

ANIMATION WORLD

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The Face of Final Fantasy

Plus:

Feature Film Oscar Winners?
Graphics Cards Explained
Gene Deitch on Animation and more...

Table of Contents

SEPTEMBER 2001

VOL. 6 No. 6

SEPTEMBER 2001

NINE AND A HALF QUESTIONS...

- 3 **Nine And A Half Questions with Leslie Cabarga**
More than just a fount of Fleischer information, Leslie Cabarga reveals his many professions and talents when Will Ryan asks him slightly less than ten questions.
- 5 **Nine And A Half Questions with Aleksandra Korejwo**
Will Ryan asks Aleksandra Korejwo a few questions – 9 1/2 to be exact – about her unusual production technique.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

- 7 **Behind the Scenes on Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within**
Final Fantasy brings synthesians to the big screen with amazing results. John Edgar Park goes behind the final product to discover the staggering amount of skill, time and technical savvy that created this first.
- 10 **Inside Jeepers Creepers**
Go behind the scenes of Jeepers Creepers with the effects team at E=mc2. Includes step by step explanations.
- 12 **Producing Animation: The Development Process**
What is the role of a producer during development? Plenty! This month's Producing Animation excerpt by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi details the process.
- 15 **And The Winner Is...**
What if we'd been giving an Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film since 1937? Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman gives us his predictions on the winners, the losers, the rivalries and the pageantry.
- 18 **The Animation Pimp: Rex, Epicurus and Me: The Search for Pleasure**
Finally, something the Pimp likes! Rex The Runt. But, this month, we see that the Animation Pimp reads a lot into this show of four dogs.

STUDENT CORNER

- 20 **Animation - What The Heck Is It?**
Gene Deitch tackles the shifting definition of animation in this excerpt from his book, How To Succeed In Animation, (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!), published exclusively on AWN.com.
- 23 **The Career Coach: Jobs In A Visual Effects House -- Defined**
The final part of a three part series that describes the steps involved in different specialties of visual effects production, the specific skills required for each specialty, as well as what the studios are looking for in a portfolio and demo reel.

TELEVISION

- 25 **TV Review: Stanley Is Playing Catch Up**
Jerry Beck reviews the Disney Channel's latest pre-school offering, Stanley.

EVENTS

- 28 **Comic-Con 2001: A Pro's Eye View**
Danny Fingeroth recounts the San Diego Comic-Con, an event that has grown to include not only the best of the comic book scene, but also the coolest Hollywood talent and inside scoops and previews.

TECHNOLOGY

- 30 **Graphics Cards and the Quadro DCC Explained**
John Edgar Park not only delves into the history and purpose of graphics cards but also reviews nVidia's Quadro DCC, the latest in graphics cards.

FILMS/VIDEOS

- 33 **New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews**
Fred Patten reviews the latest anime releases including new Robotech releases, Spring and Chaos: The Life and Times of Kenji Miyazawa, and the OAV and TV series of Vampire Princess Miyu.

BOOKS

- 37 **Buster Keaton Remembered**
Buster Keaton Remembered, a new book, gives insight into this genius that has inspired, and is still inspiring, animation's greats. Will Ryan reviews.

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Nine And A Half Questions...

With Leslie Cabarga

by Will Ryan

Who's got time for Ten Questions? Not me. Here's the Nine and A Half Question interview: mini-interrogations for you busy moderns.



Many people under the age of 40 who've heard of Betty Boop probably know about her because of Leslie Cabarga. While in his mid-teens, Leslie researched, wrote and designed the definitive book on the Max Fleischer Studios (*The Fleischer Story*, Perseus Press), which has seen two editions and has been in print for 25 years. The book helped bring about a Betty Boop revival – and a marketing bonanza for the Fleischer heirs and King Features. Leslie proceeded to paint more than 50 Betty Boop greeting cards, design the first Boop ceramics lines and see his Betty Boop art become ubiquitous on various product lines. But there's much more to Leslie Cabarga than Helen Kane's cartoon look-alike, as you'll see.

At the time of our interview, Leslie Cabarga had just returned to the United States from a European tour. Coincidentally, so had I.



Will Ryan: Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Leslie Cabarga: Quite possibly



Leslie Cabarga.

you saw me in Munich, Prague, Nice, Cannes, Paris and Edinburgh. I was playing second ukulele with the Hollywood Cartoon Band. I only know three chords but it's enough. I mean, even Mozart never really used more than three chords.

WR: I guess I didn't recognize you without your uke. Say, how was the tour, anyway?

LC: Well, you should know — you were playing first uke.

WR: Oh yeah, I thought I looked familiar.

LC: They didn't "get" us in Prague, if you know what I mean, but they loved us at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh.

WR: You mean, they didn't throw anything?

LC: Nothing you couldn't make a decent fruit salad out of.

WR: Thrifty, those Scots! And speaking of non-sequiturs, a few years ago I was working on the *G. I. Joe* animated series and met a kid who tried to tell me his name was Rudy Zamora. That ever happen to you?

LC: Yeah, I worked for Rudy too. I did the background paintings for a Froot Loops commercial he was directing in San Francisco. His father, Rudy Zamora Sr., worked for the Fleischers so for me it was like *deja vu* all over again!

WR: Most animators have at least one edition of your book *The Fleischer Story* on their shelves, and many are aware of your illustration work (covers for *Time*, *Business Week*, *Rolling Stone*, etc.), but not everyone knows you're an award-winning animator.

LC: Yeah — after researching and writing about animation for years, the first actual animation I ever did was a spot produced by Acme Filmworks. Which in fact won an award.

WR: When you were the on-camera host for *The Fabulous Fleischer Folio*, were those great title cards also done by you?

LC: Of course. I also wrote and performed the theme song for the show, which ironically ran on the Disney Channel for years. I recently did title cards for the re-release of all those amazing old Columbia shorts that are in syndication around the world. And, as you might recall, I even did some title cards for *Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective!*

WR: Good show, old bean! There

are over thirty books published with your name on the cover; written any good ones lately?

LC: The new one is called *Designer's Guide to Global Color Combinations*. It's a sequel to *Designer's Guide to Color* and comes out in October. I wrote it, designed it and even designed the fonts.

WR: And those aren't the first fonts you've designed, are they?

LC: I've made tons of them. Check out my Website, <http://www.flash-fonts.com>, and you can see them. I made animated movies in Macromedia Flash to go along with them. You can also order my books off the site and gosh this

sounds like an ad. Will they let you get away with this?

WR: Say, I'll handle the questions, mister. So what's with you and that Betty Boop dame, anyway?

LC: Now, remember, I am a married man.

WR: So you and Betty are – ?

LC: Yes, we're just good friends.

WR: Hmmm.



Leslie Cabarga's new book, Designer's Guide to Global Color Combinations (HOW Design Books, October 2001 release),

is not only the most useful color swatch book on the market (he gives the CMYK and RGB color formulas right next to each swatch), but it's also the funniest.

Will Ryan's new book, The Laffy Giraffe Joke Book (Snappytoons Press, October 2001 release), is not only the most useful joke book on the market (he gives the punch lines in italics for easy comprehension), but it's also the funniest. For the record: Wolfgang, Leslie and Will all use more than three cords in their compositions and performance.

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Never before available!!!

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



Nine And A Half Questions...

With Aleksandra Korejwo

by Will Ryan



Aleksandra Korejwo.

Aleksandra Korejwo has, without question, the most unusual animation style of any animator working in Hollywood. She uses no pencil, no paper, no clay, no dimensional figures or objects and no computer. Her tools are a camera, film, air and a condor feather. Oh, and one other secret ingredient, which we'll learn more of later.

I spoke with Aleksandra in Los Angeles as she was preparing for her first U.S. art exhibit, silent auction and screening of her work. It will be held at 8:00 pm Saturday, September 29, 2001, at the Directors Guild of America

building at 7920 Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. The entire animation community is invited to take advantage of this rare opportunity to view the work of one of the world's most singular and honored animators.



Will Ryan: Your films have received awards throughout the world, from the Grand Prix at the Shanghai Animation Festival to your many European awards. Everyone who sees your films is fascinated by the magical, ethereal movement you create onscreen. And we all wonder how you do it!

What is it that we, the audience, see moving around on the screen in your films?

Aleksandra Korejwo: Salt.

WR: Salt?

AK: Salt.

WR: That's not some computer technique? All of those swirling images – the horses, the dancers, the swans – they're all just ... salt?

AK: Salt.

WR: Nothing else? But, but ... what about all those colors? What are they?

AK: Salt!

WR: Oh, I see! You dye the salt to create the colors. So do you mean to tell me that those exciting transmutations in the main title sequence of the feature film *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit*, which you single-handedly animated, and which won the praise of Ray Bradbury, Roy Disney, the Annie Awards nominating committee and all the critics, were nothing more than the artful manipulation of mere – ?

AK: Salt.

WR: And are you standing there telling me that all those evocative, sensitive, award-winning films of yours set to the music of Bizet, Mozart, Saint-Saen, Schubert and Strauss were created using the same common household item, which I need not name?!

AK: Uh, salt?

WR: Salt!

AK: Salt.

WR: Salt. Wow! Amazing. Simply amazing! So ... when you go to the movies, what do you put on your popcorn?

AK: Butter.



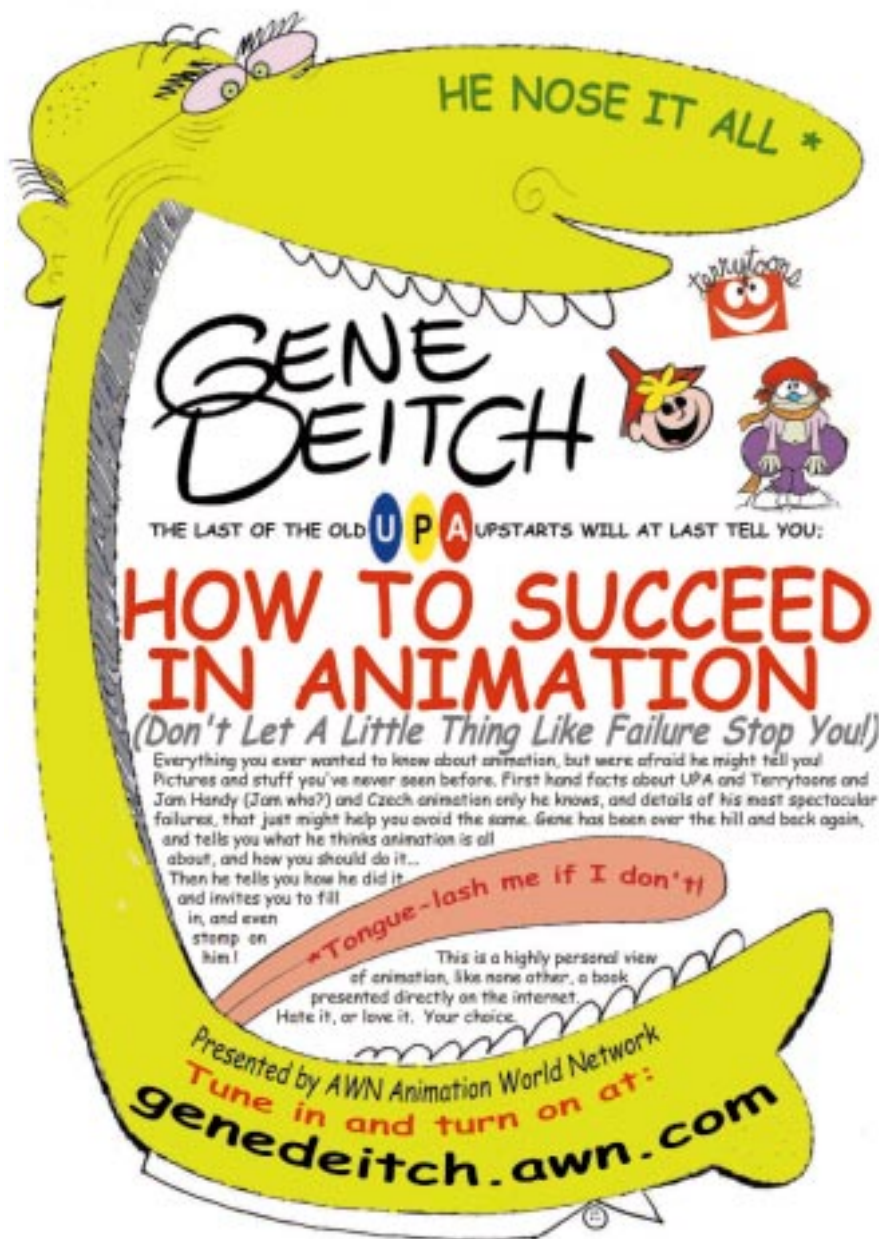
Aleksandra Korejwo was not actually interviewed for the above witty piece, however the facts remain true!



Aleksandra Korejwo is currently in Los Angeles for a brief visit before returning to Europe. You can meet her – and see her amazing films – at the Directors Guild Saturday, September 29, 2001. Attendees will also be able to witness a demonstration of her animation methods. There will also be an auction of Aleksandra's storyboards and artwork, the proceeds of which will be used for the production of her next film. Despite what you may infer from the above interview, Aleksandra is usually – and delightfully – loquacious.

Will Ryan is president of Will Ryan and Company Ltd., a production and design organization now affiliated with the architectural firm of McFarland, Eyth and Cabarga. The combined companies specialize in the creation of animated films, theme parks and creative consumer environments. He is currently on a salt-free diet.

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Behind the Scenes on *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*

by John Edgar Park



Aki Ross: the synthespian poster child. © 2001 FFFP. All rights reserved.
Square Pictures, Inc.

In the past few weeks, how many people have you heard ask the question, "What do you mean those actors aren't real?" when referring to the *Final Fantasy* trailer? During the movie did you occasionally forget that it was all CGI? I shook my head at one moment and had to smile when I wondered what real-world parts a prop gun was made from. No question about it: Square Pictures' *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* contains spectacular visuals. The realistic skin and hair get all the glory, but don't overlook the incredible amount of detail found in the animation, scenery, props and effects. At a recent Alias|Wavefront sponsored event, Square Pictures' VFX Supervisor Remo Balcells gave a peek into the making of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.

The Gray Project

When the principals of Square Pictures decided that they wanted to take the themes and title of its massively popular *Final Fantasy* series of PC and console games to the big screen in an entirely CGI feature-length film, they first had to prove to themselves that it was possible. Eschewing the more stylized rendering of the in-game cinematics for a photo-realistic look, they knew that there would be some major challenges ahead. So they decided to create a proof-of-concept animation that showcased the ambitious level of realism in human characters they would require for the finished product.

The proof-of-concept, titled *The Gray Project*, was a way to focus on both the artistic feel of the film's design and the technical

complexity of generating realistic hair and skin on humans. The scene shows two women inside a futuristic apartment having an argument. While far from a compelling story, the level of drama and realism hit the mark. Balcells showed the captive audience the never seen outside of Square Pictures animation, and it was quite amazing. Ultimately, *The Gray Project* was an internal success which allowed Square's R&D department to prove that their production pipeline worked and they could use Maya, Renderman and custom tools to make the movie.



One soon forgets that the characters in *Final Fantasy* are merely the product of zeros and ones. © 2001 FFFP. All rights reserved. Square Pictures, Inc.

Film By Layers

The film itself is composed of 1,327 shots. There are 141,964 frames, each of which took anywhere from 15 minutes to over 7 hours per frame to render. The average was around 90 minutes. Square Pictures stored 10 Terabytes of 3D and 5 Terabytes of 2D artwork. The roughly 200 people who worked on the film contributed about 120 person-years of work. All of this data needed to be carefully managed so that the creation process was collaborative and organized. This was the job of the sequence supervision department; they oversaw the work as it



Aki's dream world contains the key to unlocking the aliens' domination.
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traveled between many departments including Storyboards, Layout, Sets/Props, Animation, Motion-capture, Lighting, FX, Rendering and Compositing.

By going through these departments a shot would be built with anywhere from nine to 498 composite layers! Balcells showed one shot, where the ground troops rescue Dr. Ross from a forbidden section of Old New York City, in a progression of layers leading to the final shot. The passes started with color and lighting then added fog, muzzle flashes, shadows, fog noise, glows, fill lights, specularity, more lighting, different fog, and so on. Suffice it to say that the whole was far greater than the sum of its parts.

Balcells is proud to note that when he began going through the many VFX shots needed for the film, director Hironobu Sakaguchi was always pushing him to generate everything in CGI. When it came to some very large explosions, smoke and fireballs, he initially planned on using composites of practical effects. But as his team of 20 artists experimented with CGI versions, Sakaguchi eventually was pleased enough with them to greenlight the project as 100% CGI. One trick

they developed for making very lifelike smoke and fireballs was to render the RGB channels separately and then tint them each a different fiery hue before compositing them. The results are beautiful effects with many levels of detail and an organic nature.



The sympathetic face of Dr. Sid.
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Square Pictures, Inc.

Pursed Lips, Twitching Eyes

The character animation in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* was almost always created through a series of refinements. First, an actor would be motion-captured for the broad movement and blocking of a scene. Next, an animator would tweak that performance in Maya using an optimized set of data that had been reduced from the original mo-cap data. If the character had flowing clothes, like General Hein in his

trench coat, or long hair, like Aki Ross, these objects would receive secondary animation through dynamics and keyframing. Lastly, the facial animation would be implemented. Technical directors and lead animators would create a set of sliders to control each element of the face, such as "Left Lower Eyelid Twitch" or "Purse Lips" in order to animate the performance while following along with video shot of the voice actors' performances. For lip synching, Square created a Phoneme Library from which the different mouth shapes could be pulled.

The support staff for R&D on these hair, tool and queuing systems was 40 full-time employees. Not a small operation! Using the Maya API, they developed over 100 plug-ins for Maya. For the hair tools they created methods for the animators to control the movement of Aki's 60,000 strands of hair down to the lock that often falls in front of her face. So when you watch the film and are in awe of the subtle acting and great-looking hair, remember that each element was the product of a lot of hard work — a labor of love for a few hundred artists and programmers. Visually, the results speak for themselves!

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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Inside Jeepers Creepers

With offices in Los Angeles, Toronto and Rio de Janeiro, E=mc² provides visual effects and video effects for the commercial, television and motion picture industry throughout North and South America. Their commercial clients include such heavy hitters at AT&T, Dell and Xerox and for television their work has been featured in shows like *CSI*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Freaks and Geeks*, *The Agency* and *The Fugitive*. Their recent film credits include *Traffic*, *American Beauty*, the upcoming remake *Ocean's Eleven*, and the current *Jeepers Creepers*. E=mc²'s visual effects team is specialized in 3D modeling, compositing, digital matte painting and wire removal.

Here the E=mc² visual effects team outlines their process in creating a few of the effects for *Jeepers Creepers*, a film that has won praise for being more than the average teen horror flick. Holding the number one box office spot over the Labor Day weekend in America (August 31, 2001 to September 3, 2001), *Jeepers Creepers* was a surprise for critics and fans alike that found this Florida-based romp frightening and fun — a campy throw back to the horror films of the '80s. The film's box office now stands at over US\$30 million, despite the major box office slow down due to the terrorist attacks suffered by the United States on September 11th.

The Storyline

A brother (Darry) and sister (Trish) are driving back from spring break in Florida. Unknown to



Making creatures just a little more creepy: E=mc².
All images courtesy of and © E=mc².

them every twenty-third spring, for twenty-three days in this remote corner of Florida a creature comes out of hibernation and must consume what he needs to live. For example, if the creature has a damaged foot, he'll eat a human foot and regenerate a new foot. In *Jeepers Creepers* the creature needs to regenerate his soul and he has found it in Darry. Scary and gruesome moments occur through the movie as the creature chases the brother/sister team through the Florida outback.

Int. Police Station – Creature Reveals Wings

In the ending of *Jeepers Creepers*, Darry and Trish have been saved by the police. However, the creature has tracked Darry and Trish to the police station and moves in for the kill. As the creature secretly enters the police station, the police men slowly become aware of his presence. Moving in with guns drawn the police try to capture the creature. But the creature strikes first, ripping the heart out of a police officer before he can open fire.

The Heart

This shot called for the creature to enter from the top of frame and pull out the police officer's heart. As the creature exits the same way he enters, the police officer has a gapping hole in his chest. For this shot to work several different plates needed to be shot.

1 — A foreground plate with the action of the police officer and the creature dropping in from the top of frame.

2 – A background plate of a group of police officers shining flashlights.

3 – The hole in the chest element was created by shooting a mannequin with a hole in its chest as grips shined flashlights through the hole.

Comping the Shot

Using Adobe After Effects, compositor Buddy Gheen created a hole in the police officer's chest. For Buddy to create the illusion of the police officer having a large hole in his chest he first had to cut out the hole in the mannequin ele-



ment. He then selected a section of the film where the flashlights are shining through and illuminating the hole. Once that element was chosen Buddy comped that element on the back of the police officer. The trick to this shot was tracking the hole on the back of the police officer as he moved from side to side and eventually fell forward.

Taking to Wing

Later in the film, the creature is trapped! Heavily armed police officers are closing in and its only hope of escape is to use its wings! These shots were the most challenging visual effects shots in the film. Listed below is the order of events in which the shots came together:

1 – The art director provides E=mc2 with illustrations of the creature with its wings extended.

2 – A 3D modeler creates a wire frame model of the wings. (Software: 3D Studio Max)

3 – The Background plates are shot on stage.

4 – The wing design is signed off on by the director.

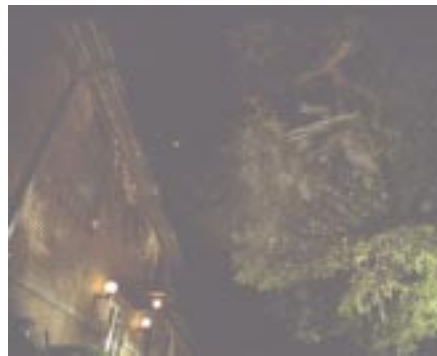
5 – The wire frame model is then animated to give the wings life and the director an idea of the movement of the wings in each scene. (Software: 3D Studio Max)

6 – At the same time, texture and lighting is added to the wings. (Software: Adobe After Effects)

7 - The wings are now ready to be tracked on the back off the creature. (Software: Scene Genie)

8 – Once the director has signed off on the movement, texture, lighting and tracking of the wings it is now ready to composite in to the scene.

9 – Comping is the final stage of the VFX shot. At this stage the wings are added to the creature and made to blend into the shot seamlessly. Shadows and final fixes are also added to the shot. (Software: Adobe After Effects)



Take Off Through The Window

The only escape for the creature is to blast through the window behind him and out in to the night sky. Once again for this shot to work plates needed to be shot.

1 – A background plate of the police station with the window



being blown out was shot. To create the look of the window exploding a green bag was fired by an air cannon through the window. The bag needed to be green so it could be keyed out during the comping stage.

2 – A foreground plate of the creature holding Darry was shot in front of a green screen.

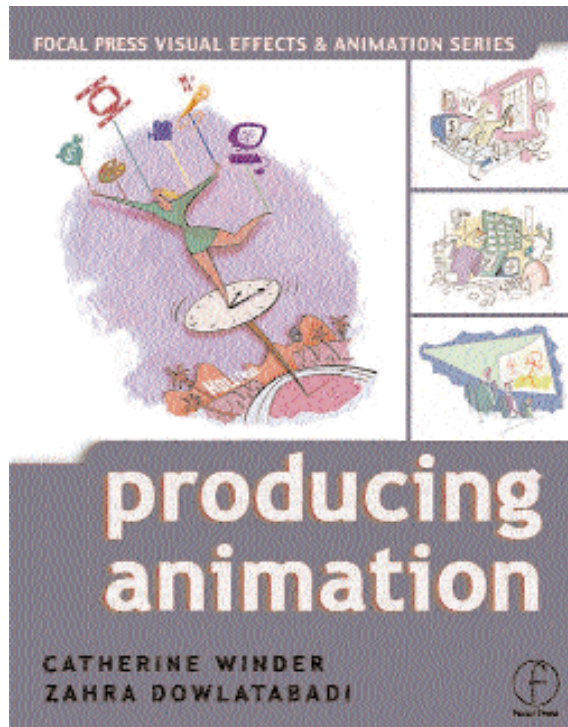
Once the two plates were shot Buddy animated the wings flapping. Once the animation was signed off on by the director, Buddy then tracked the wings on to the back of the creature, and after adding shadows and removing the green from the shot, it was finished!

Go online to
http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?type=pageone&article_no=631
 to view the final shots.

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Producing Animation: The Development Process

by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi



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

The development phase is the phase in which the creative foundation for a project is set up through visual and written materials. Inspired by an idea or a vision, writers and artists strive to capture the unknown. To some, it is a seemingly simple process; however, it is much more involved than one might imagine. To start with, there are no hard and fast rules to development. The approach taken is dictated by the property, its source and the people initially attached to it, such as the creator (hereon referred to as the seller) and the buyer. Putting

together a strong development team to bring the concept to life is one of the most important steps in creating a successful project. While it can be challenging to match up key players who have a creative chemistry, when the right people are in place, there is no limit to the potential of a project.

The Role of the Producer During Development

It is fundamentally important that a producer be involved in the development phase as early as possible. Working closely with the buyer and the writer, the producer

has input into how the script is created. During this process, one of the producer's primary duties is to determine how to make the project suitable for animation. Working with a select group of artists, the first step is to establish the appropriate style and quality of animation. Factors that directly influence this process are the story content and the project's budget and schedule. Equally as important is satisfying the buyer. Just because a property is in development, there are no guarantees that it will get produced. The buyer needs to be completely confident that investing the significant funds required to start production is a sound business decision.

In exploring the possible paths to developing a project, the producer needs to assess its strength and weaknesses. If the property is based on written material, it may be used to create the visuals. On the other hand, it could be the reverse, whereby the visuals drive the script and a writer needs to be identified. It may be, however, that the project is based on a property that already has both elements in place (such as a comic book). In this case, the creator may act solely as a consultant or may be responsible for either the visual or written material, depending on his or her experience. In all of the possible scenarios, the producer works with the creative executive, who is typically the representative of the buyer, and the seller, to find and interview the appropriate candidates to attach to the project.

In order to keep costs down, projects with lower budgets (such as a television series) use freelance artists. When negotiating and hiring talent, the producer needs to be clear as to whether

they are “attaching” the talent to the project or simply bringing them on as “work for hires.” If someone is integral to the project’s success and is instrumental to selling it — such as an “A-list” writer or top director — the producer will probably attach them to the project. This ensures that the talent is available should the show go forward. If the talent is not crucial to the project, they would most likely be hired only for their specific services. The producer needs to be cautious in terms of who gets attached and who is guaranteed to play a role on the production should it go forward. If the buyer is not impressed with an artist’s work, yet they are attached to the property, it could hinder the project getting picked up for production. Another item for the producer to consider before hiring an artist for the duration of the project is how easy or difficult it is to work with him or her. Getting a project produced is challenging enough without having to deal with personality conflicts.

Features, on the other hand, are generally created by staff producers, directors and visual development artists. Writers may or may not be on staff. Studios that are dedicated to feature filmmaking frequently have a number of artists on staff who focus solely on conceptual artwork. As the primary storyteller, the director guides the artist(s) toward his or her vision. If no talent is initially attached to the project, the producer will select visual development artists, and possibly a director, to develop the look of the show. (Chapter 4, “The Core Team,” in our book *Producing Animation*, includes more information on this process and a detailed description of the role and respon-

sibilities of a director.) In those cases where the director is already on board, he or she works with the producer to review portfolios and find the appropriate talent for the project.

In television, unlike features, the overall creative visionary on a project is the executive producer, who is often referred to as a “show runner.” It is their responsibility to oversee the storytelling process and manage the directors or production designers. In both cases, the producer typically negotiates deals with the artists and creates a schedule for visual development. Working closely with the executive producer, the director, the seller and the creative executive, the producer makes sure that everybody’s notes are addressed.

When a writer is attached to a television series from its inception, he or she creates a “bible” prior to writing a script. The bible sets up the concept, characters, their world and some potential story lines. Using the submitted written material, a pilot is created for the show. Note that if the property is the writer’s concept, depending on their background, the writer typically plays the role of the executive producer.

In both television and features, the producer, in cooperation with the writer, generates a schedule based on the key milestones of the script as it evolves from premise to final draft. The writer is given creative notes by the producer, the director (if on board), the seller and the creative executives at every stage of the scripting process. The purpose of this input is to make sure that the script is meeting the project’s creative objectives from a narrative perspective as well as in terms of character development.

It falls on the producer’s shoulders to pace development appropriately, allow creativity to thrive and meet long-term schedules. Although it is essential to adhere to schedules in production, applying strict deadlines to development can at times hinder the creative process. The producer has the balancing act of ensuring that the creative team has enough time and money to achieve their artistic goals and that the quality of artwork created is suitable for production. As a result, the producer has to use his or her intuition to know when to push and when not to push. An artist’s worst fear is working with a producer who has an assembly line approach toward artistic endeavors. And yet, how can network delivery deadlines be met if there is no schedule? Can a studio afford to lay off hundreds of talented and trained artists because the next project is not ready for production?

It is the nature of development to move slowly. Unlike a film in production, which has a set schedule, a concept in development can take many months — or even several years — before it is greenlit, as it is constantly changing and evolving. An important responsibility for the producer is to keep the buyer and other significant players excited and enthusiastic about the future product. In the case of a larger studio, one approach to getting a project funded is by obtaining the support of other division or ancillary entities within the company, such as the consumer products group or the Internet. The more revenue a project is likely to generate, the more quickly funds will be released for its production. Items that can help bolster the case for making a particular feature include a poten-

tially successful toy line or soundtrack. Another option is to contact other division heads to see whether a feature can be made into a television series or has potential for a direct-to-video sequel.

One important item to note prior to getting into the development process is confidentiality of material. Starting at this stage of the production, it is critical for the producer to establish ground rules safeguarding the project from piracy. Confidentiality policies and procedures typically apply to script, characters and software development, and must be adhered to throughout production and post-production (i.e., story reel, dailies, rough-cut tapes, etc.).

The following topics are also covered in this chapter of *Producing Animation: Visual Development, The Writing*

Process, Script Stages, Writer's Deals and Production Scripts.

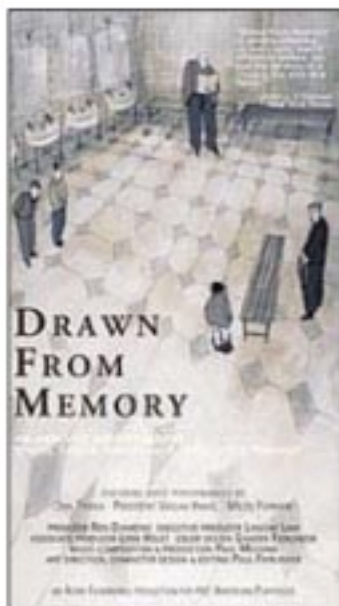
Catherine Winder has worked as both an executive producer in television and feature animation. Her background in development, as well as production with studios from around the world has given her a rare global expertise in the field of animation. In her present position as vice president production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

Zahra Dowlatabadi. Zahra Dowlatabadi, an award-winning producer, started her animation career in 1986. Since then, Dowlatabadi has worked in almost every major studio in Los

Angeles along with many internationally acclaimed animation studios and talent. Dowlatabadi is the founder of an organization entitled Animation Team, which assists studios with production staffing needs ranging from qualified line producers to experienced production assistants. She also has co-written a book entitled Producing Animation with Catherine Winder for Focal Press.

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

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



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

--Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer



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

And The Winner Is...

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

Since 1937, animated films have made millions of dollars and charmed an equal number of moviegoers. Eleven of the top 100 box office grosses of all time belong to animated films and the genre has exploded since the late 1980s. Only now has the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences seen it fit to hand out Oscars for "Best Animated Feature Film." This begs the question: *What took so long?* One would think that after *Beauty and the Beast* nearly humbled Hannibal Lechter in 1992 the Academy would have put a few guidelines in the storyboard stage, but the process took nearly a decade. When one looks at the defining rules — 70 minutes running time, a significant number of the major characters to be animated, and animation evident for at least 75% of the film's running time — it is difficult to fathom why they weren't developed earlier. Ah well, better late than never. What film will take that seminal Oscar home? On whose mantelpiece shall the celebratory statuette stand? What title shall follow the stark pause after the catchphrase "*And the winner is...*" sets countless silicone-enhanced breasts heaving with anticipation on Oscar night? Don't ask me, people. I'm the brilliant prognosticator who told you that *Shrek* would peter out before it made \$30 million. I can't even walk into a bakery without being heckled by pans of gingerbread men.

Still, what if...what if the Oscar for Best Animated Feature



Is this the face of an Oscar winner? Could be! © DreamWorks Pictures.

Film *had* been awarded since 1937? What a rich tradition animated films would have had! Well, wonder no longer, my long-suffering readers; this month we will go back in time to take a look at the drama, the triumph, the tragedy, and the cupidity that is...the Oscars. Cue the tape, dim the lights, and — get those gingerbread men out of here! Why must they taunt me so?

1937: The first Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film goes to Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In order to create an actual competition, Paul Terry was allowed to edit thirteen *Farmer Al Falfa* cartoons into a 90-minute film. It was not much of a contest.

1941: When Disney's *Dumbo* was nominated for an Oscar against the Fleischer's *Mr. Bug Goes to*

Town, the latter studio attempted to disqualify their rival by pointing out that *Dumbo* ran only 64 minutes. Disney countered by having Howard Swift and some assistants add an extra seven minutes to the "Pink Elephants on Parade" sequence. The new sequence, entitled "Nude Pink Elephants A Go-Go," was a tremendous hit with the screening committee, who awarded the film the Oscar. The sequence was then cut before general release and hidden away where Charles Solomon and John Grant would never, ever find it.

1949: Disney's *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* beats out *The Magic Horse*, an entry from the USSR. A rabble-rousing young senator from Wisconsin named Joseph McCarthy demands to know how a Russian film was nominated in the first place, a comment that draws the attention

of the House Un-American Activities Committee. At last it can be told; the secret origin of the infamous Hollywood blacklist.



When *Animal Farm* didn't take home the golden statue, the animals weren't too happy. Image courtesy of SIARA.

1955: The Oscar comes down to a contest between Halas and Batchelor's *Animal Farm* and Disney's *Lady and the Tramp*. When the Disney film is awarded the Oscar, the losers storm the stage and attempt the overthrow of all human presenters. Order is restored, but not before a deeply embedded horseshoe is removed from the posterior of presenter Robert Mitchum.

1962: The first anime Oscar winner goes to Toei Production's *The Adventures of Sinbad*, which outpoints UPA's *Gay Purr-ee*. Chuck Jones, who wrote the screenplay for the runner-up, is given a consolation prize; Contents: One Acme Do-It-Yourself Oscar Kit.

1965: The Oscar screening committee desperately tries to find prints of the three obscure nominees: *The Man From Button Willow*, *Willy McBean and His Magic Machine* and *Pinocchio in Outer Space*. They find *Button Willow* first, playing at a Saturday matinee in Terre Haute, Indiana. The Oscar is awarded on the spot.

1969: *Mad Monster Party* is the first stop-motion winner of the Oscar.

1970: What do you know? That Acme kit really worked! Chuck Jones takes home an Oscar for *The Phantom Tollbooth* on his way to collecting every honor that animation can bestow.

1972: And the winner is...*Fritz the Cat*! Runner-up Bill Melendez (*Snoopy Come Home*) vows that his next animated *Peanuts* opus will feature a lap dance.

1975: Ralph Bakshi's *Coonskin* is this year's winner. A record is set for the Longest Disclaimer Prior to the Presentation of an Oscar in the history of the prestigious awards. Mr. Bakshi — and his golden statuette — are discreetly escorted through a rear exit by security forces as the disclaimer drones on.



This American icon of course took home the Oscar. © AOL Time Warner.

1979: A storm of protest arises when the Oscar goes to *The Bugs Bunny/Roadrunner Movie*. Runners-up Rankin-Bass (*Rudolph and Frosty's Christmas in July*) charge that the Warner movie is made up of previously used animation, and that the characters...uhhh...hmmm.

1981: *Heavy Metal* is the surprise winner over Disney's *The Fox and the Hound*. Disney Executive Director Ron Miller tells the press: "This is like, so totally *bogus*, dudes!"

1984: No Oscar is awarded this

year. The committee, forced to screen *Rainbow Brite* and *the Star Stealer* and *Here Come the Littles*, become comatose and cannot be revived in time to declare a winner. It is rumored that one poor member is today a ruined woman, doomed to a lifetime on anti-psychotic medication.

1985: John and Faith Hubley finally gain their due with *The Cosmic Eye*.

1986: Up for consideration are four product-based films: *Care Bears Movie II: A New Generation*; *My Little Pony: The Movie*; *Go-Bots: Legend of the Rock Lord*; and *Transformers: The Movie*. Oscar proves that he is no slave to commercialism when he falls into the arms of Don Bluth for *An American Tail*. An excited Bluth immediately announces the launching of a Bluth store, a Fievel's Follies water park and a chain of restaurants called Mrs. Brisby's Burgers.

1988: Don Bluth's hopes for a second Oscar are shattered when *The Land Before Time* comes up short against the Disney/Amblin masterpiece *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*. Bluth, taking this one hard, places a curse on the committee: they will live to see a hundred musical sequels to his film.

1989: *The Little Mermaid* defeats *Lensman* and *Twilight of the Cockroaches*, but...

1990: ...*Akira* takes the Oscar this year, and the American-Japanese animation rivalry kicks into gear.

1993: The plot thickens, and it's time to take anime seriously: *My Neighbor Totoro* edges *The*



Roger Rabbit led the new U.S. renaissance. © Touchstone Pictures and Amblin Entertainment.

Nightmare Before Christmas for the Oscar, and screaming factions of animation fans become the highlight of every Academy Awards show: "U-S-A!" "A-ni-ME!"

1995: *Toy Story* becomes the first all-CGI film to take an Oscar home, winning out over *On The Wings Of Honneamise*. "U-S-A!"

1996: *Ghost in the Shell* rings Quasimodo's bell. Oscar goes back to Japan. "A-ni-ME!"

1997: Warner's *Cats Don't Dance* is everybody's dark horse, and in some of the rumor mills the cat is out of the bag that Oscar is in the bag. However, Warner neglects to send the screening committee any promotional goodies, PR materials or even a print of the film. The screening committee frantically runs out to local theaters to view *Cats Don't Dance*, but the lack of publicity for the film has already killed it. Warner officials issue a statement that *Cats Don't Dance* actually does exist, but it's too late. Weeping with frustration, the

committee hands the Oscar to Disney's *Hercules*.

1998: DreamWorks SKG sends *Antz* up against *A Bug's Life*, and the antz go marching to defeat. Jeffrey Katzenberg swears to the press that in the near future he'll wrest that Oscar from his former employer: "I can get as mean as an ogre and as stubborn as a mule! Saaay...that gives me an idea...!"

1999: Warner's *The Iron Giant* is everybody's dark horse, and in some of the rumor mills... um... haven't we been here before? *Tarzan* is a controversial winner over *Princess Mononoke*, but an animated Eric Cartman steals the show when he touts *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut* as "Way f***** better than any of these s***-ass movies! Suck my ****, Oscar!," when the film's nomination is announced.

Sixty-four years have passed without this much fun, but there is no doubt that from now on the entertainment world can look forward to a lively tussle whenever the Oscar for Best Animated Feature Film is at stake. Although my account of Oscars past is a

facetious one, the rivalries between Disney and DreamWorks, between studios and independents, and the race for box office supremacy between anime and American animation should guarantee excitement for years to come. As animation evolves through CGI, motion-capture, VR and holography, the stakes can only be raised. I for one am looking forward to cheering on my favorites every year. Perhaps one day, if my wildest dreams come true, I'll even get to be a presenter. Standing there in my tux, the fateful envelope in hand, I look out over an eager audience. Sitting there in the first few rows are the Hopfuls, each one convinced that their animated film is one of the best ever made. I glance at the TelePrompTer, and then back the crowd, who have suddenly, inexplicably turned into a horde of sneering gingerbread men...will they ever let me live this down?

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

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



Those hip antz laid the groundwork for greater success! © 1998 DreamWorks & PDI.

Monthly provocative, drunken, idiotic ramblings from the North...



Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

Rex, Epicurus and Me: The Search for Pleasure

by Chris Robinson

"Every being strives after pleasure, and it is in pleasure that happiness consists." — Epicurus

"Oh that was only our Vince. He shoots himself occasionally." — Wendy of Rex The Runt

What I love about *Rex The Runt* is not the absurdity or surrealist tendencies — *The Simpsons* occasionally provides a flicker of that as does my life in general — but instead the very mundane shrug of its protagonists. I mean these dogs (Rex, Wendy, Bob and Vince) live a life completely devoid of pleasure. They are barely satisfied with their basic passions: "telly" and food. Now of course there's a little more to the show. Between channel surfing, they've: used a shrink ray to travel inside Vince's brain; traveled back in time; drilled a hole in the centre of the earth and subsequently used the now deflated planet as a spaceship; formed a band (with the exception of Wendy, they have NO musical talent) so that they could enter a talent contest (they lost) and pay a 10 quid bill; and Wendy momentarily became a TV star after she was acquitted of shooting Vince (she did shoot him but

he's plasticine). You'd think these adventures would provide a level of excitement and pleasure, but they don't. Their reaction remains the same whether they are entering a black hole or taking a piss. Not only are they uninterested (even their voices are monotone and occasionally barely audible) but they also seem incapable of finding any sort of pleasure in life. It's this absence of pleasure that makes the series both funny (à la Buster Keaton) and disturbing (as a reflection of our own increasingly mundane lives).

If we believe Epicurus, pleasure is the key to a relatively pain free existence. Easier said than done of course because most of us haven't got a clue what defines pleasure. For many of us one of the biggest obstacles in life is the ability to string together more than a few moments of pleasure. Generally those moments are self-gratifying individual or 'moving' pleasures. Moving pleasure is something you are enjoying while in the process but which leaves you unfulfilled. According to Epicurus, the more satisfying type of pleasure is 'static.' With static pleasure you are left with no needs or wants, just pleasure. For example, compare 'play-

ing' a hockey video game to actually playing hockey (street or ice). There is no comparison. The 'real' activity will pleasure you on both a physical and intellectual level. Generally you will feel exhausted and fulfilled. A video game will not achieve the same level of pleasure. It will leave you a need.

In this way *Rex The Runt* is less a mirror of our current society than a foreshadowing of our eventual digression. The quartet has become so dulled that they are unable to differentiate between television and the real world. As such, when given the opportunity, their ability to experience lasting, meaningful pleasure has eroded. In "Too Many Dogs," they travel back in time NOT to explore history and the foundation of the world or even acquire any sort of knowledge, but simply to figure out who ran off with half their house. In "Adventures in Telly: Part 3," they find themselves travelling in space. Rather than express any wonder or seek any knowledge about the universe they play ping-pong, complain of boredom, stop at a space service station and basically just can't wait to go home.

It never used to be like that. As kids we were genuinely enthralled by seemingly mundane stuff like gift-wrapping paper or even a manhole on the street. Everything was so new and the possibilities were boundless. Vince seems to possess all the wonder of a child. He has relatively simple needs and seems to enjoy shooting himself, having people travel in his brain, being shot, eating spaghetti, drinking and saying, "Tuesday." However, Vince cannot discern between pleasure and pain; punched or caressed, it's all the same to Vince. He is, at least

on a sensory level: dead. Paradoxically, within the context of Epicures' thinking, Vince has overcome one of the biggest obstacles of pleasure: the fear of death.

Being vs. Becoming

Life today has become determined by wants and needs rather than an authentic and long term feeling (physical and mental) of pleasure. Over time our want of a simpler life has potentially gone too far and overtaken our ability to experience. We embrace THINGS rather than MOMENTS. Think about all the things that are fundamentally just selfish wants and how we've re-written them as needs. Let's take the phone for example (because Bell Canada interrupted my writing). There was a time when of course we didn't need phones (let alone faxes or the Internet). I love hearing people say, "I don't know how we got along without it." Well...you did and you did it just fine. I digress. Now it's not just enough to have a phone or hell even an answering machine. Let's get voice mail, dial display, extra phones in the house so you don't have to run ALL THE WAY upstairs. It's really insane and you know I sit here and listen to this poor woman on the other end try and convince me that I need these THINGS. Yes...I'm sure it would make my life a little easier if I had dial display because I wouldn't have wasted my moment of genuine fuggin' pleasure answering her damn call. (Bare with me it's relevant.) We've allowed virtually every aspect of our life to become easier and yet we're all still miserable (hence the increase in anti-depressants and alcohol, spousal and child abuse). When will we stop 'this crazy thing,' sit

back and say, 'Ya know these THINGS are not making me happy.' We are, as Abe Spalding, the protagonist of the very excellent Canadian book, *Fruits of The Earth*, living FOR the moment rather than IN the moment. As Heraclitus said in another time, we never ARE because we are always in a state of BECOMING. This can be a positive thing, as Heraclitus likely meant it to be, because it suggests something evolving. But today, basically it means we're all so god damn busy seeking THINGS rather than savouring MOMENTS.

And what happens when we get those THINGS? In "The Trials of Wendy," Wendy becomes a famous and wealthy TV star (after being acquitted for shooting Vince), but she's utterly miserable (as are Bob, Rex and Vince) and when asked, returns to her former life without any hesitation.

Without realizing it, Wendy has stumbled upon perhaps the most important element of pleasure in the Epicurean notion of pleasure: friendship. Friendship for Epicurus is a great way of attaining pleasure. Friends provide security and comfort. Without them life is lonely and full of uncertainties. Sure Rex and co. insult, shoot and hit each other, but they are always able to transcend their momentary differences for the sake of their friendship. Most importantly, they possess trust and treat each other as they would treat themselves (Yes, Wendy shoots Vince, but Vince shoots himself regularly). Friendship keeps them from loneliness. Sure they're miserable, but at least they don't suffer alone and for some it's better to go through hell with someone else than to go through it alone.

Hottie Animator of the Month

Montreal animator Stephen Woloshen, a genuine independent who has been quietly making some very unique, interesting animation for over twenty years.

"It's like a buffet, you just take what you need."

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

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

Animation – What The Heck Is It?

by Gene Deitch

I like things to be clear, so just to be sure we're all talking about the same thing, I decided to work out a bullet-proof definition of animation; something that covers all forms and fashions of frame-by-frame endeavors. See if you agree with me. If not, we're off to a rocky start.

Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, who know what they're talking about, called it "the illusion of life." But how do you do that? To do it, you really have to think about what it is. When you know what it is, you can master it.

In 1978 John Halas asked me to submit a definition of animation for consideration by ASIFA (International Association of Film Animation).

This was an interesting puzzle: how to come up with a technical definition without limiting it to a specific technology, that might become obsolete; to try to come up with a bedrock basic statement of stop-motion animation's technical essence? This is what I wrote him:

"...my definition carefully says nothing about film, cameras, frames, projection, screens, laser beams, computers or even drawing. It could cover all of these or any future technology! It is based on what I would consider to be the technical hardcore of stop-motion animation: the creation, recording and retrieving of individual phases of motion."

It should be clear that what

I'm writing about in this book is frame-by-frame animation — whether it's drawn, object-manipulated or computer generated. There is something now called "real-time" animation. Well real-time animation is nothing but live puppetry. Live puppeteers, working in puppet theaters with marionettes, call themselves "animators." But that is clearly outside the definition required for entrance into animation festivals. Real-time animation may perhaps save time and money, but it can never achieve the sharpness, precision and exaggeration of frame-by-frame animation. Likewise, frame-by-frame animation is weakest when it tries to imitate real life. Perhaps it can be done, but why? Best if the twain never meet.

If we speak of animation in its broadest sense, it derives from the Latin word, *anima*, "the breath of life." I would use the term "cinematic animation" for what we do. For want of a better term, it delineates our stop-motion work. For precision, I have omitted reference to any particular technique, medium or technology. Here is my definition:

"Cinematic Animation: The recording of individually created phases of imagined action in such a way as to achieve the illusion of motion when shown at a constant, predetermined rate, exceeding that of human persistence of vision."

Academic? I think it is useful to know what we are doing and

to realize how broad our craft really is. If you look at and think about that definition, you may conjure up a whole new way of doing it and presenting it, that no one has yet thought of. So a definition can suggest vast areas of technical and artistic variations!

To temper my strictly technical definition of animation I would want to quickly point out that animation is much more than technical.

The best and most poetic description I know of what animation is all about was beautifully stated by Steven Millhauser in his book *Little Kingdoms* (Vintage Books — Random House, page 107):

"...[an] immobile world of inanimate drawings that had been granted the secret of motion, [a] death-world with its hidden gift of life. But that life was a deeply ambiguous life, a conjurer's trick, a crafty illusion based on an accidental property of the retina, which retained an image for a fraction of a second after the image was no longer present. On this frail fact was erected the entire structure of the cinema, that colossal confidence game.

The animated cartoon was a far more honest expression of the cinematic illusion than the so-called realistic (live-action) film, because the cartoon reveled in its own illusory nature, exulted in the impossible — indeed it claimed the impossible as its own, exalted it as its own highest end, found in impossibility,

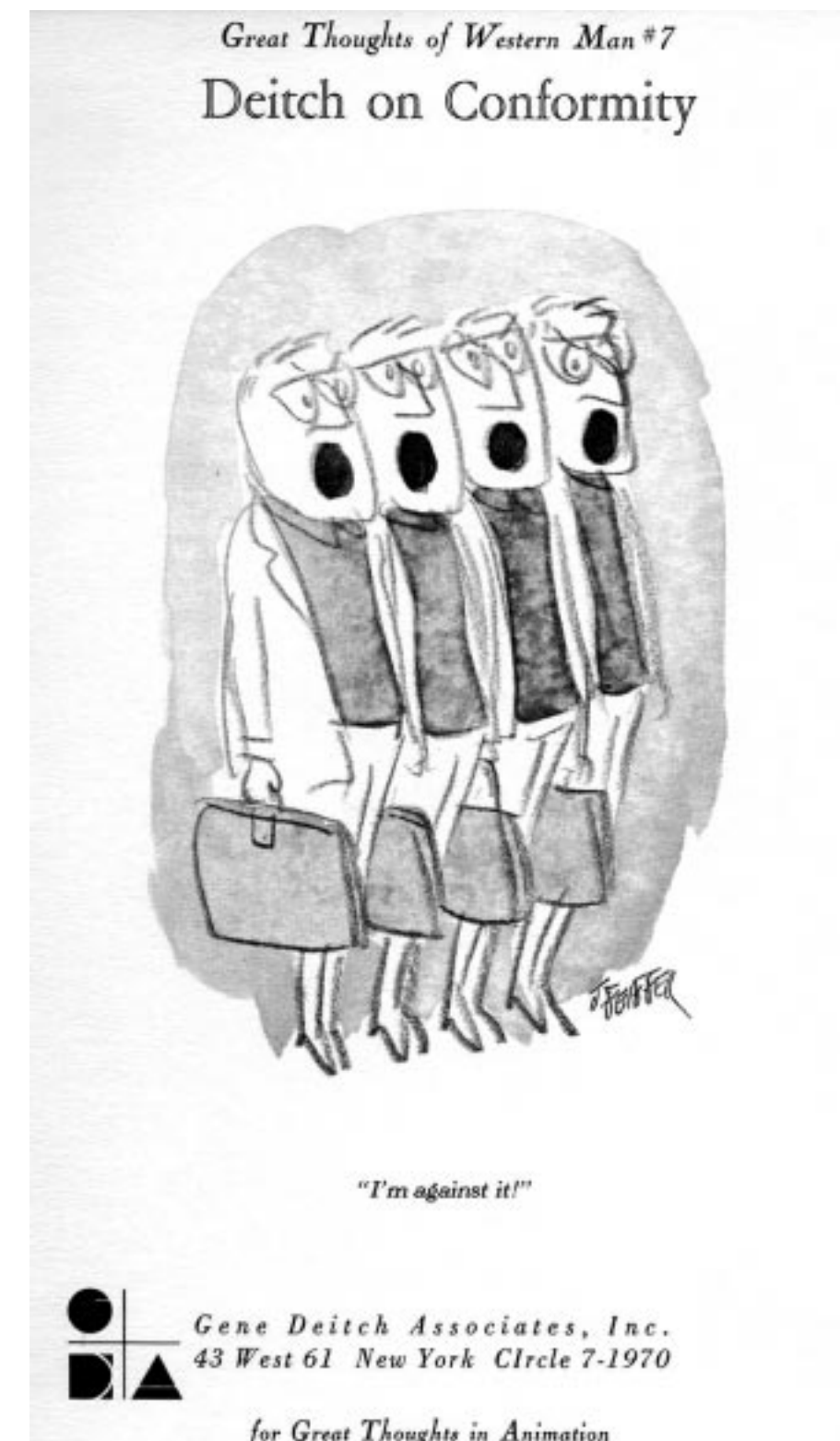
in the negation of the actual, its profoundest reason for being.

The animated cartoon was nothing but the poetry of the impossible—therein lay its exhilaration and its secret melancholy. For this willful violation of the actual, while it was an intoxicating release from the constriction of things, was at the same time nothing but a delusion, an attempt to outwit mortality. As such it was doomed to failure. And yet it was desperately important to smash through the constriction of the actual, to unhinge the universe and let the impossible stream in, because otherwise - well otherwise, the world was nothing but an editorial cartoon."

Beautifully stated, but it needn't be in the past tense! My feeling is that for anyone to really achieve anything in the medium, they must feel its basics in their bones. I tried to formulate my technical definition of animation without using any terms that indicate it must be on film, or any other specific medium or technology for storing and retrieving individual phases of action. It all comes down to creating and registering imagined action in the form of individual motionless increments. The basic difference between live-action films and animation films is this:

In live-action cinematography a camera records action taking place before its lens. In animation, only still images are recorded, and the "illusion of action" only takes place at the moment of projecting it on a screen or monitor.

I like to point out that animation, as with music, is an art form that exists in the dimension of time. If you press the pause button while playing a CD recording, obviously the music ceases to exist. It must have uninterrupted



movement through time to exist, and that is exactly the same with animation! To animate, one must understand time and timing!

The rhythm and music of a film is a basic part of the whole. In

a recent TV interview, the moderator asked me if I could choose what I'd want to be if born again, I said, "A musician." I worship musicians as the true cultural magicians. I can do a lot of things,

but I cannot sing on key and cannot play any musical instrument except hand drums. We are all living within various rhythms. I drum all the time. People think I am nervous if I tap my fingers on the table, but no, I am listening to and playing rhythms all the time. I hear everything in music, and I have had a hand in the composition of innumerable scores for my films and songs. I try to get across my ideas to the musicians I work with. I even attempt to hum to them the melodies I hear. They inevitably say, "But Gene, there are no such notes!" Frustrating. Oh, how I wish I were a musician!

I will not comment on the various styles and superficial modes and fads of animation. My point is that the basic medium is absolutely unlimited, and can contain anyone's personal vision. Animation technology is analogous to a

painter's blank canvas - you can lay anything onto it, shit or shine. But I must say that the principles of animation, mainly developed at the Disney studio during one incredible decade — from 1930 to 1940 — apply to any frame-by-frame technique, be it classic cel animation, paper cut-outs, stop-motion puppets, computer generated images — whatever. Don't conform! Do it your way!

Want to read more of Gene's pearls of wisdom? Then go directly to <http://genedeitch.awn.com>

Gene Deitch is one of the last surviving members of the original Hollywood UPA studio of 1946, the instigator of the CBS-Terrytoon "renaissance" of 1956-1958, Animation Department Chief of the Detroit Jam Handy Organization, 1949-1951, Creative

Chief of UPA-New York, 1951-1954, Director at John Hubley's Storyboard, Inc. New York, 1955, Creative Director of CBS-Terrytoons, 1956-1958, President of Gene Deitch Associates, Inc. New York, 1958-1960, Creative Director for Rembrandt Films, 1960-1968, star director for Weston Woods Studios, Inc., Weston, Connecticut, 1968-1993, and has worked for over 40 years with the Prague animation studio, "Bratři v Triku."

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Bonus HTML Features

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

Comic-Con 2001: A Pro's Eye View

Danny Fingeroth recounts the San Diego Comic-Con, an event that has grown to include not only the best of the comic book scene, but also the coolest Hollywood talent and inside scoops and previews. Go on-line to see snaps from the Con's Masquerade Ball. Visit:

http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=498

Inside Jeepers Creepers

Go behind the scenes of *Jeepers Creepers* with the effects team at E=mc2. Includes step by step explanations and QuickTime movie clips at:

http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=631

Animation – What The Heck Is It?

Gene Deitch tackles the shifting definition of animation in this excerpt from his book, *How To Succeed In Animation, (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)*, published exclusively on AWN.com. If you'd like to dig into the entire book now, then don't delay. Go to <http://genedeitch.awn.com/> and read away.

The Jobs In A Visual Effects House — Defined

Part Three of Three: Lighting and Compositing/Rendering

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

The last of a three-part series that describes the steps involved in different specialties of visual effects production, the specific skills required for each specialty, as well as what the studios are looking for in a portfolio and demo reel.

You want a job in visual effects but you have no idea what the jobs are and what you would be best at?

My recent three-part series 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. If you are skilled or talented in three or more of these areas you may want to consider a job with a small 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.

The previous two articles discussed modeling, skeleton/bones/set-up, texturing and animation. This article, the third and final article in the series, will cover lighting and compositing/rendering. I'll show you what is involved



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

in each of these steps and the skills required. You will also find out what the studio wants to see in a portfolio and demo reel.

Lighting

Lighting artists work in the 3-D environment creating the look of individual elements and entire scenes. This can include the creation of textures or the subtle use of virtual lights to enhance the mood and tone of a scene.

Skill set: Be able to light sets. Understand color, contrast and lighting design, and be familiar with 3-D lighting. Know how lighting can be used to increase efficiency by reducing the number of elements that need to be built

in a scene.

Demo Tips: The most overlooked aspect of a demo, lighting should create a mood or atmosphere. Don't have over-lit scenes just to show off models. Lighting should add excitement and depth to a scene. A portfolio showing video examples of 3-D lighting or traditional work, including painting, drawing or photography, is appropriate.

Compositing/Rendering

The final step where the computer animated character is combined with the real actors and live-action plate is called compositing. The compositor is responsible for integrating multiple independent elements, which could include green screen elements, 3D elements and background plates, into the final image.

It all comes together in rendering. As Terrence Masson states in his book *CG 101*, "Rendering is the cinematography of computer graphics." Rendering is the creation of images in the computer from the modeling, lighting, texturing and animation information.

Skill set: Have a thorough understanding of color, light, film and traditional photographic techniques. Understand color difference matting. Have a strong visual sense and the ability to distinguish subtle differences that affect the matching of elements created in multiple mediums. Have an eye for color and scene match.

Demo Reel Tips: Show skill in compositing moving footage, preferably film footage, animation and live-action. Include before-and-after shots. Other examples of work in computer graphics or traditional art mediums are also encouraged.

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: Pumpkin becomes Coach — animated the pumpkin morphing into coach using Softimage; modeled the fairy godmother using Maya; created the textures

on the pumpkin using Photoshop. If you did everything on your reel, say so.

If you are submitting your work to a company who attended SIGGRAPH or WAC (the World Animation Celebration) in August, it may be a few months before you hear anything as many of them are swamped with submissions received during those conferences. The best time to submit work is in the early part of the calendar year, though companies accept submissions year round. Check the company Website to

find out what their specific portfolio requirements might be for the areas that interest you.

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a career coach/mentor for hire/recruiter and management consultant. She is a frequent speaker at colleges and universities.

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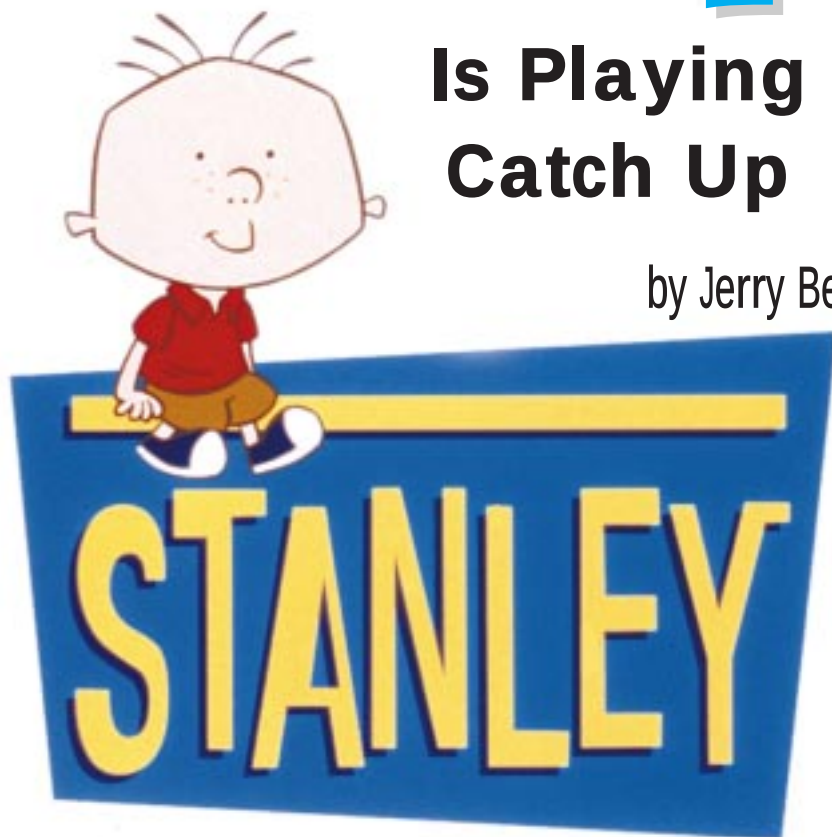
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TV Review:

Stanley

Is Playing Catch Up

by Jerry Beck



Welcome to the first of my new columns for Animation World Network, where I will review current TV series and specials on a weekly basis.

TV animation is certainly a unique breed of cartoon. Commercials and feature films have large budgets and longer schedules; shorts are usually the work of a solitary artist. Pity the poor TV cartoon, saddled with a bad rap due to a 40 year history of cheaply produced, badly written, horribly animated shows that have been blamed for every problem children get into.

But for every ten shows like

The Smurfs or *Super President* or *Turbo Teen*, there is one *Rocky & Bullwinkle*, *Ren & Stimpy* or *The Simpsons*. And when those shows come along, it makes watching TV animation very worthwhile.

TV animation has changed, mostly for the better, within the last 15 years. Before 1990, most TV animation was churned out for the big three networks' Saturday morning schedules, 13 episodes usually produced within six grueling months. Between 1960 and 1989, cartoonist driven classics like *Beany & Cecil* and *Underdog* gave way to network dictated drivel like *The Little Clowns Of Happy Town* and *The Gary Coleman Show*.

Pee-Wee's Playhouse (1986), Bakshi's *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures* (1987), Disney's *Duck Tales* (1987) and Spielberg's *Tiny Toon Adventures* (1990), followed by Nickelodeon's initial trio of Nicktoons (1991) were the instigators of TV animation's renaissance. Today cartoon series are produced mainly for cable channels like Cartoon Network, MTV, Comedy Central, Nickelodeon and Disney, as well as broadcast outlets like Kids WB!, ABC, PBS and Fox (for both primetime adult and afternoon kids blocks) — and that's just the U.S. market.

International co-productions and cartoon cable channels worldwide have created an insatiable demand for product, for both kids and adults, so much so that TV animation has become the genre to watch for the next big trends, popular characters and emerging creators.

You never know from where the next *Rugrats*, *South Park* or *Powerpuff Girls* will originate; I hope this new column will help locate and alert you to it first.



First up, Cartoon Pizza's *Stanley*, a new pre-school animated series which runs weekday and Saturday mornings on Disney Channel's Playhouse Disney block. The show revolves around Stanley, a curious little boy with a talking pet goldfish and a strong desire to research wild animals.

The gimmick on this series is that after an initial fantasy where Stanley imagines himself playing with a lion, or a kangaroo or a shark, the boy looks up the animal du jour in the *Great Big Book of Everything* (queuing a theme song each episode from Stanley's



Stanley at home with Dennis. All images © Disney.

singing cat and dog). There he learns all he needs to know to use his imagination to get into a fantasy adventure, all within the confines of his home. Pet goldfish Dennis asks Stanley, and directly the kids at home, some questions, which nicely move the story along and mildly educate.

The show successfully combines adventure, comedy, fantasy and educational values in a relatively appealing package.

The show is based on a series of *Stanley* books by London-based Andrew "Griff" Griffin, published by Hyperion, and is produced by Jim Jenkins (*Doug*) and

David Campbell (*PB & J Otter*, both formerly of Jumbo Pictures).

Jenkins and Campbell are now producing through their New York-based company Cartoon Pizza, Inc. and have enlisted a team of respected educational consultants to ensure the series its learning based curriculum. That includes The Wildlife Conservation Society for "a lot of interesting information about animals," and The Cognitive Skills Group at the Harvard Project Zero, a research unit at Harvard University. The goal is to help the young viewers enter the world of Stanley and share in the opportunities for learning and growing, problem solving, early math, science and language skills.

The show successfully combines adventure, comedy, fantasy and educational values in a relatively appealing package. The angular production designs are

appropriately simple and the vivid color styling is attractive. Stanley's character design is a cross between Charlie Brown and PBS' *Calliou*, and the program's interactive premise owes a nod to *Blue's Clues*. It should do well with its intended audience of under 6 year-olds — and parents won't mind watching it along with their kids either.

As technically efficient and well-meaning as this series is, it has the smell of a Nick Jr. wanna-be.

But as technically efficient and well-meaning as this series is, it has the smell of a Nick Jr. wanna-be. It's hard to criticize such a well-intentioned effort, but there is no

question that the Nickelodeon/Nick Jr./Noggin team are the current trailblazers in new-style interactive kids educational programming.

It's great that Disney Channel is joining this pre-school effort — but I think we have enough *Winnie The Pooh* sequels, thank you. I'd like to see the old Disney pioneering imagination at work, coming up with something not-so-familiar. With this series they are playing catch-up. More original ideas and clever visuals (like their *Rolie Polie Olie*) could help.

Jerry Beck is an animation producer and cartoon historian who is simultaneously developing a show with MTV Animation and writing a book for Harry N. Abrams Publishers. He also has a cool Website at www.cartoonresearch.com.

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



Stanley on two of his many adventures in the wild.

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Comic-Con 2001: A Pro's Eye View

by Danny Fingeroth



It doesn't get much bigger than the Con!
All images are © Comic-Con International, 2001.

You're in one of the most beautiful cities in the country, known far and wide for its breathtaking scenery and the perfection of its climate. But you never actually go outdoors or have any sunlight touch your body. Instead of expertly prepared nouvelle California cuisine, you find yourself subsisting on very mediocre pizza and hotdogs. You must be attending Comic-Con.

Comics conventions are unique among professional gatherings. Civilians aren't allowed into New York's Licensing Show, for instance, or L.A.'s E3, or into most trade shows and conferences. Certainly not civilian *children*. But at Comic-Con, fans and pros mix, the lines between them blurring. Last year's eager fan is this year's hotshot pro. And vice versa.

Any given individual's experience of the Con is just that: individual. As you could no more say what New York or L.A. is like from one visit to one part of town, so it is

with Comic-Con. Comic-Con is actually like a small city, in a way, a sort of Woodstock for comics and pop culture folks, without the mud, but with the overpriced bad food.

That said, I thought it was a great show this year. Ostensibly, I was there to expand my contacts and my client base for my writing, development and consulting work. That means my goal was to take in as many panels and events as I could dealing with areas I'd like to become more involved with and knowledgeable about.

But of course, as a comics reader since age five, let's face it, I was gonna do my share of geeking out. I mean, come on, Irwin Donnenfeld was there — the son of one of the founders of DC Comics. This is a guy who, at age 12, his dad shows him some art boards and says: "There's this thing called *Superman* we're thinking of publishing. Give it a read and tell me what you think." Talk about being there at the creation. This is

just one of the many great panels mc'd by Mark Evanier, the god of us geeks. Thanks for the Donnenfeld panel and all the other incredible events, Mark. (And for answering a question I had about the Marx Brothers a couple of months ago, tooz

Alvin Schwartz was another rarely seen old pro, who wrote many early DC Comics and *Superman* and *Batman* newspaper strips. He left the industry way, way back to become a novelist and advertising man, but he, too, was there when the biz began, when things we take for granted were just starting. To a third generation pro like myself, these folks are the Lumiere Brothers and Orson Welleses of our business. In addition, they present an alternate-universe take on the lives of our parents and grandparents, almost as if they came from a scene in Michael Chabon's *Kavalier and Clay* novel.

Speaking of whom, Chabon, himself, was at Comic-Con, too. In one panel, he and the legendary creator of *The Spirit*, Will Eisner, dialogued. Will was as brilliant and articulate as ever, and the Pulitzer-winning Chabon showed himself to be a true comics fan (as if there was nay doubt), as well as a charming and intelligent guy. I'll try not to hate him too much for writing the novel I — and every other comics pro — wanted to write.

More often than not, there were two or even three simultaneous events I wanted to attend. Even the geek/pro rule of thumb wasn't always useful in determining what I would go to. Sometimes it was as simple as deciding that if a hotshot I wanted to meet was holding a panel and 3,000 people were in attendance,

it was unlikely I was going to meet him or her in that context, so I'd be better off hitting a medium-shot's more sparsely attended panel. Often, if there was someone I thought I could meet home in NY, I'd go instead to see someone more L.A. or wherever based.



Cartoon Network let fans meet the folks behind *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast!* and get sneak peeks of *Samurai Jack* and *The Justice League*.

The Con, while the most heavily attended ever, seemed less crowded than in years past. I think they rented more space, and left wider aisles. It became less of an ordeal to traverse the convention floor. There seemed to be fewer kids than in previous years, which I find distressing, since they are the future of comics. Ya gotta hook 'em young.

Comic-Con is where professionals in a wide variety of entertainment media come face-to-face with their public, and vice versa. With its proximity to Los Angeles, plenty of Hollywood folks make their way down to the Con. Hollywood people come looking for the Next Big Thing. They are forever in search of talent and ideas. Which is why, fan or pro, it's a good idea to strike up conversations with people next to you at events or on a line. They might be someone whose work you've admired for years. Or they might be a fan of yours. They might be a source for your next gig, or your next date. For me, this was the highlight, meeting up with old friends and colleagues, meeting

new people, catching up on gossip and news. Fan or pro, you feel like you're somehow part of this Great American pop Culture Machine.

Will you get to meet Steven Spielberg there? Probably not. Will you get face time with some of your favorite artists as they sit in Artists' Alley? Yup. Will you hear stories of the old days from people who may have been just names on a credits box or in a history book before? Definitely. Will you get a better deal from a retailer on the Con floor than you will on the Internet? There's a good chance, especially if you shop the last hour of the last day of the show, when dealers are packing up and eager to unload stuff.

And, of course, there are parties, awards shows, gaming sessions, and informal gabathons at bars and restaurants. Or if people aren't your thing and you want to just spend all day and night watching movies, that's there, too.

My biggest disappointment? I went to the autograph booth where Edd "Kookie" Byrnes was supposed to be signing (if you don't know who he is, there's no point asking). But Kookie wasn't there. People said they saw him, but he wasn't around when I was! There were plenty of other folks giving out their John Hancocks, though, including Kevin Smith, Joss Whedon, Julie Schwartz, John Romita (Jr. & Sr.), Greg Rucka, Michael Chabon and Brian Bendis. And these are just some of the official signers. Anyone you bump into at the ATM is a bonus. (Generally, however, it's considered bad form to ask for an autograph in the restroom.)

San Diego is a great city. There are beaches and restaurants and clubs. There's Coronado Island. There's the Zoo. I've been

to these places. They're very nice. But the real reason to come to Comic-Con is the people and the hoopla. You meet old friends, make new ones, find original art and back issues of comics. You essentially get to spend time in an atmosphere where comics and anime and science fiction are not just tolerated, but extolled and admired, where you are not the oddball but one of a community that loves many of the same things you do. You come home exhausted but energized, whether your aim is to create the next X-Men or to read the next X-Men.

Go to the Con's Masquerade Ball by visiting http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=498! Can you name all of the animated stars depicted?

Writer, editor and story expert Danny Fingeroth was a mainstay at Marvel Comics for many years where he ran the Spider-Man editorial line, consulted on the Fox Kids Network Spider-Man animated series and wrote many adventures of Spider-Man, Darkhawk and the immortal Dazzler.

Danny has also written the Superman: Menace of Metallo Multipath Movie for DC and BDE, which appears on warnerbros.com, as well as prose novels and short stories. He started and led Virtual Comics for Byron Press Multimedia and AOL, where he co-created the Virtual line of comics. Most recently, he was Senior VP for Creative Development at Visionary Media, home of the Flash-animated sensation, WhirlGirl.

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

Graphics Cards and the Quadro DCC Explained

by John Edgar Park

The latest workstation graphics card from nVidia, the Quadro DCC, has been designed with the professional 3D artist in mind. The name DCC stands for Digital Content Creation. Anyone who spends their days and nights making 3D models and animation for film, broadcast or video games fits that description and will very likely find the Quadro DCC to be an excellent choice of graphics card.



Based upon the GeForce3 architecture, nVidia has designed this 64MB reference card for real-time 3D content creation. This gives the 3D artist instant feedback when creating, texturing, lighting and animating large models and environments. "We develop a core chipset architecture and then find ways to leverage that architecture," says Brian Burke of nVidia. The GeForce3 has been extended into the PC and Macintosh markets as a hardcore gaming card, the NV20 is the version found in the upcoming Microsoft Xbox and now the Quadro DCC is the professional workstation version.

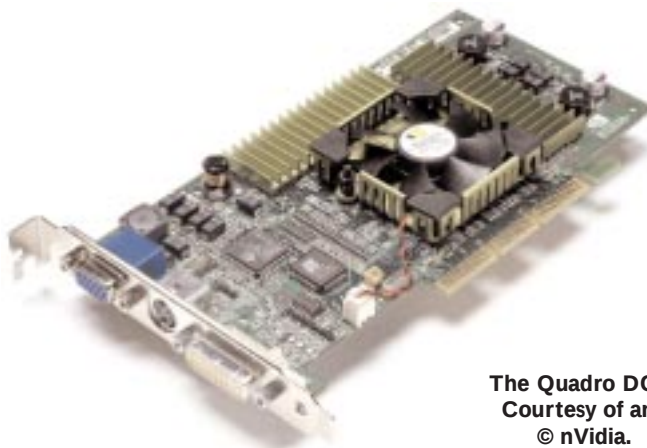
What separates the Quadro from its gaming cousins is full support of OpenGL and Direct3D functionality in high-end applications like discreet 3ds max, Alias|Wavefront Maya, Side Effects Software Houdini, Avid Softimage and NewTek Lightwave.

Graphics Card Basics

What does a graphics card do? Essentially, graphics cards are the gateway between your computer's motherboard and your monitor. In 1987 IBM created the VGA standard which gave us 256

colors on screen. Next came the SVGA standard, providing us with our current palate of 16.8 million colors. But the graphics processing still took place in the CPU of the computer.

Since then, major evolutionary steps have taken place, allowing users to quickly manipulate large graphic files. By offloading the graphics processing tasks to the graphics card (now sometimes referred to as graphics processing unit or GPU) the CPU is free to handle other tasks. GPUs like the Voodoo and TNT chipsets were among the first to gain wide acceptance in gaming and the Permedia and Oxygen were two early workstation class chipsets. What the GPU does is draw the polygons that are formed by vertex sets, attach textures to these polygons, calculate the lighting values in the scene and then paint



The Quadro DCC.
Courtesy of and
© nVidia.





The chameleon's changing skin illustrates just a few of the many stunning effects possible with GeForce3's nfiniteFX engine. Courtesy of and © nVidia.

those pixels onto your monitor.

So, the GPU is really a co-processor that handles the heavy polygon crunching tasks and sends signals up to the monitor. The Quadro DCC can add special effects to the image in the form of nfiniteFX programmable pixel and vertex shaders. These effects can render environment reflections, bump maps, multi-textures and others in real-time without ever taxing the CPU. Think of *Terminator 2*-style liquid metal (without ever having to click the render button) and you'll get an idea of what it's like.

Installation

I installed the Quadro DCC into a 1.7Ghz Pentium 4 workstation with 768MB of RAM running Windows 2000. It fits in the AGP slot of the motherboard and then connects to a CRT (standard VGA D-shell 15 pin) or digital flat panel monitor (DVI-I), as well as a TV through the S-Video port. Next comes the drivers dance as Windows 2000 and the Quadro DCC try to decide on which driver to install. After a few different tries, I found one that worked. The nVidia Website now has the latest ones available for download.

Also provided with the Quadro DCC is an application-specific driver for 3ds max called MAXtreme. This driver is fully optimized for 3ds max and allows it to do things that are otherwise impossible, such as real-time fog and realistic transparency. If you are running an application in OpenGL, such as Maya, Softimage or Lightwave, the Windows Display Properties nVidia panel has specific presets to enhance performance in those applications.

Performance

I ran some standard benchmarking tests that indicate viewport framerate under a variety of simulated working conditions (i.e., wireframe, shaded, textured and lit models and animations). The results were in keeping with the published stats for the card – which is to say, very good numbers. But the real proof is in actually creating models and animations and seeing how things run. I used 3ds max 4.2 and Maya 4 to build and animate complex polygonal, NURBS and subdivision surface models, add textures and lights, navigate around scenes and place cameras. In this typical

workflow the Quadro DCC felt very agile.

Maya's interactive paint and sculpture tools were responsive and fun to use, thanks to the Quadro DCC's fast redraw speeds. Dense polygon meshes with over 20,000 faces were quick to update, and only a tessellation to 50,000 polygons stressed the card and caused stuttering framerates.

The performance in 3ds max was also excellent across the board – it's no wonder that the Elsa branded version of this card will be offered directly from discreet resellers. Normal modeling operations and viewport navigation ran very smoothly, and the ability to anti-alias wireframes through the MAXtreme control panel provides some relief from eyestrain. Scenes can combine RGB Multiply materials, transparency, colored lighting, specular maps, fog and particles — making 3ds max look more like a next-generation game than a 3D program.

Hardware Shaders

Both 3ds max 4 and Maya 4 take advantage of nfiniteFX pixel and vertex shaders. 3ds max 4 uses the Hardware Shaders plugin, while Maya allows you to use any texture as an environment map. This effect is impressive, and is useful in evaluating the surface of a model. More effects should make their way over from gaming as time goes on. One neat trick already possible in Maya 4 is real-time shadow casting. Man is it neat to see real-time shadows before you render! However, using too many spotlights with depth map shadows slows down performance.

These effects are the first of what will hopefully be a large variety of useful real-time shaders.

Available on the development area of nVidia's Website is the NVEffects Browser that lets you preview some of the effects that programmers have built, such as cartoon shading, real-time refraction, fur shading and real-time glows. Unfortunately, until these are ported to the 3D applications, you can look, but not touch. (Looking at pre-release versions of Houdini 5 and Softimage xsi 2.0 at SIGGRAPH indicates that they too will take advantage of these nVidia effects.)

Conclusions

The Quadro DCC is a well-balanced, high-quality graphics card. It displays fast, accurate 2D performance in applications like Photoshop and After Effects. Its polygon pushing power is immense, as was demonstrated at SIGGRAPH where it was used to run scenes from *Final Fantasy: The*



If anything was going to test a graphics card – it was *Final Fantasy*. Image courtesy of nVidia. © 2001 FFFP. All rights reserved. Square Pictures, Inc.

Spirits Within in real-time. One thing worth getting excited about is the future of pixel and vertex shader effects; it's just too bad that more of them aren't readily available now.

Without doing a side-by-side comparison with the Quadro DCC's main competitors, like the 3DLabs Wildcat II 5000 and the ATI FireGL4, it's impossible to declare a winner in the workstation graphics card war. AWN will review those cards in the future and pro-

vide a graphics card roundup. That said, I strongly recommend the Quadro DCC to any 3D artist who wants fast performance and access to time-saving real-time effects.

Currently, you can get your hands on the Quadro DCC through nVidia's technology partner Elsa in the form of the Elsa Gloria DCC for \$999.00. It is also available as an OEM option on the Hewlett-Packard HP Workstation x2000 and x4000.

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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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.

Robotech. The Macross Saga: V.1, First Contact. V.2, Transformation. V.3, Homecoming. V.4, Battlefront. V.5, War and Peace. V.6, Final Conflict. The Robotech Masters: V.7, A New Threat. V.8, Revelations. V.9, Counter Attack. V.10, The Final Solution. The New Generation: V.11, The Next Wave. V.12, Counter Strike. V.13, Genesis. V.14, Hollow Victory.

TV series (85 episodes), 1982-1985. American Producer: Carl Macek; Director: Robert Barron. Japanese Directors: (*Macross*) Noboru Ishiguro; (*Robotech Masters*) Yasuo Hasegawa; (*New Generation*) Katsuhisa Yamada. Price & format: DVD, English language, V.1 - 13, 6 episodes/150 minutes; V.14, 7 episodes/175 minutes; \$14.98 each. Distributor: A. D. Vision Films.



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The American *Robotech* and its Japanese *Macross* component are both monumentally popular and influential. Harmony Gold, an American global TV distributor, wanted to sell Tatsunoko Production Co.'s animated space-adventure TV serial *Macross* to American TV. But *Macross* was only 36 episodes and the syndicated TV market of the early 1980s required at least 65 episodes. Producer Carl Macek's solution was to buy two more space-adventure serials from Tatsunoko Pro, similar in basic plot and art design, and rewrite them into a single 85-episode saga spanning three generations. *Robotech*, debuting on American TV in March 1985, was designed for the teen *Star Trek* market. It was the first Americanized Japanese TV cartoon series to court the new anime fan cult openly instead of downplaying its foreign origins.

Robotech was directly responsible for a sharp increase in anime fandom (an authorized *Robotech* convention in October 1986 drew 4,000 fans). At the same time, many TV stations treated *Robotech* like a typical juvenile TV cartoon, censoring scenes that they considered unsuitable for young children or disregarding the episode order, which destroyed story continuity. This influenced the anime fan perception that the American movie-TV industry did not understand anime, which led directly to the new fan-created anime specialty market in the late 1980s. *Robotech* has continued in popularity through TV reruns, licensed sci-fi novels and comic books to the present. *Robotech II: The Sentinels*, a planned 65-episode sequel written by Carl Macek and animated by Tatsunoko Pro, was aborted early due to business problems, but the animation that had been finished was turned into a video feature in August 1988; one of America's first animated direct-to-video movie releases.

Robotech's most popular segment was the introductory *The Macross Saga* (in Japan *Super-Dimensional Fortress: Macross*, 36 episodes, October 3, 1982 - June 26, 1983). It features believable teen emotional entanglements as young combat pilots and officers on the space battleship *Macross* and adjacent civilians are thrown into constant contact as they battle the giant Zentraedi warriors attacking Earth. A major fan-favorite character is killed in action; there is an interracial romance; the main protagonist, fighter pilot Rick Hunter (Hikaru Ichijo), is embarrassed and confused to realize that he cannot decide, which of two girls he loves. (In Japan there were sequels to the

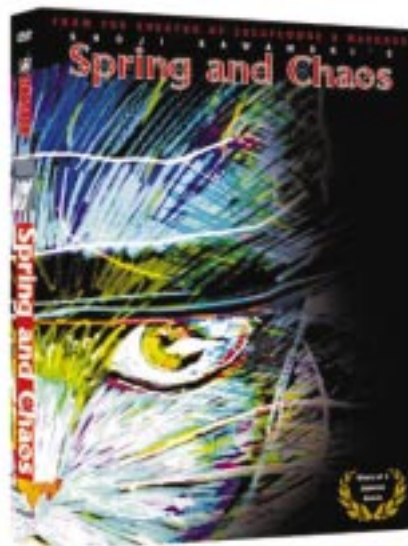
Macross series alone, two of which, *Macross II* and *Macross Plus*, have been released in America.) The other two segments, *The Robotech Masters* (24 episodes; in Japan *Super-Dimensional Cavalry: Southern Cross*) and *The New Generation* (25 episodes; *Genesis Climber: Mospeada*), were less popular. They were actually failures in Japan, originally planned for 36 episodes but condensed and concluded early due to poor ratings.

Robotech has previously been released on video in both partial and complete versions, simplified for children or uncut for anime fans. A.D. Vision's new DVD release is complete and uncut, but in English only since the American 85-episode story required such an extensive editing of the three separate series that the original Japanese dialogue tracks no longer match. Also, the individual *Robotech* DVDs do not include any extras. Those come with a special three-DVD boxed-set edition, *The Robotech Legacy*, seven sets at \$44.98 each. Each *Legacy* contains two regular DVDs, plus an exclusive "Elements of Robotechnology" DVD with 2 hours or more of extras such as production sketches, character model sheets, a gallery of *Robotech* comic book covers, the complete 80-minute *Robotech II: The Sentinels* feature with a commentary by Carl Macek, creator interviews, and samplers of scenes from foreign releases in a wide variety of languages.

Spring and Chaos: The Life and Times of Kenji Miyazawa.

TV movie, 1996. Director: Shoji Kawamori. 57 minutes. Price & format: DVD \$29.99 audio English & Japanese; subtitles Chinese, English, French, German, Korean,

Spanish. Distributor: Tokyopop Anime.



© TV Iwate, Group TAC.

Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933) is today one of Japan's most revered authors, though he was practically unknown in his lifetime. Popular director Kawamori's tribute to him has the emotional impact of Frédéric Back's 1987 adaptation of *The Man Who Planted Trees*; of introducing the viewer to a man who, although generally unknown, left the world a better place for his contributions to it. "Misunderstood genius" is a simplistic summary, though if Kawamori's portrait is accurate, one can also sympathize with Miyazawa's exasperated father and associates; he was too impractical to survive in a materialistic world. The film covers Miyazawa's life during roughly his graduation as a geologist, his failure to sell his allegorical poems and fables to the commercial literary market, and his career as a teacher at a rural agricultural high school, where his rhapsodic lectures about the invisibility of agronomy, geology, astronomy, paleontology, and all life and matter (a synthesis of Buddhist philosophy and news of

scientific discoveries about atomic and molecular nature), amused his students but gave him a reputation as a fool or lunatic. Miyazawa is also shown as being deeply influenced by the slow decline and death of a beloved younger sister; alienation from an equally idealistic best friend who makes a "practical" decision to fit into Japan's growing militaristic society; and his rejection by reactionary peasants to whom he attempts to introduce modern farming practices. Kawamori presents this life story in a non-linear manner faithful to Miyazawa's constant shifting between reality and illusion: showing the characters as anthropomorphized cats (one of Miyazawa's most popular fables is *The Cat Office*); constant time-shifting back and forth between major events in his life; switching between art styles and animation techniques from traditional cel animation to "raw" CGI to chalk drawing (very like *The Man Who Planted Trees*) and others. There are brief glimpses of images in Miyazawa's imagination that Japanese viewers will recognize as characters from his best-known works like *Night on the Galactic Railroad* (the inspiration for Leiji Matsumoto's popular sci-fi manga and anime series, *Galaxy Express 999*), *The Earth God and the Fox* and *The Twin Stars*. These will be meaningless to most Americans, though *Spring and Chaos* is inspirational enough to encourage one to seek them out. (The Japanese title is *Ihatov Genso - Kenji no Haru* (*Ihatov Illusions - Kenji's Springtime* from Miyazawa's fantasy dreamland of *Ihatov*). This one-hour TV movie commissioned for the centennial of his birth, produced by Group TAC and broadcast December 14, 1996, won a Japan Culture and

Art Foundation Award and the 23rd Cultural Broadcasting Foundation Award for Best TV Entertainment Program.

Vampire Princess Miyu. V.1, Unearthly Kyoto & A Banquet of Marionettes. V.2, Fragile Armor & Frozen Time.

OAV series (4 episodes), 1988-1989. Director: Toshihiro Hirano. 50 minutes each. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$24.95 each. Distributor: AnimEigo.

Visual allusions to Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire* are to be expected, but look for the scene in which two students in a school library discuss the advantage to vampirism of never growing older; a vampire will "live" forever. The camera flashes briefly on a book; the title is not shown but the author is Michael Ende. Ende is, of course, author of *The Neverending Story*. *Vampire Princess Miyu* was one of the first OAV productions from the Anime International Company studio; four half-hour episodes released between July 1988 and April 1989 (and one of the earliest anime releases in America, on both subtitled and dubbed videos by AnimEigo in May and June 1992). It was somewhat of a husband-wife collaboration between director Hirano and character designer & animation director Narumi Kakinouchi, who also wrote and drew the original *Vampire Princess Miyu* manga. (Kakinouchi specializes in vampire cartoon-art novels with heavy romantic/psychosexual overtones, which are often reviewed with terms like "elegant" and "vampire chic".) The pair avoided the problems of a low-budget production with an intriguing story that does not need

animation-intensive scenes: intelligent conversations, emotional conflicts, moral dilemmas, a slow buildup of terror in shadowy, motionless settings, and clever references to the vampire classics. (Miyu, the young vampire girl, is quietly amused by the whole Dracula stereotype.)

Himiko Se, a psychic detective/spiritualist, learns that Earth is surrounded by a supernatural dimension called the Dark. The age-old barrier separating Earth from the Dark is weakening and hungry ghosts called Shinma are breaking through to prey on humanity. Miyu, a centuries-old vampire permanently frozen in mid-adolescence, has been assigned to enforce the barrier by capturing the Shinma and returning them to the Dark. This has the side-effect (incidental to Miyu; all-important to Himiko) of saving humans from being devoured by the Shinma. But Miyu herself needs human blood; although, as she points out, she does not take so much that her victims die. Himiko is tormented over whether

she should aid Miyu as the lesser of two evils, or try to slay them all. Her dilemma is complicated by the psychological problems of the Shinmas' victims, which cause them to embrace their predators willingly. Aina is a sick young girl whose life is saved by massive blood transfusions, giving her the delusion that she has become a vampire. Kei Yuzuki is a "golden boy" high school senior, handsome and rich, who is bewitched by a Shinma succubus. Or is he stalking her, desperate to escape his future life which has been planned for him in rigid detail by his domineering family? Miyu herself, for all her condescension towards "mere" humans and their weaknesses, seems more envious than contemptuous of the mortal girls who will mature beyond adolescence into full womanhood.

Vampire Princess Miyu. V.1, Initiation. V.2, Haunting.

V.3 - 6 (titles not yet determined). TV series (25 episodes), 1997-1998. Director: Toshiki Hirano. Price & format: V.1, 3 episodes/



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75 minutes; V.2 - 4, 4 episodes/100 minutes each; V.5 - 6, 5 episodes/125 minutes each. Video dubbed \$19.99; DVD bilingual \$29.99 each. Distributor: TOKYOPOP Anime.

Almost ten years after its OAV incarnation, *Vampire Princess Miyu* was re-adapted into a 25 episode TV version. Director Hirano and music composer Kenji Kawai ably performed their same roles. Kakinouchi advised on story and art, though actual character designs are by Megumi Kadosono. American rights to the TV series have been sold to a different anime specialty company, creating confusion as to what extent differences between spellings and names are due to different American translators and to what extent they represent actual changes. The distinction between "Larva" and "Lava" (the name of Miyu's silent pretty-boy Shinma assistant; resonances to the English word "lover" may be inferred) and "the Dark" and "the darkness" are presumably translators' decisions. The distinction between director Hirano's first name is actual; American fans learn to get used to Japanese filmmakers adopting and dropping nicknames and pseudonyms. To increase the confusion, AnimEigo lists the credits in Oriental name order (e.g. Kakinouchi Narumi), while TOKYOPOP lists them in Occidental name order (Narumi Kakinouchi). And both series are titled simply *Vampire Princess Miyu*.

The TV version is specifically aimed at young adolescents. In the OAV, one episode is set in a high school where Miyu impersonates a student while she tracks down the Shinma on the campus.

The whole TV series is set around a middle school which she uses as a home base as she searches for Shinma throughout the surrounding large city, while entering the school as Miyu Yamano, a 13-year-old transfer student. Chisato Inoue, a bubbly young teen, invites Miyu to join her girls' clique. Miyu accepts to improve her disguise as an ordinary student, but is soon drawn into genuine friendship with Chisato, Yukari and Hisae. Larva is transformed from a probable offstage older lover into a helpful big brother, and Miyu gains a cutely grotesque Shinma talking bunny-rabbit pet (with blatant plush toy potential). The OAV was deliberately vague as to Miyu's personal feelings about humans. The TV series turns this into a definite conflict by splitting Miyu's personality and giving the callous half to Reiha, a second Shinma hunter who appears in Episode #4 to assist her. Reiha is only concerned with finding Shinma and sees nothing wrong with using humans as disposable bait. This crystallizes Miyu's determination to put the safety of humans above their job of returning Shinma to the darkness, making her a clear heroine and protector of her school chums from Reiha as well as the Shinma. Miyu's personal need as a vampire for blood is essentially forgotten. The TV series has more action scenes than the OAV (to appeal to teen viewers), which makes the limited animation (again by A.I.C., in cooperation with Group TAC) more obvious. Despite being tailored for young adults, the *Vampire Princess Miyu* TV series ended up in a Tuesday 1:15 a.m. time-slot, October 7, 1997 through March 31, 1998, where few saw it. This was a pity, because the TV series is

quite a good Young Adult fantasy thriller; certainly more intelligent than most of the anime adolescent T&A fantasies about air-headed super-endowed sex toys or lust-demons out to ravish all the coeds. Both the OAV and the TV versions have their merits, and neither is a pale imitation of the other.

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

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Buster Keaton Remembered

reviewed by Will Ryan



This is a book to read! This is a book to see! It's a book to have, it's a book to give. It will inspire, it will amaze. If you don't have a coffee table, it's worth getting one just to put this book on top of it.

For someone who, as far as I have been able to discern, never directly participated in the medium, Buster Keaton is a key figure in the development of animation. He was a direct inspiration for some of the finest artists in the field. His influence on Walt Disney and his studio are obvious.

Included in this book's 240 pages are 225 photographs chosen from thousands of images of Buster — family photos and film

stills — and many from the original 8x10 negatives. As Manohar Bowman points out in his notes on the photography, "...[S]ome of the most famous stills of Keaton were cartoonish 'gag' shots that did not even appear in the films they were supposedly representing. For example, two of the most instantly recognizable photographs of Keaton from *The Navigator* (Keaton sitting stoically on the steamship, and Keaton hanging off the rigging ropes looking out at the sea) are nowhere to be found in the film."

Keaton's use of publicity "gag" shots was picked up by the Disney studios in their use of special publicity artwork for individual

cartoons. A picture can be worth a thousand words, or maybe sell a thousand tickets. Mickey Mouse's first starring release, *Steamboat Willie* (released November 18, 1928), was a clear pun on Keaton's recent (May 12, 1928) success *Steamboat Bill Jr.* Moreover, Buster meets Mickey Mouse in one of Mickey's earliest cartoons. Buster's films were screened regularly to "inspire" the animators and gag men at the studio. The "borrowing" of gags or ideas was inevitable.

Buster guest-stars as an animated character in cartoons for other studios, too. He played a cartoon character in the first *Li'l Abner* feature film. And of course he began his career as a living cartoon. The family act, *The Three Keatons*, consisted of knock-about, grotesque caricatures of shanty Irish — right out of the funny pages. They presaged *Happy Hooligan* and *Jiggs and Maggie*, who later went on to star in animated cartoons.

And speaking of funny pages, here's a conundrum for the ages: Which Buster came first, the Keaton or the Brown?

Buster was responsible for making a film actor out of an East Coast mug named Edward Brophy, who went on to create the voice of Timothy Mouse, famed sidekick of *Dumbo*. Buster was longtime pals with fellow ukulele strummer Cliff Edwards. They were in three feature films together including one shot primarily in Buster's Beverly Hills home! Cliff went on to create the voices of *Jiminy Cricket* and another *Dumbo* sidekick, *Jim Crow* (if that's still the character's name). Buster's co-star in his early talkies was *Jimmy Durante*, who later famously hosted (as an animated

figure) a Rankin-Bass stop-motion perennial.



Buster as Lonesome Polecat, with Granville Owen as Li'l Abner and Bud Jamison as Hairless Joe. © 1940 RKO Radio Pictures, Inc. Courtesy of The Aarchives/Will Ryan.

As a comedy technician whose very body was a prop for humor, Buster Keaton reigns supreme. Only Lupino Lane approached him as an acrobatic comedy star. Even after over 100 years of cinema, no one has come close to mastering the physics and geometry of cinematic comedy in live-action. In animation, I would argue that Chuck Jones together with Mike Maltese and Maurice Noble and other collaborators approximate the template set by Buster, particularly in the Roadrunner cartoons. The cerebral, surreal quality of Buster's battle with real life's frustrations is reflected in the Coyote's obsessive pursuit of the elusive.

While drawing a picture at his home one day, Chuck said to me, "You know, one thing about Buster Keaton: he acted with his feet." Okay: I was stumped. "What do you mean?" Without looking up from his drawing, the great cartoon director explained. "Well, he doesn't act with his face. It never moves. So he acts with his feet. If he's confused by something, he walks up to it, maybe takes a few steps back. Might even walk around it. No expression on his face, so he acts with his feet."

Hmmm. This guy has thought about Buster Keaton a lot. And it shows in his work.

The text of this book is as outstanding as the visuals. Included are reminiscences by Buster's widow, the late Eleanor Keaton, a filmography, Eleanor's famous recipe for baking a pork-pie hat, an afterword by British film historian Kevin Brownlow and essays on each of Buster's greatest films and on every stage of his career.

There was once a book, translated from the French, called *The Look of Buster Keaton*. It consisted of many photographic portraits and running commentary praising the "beauty" of Buster's face. The commentary seemed at odds with the 40 miles of bad road the public was confronted with on Buster's later television appearances (*Twilight Zone*, *Ed Sullivan*, etc.) and in films (all those American International pictures). But the book managed to confirm with photographic evidence its contention. Not unlike Japanese puppets whose faces are immobile masks, Buster's face in his early films reflects and emits mystery, profundity and a vaguely surreal transcendence, which might indeed be described as beauty. Whatever its qualities, that earlier book lacked the impressive packaging and pedigree of the book currently under review.

Buster Keaton Remembered should be on the shelves of all the animation professionals who frequent the Buster Keaton screenings at the Silent Movie Theatre on Fairfax in Los Angeles. Based on my visits to such screenings, that's a sizeable percentage of the people in the L.A. business.

It would have been nice had Eleanor Keaton lived to see

this completed book. But Buster's widow passed away as the book was well along in production. *Buster Keaton Remembered* is a labor of love. It memorializes Buster Keaton in a way that would please Marc Antony. It works in the way that memory works for the luckiest of us: the bad parts are skimmed over or ignored and the very best remains vivid and alive.



Buster with Anita Page and Cliff "Ukulele Ike" Edwards in 1931's *Sidewalks of New York*, an early talkie from MGM. © MGM. Courtesy of The Aarchives/Will Ryan.

Buster Keaton Remembered by Eleanor Keaton and Jeffrey Vance. New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001. 225 black-and-white photographs, 238 pages. ISBN: 0-8109-4227-5 (us \$45.00/CAN\$65.00)

Will Ryan was a friend of the late Eleanor Keaton. This was perhaps because, despite or regardless of the fact that he plays the ukulele. He has received Emmy and Writer's Guild Award nominations for his work as a writer/producer. Among his current projects are the Annie Award-winning series Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective! and the screenplay for Murder In Malibu.

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