-animated outtake scene that fans will want, plus two theatrical trailers.

Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water. V.1, The Adventure Begins. V.2, The Dark Kingdom. V.3, Aboard the Nautilus. V.4, Battleground.



Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water. © 1989 NHK / SOGO VISION / TOHO.

V.5, Nemo's Fortress. V.6, The Deep Blue Sea. V.7, Nadia's Island. V.8, The Secret Cave. V.9, Nadia in Love. V.10, The Prophecy Fulfilled.

TV series, 1990 - 1991. Director: Hideaki Anno. v.1 - v.9, 4 episodes/100 minutes. v.10, 3 episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: \$19.98 dubbed video; \$29.98 bilingual DVD. Distributor: A.D. Vision Films.

Long before Disney ever thought of *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*, Japan's feisty new Studio Gainax was approached by Toho Studios in the late 1980s to produce a juvenile TV series conceived of but abandoned by Hayao Miyazaki a decade earlier, basically combining Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. (Miyazaki evolved his own ideas into his 1986 *Laputa: The Castle in the Sky*.) Gainax (co-animating with the Group Tac studio) turned the outline into a dramatic thriller

in which the trip around the world was replaced with a quest for Atlantis. Two orphaned 14-year-olds meet at the 1889 Paris Exposition; Jean, a French amateur inventor and techno-nerd, and Nadia, a circus acrobat of unknown racial heritage with a "blue water" crystal pendant necklace. Jean rescues Nadia from three semi-comical thieves after the crystal and a chase starts, which leads them to the *Nautilus* and Captain Nemo, and to a much deadlier enemy who knows the secret of Nadia and her crystal and needs both to seize the power of lost Atlantis for world conquest.

Nadia became a prime-time (Fridays, 7:30 p.m.) 39-episode TV series (April 13, 1990 - March 29, 1991) for NHK, Japan's equivalent of the BBC; followed by a theatrical feature sequel, *Nadia: The Secret of Fuzzy*. It topped Japanese anime fan polls while it was running and for several years

after. Many of the production staff (notably director Anno, character designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto and composer Shiro Sagisu) went on to anime-industry stardom, especially on Gainax's 1995 TV series *Evangelion*. As with many anime serials, a large and charismatic supporting cast was built up, including Captain Nemo and his brisk blonde first mate, Electra. (*Nadia* was a pioneer in presenting attractive women in efficient leadership roles rather than as just assistants to a male hero or as eye-candy heroines.) Also typical was the light-hearted beginning that turns unexpectedly grim. People die. Nadia and Jean are both traumatized by their discoveries; Nadia of her heritage as the Princess of Atlantis and what happened to her family, and Jean because his idealized scientific progress can threaten the world with destruction. The two pals are further shaken by their feelings toward each other as pre-adolescence turns

into adolescence.

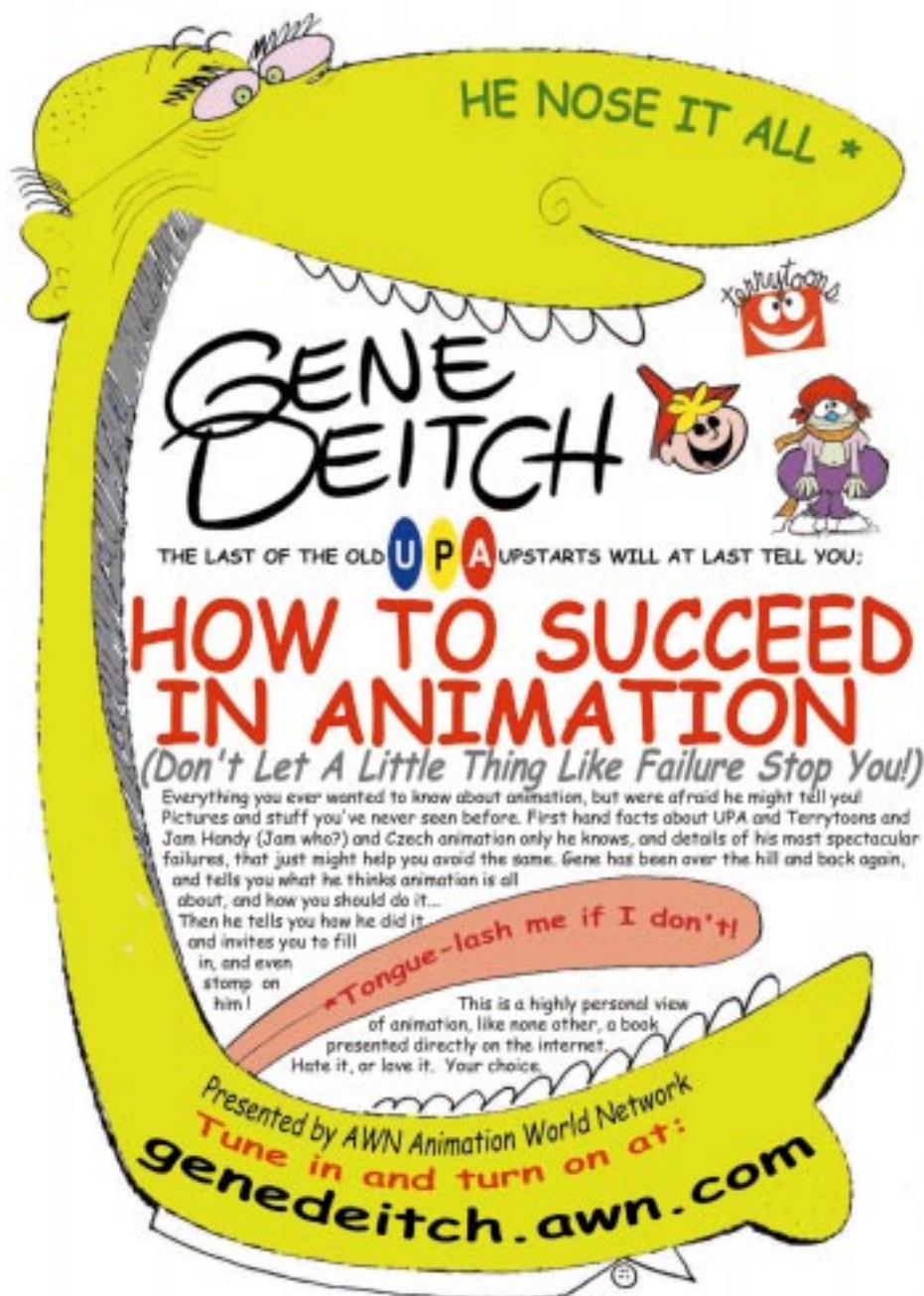
Nadia was also a hit with the burgeoning English-language anime fandom, getting cover-feature articles in all the American and British anime magazines of the early 1990s. American fans saw it mostly through bootleg videos of the Japanese episodes, but there were two American licensed releases of just the first eight episodes dubbed, individual-

ly as *Nadia* between March 1992 and August 1993, and in two four-episode sets as *The Secret of Blue Water* in January 1996. A.D.V.'s new version, starting in June 2001 on a six-weekly release schedule, is a brand-new dubbing. As is becoming standard with most American anime releases, the DVD edition includes both English dubbing and the original Japanese dialogue with English subtitles,

plus such extras as the openings and closings without text as music videos.

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

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



Anime Essentials:

Everything A Fan Needs To Know

by Alan Neal



How essential this book is depends very much on the reader. Poitras bids you welcome 'whether you are an anime beginner (the person I wrote this book for), a curious parent... or a fan.' As the book's subtitle reveals, though, *Anime Essentials* is very much geared toward junior 'fans' who've watched anime here and there and want more of an overview. It's not the first English-language

book of its kind. Poitras acknowledges Helen McCarthy's *Anime: A Beginner's Guide to Japanese Animation* (Titan Books, London 1993), which addressed the same challenge. However, *Essentials* is grounded much more in U.S. fan-culture.

Poitras confines himself nearly completely to anime available in the States, summarising the different generations of 'English-language' — really American —

fandom through 'the *Astro Boy* generation,' 'the *Robotech* generation' and so on. It's a valid approach, though one wishes there was more acknowledgement that the anime favoured by U.S. fans is often *not* the anime best-known to the Japanese. (For example, there is no mention of *Doraemon*, the robot cat known to millions of Japanese children.) Again, Poitras' brief anime history rightly mentions the propaganda feature *Momotaro no Umiwashi* as a landmark, but then asserts that U.S. favourite *Astro Boy* marked 'the birth of modern anime,' ignoring the contribution of Toei's features from *Hakujaden* (1958) onwards. (On a pickier level, Poitras describes the *Momotaro* film as a feature; a friend points out the film ran only 37 minutes, though a feature-length sequel followed in 1945.)

However, within Poitras' self-imposed limits, *Essentials* is an easy, friendly guide with plenty of solid info slotted round helpful sub-headings and captions. The series of 'lessons' taken from Gainax's mockumentary *Otaku no Video* — which also provides the cover image — is a neat idea. The biggest problem is that the text sometimes becomes a wearying list of briefly-described titles. (Readers who know only a few of the names will be discouraged.) Another annoyance is that there's no anime-title index, so reference is a chore. On the upside, there's a handy subject index at the back of the book, together with guides to further reading, Internet resources and 41 recommended anime titles.

The second half is more fan-orientated, with sections on clubs, conventions, merchandise and an account of 'fan controversies.' Once again, how interesting

all this is depends on the reader. The material may encourage outsiders who know other fandoms, while scaring off readers horrified by the three-letter word. Don't expect provocative arguments on subjects like the 'sub versus dub' debate, or the morality of the 'Fansub Code.' Poitras presents the topics neutrally, probably the only way in a book of this kind.

However, *Essentials* may occasionally raise the hackles of AWN readers. The book takes it as read that anime is worth watching; few purchasers will disagree.

However, Poitras also claims that anime is far more diverse than today's U.S. animation, with a more sophisticated treatment of feelings, motives and actions. The arguments beg an irritating number of questions, but such asides do not spoil a useful book.

Note on recommended anime titles: *Akira*, described as 'presently unavailable,' has been re-released on video since the book was published. Poitras has a tendency to downplay adult material in his guide, with both *Akira* and *Wings of Honneamise* con-

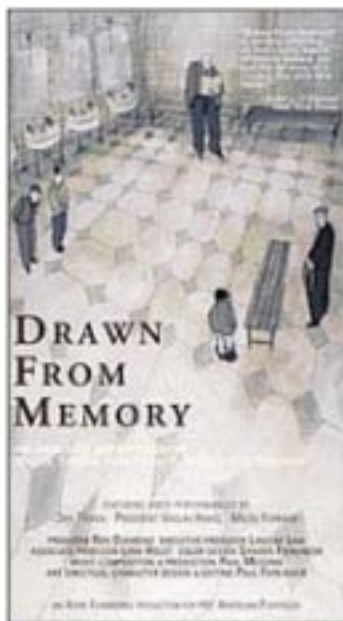
taining brief but fairly graphic images of sexual assault.

Anime Essentials: Every Thing A Fan Needs To Know by Gilles Poitras. Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press, 2001. 128 pages. ISBN: 1-880656-53-1 (paperback)

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

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