

ANIMATION

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Waking Life

CGI vs. Traditional:
What's the Score?

TV Trends

Gene Deitch and Terrytoons

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Nine And A Half Questions...

Milton Knight

by Will Ryan



Milton Knight a few short years ago.

Milton Knight is in at least one way the Grim Natwick of our time: he entered the animation business as an already-famous illustrator and cartoonist. He brings to the animation industry not only a strong personal artistic viewpoint, but a depth of knowledge of art, music and animation history matched by few.

I spoke with Milton at the Los Angeles Equestrian Center, a short trot away from the Burbank offices of ASIFA-Hollywood, which recently honored Milton with an exhibition of his paintings.



Will Ryan: Milton, your drawing style is unlike anyone else's.

Milton Knight: Thanks.

WR: Who in the world influenced you?

MK: Right now, Chinese art very much, and Asian art in general. As for oil painters in the Twentieth Century, Xu Beihong. Asian graphics as well. Russian art.

WR: How about earlier influences?

MK: For a long time in my twenties, I was heavily influenced by the Japanese.

WR: Ukiyo-e?

MK: Yes, the great nineteenth century printmakers like Kuniyoshi, Kunasada and the rest.

WR: I shall look forward to your "One Hundred Views of Mount Wilson."

MK: Too smoggy, I'm afraid. There are a lot of other early influences, too; I don't know how far you want to go with this question.

WR: Well, we've gone halfway around the world so far. How about American influences? Any domestic animators or cartoonists you'd care to cite?

MK: The New York artists, generally.

WR: Okay, I'll specify a New Yorker. Decades ago you were waving the flag for the animation

of Jim Tyer. When were you first aware of his work?

MK: I was imitating his drawings when I was six years old. When I watched his *Heckle and Jeckle* cartoons at that age, I loved his work. I called him "the stretchy artist." I didn't find out his name until I was in my teens.

WR: What drew you to his animation?

MK: Rather than aiming for academic perfection, he drew as the action would be felt. Academic perfection is nice, but it was Jim Tyer's expressiveness that drew me to his work.

WR: Well, I think there's a similar feeling of strong emotion in your work as well.

MK: Thanks.

WR: One of your many fans is Ralph Bakshi. Any thoughts about him?

MK: Ralph gave me my first job in the wonderful industry we call animation. Sweet. Loveable. Ovenly.

WR: That's one of the great things about you, Milton; you always have an original point of view.

MK: Thanks.

WR: Is it fair to say you were collecting what's come to be known as "Space Age Bachelor Pad Music" fifteen years before its comeback?

MK: That's about right. David Carroll, Werner Mueller, all those guys. LPs that I used to be able to pick up for a dime are now going

for, I don't know, a hundred dollars.

WR: You know, Milton, I'm suddenly realizing that you're kind of an advance man for popular culture. Kind of a harbinger of tomorrow's hits. Kind of ... Say, you wouldn't happen to have any advice about – ?

MK: I do not give tips on the stock market.

WR: Just thought I'd ask.

MK: But stock up on Silly Putty.

WR: Ooh.

Milton Knight's new film, Caprice: Teen of Tomorrow, is currently in production. He exhibits widely and his illustrations appear in major magazines throughout the world.

Will Ryan is the creator of the animated series Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective! Hanging in his living room are original oils

by Grim Natwick and by Milton Knight.

By the way, Milton was just kidding about the Silly Putty.

We think.

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• MAGAZINE •

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:

Fresh from the Festivals: November 2001's Film Reviews

Don't miss clips from this month's selection of films: *Bike Ride* by Tom Schroeder, Alina Hiu-Fan Chau's *E=mc2*, Marilyn Zornado's *Insect Poetry*, *Lint People* by Helder K. Sun, and *Maaz* by Christian Volckman.

http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=search&sval=hofferma&article_no=860

The Terry-fying Challenge

Continue reading about Gene's time at Terrytoons at:

<http://genedeitch.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=chapter&chapter=14>

Want to hear more of Gene's wisdom? Then read *How To Succeed In Animation (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)* exclusively on AWN at <http://genedeitch.awn.com/>

CGI For Television: Don't End Up In The Cartoon Graveyard

by Josh Prikryl

TV animation is sometimes thought of as being the ultimate in disposable entertainment. It is mostly a 2D art form, but recently we've seen both some exciting, and not so exciting, forays into CGI animation for TV. The term 'tra-digital' comes to mind when I think of CGI productions that use 2D methodology and planning. Producers of TV animation, who only a few years ago were thrilled at the possibilities of CG production, now want to avoid what has become a cliché. CGI is now sometimes seen as an undependable and dangerous investment. A number (but not all) of CGI series have been delivered late, gone over budget and been difficult to control creatively. In general a feeling of overall predictability has eluded the producers who need to have control over what should be no more complicated than the 2D animation process. If CGI is to thrive as a commercial viability for television over the next few years, we must try to ensure that it will be as predictable as 2D animation production.

I have worked on most of the "all CG" animated TV shows that ever saw airtime and were produced in the United States. This gives you an idea about how small the CGI for television animation community is. Most recently I was CG animation director on *Butt-Ugly Martians*, which is currently airing, or is soon to air, in most territories worldwide. We completed 26 episodes of this all CG animat-



Butt-Ugly Martians: an all-CG show delivered on time and on budget.
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ed TV series on time and on budget. It was also my first experience working overseas, at DCDC, in Hong Kong. I have 10 years of production experience in the animation industry, and have signature approved close to 20,000 scenes as an animation supervisor. Having supervised two all CG animated TV series that were both completed on time (52 half-hour episodes), I would like to share with you my opinions; some of what I believe works for CGI television production and what does not.

Here are four areas of how some TV animation producers have gotten into trouble with CGI animation for TV and ended up in or close to that cartoon graveyard.

1. The Producer's insistence on extreme realism, rather than a stylization of the characters and sets.

This points to producers' preference for realism in CG television, and although the technology might arguably be available, it is not always practical to produce realistic CG TV animation at this time. Why not, you ask? There have been very few realistic CGI TV shows that have been produced on time, so there's some history to think about. Kids don't necessarily prefer it, and they are the intended audience. It's a burnout for your animation crew to produce overly realistic scenes while on a TV animation schedule. People complain about the



Stylized sets and characters were hallmarks of the late series *Voltron: The Third Dimension*, on which Josh Prikryl was a supervising animator. TM & © World Events Productions.



"weird" look the characters sometimes have. If it doesn't make good financial and practical sense to produce a realistically animated 2D production for television (can you name one?), then it probably doesn't make sense in 3D production. To develop a realistic look that is maintainable is one thing, but when one combines this difficulty with some of the other pitfalls it becomes impossible.

2. Producers and directors not heeding the limitations of CGI.

The hurdle of too many scenes per episode, and too many scene retakes, will cripple a CGI production. An unrestrained quantity of character and set models is often the case with "failed" productions. Writers must understand these limitations with CG animation upfront. If producers insist on not putting limits on this, they are probably going to have the episodes delivered late, no mat-

ter what any CG house tells them up front. It's easy to accept the large quantity of models in the boardroom, when budgets are being approved, as it's only theory at that point, but someone needs to be realistic. Often, we have producers requesting to remodel characters and models that were approved previously. This is another burden that is more common than one thinks, but even if it's

necessary, it's a step toward failure.

3. Incorrect software choices.

It seems unreasonable to be a trailblazer at this point in CG television production. Go with what works now, or what is already proven to work on a TV schedule. Render time, the technical equivalent to "cel painting" in the older 2D days, can make or break a TV animation production even if everything else goes right. If particular software has never been used before, or should have never been used, for television production, go with a more practical solution. It's simple math when everything goes right...but most of us can only be so lucky.

4. Finally, you cannot underestimate the importance of animator morale.

To complete a production with consistent quality, you must keep the animation team intact and with good morale. A good



Josh Prikryl as he hangs with some "BUMs."
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Art? Reality? Cartoon? CG has the ability to do it all. A shot from *Voltron: The Third Dimension*. TM & © World Events Productions.

animation team needs solid leadership to produce animated scenes week after week after week faithfully. After all, to a large degree, and whether they know it or not, the animators decide whether scenes are turned in on time and a production succeeds or fails.

Solutions

Okay, so those are the pitfalls, which brings me to how to produce a successful CGI animated television show. Let's summarize some basic points that studios can improve upon for success, or, how to stay out of the cartoon graveyard:

1. The CG studios and producers need to develop a maintainable quality, and must plan their schedules accurately if they, and CGI animation productions worldwide, are to not only survive, but become as predictable as 2D animation. Although a company might have a great looking

demo, they must quickly adapt a quality that is maintainable for 13 episodes and up in order to best serve their client. The stylization of a CG design for a show is not only more maintainable for the crew, but, as we know from 2D animation, a character's body and facial antics read better with some exaggeration, which isn't as easy with photo-realistic animation productions.

Producers must be willing to accept a quality that is reasonable, and understand that the entire schedule is in jeopardy if they allow too much pride to enter the production. *Shrek* took 4 years — what can we do in four weeks? This should not however be seen as an excuse to produce a low standard quality. There is a balance between the "higher than TV" quality and what I would call "low standard animation." A failure to understand this medium ground has had great consequences for even the biggest stu-

dios that are attempting television CG animation production. A production's goal is to deliver a message — the story. Unfortunately, there isn't time to finesse each and every movement when it comes to TV.

2. The scene count problem, and the model quantity, is one of the least understood areas of CG production for animated TV producers. Studios must set parameters early enough so the writers can structure the stories in a strategic way for CG production. To be safe, keep it under 400 scenes total, and 10% retakes are a good standard for which to try. There is also a problem of storyboards not following the look and design of sets, which slows down the animation process greatly, so we need storyboards to follow a model guide, and work with a more cinematic style when storyboarding. Ultimately what CG houses do is to interpret the 2D vision of the producers, via storyboards, and turn it into a comparable and quality 3D product. For that reason the importance of storyboard quality cannot be underestimated.

3. It cannot be stressed enough that the software chosen must be able to render effortlessly for CGI television production. Certainly more than a few productions have fallen victim to this incorrect software trap. Think about it — one half-hour show has close to 40,000 individual frames. If you're doing four render tests per scene, you have a severe situation if the software can't render efficiently, to say nothing of attempting multiple episodes per month.

4. Maintain animator morale. It is my opinion that animators will more easily follow a



Making characters “cartoony” helps them read. These Martians are obviously evil
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leader, who can him or herself animate any scene in the production in a way to which the animators can aspire. It doesn't work to have a 2D storyboarder direct the animators, at least one on one, because there is no understood empathy or practicality toward problem solving in regards to the animator's workload and creative issues.

A few good rules for a CG director to follow to maintain animator morale is: listen to them, don't yell at them, and if they are having trouble with an assignment, try and empathize with them. Also, if they have a great idea, let them do it! That's common sense. How many times in past jobs have we been asked to do something, which we KNEW our bosses could not or would not do? Grumble, grumble! Your director and team leaders must lead by example, and be good animators themselves. Follow these rules, and the animators will work harder than you can imagine for the show, week after week. Oh, and

plenty of treats for the animators now and then can't hurt.

CGI's look is widely accepted by both children and adults; it has a quality that we instantly relate to because it looks somehow real. I believe that CGI has an important role in the future of animation as it can be rendered to look real, stylized, or even just like a 2D cartoon. Probably the most exciting aspect of CGI is, it is still



The voices behind the characters of Butt-Ugly Martians (l to r): Charlie Schlatter (B. Bop-A-Luna), Rob Paulsen (2-T-Fru-T), Josh Prikryl (CG director) and Jess Harnell (Do-Wah Diddy). Photo courtesy of Josh Prikryl.

developing as an art form, and we have only scratched the surface with the possibilities of the art's direction. There are very few limits — beyond the budget and schedule.

I hope that *Butt-Ugly Martians*, and shows like it, will help prove to the world that indeed CG television can be as predictable and profitable a production as any successful 2D animated show. By consistently turning in episodes on time, and always striving for increased quality, CG studios can prove to producers that CGI is as dependable as any 2D show.

Josh Prikryl is the CG animation director for Butt-Ugly Martians at DCDC in Hong Kong. He has supervised a total of 52 half-hours of CGI animation production for both Voltron and Butt-Ugly Martians with over 18,000 scenes combined. Other CG TV shows he has worked on include: Nascar Racers, Xyber 9, Starship Troopers, Max Steel and Dan Dare. Before you start writing letters (!) — he is a great fan of both 2D and 3D animation of all styles.

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On Technique and Tweens: The Latest in Animation Trends

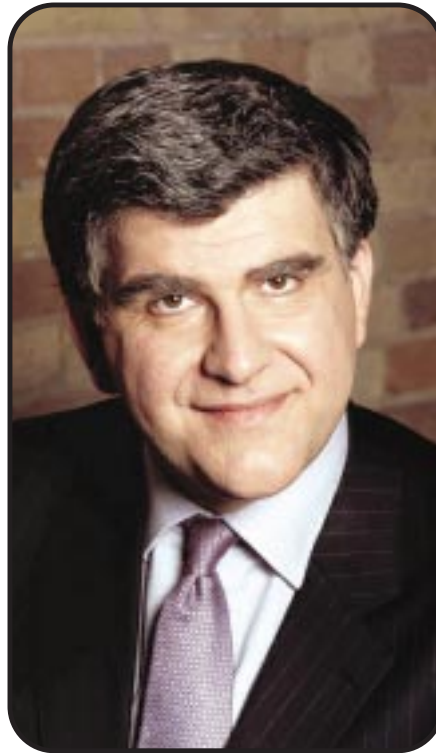
by Charles Falzon

From its earliest incarnation as simple drawings photographed in sequence to evoke a sense of movement, to the sophisticated rendering capabilities of today's computer generated imagery, animation has undergone significant progression and advancement fueled by both artistic and technical innovations. But whether it's the beautifully hand-drawn animation cels that come together to create the classic artistry of a *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* or the cleverly crafted lumps of clay that tell the amusing tales of *Wallace and Gromi*, or the ingenious, albeit straightforward, presentation of *Captain Pugwash* in 3D, animation styles are often determined by the content and environment of the story it's trying to convey.

Is There Only CG?

While the latest hit animation series may fuel a number of similarly styled programs, such as the recent deluge of anime style series that are currently bombarding children's programming schedules, we at Gullane prefer to focus on the style of animation that is best suited to the property we are developing. However more often these days, we're seeing a shift from the Japanese anime style of animation (*Pokemon*, *Dragon Ball Z*) to more sophisticated computer generated imagery or CGI techniques.

Among the many benefits of CGI animation are reduced



Charles Falzon.

costs and efficient production schedules, not to mention the form's multi-dimensional abilities and lifelike textures, colors and properties. CGI also offers a flexibility to blend various animation styles with live-action, while also providing a sense of interactivity or connect-ability for the audience. CGI styles can range from the crisp, cold look of early video games and the futuristic look and feel of *ReBoot*, to the softer, warmer look and feel of *Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs*.

Advancing technologies and desktop workstations have combined to make CGI more affordable as well as more accessible. When you factor in broad-

casters' decreasing licensing fees, reductions in advertising commitments and the consolidation of the licensing and merchandising marketplace, more affordable animation programming becomes increasingly attractive to producers.

The Tweens

But before jumping on the CGI bandwagon, today's animation producers need to consider the sensibilities of the property they are developing and the tastes and perceptions of their target audience. The children that comprise our audience are not only more sophisticated than previous generations, they are also uniquely connected to what their peers perceive to be hip or cool. And those perceptions change as quickly as the wind. That said, there is also the growing "tween" demographic group. These are the 11 to 14 year-olds that are being so expertly marketed to by the music industry. Picture the audience at an *NSync or Britney Spears concert and you've got a picture of this unique demographic group.

The added attraction of developing animation programming for this group is that if you can attract these 11 to 14 year-olds, their younger siblings come along for the ride. The challenge however, lies in the fact that it doesn't matter if your animation program is delivered via 3D CGI, traditional cel, model animation,

claymation or any combination of the above.

What matters most to these kids is the story — is it engaging, is it entertaining, is it real — and whether or not they can relate to or care about the characters. We made the decision to use model animation in depicting the tales of Thomas the Tank Engine, for example, because it upheld the integrity of the original art contained in the published stories. Often, selecting an animation style that conveys a similar look and feel for a property first introduced in another medium, such as a storybook, will convey a sense of familiarity to the young viewer. Simpler forms of animation can also provide a greater focus on the story and characters, elements, which can often be overshadowed by CGI's special effects. Special effects may grab the attention of many young viewers, but special effects alone are not going to keep them watching. It is the connection to the story and characters that will convince them to come back.

What we have been able to determine, through extensive market research and focus group testing, is that this specific demographic group likes to laugh, especially at parents, teachers and other figures of authority. They also relate to a more modern family environment, with fallible adults and heroes that are often less than perfect. And the protagonist for every story needs to have some redeeming or at least interesting characteristic. One-dimensional characters, regardless of how they are animated, just don't make the cut.

Does This Make Sense?

There is also a fear among loyal cel animation proponents

that CGI will eventually replace traditional forms of animation. While on the surface this may appear to be the case, I for one believe that the technology aids the advancement of all animation. Rather than replace traditional animation styles, CGI can be used to enhance the art form by combining hand-drawn character cels with computer-generated backgrounds or other applications of both forms.

So before you decide on which form of animation you'll use to tell your story, try to imagine your project in your mind. If the concept is culled from an existing toy or book, examine it in its original form and try to determine if a particular animation style lends itself to the property visually and/or seems like a natural fit. Does the concept have the capacity to play on more than one platform? Determine the overall brand strategy for the property and then try to ascertain which style of animation comes most naturally to the execution of that brand strategy. And above all, remember the golden rule that there are no rules.

Charles Falzon's career in the film and television industries began over 20 years ago in the Export Sales department for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. From 1977 to 1982, he was instrumental in expanding CBC's distribution reach, and played a key role in the formation of CBC Enterprises. After a successful term as Sales Executive with MCA International, Falzon moved to New York to join D.L. Taffner Limited as Vice President of International Operations. In this capacity, he managed the company's international distribution and co-production activity. In

1987, Falzon, together with a group of Toronto entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, formed Producers Group International, a diversified communications and studio facility company. As President of the entertainment division, Falzon was instrumental in establishing the company as a top producer and distributor. Four years later, in 1991, Falzon created Catalyst Entertainment Inc. Under Falzon's leadership as Chief Executive Officer, Catalyst established itself as a prominent Canadian production and distribution company both domestically and internationally. Today, Charles Falzon holds the position of Chief Executive Officer of Catalyst Entertainment, the founding Chairman of the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, and is President of Gullane Entertainment, an international family entertainment studio, with interests in television, publishing, licensing and live events.

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The Terry-fying Challenge

by Gene Deitch

In 1955, Paul Terry suddenly sold his Terrytoons studio and vast library of schlock cartoons to CBS-TV, who began looking for a new creative chief to "revitalize" the studio. In the spring of 1956 they came to me. Why, I didn't know, and I certainly didn't ask. It was the dream challenge of every red-blooded 100% American boy animator; a chance to remake the world's worst animation studio into the best. It turned out to be my greatest failure. Yet it was at Terrytoons that I created my most famous cartoon character, Tom Terrific.

I was so dazzled by the CBS offer that I completely overlooked two totally depressing facts. Fact One: What CBS really wanted was that vast library of 650 schlock cartoons. Mighty Mouse! Heckle & Jeckle! Gandy Goose! Farmer Alfalfa! Dinky Duck! Kiko the Kangaroo! The Terry Bears! Puddy the Pup! Little Roquefort! Names that reverberated like punctured tin drums in the annals of animation! Fact two: The studio manager, one William Weiss, had a tenure contract as his only pay-off for a life of toadying to Paul Terry. And he, Bill Weiss, would have the job of juggling those ancient cartoons into weekly kiddie shows on CBS-TV.

Whereas I was given the golden job of turning a loser cartoon studio into a winner; complete freedom to reinvent Terrytoons, to make a creative "renaissance!" A sure winner, right? Wrong! I never had a chance. I

couldn't fly, but like the bumble-bee, I didn't know it, and I flapped my wings anyway.

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There were 18 blank CinemaScope screens to fill each year for 20th Century-Fox. (This was still the mid-20th century, you understand.) And there was the parent company, CBS, which would be using us as their source of animation programming. We had it made.

Except for a few negative factors: When I was first recruited by CBS, they delayed as long as possible taking me out to the Terrytoons studio, until they felt sure I would accept the job. It was clear to them that I would be dismayed, and turned off, when I finally was introduced to Bill Weiss. They were right. The moment I met him, I sized him up as a crude and cultureless dead-hand. He regaled me with tales of how he was

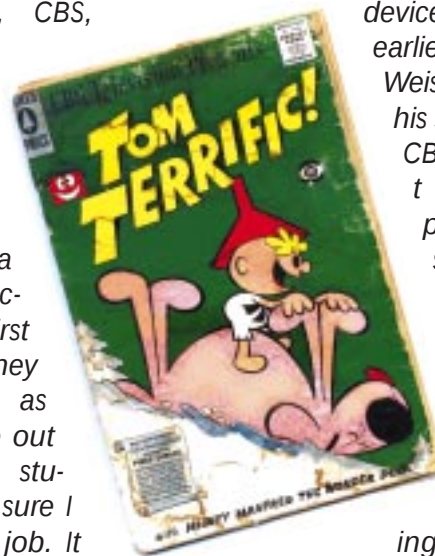
screwed by Terry. Bitterness! I reluctantly opted out. This was not a man I wished to work with.

Schwin had downplayed Weiss's position, describing him as a "business manager" of minor importance, and that I would have CBS support continuously in weekly staff meetings, which Schwin would always attend. I tried to protect myself by declaring that I would only take the position if I had a secure written contract. I was told that "nobody at CBS had a contract." I was carefully soothed into acceptance of the risk. I later found out that Weiss did have a five year contract! It had been a condition of sale insisted on by

Terry, who used that device to get out of his earlier promise to cut in Weiss on a portion of his sale payment from CBS, so from
t h e i r
point of view it somehow "didn't count." I considered Weiss a hateful and reactionary element, but in my enthusiasm for creat-

ing something great at Terrytoons, I dropped my guard.

While I was necessarily investing the company's money in projects I believed would in time raise the Terrytoons image, Weiss was simply and cheaply packaging the old schlock library



EASY WINNERS



Jules Feiffer's original model sheet for *The Easy Winners*.

into *The Mighty Mouse Show* and *The Heckle & Jeckle Show*. Easy money — and quick.

I inherited a studio full of disgruntled, underpaid old veterans...

Obviously, producing new cartoons, and especially trying to create new characters and raise the standard of quality, money had to be spent. The archival shows Weiss was patching together cost virtually nothing to get on the air, and they were getting amazingly good ratings. I was doing 20th Century-Fox Cinema-scope cartoons for an increasingly weakening theatrical market, with only a long-range hope of creating enough films to go onto television. Weiss was juggling and switching ancient cartoons from the vault, so as to make each

weeks installment seem like a new show. Clever.

So while I was working my tail off making a “renaissance,” Weiss was taking the train each week to CBS headquarters downstream in Manhattan, and making it clear to the brass just who was spending their money and who was making their money. I was cooked long before I knew it.

Weiss, along with virtually all of the 125-member staff, had resented my being there in the first place; a young outsider brought in as creative chief instead of one of the long-suffering staff. I am sure that Weiss was working on my ouster from the day I arrived. It took him just over two years to accomplish it.

I inherited a studio full of disgruntled, underpaid old veterans who had been led to believe by Terry that when he eventually sold the studio they would all get a cut. This was especially the case in respect to Bill Weiss. He told me himself that Terry had promised

him 10%. In fact, no one got a nickel. Terry negotiated the CBS deal in secret, and just took the money and ran.

I was cooked long before I knew it.

The morning it was announced, Tommy Morrison approached Terry saying, “Paul, I just read in the paper that you sold Terrytoons to CBS for \$5,000,000! Can that be true?” “That’s none of your goddam business!” said Terry. He then put on his hat and walked out. With all this bitterness, I was just another blow to the veterans’ position. Many thought I would be firing them all, and they would be out in the cold. No champagne for my arrival.

Terry had years earlier purposely relocated the studio from New York City to New Rochelle, specifically to get out of the cartoonists’ union jurisdiction, and

thus hold down wages. Having heard about all this, I had actually pledged myself not to dump anyone. As old-hat as many of them were, I was determined to reform them, not replace them. Nevertheless, I was perceived by Weiss to be a threat to himself personally. He was right. If I had been successful at Terrytoons, I would have thrown him out. But he got me first.

The person I most wondered about when I got there was Paul Terry. What kind of a guy was he, to have such a low standard of work, and such low regard for the people who worked for him? The animators told me that in the early days he used to go around the studio, from animator to animator, carrying a ruler. He would measure each animator's stack of drawings, and when the pile was high enough, he'd say, "That's enough, put a *The End* sign on it!"

It took a long time for Terry to show up to look me over. But he did not linger to look at the newly decorated studio. He invited me out to lunch at his exclusive club, and drove me there and back in his big Cadillac. He could barely fathom what I was doing, but he was full of advice, namely that I should create a character based on Charles Lindbergh, "the greatest hero of all time." He seemed unaware that by the mid-50s few knew much about Lindbergh except that his baby was kidnapped. Terry was by that time pretty much out of it, and believed that the style and humor of the early part of the century was still valid. Perhaps he was right, but I didn't think so at the time. He was mainly delighted to be a millionaire, and how he had outfoxed everyone at the studio. A

strange old dodo, of very moderate appeal.

I did have the studio remodeled, and had work areas rebuilt to create a better atmosphere. It was basically a huge barn, a scooped out former movie theater. All the workers — animators, inbetweeners, inkers and painters — were all lined up in rows in one huge mass. It was dark and dingy. CBS gave us money for a spruce up, to their standards. I had the place painted, and provided at least cubicles for the animators, and little rooms for the directors, so there would be a modicum of privacy. Not everyone was thrilled with that, but they soon got used to it, and I think they did like it.

I also personally designed a new Terrytoons logo. The original Terrytoons logo, with musical notes, was part of the studio's old cornball image, and one of the first things I did was to create a logo that would reflect a new image. I think the design is self evident, a reference to the smiling, movie-screen-shaped Greek theater mask, with the word "Terrytoons" scribbled as its hair.



My overriding goal was to reinvent Terrytoons — to create a new reputation; to win the support of the disgruntled staff; to revise, where practical, films in production, without interrupting workflow; and mainly to rebuild the story department, bringing in

fresh talent such as Jules Feiffer and Al Kouzel, and to inspire Tommy Morrison, Larz Bourne, Eli Bauer and others already on the story staff; to venture into fresh territory. I spent most of my own time in there with them; it all had to start with story and characters.

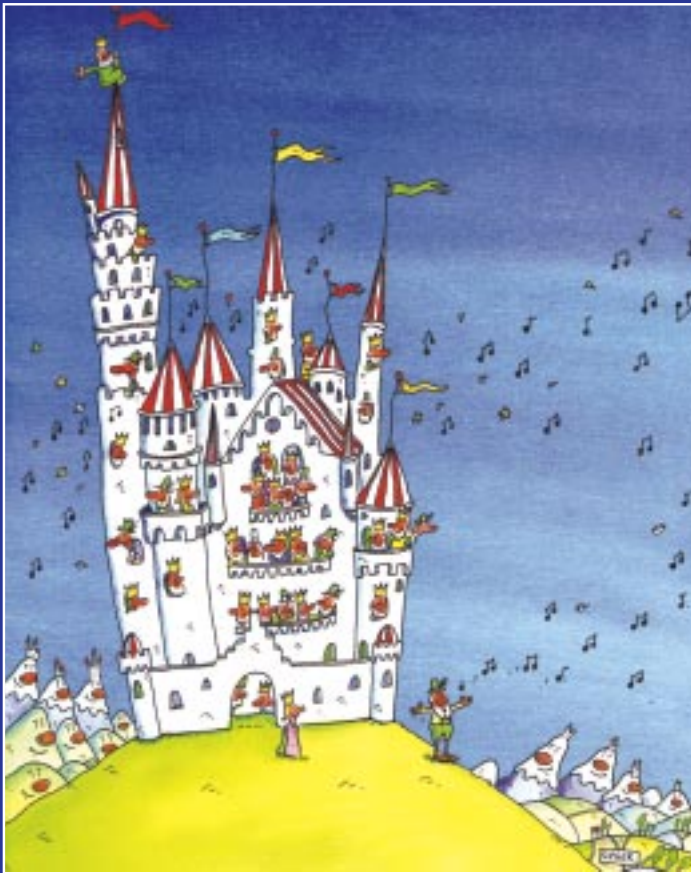
Continue reading about Gene's time at Terrytoons now at: <http://genedeitch.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=chapter&chapter=14>

Want to hear more of Gene's wisdom on story and a thousand other topics? Then read *How To Succeed In Animation (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)* exclusively on AWN at <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, "Bratri v Triku."

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

Cartoon Forum in Bavaria: Bigger, Longer & Uncut



by Heikki Jokinen

This year's co-production event, Cartoon Forum, was bigger than ever. The European animation industry gathered September 19 – 22, 2001 beneath the Alps in Garmish-Partenkirchen in the German southern state of Bavaria. Since the first annual Cartoon Forum in Lanzarote, Spain in 1990, the

number of participants has steadily grown. More than 700 people participated in this year's edition; 103 of them from TV channels and 162 were distributors or other investors.

This reflects the changes in the European TV market. The expansion of new TV channels has been rapid in the last ten years

and is still going on with the brave new world of digital television to come. With more and more channels, there is a more and more precisely targeted audience for each — at least in the hopes of the TV companies. Even though the amount of airtime for animation has been growing rapidly, the production revenues haven't. In other words: more screenings but less money per screening.



One of the many conferences that occurred during the Cartoon Forum was this discussion about animation production in Germany. All event photos © Cartoon-AEFA. Photographer: Tim Leborgne.

Markets are split between the primary market of big channels with generally sufficient compensation and the secondary market of mainly cable and satellite channels with very low price levels. One producer told me how he sometimes refuses to sell to this secondary market. The payment promised does not even cover the price of the office work needed to sell and transport the programme. When a programme has received some European or other public support, every sale has to be reported, which again means more paper work to complete.

Producers have to be much more aware of the complex situation in the animation market, especially due to growing feature animation production. As GEO Gert

Müntefering from German Bavaria Kinder channel said in a panel discussion about the German TV market: "We have to be realists in the market; one can loose nice money with feature animation or earn lousy money with TV serials."

Longer Series Are Here

Projects were also longer than ever. One-time TV specials have given way for bigger and longer series. The 79 projects presented had a total length of 499 hours and 50 minutes, some 63 hours more than last year's Visby Cartoon Forum. The figures, however, are only numbers. "The Soviet Union also had impressive figures — steel production was growing year by year," said one participant. "The European Union seems to have the same kind of love for growth, at least on paper to show the politicians."



There are many ways to market your project. Here's the Boo Team from Britain, in all their sartorial splendor.

In recent years, the role of the German animation industry has been growing significantly. This trend was clear in Garmish-Partenkirchen. German companies presented 18 projects and were involved in 17 others. Though British and French companies still presented more projects, the Germans are coming. The reason is simply the volume of the German TV market. It is the major market in Europe and needs a lot of new animation. There is also a



War Boy was just one of the many projects presented at Cartoon Forum.
© The Illuminated Film Company, Ltd. 2001.

lot of national money available through the Film Funds on the state level.

In previous years many of the projects were based on comics or children's books. This time there were not too many such projects, even though these are still important sources for TV animation. Many of the best known European comics are already used for animation (e.g. Tintin, Blake and Mortimer, Corto Maltese, Das Kleine Arschloch, Werner, Loisel's Peter Pan) and even more of the children's books.

The need for original ideas is therefore bigger than ever, because the existing European animation machine has to be fed. The problem is that not all of the new original ideas are on the same level as those taken from comics or children's books, where both the story and visuals have already been thoroughly developed and made a breakthrough in the market. Now we are seeing too many "uncut" stories and

ideas, which are still in need of further development.

What Did You Learn In Forum Today?

And what did we see in Garmish-Partenkirchen? Many fine and interesting projects. British Iain Harvey from The Illuminated Film Company presented *War Boy*, a story about a small boy during WWII in Britain. It is based on the well-known picture book by Michael Foreman, and is a collection of memories from his childhood.

The film is supposed to be a 28-minute TV special, not a series, and appears to capture the intimate and personal touch of Foreman's book by being based on his graphic style. Harvey has already produced one film, *War Games*, on another one of Foreman's books and is planning to do a third, called *After The War Was Over*.

"In the UK these films are used to teach history to children,"



Pitching new projects and getting business done continues in the lobby.

explains Harvey when asked to describe his motive. "My goal is to make animation that lasts."

Another completely different type of film was the Belgian *Paniques*. It shows plastic figures — like those I played with in my childhood and my son is playing with now — having various wild adventures. The planned series will have 20 four-minute episodes, with the main figures being Cowboy, Indian and Horse. The pilot, *Le gâteau*, directed by Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar, won this year's Grand Prize in Annecy for Best TV Animation Programme.

It is a completely crazy film. Horse prepares a cake, but Cowboy and Indian try to steal it from the fridge. At the same time a bear is trying to get into their house. The fascination of the film lies in the clash between children's imaginative play and adult humour. The use of plastic toy figures with their stiff movements remind us of our childhood, but the contrasting adult dialogue just leads to absolute absurd hilarity.

The producers were seeking the missing 340,000 euro of

their total budget of 880,000 euro. Judging the response from the TV channels this might happen. The pitch was attended by 94 Forum participants, including 34 persons from TV channels and 25 other investors. *Paniques'* per minute price of 11,000 euro is around the average price of the productions presented at Cartoon Forum. Usually 26-part 26-minute series are created with a budget around seven million euro, which is 10,000 — 13,000 euro/minute.

One of the major projects presented was *Arabian Nights*, a 26 x 22 minute series produced by Germany's Hahn Film. According to the producers it is based on the untold stories of *The Tales of 1001 Nights*. Sherazad, "a modern teenage girl, witty and brave, a role model," meets a lot of heroes and villains and has a small ghost to help her. Along the way, humour is not forgotten. For instance, there is a man who has something better than the usual flying carpet — a flying sofa!

Visually the series is well done. The Arabian-style backgrounds are combined with good quality character animation. Hahn

Film has a branch in Saigon, where part of the work is done. The series is expected to be done in roughly 20 months; seeking the finance will take until the end of the year and production 18 months, "plus the usual two month delay," one of the presenters realistically added.

Windows For The Web

WebWindow is a Cartoon Forum special section, which gives pitching opportunities to Web animation. It started at last year's Cartoon Forum. This year it included eight projects. Many of these were Web productions to support existing TV series — part of the package — but now France's Millimages Online's *Gotchaaa* is a project done primarily for the Internet.



President Serge Ewencyk from Millimages Online (I) being interviewed by your humble writer, Heikki Jokinen.

The concept is simple: each of the 31 Webisodes includes two 30-second black humor stories where "shit happens" to some of the characters. Every story has different characters and surroundings. This kind of animation is somewhere in between daily comic strips and television; it has to be sharp, short and reach the punch line with very few images.

President Serge Ewencyk



Mike Robinson (r), a session chairperson, discusses a pitch with participants.

from Millimages Online says that because his company is part of larger animation producer Millimages, they do not have to do TV programmes. "Our task is to develop new concepts," he explains.

"Our emphasis is the Web. We have to keep it always in mind. The animation we are doing has to load quickly, but it also has to possibly screen on television." Millimages Online develops animation for the Web, but they try to sell it for television as well. "We choose simple visual design that works also on television," Ewencyk says.

This means that the story is the most important part: "We tell the artist that there are not big possibilities for [animation] details, he has to work on the story." Ewencyk takes *South Park* as an example, "It's simple animation, but the story is strong. It would work any place."

Web animation is done using Macromedia Flash. "It's universal, cheap and 90-95 percent of Internet-users have the Flash plug-in," says Ewencyk. "Basically, it's the same to do animation in Flash. It's very simple. It's vector-

based and much lighter than pixel-based animation. It's also easy to enlarge." This part is true! Flash animations work on screens bigger than just your computer. When screened in larger formats, Flash animations yield surprisingly good results. Plus, every episode has a maximum size of 200 - 300 kb.

However, the key question is money, which is now running away from e-businesses, after camping out for several years. "One has to adapt to this reality and know the market," thinks Ewencyk. "We started last December, but only after we had real customers. We researched and got the customers before we started."

"The Internet is here forever, only the frenzy has stopped and the hype is over. The problem with some e-companies was that basically they just wasted money; they did programmes which were too expensive and didn't earn the money back."

Millimages Online does not start a project before they have at least one buyer. France Telecom was involved in their two previous

projects. "But we do not need 100 percent of our financing beforehand either, because the financial risk is so small. We can do the serial though 40 percent is missing. This is not possible with a seven million euro TV series." The budget for all Millimages Online series is around 110,000 euro, one third of the price for a similar TV animation.

Serge Ewencyk doesn't see the global nature of the Internet as a problem when it comes to selling Web animation. "Internet users are looking at national pages. French people do not read German pages. The content and language make the difference, though pages in English are an exception." He believes that even when a series is already on French Web pages, it doesn't make it an obstacle to sell elsewhere.

The next Cartoon Forum will take place in Wales in the city of Eriry, the Welsh name for Snowdonia, September 18 - 22, 2002. But before that, the European animation industry will gather to pitch feature animations in Potsdam, near Berlin in Germany, March 14 - 17, 2002.

Heikki Jokinen is a freelance journalist based in Helsinki, Finland and specializing in short film, animation, documentary film and comics. He is also a board member of ASIFA International and president of the Finnish Association of Art Critics. Heikki has participated in every Cartoon Forum since 1993.

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

dreamisdestiny: **Waking Life**

by Gregory Singer

*On November 8, 2001 in Los Angeles, an exclusive art gallery exhibit showcased the work of artists who helped in the creation of the critically acclaimed and widely discussed Twentieth Century Fox Searchlight film *Waking Life*. Puzzle Creative Development brought together and showcased the artists' work. Featured artists attending the event included Jason Archer, Paul Beck, Nathan Jensen and Travis Lindquist. Also in attendance to help put *Waking Life* in perspective with the greater animation world was Steve Brown, a faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts' character animation department.*

*Gregory Singer attended and spoke to the artists and other attendees about the film, its creation and the bigger picture...has animation painted itself into a corner? Are we getting such a reaction to this film because it isn't what we expect from an animated feature? Far from the subject matter, *Waking Life* asks many other questions...*

I imagine that we are all walking through life in a dream. This is the thematic cornerstone of director Richard Linklater's latest independent film, *Waking Life*. Having first wowed audiences at the Sundance Film Festival, the movie is now, slowly, in wider release, courtesy of the distributive art house arm of Twentieth Century Fox Searchlight. Though

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



The main character of the film, played by actor and artist Wiley Wiggins, walking through life in a dream. All *Waking Life* images © Fox Searchlight Pictures.

largely a movie of philosophical ideas, a "narrative of digression," as Linklater describes it, the film does succeed, ultimately, in couching its ideas as entertainment. Without coming across as pretentious, boring or annoying, the film achieves its message, in no small part, because of the nature of its presentation: the fact that it is animated.

With the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences honoring filmmakers this upcoming March (2002) with the first-ever Academy Award for Best Feature Animation, there has been some hesitation and contention within the animation community as to whether *Waking Life* should be among the considered films. For some people (not all), there arises a criticism: despite its visual "coolness," despite its innovative experimental technique, *Waking Life* is merely the façade of animation and not the real deal. For these people, not only should *Waking Life* not be a contender for

the Oscar, they feel it is somewhat insulting to the craft even to nominate it within the category.

Before we delve into this particular brouhaha, perhaps it would be helpful to step back and give a brief summary of how the film was made, for those readers who may not already know.

First, A Word From Our Sponsor

Originally, Richard Linklater, who has brought to the screen such films as *Slackers* and *Dazed and Confused*, worked with a small crew of four or five people to shoot the film as a live-action digital video. The coverage was edited, converted into a QuickTime movie, and then, using software developed by Bob Sabiston (more on him later), a team of about thirty artists — working on G3 and G4 Macintoshes out of Linklater's Austin, Texas office — painted over the live-action images, frame by frame, until the movie was essentially converted, or fabricated, into "animation." Ta-dah!

One year later, having devoted upwards of 250 person-hours for each minute of final film, *Waking Life* made its animated debut to the rest of the world.

Now, there has always been a politely muffled feeling among animators that rotoscoping (drawing over live-action footage) is a fundamental cheat. People may not express this outwardly, but there is almost an unspoken understanding that rotoscoping is a shortcut circumventing the imagination, skill, nuance (and therefore, "magic") of traditional hand-drawn animation. This, of course, is ironic, in light of the fact that rotoscoping has been used since the very earliest North American animated features, including Walt Disney's *Snow White* (1937), wherein we bear witness to a beautiful maiden dancing around her idyllic forest world with a grace that is almost "too perfect."

Steve Brown, a faculty member at the California Institute of the Arts' character animation department, historically known as a breeding ground for many future Disney animators, recently remarked: "Even when [Disney] didn't rotoscope, nobody really likes to talk about it much, but they used to shoot a ton of material of actors in costume, acting out the scenes. And they can say they study it for reference, and they don't actually trace back from it, but still ... to what degree are they 'drawing' inspiration from the shot or the filmed image of the live actors." Alluding to whether *Waking Life* merits some of the recent complaints, Brown adds, "It's really kind of a murky issue, it's really easy to throw stones."

The process used to animate *Waking Life* has come to be



Pillow talk with Ethan Hawke.

known as "interpolated rotoscoping." Bob Sabiston, the creator of the software (dubbed RotoShop) and the art director of the film, is an alumnus of M.I.T., whose own work has won him kudos, awards and animation gigs with such companies as MTV and PBS. For anyone who may be in the know, Sabiston is the fellow who animated *Snack and Drink*, a three-minute short about an autistic child in a 7-Eleven store, which is now part of the permanent collection of the New York Museum of Modern Art.

Sabiston wanted to create a program that was relatively fun and easy to use...

Basically, Sabiston wanted to create a program that was relatively fun and easy to use; that didn't crowd out the emotional involvement or the immediacy of experiment that comes with, say, a traditional pencil-and-paper flip-book. Again, perhaps ironically, this is something that artists are oftentimes asking for — technology that doesn't belabor their creative efforts, where they have to busy themselves fiddling with default levels and tweaking x,y,z coordinates.

Trust the Process

Paul Beck, one of the artists to work on *Waking Life*, will be the first to tell you: "I'm not an animator." With good-natured, self-deprecating humor, he adds, "I mainly paint houses."

Using a Wacom tablet and the original live-action video as reference, the animators on *Waking Life* recreated and interpreted the film, aesthetically, according to their own vision. Artists like Paul Beck and Travis Lindquist consider themselves painters first, but they also enjoy the fact that they can now, with Bob Sabiston's software, add animation as another hat.

Steve Brown, of CalArts, suggests, "I think that the main thing a lot of animation students lack is a real knowledge of art history and a real appreciation of contemporary art. I think that any technology that makes it easier for fine artists to begin to include animation as part of their artistic expression is a really good thing."

Nathan Jensen, another artist for the film who now works in Los Angeles, comments, "What was special about this film is that we, not coming from a trained arena, can sit down, learn this software in a day, and start to work." With each artist choosing and working on one actor in the film, at a time, director Richard Linklater notes that the process of creating the animation was the antithesis of any committee-minded manufac-

ture of consent. As the artists interpreted the live-action and brought to bear their own ideas and whims, Linklater would give his feedback on whether the animation was communicating properly. Jensen remarks that Linklater and the producers did not come to the project with a preconception of how the animation should be, or what it should look like. Jensen describes the filmmakers' approach more along the lines of, "We recognize you as artists, and we want you to be artists, and to do something to this film."

Remarking on this freedom, artist Jason Archer says, "A lot of the things that we did, it was kind of an experiment, and the mistakes that we made wound up becoming something that we didn't expect to see, and we left them in there."

Jensen adds, "We're not tied to any software, whether it's Bob's program or AfterEffects, or another animation software program. It's about pushing the limits of these tools."

Archer continues, "Anyone can use the software, anyone can create this animation, but it's the people behind it that really make it interesting. [The artists] are so creative, they take the viewer into this realm they have never seen before."

It's All About Story

This is precisely the efficacy and success of *Waking Life*, and the motivation for Linklater to animate the film. For years, Linklater had the general idea of the story in his mind, but there was never any clear way to depict the notion on film, of walking through life in a dream. *Waking Life* emerges as a

larger philosophical and peripatetic conversation, wherein the audience participates in the fragmentary and fluid reality of the dream state.



"I want to have real human moments."

As Linklater explains, *Waking Life* was really "two films in one — a double creative collaboration" that called for a full live-action feature and then a fully animated feature. Linklater explains, "I don't really divorce the processes. To me, there's this inherent overlap between the content of the film and the look of it."

"To me, there's this inherent overlap between the content of the film and the look of it."
- Richard Linklater

For some people, the "look" of the film ranges anywhere between hypnotic to dizzying; and its disjointed story structure is received either as mildly bewildering, or as a welcomed intellectual relief from the typical formulaic plot.

Steve Brown, for one, was

excited to see *Waking Life*, because it was something he had not seen before, visually, in a theatrical film. In clarifying his appreciation, Brown says, "Even though there is this goal [within schools] of trying to encourage new innovation and vision and approaches in animation, ... there is also this recognition that, no matter what developments may occur within the visual aspects of the medium, for it to connect with an audience, there still have to be almost 'traditional' elements of narrative and character."

In any storytelling, audiences need a way to relate to the characters on some level. *Waking Life* represents a kind of dichotomy for Brown, "Because on first glance, it seems to be somewhat non-narrative, or at least not a traditional narrative. But there is still an 'identification character' ... someone who took us through this journey, through this world; and that was important in terms of being able to experience and identify with the film. There was even sort of a classic conflict, which in a sense was introduced in the second act, where it became clear that the identification character was trapped within the dream state; there became this quest or goal to discover the way out of the dream state."

In all, unlike some moviegoers, Brown was a fan of the non-traditional nature of the film. "No matter how visually innovative or interesting something is, its real justification is in how well it supports the story ... how well it seems to 'plus' or work with what-

ever the basic narrative idea was. And, in this sense, the whole visual approach of the film was very effective in suggesting the idea of being within the dream state."

Animation as Myth

This, then, speaks to the real reason for animating anything, and serves as a rebuttal to those naysayers who believe that if a narrative can be filmed in live-action, then there is no purpose or justification in wanting to animate it.

Within *Waking Life*, there is a brief discussion of the "ontology of film" — this notion of trying to capture moments of so-called reality; and our subsequent relationship, as an audience, with this effort. Indulging in a "holy moment," with thunderbolts, electricity and clouds surrounding the discussion on screen, we glimpse through the window of what animation uniquely

allows for, in communicating ideas, experiences and understanding. Whereas live-action filmmaking oftentimes must depict a specific character with a specific look, in a specific environment, animation suggests, visually, a realm of absolute possibility. Animation retains an inexactness of feeling and representation, an "imaginative aspect," that we more usually associate or experience through literature.

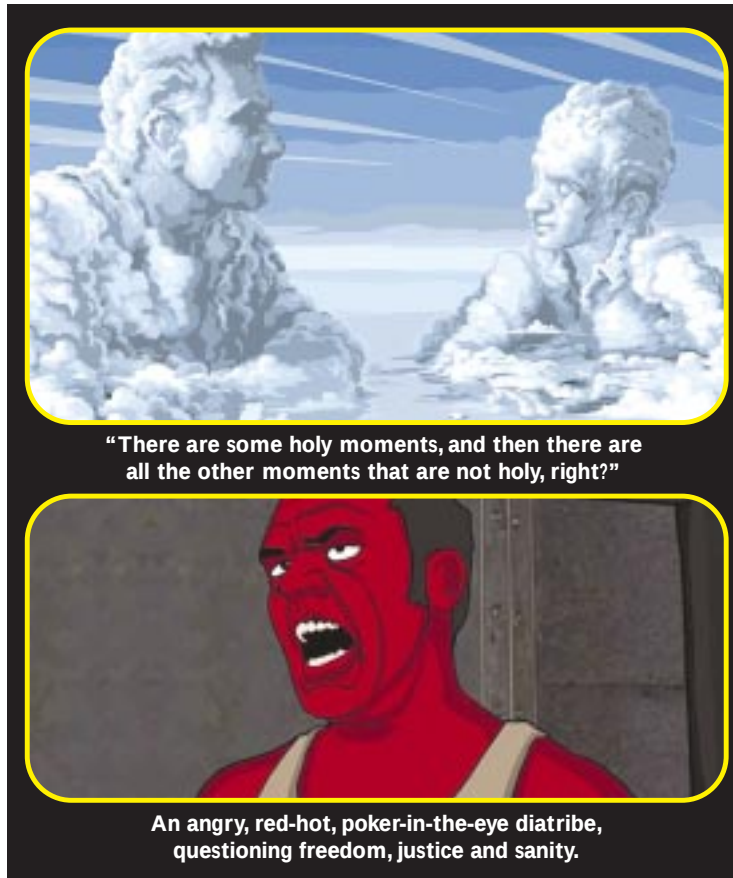
The animation of *Waking Life*, without having to slavishly maintain continuity of line or

character, echoes the dialogical contemplation of dreams, consciousness, identity and reality. The visuals of the film contribute thematically, suggesting that we are all, maybe, characters in a larger story, in a bigger dream, continually becoming and unbecoming.

Steve Brown compliments

a way. But then there were other scenes, where [the artists] were willing to start with the photographic image, but then actually distort the forms, and really think about manipulating the shapes. That's much more in the spirit of animation; that, to me, took it beyond the idea of just rotoscoping."

This brings us, therefore, back to the original contention of whether *Waking Life* should be considered validly animation. Brown suggests, "People are too interested in defending the little piece of ground they have staked out. I wouldn't go so far as to say they feel threatened, but traditional animation needs to be challenged, and to rethink what it is doing, and what it wants to do. Student and professional animators, both, struggle with their own ideas of what animation is, and what it can be, and perhaps they need to think beyond the cur-



"There are some holy moments, and then there are all the other moments that are not holy, right?"

An angry, red-hot, poker-in-the-eye diatribe, questioning freedom, justice and sanity.

the film in its success of going beyond the live-action images that served as reference. He likes that each artist could move away from model sheets, and interpret the characters according to their own perspective. Brown observes, "It's not the normal physics that one thinks of in terms of animation, in terms of squash, stretch and other fluidity of movement ... but it seems appropriate to the film. There were certainly segments where you could almost see the film stock underneath the images; they looked very photographic in

rent commercial paradigm for what theatrical animation generally tends to be."

Bring It Home

Rotoscoping, of course, may not always be the most favored or flattering technique for an animator to pursue, but with *Waking Life* costing something on the order of \$10 million to make, there are certainly arguments supporting it.

In terms of the availability of off-the-shelf technology which made this movie possible, "That's

the democratization of the art-form," Brown says, "taking it away from just a few powerful producers and opening it up to a much wider range of people." Given the ever-evolving nature of the industry, Brown fully advocates "bringing more fine artists, and people of that sensibility," into animation.

Paul Beck, in his own poetic way, agrees: "This stuff is becoming more available to average, everyday people, and we can do this shit, and make it interesting."

Nathan Jensen adds: "Now you can do so much with a \$1500 machine in your home, without a lot of extra things."

Steve Brown expands on this notion of an evolving and growing animation community: "I'm excited to know that there is this active animation going on in Austin, or really just outside of Hollywood in general. I think the

whole digital evolution of art also means a decentralization. It's an exciting thing to think that maybe



"On especially romantic nights with myself, I like to go Salsa dancing with my confusion."

there are these nexuses of animation appearing in other areas besides within the industry; and probably that is where new ideas will come from - fortunately or unfortunately - outside of the traditional Hollywood film business."

Brown continues, musing, "Part of the reason the animation industry is in trouble is that people [audiences] are just being given the same old things all the time."

Inagro Lazarre, director of Creative Puzzle Development, which is hosting and showcasing some of the fine art of the animators who worked on *Waking Life*, says, "The hope and idea is to create commercial art that still maintains its artistic integrity."

Brown concludes, "I think we have to at least be open to seeing what is possible, especially with the economics of the market."

Gregory Singer is an independent animation producer and freelance writer. He currently resides in Los Angeles, California.

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Drawn to Conclusions

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

Two predominant thoughts I had while recently biding time in a doctor's office: "How much will this hurt?" and "Which of my cels must I put up on eBay to pay for it?" Fortunately, I was distracted from these mordant musings by a pile of outdated magazines lumped on the coffee table beside my seat. My attention was particularly drawn to the June 22, 2001 issue of *Entertainment Weekly*. This may have been largely due to the fact that the fetching (and semi-clad) cast of *Sex and the City* was featured on the cover, but I also noted a startling question printed demurely across Cynthia Nixon's thighs: "Will *Shrek* Kill Old-School Animation?" Say what? Kill what? In the famous words of (put a politician's name here), "Sir, I don't understand the question."

As we consider this article,

"High Toon" (a fine piece by *EW* staffers Jeff Jensen and Steve Daly), allow me to set some parameters for the discussion. There are three conceivable ways in which "old-school" (meaning cel-ink-paint) animation could potentially perish: First, cel animation could be totally superseded by digital animation, thus becoming an antiquated victim of technological progress. Second, economics could kill "old-school" animation if digital features outdistanced traditionally animated features by a certain profit/loss margin over a statistically defined period of time. Studios would then inevitably produce one and not the other. Finally, cel animation could be ousted by a filmgoing public that casts its votes at the ticket booth. The generation that grew up on Nintendo/Sega/EA Sports and virtual reality experi-

ences is already with us, and they possess disposable income in abundance; children from the ages of 4-12 alone possess \$29 billion of annual purchasing power. All three of these possibilities are interrelated but not necessarily interdependent; for example, if studios decided to produce nothing but digital features, the public could demand a return to the "old school" and thus force a change. Yet, how likely are these scenarios, individually or collectively? In my opinion, unlikely indeed. *Shrek* will not kill old-school animation; nothing will.

The supposition that traditional cel animation might someday be replaced by new technologies did not begin in the age of *Shrek*. Consider these statements made by Charles Solomon in *Film Comment* (V18 #4, July-Aug. 1982) as he discussed Disney's *Tron*:

"In some ways, *Tron* is the ultimate toy...The computer effects are so dazzling that they can easily carry the picture. It promises to be the most visually revolutionary picture since *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Some of the visuals look like nothing that's ever been put on a movie screen."

This film raised the same



The success of *Monsters Inc.* will only fuel the traditional vs. CGI fire. © Disney/Pixar. All rights reserved.



Shrek's popularity began the talk of the end of traditional animation. © DreamWorks, SKG.

question in 1982 that *Shrek* did for Jensen and Daly nineteen years later. *Tron* displayed CGI effects that were impressive at the time, but so were Atari games and Farrah Fawcett's tousled coif; today a dedicated 15 year-old with a basic software package could do a passing fair job of replicating almost anything in the film. Today digital animation is capable of generating a virtual reality universe, but "old-school" animation is still very much in use. Ironically enough, it was cel animation (with a touch or two of CGI) that conveyed the Disney studio back to preeminence in the early 1990s — long after *Tron* was a forgotten novelty.

The truth is, animation has been wedded to technology and science since its inception — even though we consider it an "art." It is the nature of science to build upon and refine its discoveries, but not necessarily to discard that which has proven functional all along. The same plasticine that amazed audiences in *The Sculptor's Nightmare* (1908) had them crowing with delight in *Chicken Run* (2000). While we're on the subject of *Chicken Run*, let us pause to note that the film's stop-motion technique dates back to animation's earliest days. The first rotoscoped films out of the Fleischer inkwell left moviegoers shaking their heads, wondering how such convincing animation was accomplished. That was in 1919; in 2001 Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* and

its hi-tech spin on the rotoscope technique is sure to wow another generation. The same cel/ink/paint animation that brought Mickey Mouse to the screen in 1928 put him in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* sixty years later. Why indeed should traditional forms of animation ever be replaced?

I am tempted to say that the only animation technique that



Final Fantasy — a technological wonder, but is it good enough?
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I would like to note that computer-generated characters do have one unusual advantage over hand-drawn counterparts...

has ever become extinct is the rice paper "slash" system, but damned if Matt Stone and Trey Parker didn't create a mega-hit in 1997 by using a very similar technique during the early development of *South Park*. In short, it's unlikely that *Dinosaur* will send traditional animation the way of those extinct behemoths. Cel animation still retains powers that the most advanced CGI is still working to perfect. For that reason alone, "old-school" animation is not likely to be killed off. This is no knock against the miracles of digital ani-

mation; it is simply the truth at this present time. From the *Rolling Stone* review of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* (8/2/01):

"But then you notice a coldness in the eyes, a mechanical quality in the movements. Familiar voices emerging from the mouths of replicants erect a distance. The dark backgrounds leave you with the deadening feeling you get after too many hours of playing cybergames. You miss something. It could be the joystick, the interaction. More likely, it's the human touch from those pesky actors."

From *Entertainment Weekly* (10/26/01):

"But most of the time you're struck by how unreal the characters look. Even when they're not floating around in zero gravity, they too often move as if they're underwater. They cock their heads and give blank looks like interstellar Barbies and Kens."

When one considers that *Final*

Fantasy grossed \$32 million on a reported budget of \$125 million, the point is driven home emphatically — even though this film showcased the most breathtaking digital depiction of human beings to date. It seems that Jensen and Daly committed the error of confusing the success of *Shrek* with the triumph of digital animation over traditional; what *Shrek* truly did was advance the popularity of animated features in general.

I would like to note that computer-generated characters do have one unusual advantage



While *Atlantis* had some stunning views, some felt alienated by the character design alone.

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over hand-drawn counterparts; they seem to possess, by some convention, an equal degree of reality (or unreality). The very qualities described in the reviews above paradoxically work in CGI's favor. This mostly has to do with the fact that the technology is still being perfected, especially in the area of representing human forms and emotions; a good example can be found in the "old school" Disney disappointment *Atlantis*. Among the film's fatal flaws were the representations of its characters. We saw drastically cartoonish creations such as Packard and Molière alongside semi-realistic caricatures such as the film's hero, Milo Thatch. This is unsettling enough, but when Helga Sinclair shows up, sharply drawn as any dominatrix from the pen of Eric Stanton, the film goes completely out of balance. Contrast this, for example, with the characters in *Toy Story 2*: The toys and their human antagonist, McWhiggin, are inherently different life forms, but the fact that one simply looks like a bigger version of the other does the film no harm.

The second scenario to

consider, that of "old-school" animation perishing in the economic market, is addressed more directly by Jensen and Daly. As evidence they present the indisputable fact that recent traditionally animated features have flopped at the box office when compared to digital ones. *Titan A.E.* and *Anastasia* (Fox), *Quest for Camelot* and *The Iron Giant* (Warner), *The Road to El Dorado* (DreamWorks) and *The Emperor's New Groove* (Disney) are contrasted with digital megahits such as *Shrek*, *Toy Story* and *Toy Story 2*, *A Bug's Life* and *Antz*. The figures don't lie, but some things are overlooked in these comparisons. Consider the fact that *The Iron Giant* (despite quite a bit of CGI work) went virtually unpromoted by its studio but was wildly successful in its second incarnation on video; the same can be said for *Cats Don't Dance*. If only Mark Dindal had brought the charm of the latter film to *The Emperor's New Groove*, the film may have been a real winner; instead audiences saw a rush of hyperkinetic gags and verbal flashes that more suggested an extended episode of

Freakazoid. *Titan A.E.* actually contained numerous digital effects in its backgrounds and set pieces, but its reprocessed science-fiction script and unconvincing performances left reviewers and audiences colder than Pluto.

The quality and promotion of the recent underperformers, then, may have had far more to do with their box-office appeal than some direct duel against digital. It should also be noted that several animated features *did* do quite well over roughly the same time span: *Beavis and Butthead Do America*, *The Prince of Egypt* and the two *Rugrats* features were commercial and critical successes. Lest we forget, the highest grossing animated film to date is still Disney's *The Lion King*; except for a deftly displayed wildebeest stampede, this film is virtually hand-drawn. So, will CGI kill "old school" animation as a matter of course, or are stronger scripts, surer direction and better promotion among the more viable factors separating successful films from flops — regardless of the technology involved? As Jensen and Daly point out, "Computer animation has at least

two things in common with hand-drawn cartoons: It's costly and time-consuming." In an economic sense it therefore seems that before a studio marshals its resources to produce *any* animated film, it needs to be a winner at the storyboard stage. It's not really "high toon" in some showdown between, say, Glen Keane and the AXA Vector; without a good story to hang it on, the most resourceful efforts of both are wasted.

Finally, are audiences more likely to choose digital features over hand-drawn efforts? Based on the analysis above, yes, when the digital features have the better story. If not, the films will be less successful than their hand-drawn counterparts. Perhaps digital films do have more visual appeal to the Playstation/Game Boy/Nintendo generation, but as any one of them can tell you there are plenty of boring and substandard video games out there; part of making the expensive investment is knowing how to discriminate among them. Quality, as ever, will win out. A more cogent question would be: How easily can audiences discriminate between the two in any case? As noted with *The Iron Giant*, *Titan A. E.* and other notable features such as *Tarzan*, many animated films today are a hybrid mix of two or more animation techniques; in the case of a film such as *Osmosis Jones*, one can add live-action to the mix as well. Even animated films that seem to be entirely done in the old ink-and-paint style are deceptive, since they utilize a digital coloring process that ensures uniformity of color and tint while making such effects as "modeling" easier and more naturalistic. Rather than being replaced, it would more seem that traditional



The Prince of Egypt's beautiful panoramic shots wowed crowds with their artistry. © DreamWorks LLC.

animation is being swirled into a melting pot of modern technique and style, thus remaining a vital component of the art form.

How easily can audiences discriminate between the two in any case?

Jensen and Daly eventually do come to the conclusion that traditional animation will be around for a very long time, citing such upcoming features as *Treasure Planet*, *Tusker* and *Lilo and Stitch*. The question posed by the authors seems to be more rhetorical than practical; my point is simply that the question never really needs to be asked again. CGI and hand-drawn animation are not in conflict, with one existing as a higher predator on some technological food chain. They are complementary techniques that are, in their finest collaborations, wonderfully synergistic. Animation is the history of how multiple mediums can be used to refine

and diversify a dynamic art; no one form need ever prevail. Should "old school" animation ever be killed off, so will much of the art form itself. Fortunately, this will never happen. Men and women will continue to put pen to paper and transform their imaginations into entertainment for millions. Studios will continue to pay for these ideas and produce them. The eventual product may well be enriched by components of the latest CGI, but our eyes will still be drawn to the unmistakable artistry of the human hand.

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

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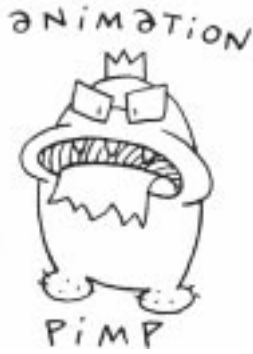


Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

We, Myself and You

by Chris Robinson

MYSELF

It's a trivial irony, but it's an irony nonetheless. Here it was, September 11, 2001, and I'm spending the morning with my formerly estranged father. For almost a decade I hated the man's guts. In my mind he was an emotional, verbal and physical bully. He was the enemy. I sometimes wished him dead for the emotional damage he did to my brother, mother and myself. Yet some ten years plus have passed and I'm sitting beside this man watching one of the most violent and tragic acts of hate ever committed on our continent (since we shot up all the natives of course).

How did I come to a point where I was able to sit with this former enemy #1? Well mostly through dialogue. Earlier this year I reached a point in my life where I needed to come to some sort of understanding of the past. I needed to know why things happened. In many cases I was given a clearer perspective of the past. Slowly I began to understand much of my father's actions. Subsequently, the hate and anger rapidly dissipated as I became more aware of what his world comprised during the dark times.

That's not to say I forget. That's not to say that I excuse him for the poor decisions he made. That is to say that through dialogue I was able to eliminate my feelings of hate and anger and move on with my life with a clearer understanding of the past.

YOU

The attack of September 11 caused many of us to react in hate and anger. There were numerous calls for violent retribution. And an unharnessed moment of emotional release is to be expected. As North Americans we have not encountered anything like this so close to home. We were scared. We wondered how could someone hate us so much?

My son is three years old. When he is scared he responds by crying, screaming, scratching, biting and occasionally hitting. We don't tolerate it...but as frustrated as we can get, we have not and will not "retaliate" by spanking him or hitting him. Instead we try to teach him that it's wrong to hit, that it's ok to be scared and upset, and in general to sit down and talk about it so that he can find the words to explain why he doesn't like this or that. In many ways, we are a society of children who have

not learned to articulate our fears and concerns properly. We've grown up in a system that has defined heroism as a masculine-no tears-no words-just action philosophy. This is a system that values expediency and efficiency. It's a go-go-go culture. It is a system built on fear. We are urged to climb to the top, where there is limited space, and along the way to stump on any damn toes that get in the path. We are afraid of weakness. Weakness means failure and failure is viewed by many as some sort of sin. As such we will do almost anything to overcome weakness (drinking, killing, stealing, boasting...the list is long). Is it any wonder that we have a proliferation of happy pills, depression, self-help books, self-help experts?

By the way, anyone remember the story of Icarus?

We are still that scared little kid who, thinking he saw something in the shadows, runs to his parents for comfort. We are a sheltered society. Our monsters are cardboard caricatures. Our monsters are Hollywood created Indians, Nazis and Bond villains. From pulp novels to cinema to television, U.S. culture has ingrained in our senses a very simplistic view of good and evil. Good is us. Bad is them. Good has reasons. Bad has no reasons. Good is free. Bad is jealous. We're in the 21st century and we're still living life as if it was a Disney film. Bin Laden. Indians. Dr. No. Dr. Evil. There is a difference, a big difference and yet the media does not differentiate and as such, rarely do we.

As Plato said a real long time ago, there are no evil men; there are only evil acts.

No one, in our minds, can justify the actions of September 11.

Everyone, in our minds, can justify the actions that began on October 7.

We were attacked without cause and we must defend our values or so it goes.

Oh...ok...but isn't that what the September 11 murderers say as well? They see their actions as retaliation against U.S. neglect of the Middle East and the murder of many innocent victims along the way?

"Oh...that's just propaganda. That's just hogwash."

Hey...maybe it is, but then again maybe there's something to it. Don't we owe it to ourselves to find out before retaliating? It's as if we think that Hussein and Bin Laden are extensions of Hollywood villains and that with one big swift kick to the ass, we will save the world from evil.

But...umm...correct me if I'm wrong...this isn't a Hollywood movie. Those aren't extras lying at the bottom of the World Trade Center; those are REAL bone and blood people. So if this isn't a Hollywood movie, does anyone here REALLY think that this new "war" is going to magically eradicate evil?

It is this blurring of fact and fiction that seems to me to be the root of the problem. Culture and propaganda have been so seamlessly weaved together. Too many people seem to believe the rhetoric of this thinly veiled propaganda that tells them they are the center of the world and that they are the beacons of peace, hope and freedom. But not far beyond this mask lies a face of intolerance. Why does an apparently confident nation always have to wave flags and sing songs about themselves?

Why does a nation always remind us that they are the "greatest country in the world" or that their freedom is "God given?" Why would a nation that continually reminds us that they are peaceful and free bomb first and ask questions later? That doesn't seem like a logical extension of an apparent free and peaceful people, but it does seem like something a three year old would do.

Remember when you were a kid and despite having paint all over your hand, you passionately and defiantly pled innocence to the spilt paint next to you?

We spout out this rhetoric about how we are the symbols of peace and justice and yet our continent was founded through murder. Our European ancestors came here and committed genocide against the natives. (To this day, our treatment of natives is reprehensible.) Owing to our ever-increasing case of selective historical amnesia we are rarely reminded of this BIG RED stain on our hands. And this leads us to what the U.S. has done better than any other nation. They have created propaganda that has become almost indecipherable from culture. For example, U.S. mythology through pulp novels and John Wayne movies re-wrote the past by painting the Indians as just plain evil. No reason was ever given for their crazy violence except that they just hated the "white man." Not once was genocide ever mentioned, instead the Indians were defined in our collective unconscious as the "other" and therefore, bad. I need only point to George Bush's comment that you're either with us or for terrorism to show just how little

things have really changed.

I remember the guy who runs the flight training school in Florida. He was surprised that the soon-to-be terrorists spoke "good American."

A century later mass media's influence has been a success. This fear of "the other" has become solidly ingrained in our imaginations. Yeah sure...we've got some mighty fancy words now like Arab-American, Afro-American and Native-American, but for the most part those are just pretty sounding words that cover a much deeper and complex racism. One need only point to the phrase "melting pot" or the post-11th hate crimes to see how useless words can be.

Is there no better example of this delusion than the flag waving, song singing and hand holding? Without doubt, these gestures provide comfort in the face of fear and that's a good thing. But eventually you have to confront that fear or you will never ever get to its root. As I watch people desperately clinging to these symbols, I almost get the sense that they are clicking their heels and nervously murmuring, "There's no place like home, there's no place like home," maybe now they are beginning to understand that they're not in Kansas anymore, and never have been. Unlike Dorothy, no amount of wizards, lions or magic wands are going to help us home.

Oh and by the way, I'm not saying we can't learn anything from Hollywood. At the end of *Austin Powers* there is a moment that's always stayed with me for whatever reason (well...I guess I know now) and that's when Austin comes face to face with Dr. Evil.

Dr. Evil says, "You know Powers, you and I are not so different." And yes, I realize that it's a sly reference to the fact that one actor plays both roles, but there was something almost genuine and heartfelt in their exchange that stands out from the rest of the film. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, just check out ANY James Bond film. Who is Bond most comfortable and at home with (ok...besides the women!)? It's the damn villains. They share knowledge of wine, art, politics and food. Through it all the hero and villain have much in common. And if that doesn't convince you then check out the *Star Wars* trilogy. This provides us with perhaps the most enlightened and human view of "the other" that has come out of Hollywood. Darth Vader, the bastion of pure evil in the first two films, turns out to be the father of the damn hero. Turns out that he isn't such a bad guy but that he allowed himself to make stupid choices. I mean even the apparent good guys, Obi Wan and the green Muppet, are called into question for denying the truth from Luke Skywalker.

My dad, Darth Vader and Bin Laden; crazy, ain't it? It all comes back to the father. And hey, get this, it turns out the Bin Laden and Bush fathers have a long working relationship. How about that? Sure is a small world... after all.

"Words, words, words."

As long as we are breathing there is always hope but without the acquisition and application of knowledge, wisdom and empathy, all these words are just that, words.

WE

So how DOES this all relate to animation, you ask? Well, let me at long last get to that point.

Art vs. Entertainment
High vs. Low
Civilized vs. Uncivilized
Animation vs. Cartoons
Us vs. Other
Me vs. You
Black vs. White
Good vs. Evil
Cowboys vs. Indians
Either/Or

"You're either with us or you're with the terrorists," a man recently said.

Ahh...if only those labels we routinely apply to virtually all aspects of our life really reflected the realities of our complex existence. The problem with either/or scenarios is that it reduces multifaceted entities to a single defining term. Think about the last time you called your kid a bad boy or bad girl. When they piss on the floor or scratch you or push a kid at the playground they are committing a bad deed, but are they really BAD people or merely struggling to articulate a feeling?

This binary logic suggests that only those on either side of the fence are united. Yet we all know that the world of entertainment or industry is not a single unified entity. It is not a simple umbrella faction of Disney, Warner, DreamWorks, Pixar, Klasky Csupo, Fox. Within their very umbrella there are many divergent interests and voices and visions with a specific geographical space. Can we apply the same sweeping labels to, for example, the U.K. industry and Aardman, Bolex Brothers, etc...? Broken

down further the goals and aims of Aardman and Bolex are quite likely different. Just take a look at *Tom Thumb*. Beyond that where do we place the Bolex Brothers, Cuppa Coffee Animation (Toronto), Bermuda Shorts (London), FilmTecknarna (Stockholm) and other smaller studios who clearly straddle that supposed line between art and entertainment? Under those terms, we would then deem *Father and Daughter*, *The Mermaid*, *The Cat Came Back* as "art" films because they were made independently and not client driven. But is *Father and Daughter* really so different than *Bambi* or *The Iron Giant*? All are skillfully created and emotionally charged films. Evoking an emotion is an aim of these films and yet some would call *Father and Daughter* an art film and *Bambi* or *The Iron Giant* frivolous entertainment. Hell, many of the so-called entertainment animators like John Kricfalusi, Bill Plympton, Nick Park and on it goes, have their roots in this supposed "other" art/independent animation world.

While *Shrek* and *Snow White* might not be films that taste good to me, I can nevertheless gain something from what they say or don't say...just as I can from a film by Priit Pärn or Phil Mulloy.

Perhaps it boils down to a question of "authenticity" or seeking something genuine. Are you making the film for money or for yourself? Are you putting your guts on the screen? With that light guiding us can we really fall back on this art vs. entertainment or animation vs. cartoons criteria? Surely the nine old folks at Disney made films with the same desire, passion and soul that Norman McLaren, Jiri Trnka and Jan Lenica did. Priit Pärn makes commercials.

Igor Kovalyov makes *The Rugrats* movie. Nothing is cut and dry. Nothing is certain. One thing is certain: to say that THIS is THAT and THAT is THIS is misleading. In applying these labels we are assuming that all ART or ENTERTAINMENT are made under the same economic, racial, cultural, social and religious influences; that they are all made from the same level playing field. We know that's not the case.

The unique aspect of animation festivals, especially Annecy and – hey, let me toot our horn – Ottawa, is that we strive to shatter those boundaries and barriers. We strive to introduce you to different voices, beliefs and values of the filmmakers and even the organizers.

Forty years ago or so, the International Animator's Association attempted to shatter borders by bringing together Eastern and Western artists at festivals and various other events. At the same time, ASIFA was created

to provide a forum for a faction of animation artists who felt that their voices were not being heard. In its time, what ASIFA achieved was outstanding. During the Cold War days, ASIFA maintained an ongoing channel of communication between the Western world and those behind the Iron Curtain. ASIFA was about creating a space not where values, beliefs and "isms" should be left at home, but instead a place where those "isms" could exist side by side in a meaningful dialogue with other "isms." Beliefs and values are a wonderful and necessary part of our natural foundation, but not to the degree that they alienate us from the views and beliefs of other people.

And that is the wonderful thing about festivals and something that online festivals will NEVER capture. I'm not calling for a fucking hugging session here, but festivals provide the opportunity for you to step outside the doors of your own world to view and hear the visions and ideas of

your peers who are also stepping beyond their doors. Sure, you respond to some films by saying, "I love it," or "I hate it," but to learn anything from those valid emotional reactions you must try and apply some logic. You will wonder, "WHY did, or didn't, I like that film?" From there you try and articulate for yourself or a friend your reasoning. Without the balance of emotion and logic, what does I LOVE IT or I HATE IT mean? Nothing, they are, just empty words.

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

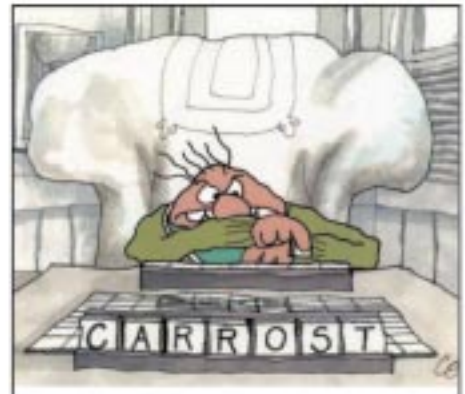
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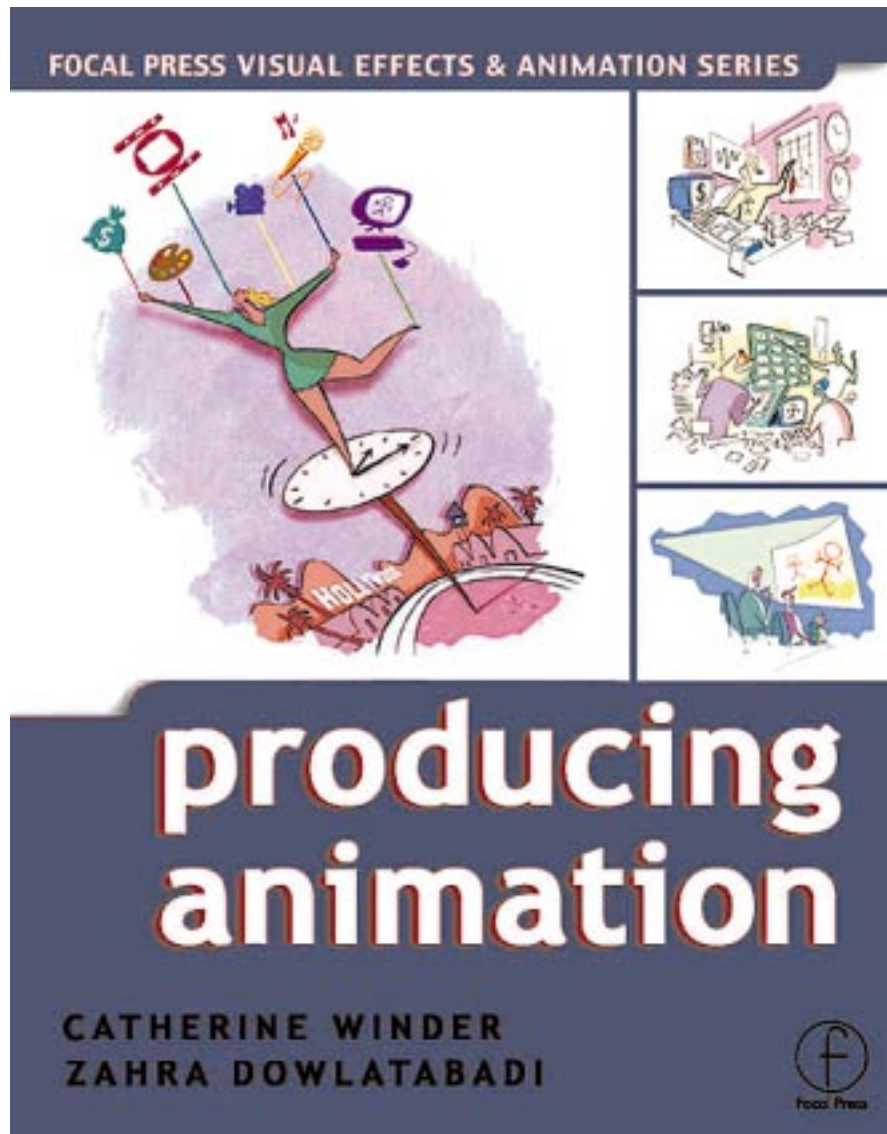


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The right choice of actors during casting, combined with a great performance during the recording, are two of the most critical steps in the production process. Since the voice track serves as a guideline and

source of inspiration for the animators, if it's weak, not even the best animators can produce good performances. The animation, timing and overall success of the project, therefore, hinge on the quality of the voice track.

Casting

Casting is the process by which actors are chosen to play parts on the project. Unlike in live-action, actors are not seen by the audience, only heard. It is the producer's job to determine the casting expectations of the buyer/executive, seller (or creator), and director in order to focus the process in the right direction from the start. When stars are attached, their names can be used as a marketing tool. It therefore needs to be established early on whether the project can afford them and wants to pursue them. Prior to the start of casting, it must be decided whether the production is going to be union (that is, Screen Actors Guild [SAG]) or non-union. If the show is non-union, casting choices can be limited. Most professional actors are union members and are prohibited by SAG or any other acting union from working on non-union shows.

Casting begins when a casting director is hired onto a project. Large studios usually have their own in-house casting department. On the other hand, smaller studios tend to hire a casting director on a freelance and per-project basis. It is the producer's job to share with the casting director the amount of money and time allotted for casting sessions (auditions), the rehearsal of the script, and the recording of the voice track. Armed with information on the time and fiscal boundaries of the project, the casting director works with the producer, director and creative executives to come up with a list of potential talent to audition. A brainstorming session takes place at which everyone suggests ideas for talent based on the characters to be cast. It is typical to refer to "like" types. (An

example of this would be “like Woody Allen in *Antz*.”) At these sessions, reference artwork is helpful for inspiration. Following the creators’ and/or directors’ prerequisites for the voice talents, the casting director begins the search for actors.

Once a list has been made, the casting director reviews his or her inventory of CDs or talent cassettes, contacts his or her roster of agents, and researches the availability and interest of the talent to audition for the part. The casting director also asks about other actors represented by the agent who may be appropriate for the project. If the voice actor is not someone the casting director is familiar with, the agent submits sample tapes to review before including him or her in the casting session. Agents are more than happy to send out materials. In fact, it may be necessary to limit the number of actors they can submit. On occasion, the casting director sends scripts or sides to agents to ask actors to record an initial audition at the agency. Most established agencies have small recording booths set up just for this purpose. This pre-screening process gives the casting director a sense of whether the actor is the right type without having to spend the time and money for a studio audition.

In cases when a star talent is being considered for a role, the casting director has the careful balancing act of timing when this information gets communicated to the agents. Some star talent will not audition for animation. This talent is called “offer only.” As a result, if a phone call is made to the agent and the actor is interested, the creative team must be willing to greenlight the actor without

hearing him or her. Most experienced casting directors know who will and will not read for them. In such cases, the casting director can pull previous work together on an audio cassette for the producer, buyer and director to listen to for some background. Everyone including the casting director, voice director (if applicable), buyer/executive, director and producer should be completely in sync in terms of who they want to go after and what strategies they will use to get the actor to sign on.

On one project that I (Catherine) produced, the casting director took it upon herself to offer a lead part to a very high-profile actor with whom she had a personal relationship. The good news was the actor was very interested in the role. The bad news was that this choice of talent was an offer-only person and the creator and creative executive assigned to the show did not consider him the best choice. Given the stature of the actor, it was impossible for the studio to back out of hiring him. This misstep by the casting director created a great deal of stress on the production. First, we were forced to use a talent that we considered inappropriate. Second, the talent refused to be recorded with the rest of the cast, and we had to spend additional money to record him separately and cater to his specific needs. The casting director had the best interests of the project in mind, but failed to discuss her plans with us. As a producer, I learned that I should have double-checked that everyone was on the same page before the casting director had any conversations with the talent.

In order to prepare the talent for an audition, specific materi-

al should be sent to them before the casting session and should be made available on the actual day of the session. For a large project, a casting coordinator may be hired to help the casting director. It is the casting coordinator’s duty to schedule talent for auditions (a typical audition slot for animation is 5 to 10 minutes of record time for the actor), process any necessary paperwork, and prepare the following materials:

- **Casting bible:** The casting bible is a written description of the project and the characters to be cast, including any pertinent information, such as personality, age and vocal quality. Character designs are also included in the casting bible.

- **Script:** It is important that this is the most recent version of the production script.

- **General information sheet:** This sheet includes the time of call, location and parking instructions for the recording facility. The actor should also be told who or what character they are auditioning for.

- **Sides:** Sides are portions of the script specific to a character that best reflect their personality. These sides are read by the actors and recorded during the casting session. The casting director, voice director or producer usually chooses the sides.

- **Visual materials:** This includes any color artwork that shows the characters and their environment. If the project is based on published material with illustrations that are used as reference on the show, it is useful to have them on hand.

The casting session takes place in a recording studio. Generally, the producer, director and casting director attend these sessions. Depending on the director, there may or may not be a

voice director hired to direct and communicate with the talent. Some animation directors are not comfortable playing this role. In feature production, the director usually directs the talent. In this book, we refer to the individual responsible for directing the actors as the *voice director*. The voice director has the actors read their sides individually or with other actors playing opposite parts. Often on television shows and direct-to-video projects, actors are given sides for several parts as it is cost effective to have a versatile talent that can play different parts. Working with the casting director, the producer ensures that the session is moving on schedule, allowing for extensions with certain actors and schedule changes throughout the day when people drop out or are late.

After the director and/or producer select the preferred performances or "circle takes," the chosen lines are edited onto a final listening tape. If they do not like any takes from an actor, the entire audition is dropped. This is called a "no print." Edited tapes, along with a list of talent recorded, are given to key team members such as the buyer/executive for review. Each person listens to the tape, makes notes, and ranks his or her choices. The casting director gets everyone's feedback and sets up callbacks. The purpose of callbacks is to re-record the talent in order to finalize casting. The original list is trimmed down significantly for these sessions. It is important to note that if you have a third callback for the same actor, SAG rules state that the producer has to pay for this and any further sessions. If none of the voices fit the part, additional casting may be neces-

sary. Several sessions may be held until actors are selected. The final choice of talent is a collaborative process. Actors are chosen based on their vocal quality, ability to bring the character to life, star power, versatility, availability and the budget. In those cases when there is a tie between actors for a part, the buyer or creative executive will usually make the final casting decision.

Before auditions, the casting director typically communicates to the talent (through their agents) what the standard fee is. There should therefore be minimal negotiations necessary. For those actors above union scale or above the flat rate paid for non-union actors, negotiations need to take place. These negotiations are generally done by business affairs in concert with the producer and creative executive/buyer. In case there is any visual likeness to the actor in the design of the character they are playing — which sometimes happens with star talent — the design needs to be legally cleared in advance. Other issues to be agreed upon for star talent are fees, size and placement of credit, and publicity. In the case of musicals, the topic of singing needs to be discussed, as some actors sing and others do not. If the talent cannot sing, another voice will be used to perform the songs. If the talent can sing, there will be a different rate paid, and the details of soundtrack royalties must be addressed. The business affairs department negotiates with the star talent's representative regarding the actor's willingness to conduct interviews and his or her availability for other promotional purposes. Generally, star talent is paid a fee to take part in

promoting the project.

Other topics covered in the Voice Track section of *Producing Animation* include: Rehearsal, Session Preparation and Recording.

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.

The Career Coach: Giving Thanks

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

It's a tradition to give thanks in the United States in November. It's a time to share a meal with family, friends, neighbors or strangers and give thanks. It's a time to thank customers or clients who have given you work. It's also a great time to thank those who give you encouragement or goad you into action.

It's a time to be thankful and grateful. I am grateful to those who have made it possible, and continue to make it possible, for us to pursue our dreams. I want to thank those who gave us freedom. I want to thank those who work for peace.

Giving thanks is a good idea at any time.

I want to thank those who inspire me to write these Career Coach articles as well as those who read them. I also want to thank Animation World Network and others who keep us informed about what is happening in the world of animation. It's easier than ever to learn about animation — from teachers, mentors, Websites and books.

I also want to thank two women who wrote a great book on animation. *Producing Animation* by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi gives a fabulous producers' overview of the animation process. But *Producing Animation* is not just for producers. Anyone who works in or aspires to work in animation would benefit from this text. The



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

writers are both experienced production people and remind us how important attitude is and why it's essential to establish a sense of mutual respect for everyone involved on a project. The way people treat each other matters. For those readers who ask me how to get started in animation, I say start by reading *Producing Animation*.

I want to thank those who volunteer in various organizations like ASIFA, Women in Animation, SIGGRAPH and others who devote their time and energy to promoting animation and sharing their love of animation and experiences with others. These people are an invaluable resource and wealth of information as well as support.

We should be thankful that animation has become ever more popular and omnipresent. Animation can be found in video games, music videos and muse-

ums; on motion picture screens, television sets and wireless devices. With the proliferation of animation, there has been an increase in employment opportunities. Animators are found working all over the world and as often in tiny studios in small towns as in huge studios in large cities. Interest in animation continues to grow and there are many Websites devoted to the dissemination of information on various aspects of animation.

This is a good time to thank your teachers — not only those you met at school, but those you've met at work. Thank your mentors and others who help you, whether you've met them through an online discussion group or industry function. Never stop learning and always keep an eye out for a good teacher.

This is a good time for employers to thank their staff for a job well done. Even those who show their appreciation often throughout the year, should do it at this time as well. If you are an employee, thank your boss and employer for your job and giving you the opportunity to work at something you love.

Remember to thank those who have helped and supported you at this time of year. And remember to do it regularly all year long. A little appreciation is greatly appreciated.

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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TWO Wildcat II GRAPHICS CARDS REVIEWED

by John Edgar Park



The Wildcat II 5110 card. This physically huge card is hungry for power. All images © 3Dlabs, Inc.

The Wildcat II 5110 and 5000 graphics cards from 3Dlabs are two tremendous products for the 3D artist. There are many good graphics cards available to the 3D animation professional. These include the Nvidia Quadro 2 and Quadro DCC based cards, ATI's Fire GL series, and 3Dlabs' Oxygen GVX1 and GVX420. How do these products differentiate themselves? The main areas where they focus their efforts are graphics processing chipsets, memory architecture and drivers. (In September's review of the Quadro DCC we looked at how graphics cards work.)

Formerly the workstation graphics card line from Intergraph (which 3Dlabs acquired last year), the Wildcats have a great lineage. The Wildcat IIs are stable, fast and

reliable. Both are physically huge cards — filling the entire length of the test machine's ATX case. They occupy the AGP slot and the empty PCI slot below it for purposes of heat dissipation. (Neither card boasts cooling fans; instead they rely on heat sinks. Be sure your case has serious cooling before adding one of these monsters.) The 5110 is hungry for power — its AGP Pro50 interface allows it to draw up to 50 watts. The 5000 runs on the more common AGP 2.0 standard and consumes less power.

Installation

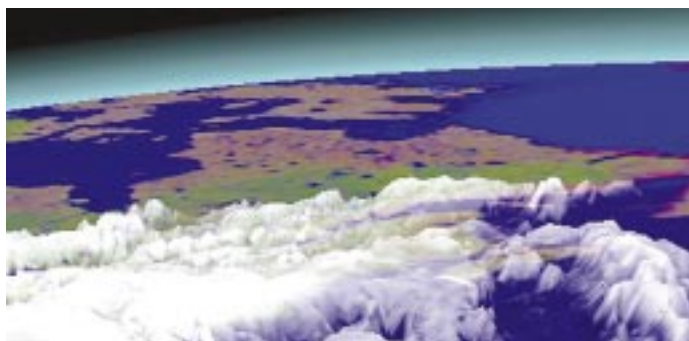
Installing a Wildcat II card is a straightforward process. First, uninstall the previous card's drivers. Next, power down, unplug and open the case. Then, replace

the old card with the (did I mention, monstrous?) Wildcat II. Close the case, plug it in and fire it up. When Windows asks for drivers, point it to the drivers that 3Dlabs provides on CD. After one more restart you are ready to go.

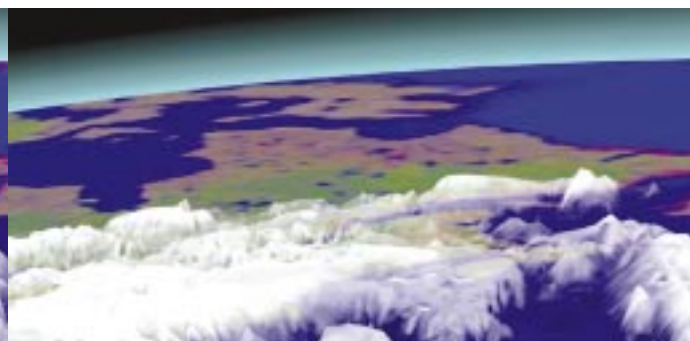
Once installed, the Wildcat II control panel allows you to select optimized settings for all of the major 3D animation programs, as well as manually fine-tunes them. After 10 minutes of back-and-forth between the control panel and your 3D software it is possible to tune it to your own optimal speed vs. quality settings. For example, the better looking the full scene anti-aliasing, the slower the framerate. These tweaks can be saved as a new preset.

Wildcat II 5110 Impressions

Before we go any further, I'll get this out of the way: the Wildcat II 5110 is the best graphic card I've used to date for OpenGL 3D content creation. It is packed with 128MB of RAM split between frame buffer and texturing, can drive two monitors simultaneously without a hitch and is fast. As in four times faster than the previous



An image created without full-scene anti-aliasing.



The same image using the Wildcat II 5110 and SuperScene full-scene anti-aliasing.

Wildcat 4110! It obliterated the synthetic and real-world benchmark tests and made working in Maya, 3ds max, Softimage XSI and Lightwave a pleasure.

The 5110 uses a ParaScale architecture to run dual-pipelines of geometry and raster operations on multiple processors. The large buffers keep your data on the card longer, minimizing slow traffic over the AGP bus to retrieve scene data. These processor and memory architecture designs are responsible for the card's great speed.

The dual-monitor capability of the Wildcat II 5110 is wonderful. I haven't used dual-monitors since my PowerMac days, and I somehow forgot how sweet it is. The ability to leave material palettes, schematic views, function curve editors and the like open on a second monitor is incredibly useful and timesaving.

Now the bad news: you can't buy the 5110 as an upgrade for your current workstation. It is only available as a \$2,000 to \$3,000 option on pre-built workstations. (Look at the Dell Precision 330/530 and Compaq EVO or check their Website for a list of system integrators.) Why can't you

buy one on its own? Perhaps 3DLabs figures that customers would blow up their cards and motherboards due to the general confusion surrounding the AGP Pro standard. The hardware requirements are high enough that they like to leave it up to the workstation manufacturers to build a stable configuration. (You can buy the cards on the gray market, however, before buying one of these and installing it yourself you'd better have a great deal of knowledge! The company does not warranty these cards.)

Wildcat II 5000 Impressions

The Wildcat II 5000 represents the first foray into the end-user market by a Wildcat card. Available through authorized resellers, this is really the 5110's little brother. It feels the same as the 5110 in many regards, just not as powerful or fast. It sports half the RAM, and by the looks of the card itself, is built on nearly the same circuit board as the 5110, with two large processors missing. I'm no engineer, but I'm guessing that the missing parts account for the single-pipeline nature of the card. The 5110's dual-pipeline makes a big difference; the 5000 can

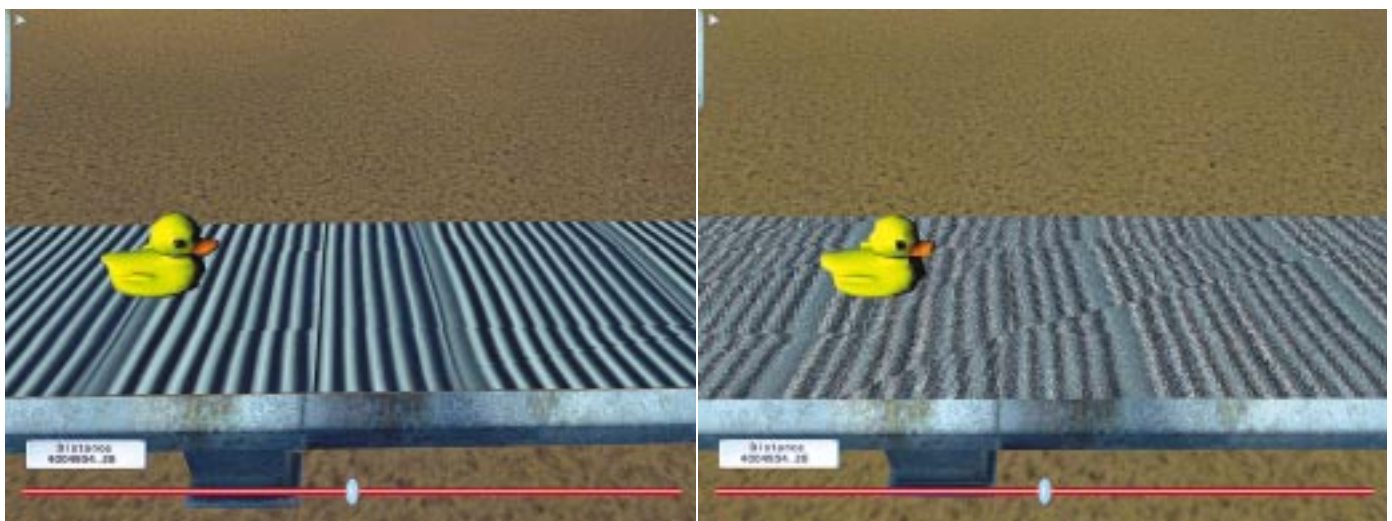
drive only a single monitor (analogue or digital, CRT or flat panel), with about half the raw polygon-crunching power of its older sibling.

The 5000 will integrate easily into most modern workstations, thanks to its compliance with the AGP 2.0 standard. This slot is available on most motherboards today. Installation, drivers and control panels are nearly identical to the 5110.

Comparisons

In programs like Maya, 3ds max, Softimage XSI and Lightwave, the 5110's pure speed and high quality anti-aliasing make it a justifiable expense for the professional animator. For the slightly more budget-minded, the 5000 (under \$900 street) is worthy of consideration, but it's in a performance range shared by some competitors like the cheaper Elsa Gloria DCC.

In most tests the 5110 rates two to three times faster than the 5000 and the Quadro DCC. The 5000 beat the Quadro DCC in most SPECviewperf tests, but was tied with or beaten by the Quadro in real-world Maya and 3ds max tests. The strengths of the Wildcats



Compare Wildcat II 5110 (left) and NVIDIA Quadro2 Pro's images of textures at 4004934.26 units from the point of origin.

are in real-time lighting and wire-frame, while the Quadro's strengths are in texturing and rasterizing.

For the slightly more budget-minded, the 5000 (under \$900 street) is worthy of consideration...

One disappointment with the Wildcat cards is their lack of support for real-time shadows in Maya and their lack of pixel and vertex shader effects in 3ds max. Many software companies are adopting the Nvidia nfiniteFX standard — it will be interesting to see how 3Dlabs, ATI and others respond.

Also, the current lack of

DirectX support on the Wildcats can be a hindrance. While most 3D software uses OpenGL, many video editing programs and games require DirectX. Game developers may find it impractical to have a content creation card that can't also be used to run their game engine. 3Dlabs plans to address this problem with future products. For now, the Nvidia cards may be a better bet for game developers. Film, broadcast and post-production animators, however, will hardly notice the problem.

To sum it all up, the Wildcat II 5110 is the most powerful card out there for the hardcore 3D animator. It speeds up your workflow significantly, making it worth the substantial investment. If something cheaper is in your sights, things are a little less clear. The excellent Wildcat II 5000 is

available as an add-on to your current workstation, but so are a number of other competing products. Future reviews will reveal how they stack up.

The Wildcat II 5110 is the most powerful card out there for the hardcore 3D animator.

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.

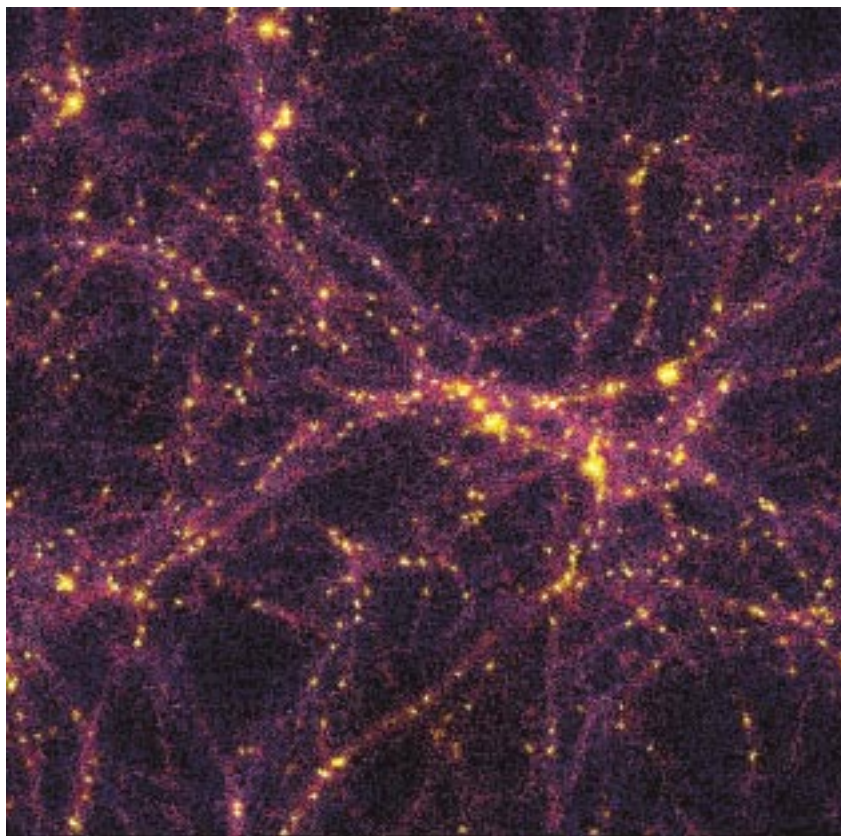
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Science Visualization and Educational Animation at **SIGGRAPH 2001**: The Next Big Deal

by Susana M. Halpine



Distribution of matter in the early universe 2.5 billion years after the Big Bang. Shown here is a volume of space approximately 24 billion light-years across. Created by L. Hernquist while at the University of California, Santa Cruz, D. H. Weinberg of Ohio State University, and N. Katz of the University of Massachusetts using a supercomputer at SDSC. Courtesy of Lars Hernquist.

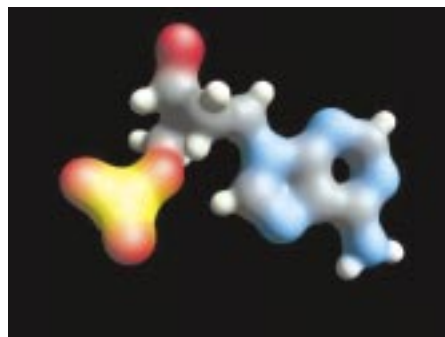
Many animators in the audience may not have realized that computer graphics owes its start in large part to science visualization.

The grand finale to Danny Hillis' SIGGRAPH keynote address, "The Big Picture," was a slide visualizing our current understanding of the universe. The science visualization image, similar to the universe shown here, looked a lot like a fiery explosion produced by a Hollywood

special effects team. If artists can create these graphics, given the right plug-ins, what's the big deal with scientific visualization?

Many game developers and special effects animators in the audience may not have realized that computer graphics owes its start in large part to science

visualization. For example, during the 1970s, scientific research, such as molecular visualization, was a major consumer of 3D interactive graphics hardware. The technology transfer to the entertainment industry was both subtle and dramatic. Digital trailblazer Jim Blinn, working at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in the early '80s, animated a DNA molecule for Carl Sagan's PBS program, *Cosmos*. To do so, he developed new algorithms to represent dynamic simulations of electron fields around molecules, what Blinn refers to as "blobby molecules sticking and



An adenine molecule created using the "metaballs" algorithm for a DNA replication sequence in the PBS series *Cosmos*. Courtesy of James F. Blinn.

unsticking." These blobby molecules are now known as the first metaballs. The term "metaballs" was actually coined by Japanese researchers developing similar algorithms at Osaka University and at Toyo Links. Their version of metaballs was used extensively by artist Yoichiro Kawaguchi in several of his spectacular films shown over the years at the SIGGRAPH's Electronic Theater.

E-Symbiosis

The symbiotic relationship between science visualization and digital graphics and animation continues to this day. In the SIGGRAPH Course, "From Ivory Tower to Silver Screen," Stuart Sumido, biologist from Cal State University at San Bernardino working with Sony Imageworks, demonstrated how his biophysical understanding of bird feathers transposed to digital animation makes the falcon character more believable in the upcoming movie, *Stuart Little 2*.

Why do scientists need to visualize their work?

On the other hand, the lively SIGGRAPH panel discussion, "Computer Games and Viz: If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them," underscored the different perspectives held by the entertainment industry and the science visualization community. Scientist Hanspeter Pfister and game developer Nate Robins debated issues such as long term scientific goals vs. built in obsolescence, the lack of advanced rendering features in computer game hardware, and the potential for game developers to fund research in computer graphics. Chris Hecker, from the Game Developers Conference, emphasized areas where these seemingly conflicting interests overlap, such as improved chip performance from hardware manufacturers.

Too Big — Too Small: In the Past — In the Future.

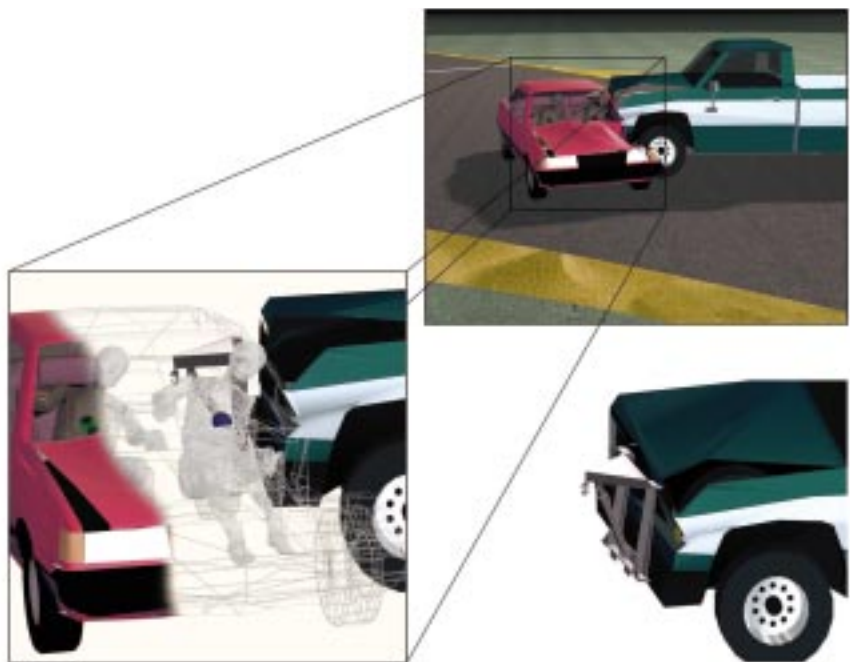
Why do scientists need to visualize their work? A popular



An artist's rendering of NASA's Mars Rover, scheduled for launch in June 2003, as it sets off to roam the surface of the red planet. Courtesy of NASA Mars Exploration, NASA/JPL/Caltech.

misconception holds that most scientists are left-brain, linear thinkers that don't feel comfortable in the spatial, visual-motor world. At the Image and Meaning Conference held at MIT in June, however, scientists from nearly every discipline colorfully displayed the images they rely on to conceptualize their

research. Even established mathematicians stepped forward and, as if attending an Artist Anonymous meeting, confessed to using black-board drawings to stimulate discussions among colleagues. Any sort of illustration, however, is generally forbidden from their professional publications.



A composite of a forensic animation sequence; the snow plow attachment on the front of the pickup may have played a role in a fatal car accident. Courtesy of Knott Laboratory, Inc.



Peace keeping theater: 3D intelligent agents interact with a trainee in an immersive environment. In this scenario, the trainee must decide how to address a vehicular accident, involving a local boy, on the way to assist in a conflict. Courtesy of the Institute for Creative Technologies at the University of Southern California.

Visualization is particularly helpful for understanding concepts beyond the boundaries of our physical senses, such as exploring extremes in scale or describing phenomena beyond our current time frame. The above supercomputer's model of the early universe, a huge fireworks display approximately 24 billion light-years across, is one mind-boggling illustration. Other instances of astronomical visualization may seem remarkably familiar. For example, NASA initially used traditional animators to depict the Apollo Space Mission and the vastness of space for the general public. To a large extent, these images still form the basis of our shared "view" of extraterrestrial exploration. Today NASA-JPL uses digital animation to envision the possibility of water on Mars, for example, or to explore concepts such as interplanetary robotics. Similarly, looking ahead to future funding needs, NASA-JPL uses digital animation to propose potential missions to Congress. At the sub-microscopic extreme, molecular visualization is critically important to biochemists and molecular biologists, as I'll discuss a little later.

Forensic digital reconstructions of past events are entering courtrooms too. An accurately

reenacted 3D animation can show, for instance, how the shape of a snow-plow attachment on the front of a pickup might have caused a bizarre car accident. Taking it a step forward, the forensic engineers digitally designed potentially safer attachments for future use.

Danger, Danger Will Robinson!

Safety concerns, cost of implementation and simplification of complex systems are additional

reasons for applying digital visualization. For example, a nuclear reactor simulator can test out different scenarios without risking public safety. The U. S. military has also used visualization in planning and training exercises for many years. While not strictly "scientific visualization," one of the more impressive uses of current technology is an immersive Virtual Reality (VR) program for training soldiers on international peace-keeping missions. On-screen 3D agents incorporate both artificial intelligence and "emotion." Thus, the storyline and characters react to decisions made by the "real" trainee. The resulting lessons can be wrenchingly powerful even for seasoned military personnel.

Another fascinating integration of games and medical science is taking place in the mental health arena. Some mental health professionals are using off-the-shelf computer games to desensitize patients' fear of driving, for exam-

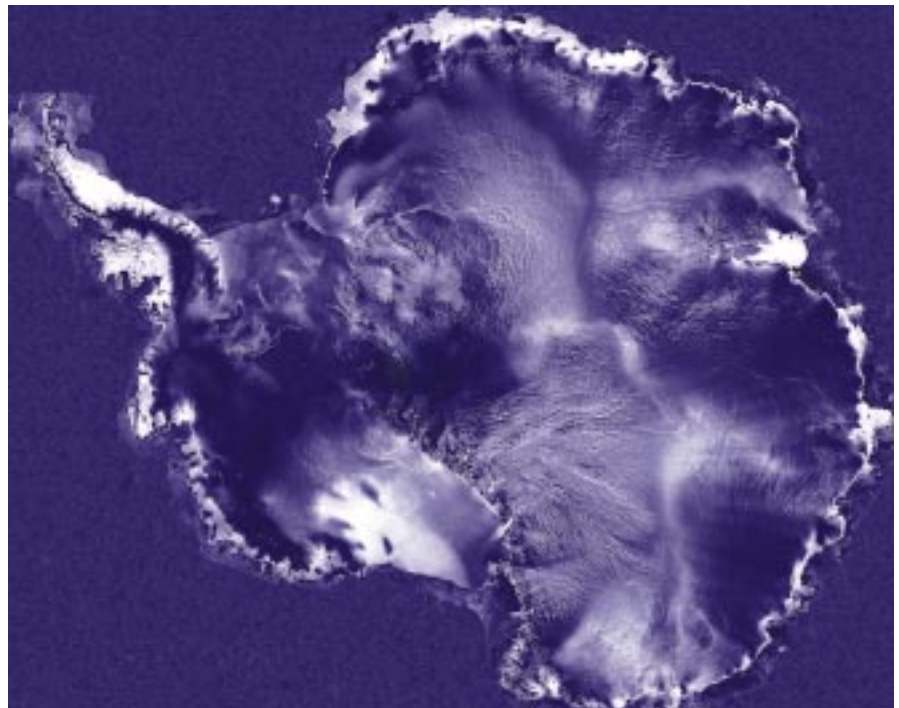


Image from Alex Kekesi's animation, *Antarctica: A Flying Tour of the Frozen Continent*. Courtesy of NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center - Scientific Visualization Studio.

ple. VR games are also being re-used to distract burn victims from the excruciating pain experienced during treatments.

Impossible Science

Some scientific research areas were hardly possible before the advent of sophisticated computer graphics. Complex systems such as global weather patterns can now be analyzed using a number of analytical approaches, including visualization of cloud formations and ocean temperature maps. Simplified versions of these weather graphics are now slipping into the nightly news.

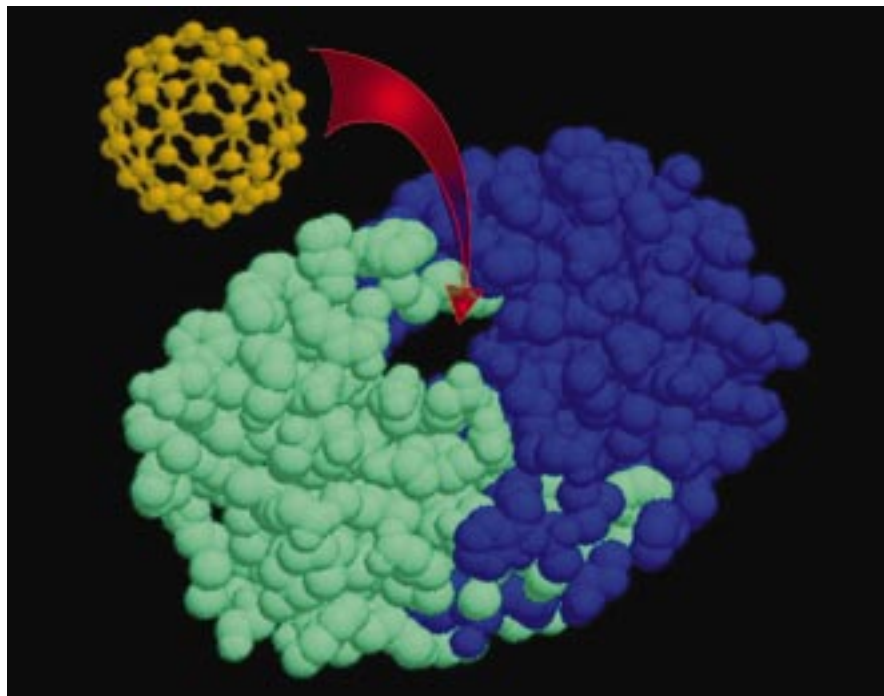
Biochemistry is another discipline that developed in-step with technological advances: molecular visualization software programs have now become indispensable to the field. The 3D helical DNA molecule has become almost a visualization icon. Far more important than mapping the DNA in the Human Genome, however, will be determining the many protein structures built in our cells from the DNA "maps." Like spaghetti placed in boiling water, our understanding of protein chemistry has evolved from linear bonds to the complex 3D folding of the protein strand. Invasive bacteria docking on a cell membrane, hormone reactions, and drug effects all involve Lego-like interactions with proteins. By determining the folded protein shapes using x-ray diffraction analysis and translating the shape into 3D atomic coordinates, molecular visualization software allows us to conceptualize protein interactions in a way that words alone never could.

Buckyballs and HIV?

When graduate student Simon Friedman first proposed



Ken Edwards' VR gallery displays sculptures and photographic prints based on molecular models. Courtesy of Kenneth Eward/ Biografx.



Buckyball, a potential agent against HIV. A modified buckyball (orange) may block the opening in HIV-protease (blue and green) and thereby inactivate this critical enzyme. © 2001 Susana Maria Halpine.

Educational animation is another example of how technology is reestablishing the relationship between science and the visual arts.

using Buckyballs in the fight against AIDS, he meant it as a joke. Buckyballs are 60-carbon hollow structures that look just like soccer balls. Officially, they're called Buckminsterfullerenes, after Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes. Using Buckyballs against AIDS became an ongoing gag in Friedman's chemistry lab. One

night he sat down at a workstation and realized that his crazy notion was, in fact, quite feasible. Apparently an amino acid-modified Buckyball has the right size and shape to fit in and block the HIV protease enzyme. So Friedman arranged with his advisor to take on this topic for his PhD research. Similar work is now

underway at several research universities, including the University of California at Los Angeles.

Educational Animation: Art and Technology...

Educational animation is another example of how technology is reestablishing the relationship between science and the visual arts. Research chemists are discovering that text alone is inadequate for describing complex processes such as inter-molecular reactions. That is, changes in molecular conformation, angle of rotation and "lock and key" docking of molecules are more readily explained through animation. This is because animation shows the interdependence of form and function over time. Therefore, animations are playing an increasing role in science education and publications.

Additionally, non-scientists must make decisions on DNA fingerprinting in courtrooms, genetically modified foods for our kitchens and cloning in selecting our future representatives. Educational animation can relate science concepts to everyday experiences by using increasing levels of abstraction, starting with real world examples and zooming in to reveal the underlying phenomena.

Educational animation can, of course, reach audiences from pre-school to adult education. Even autistic children, viewing a fire prevention program, show a greater response to an animated dog than a live-action video of a person. Since animation delivers content through non-textual means, reaching visual and auditory learners, it may also circumvent learning disabilities such as dyslexia. Most important, succinct

animated images can cross linguistic and cultural barriers, while synchronized sound and visual motion commands the attention of students brought up on electronic games. Ultimately, animation can be a potent tool for disseminating health information: how many 12 year olds chattered about white blood cells fighting viral diseases before the release of *Osmosis Jones*?

For our more discerning readers, SIGGRAPH's Computer Animation Festival presented brilliant depictions of science at its most complex, such as Eric Rosemann's *Exploring Serotonin in the GI Tract*, and Donna Cox's *Evolution of the Universe: Large-Scale Structure and Galaxy Formation*.

Even autistic children show a greater response to an animated dog than a live-action video of a person.

...And Beyond

Distance learning programs will undoubtedly become more popular over the Internet. This will require more than converting textbooks into HTML, however. Interactive visualization and educational animation are ideal venues for Web-based education. In his Educators Program workshop "Graphics in a Flash," James Mohler demonstrated how instructors can use Macromedia Flash to create interactive educational material for the Web.

In fact, some chemistry pro-

fessors are already asking their students to answer test questions "with words or drawings." Imagine: in the future, students may require drawing and animation skills to complete their geography exams and chemistry assignments!

Susana Maria Halpine's goal, as a multimedia developer, is to present educational concepts in an interactive, visual format. Her work for publisher W. H. Freeman include the Molecular Cell Biology textbook CD-Rom and the Kuby Immunology companion Website. Halpine has a background in both art and science. Working for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Columbia University, she received a Master's degree from the medical school while simultaneously exhibiting her paintings in NYC galleries. She then combined these interests as Biochemist at the National Gallery of Art, a position she held for seven years. Since then she has excelled in computer animation and teaches Macromedia Flash at the Venice Arts Mecca in Venice, California. To view sample animations and visualization graphics, visit: <http://home.earthlink.net/~shalpine>

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SIGGRAPH 2001's N-Space Art Gallery

by Annick Teninge

Located in its own area, set up like a museum, SIGGRAPH's Art Gallery is known as a place where one can find works of art that capture the curiosity, even if one hasn't any idea what it's about. The gallery features a variety of art installations created with old and new graphics technologies that embody original ideas — works that intrigue viewers and make them a part of the experience. This year, a fair amount of the art pieces combined images and sounds in creative and technically challenging installations.

Although somehow preposterous, some installations were quite amusing.

Music and Art

Altzero3 (www.squidsoup.com, Squid Soup, UK) is a spatial composition that allows one to explore subtleties and variations in sound by moving through an environment



Bubbles represent sound components in James Lane/squidsoup's *Altzero3*. All images courtesy of the artist and SIGGRAPH 2001.



Haruo Ishii creates a harmonious chord out of hundreds of bells in his sound installation *Omnipresence Version 4*.



Music Creatures inhabit a sonic environment created by Marc Downie.

where lines of bubbles rise toward the surface, each representing a single sound component. There are fifty distinct sounds within the environment, designed and positioned to create a rich, complex chord that develops smoothly over time.

Omnipresence Version 4 (Haruo Ishii, Japan) is a sound installation where hundreds of bells send out different sounds but form an organic and harmonious chord, symbolizing a sort of multi-dimensional perspective of the cosmos.

Music Creatures (www.media.mit.edu, Marc Downie, USA) is a harmonious installation consisting of autonomous, virtually embodied characters living within a sonic environment. The movement of their graphic bodies, visualized on a computer screen, produces music on a piano and reflects their understanding of the sound that they hear. Computer movements and piano music are synthesized through the creatures' animal-inspired artificial intelligence.

Although somehow preposterous, some installations were quite amusing. In *Poem Vacuum Cleaner* (Eunmi Yang, South Korea) the floor is covered with poems coming from an overhead projector. When a viewer vacuums the poetic words, they turn into colorful projected flowers. According to the author, this work reflects on the role of a poem, which is a flower in our desolate urban exis-

tence. She commented that reading poems purifies feelings. It is ironic though that a vacuum symbolizes the act of reading.

Social Commentary

The Smoker (www.novinity.com/circuits, Gene A. Felice II, USA) is an interactive, robotic sculpture that simulates the lungs during the process of smoking. This is stressed by the sound of the author's own breathing and coughing, which can be heard as a pump in the sculpture breathes in and out. The speed of the breathing matches the speed of the pump, which is controlled by the viewer's interaction with another dial on the control box. While viewing steel factories with their smokestacks puffing out damaging byproducts, Felice conceived this sculpture. He combined this point of inspiration with the ongoing research he is conducting with interactive sculptures and their ability to create random byproducts through user interaction. Another goal of this piece, which was for him to quit smoking, has not worked out so well!

Case Study 5510/Case Study 5510-B (Tammy Knipp, USA) is a video-kinetic installation that



More cumbersome than a nicotine patch: *The Smoker* by Gene A. Felice II.

captures people's facial expressions as they experience the simulation of a beheading machine. The installation consists of two 8-foot high guillotines mounted on a platform. Two people participate in an experiment where they lay down, face up, to view a wooden block actually dropping. The performance begins with a video image displayed on a monitor showing a rope unwinding — virtually appearing to unwind. The 3D motion of a spinning wheel enhances the realism and builds a degree of anticipation. One and a half seconds after the video image of the rope unwinds the wooden

blocks drop. Synchronized with the fall a concealed air compressor forces air around the neck of each participant. The participants' facial expressions are depicted live on two monitors mounted on a wall in a remote location of the gallery. The installation is described as "offering multiple perspectives and dialogues in the historical context of guillotines, control and technology as executor, monetary value [the guillotine is coin-activated] and entertainment at the expense of another's vulnerability." Maybe I missed something, but I wasn't intrigued or impressed by the technology and creativity of this convoluted installation. It didn't give me any historical perspective. The "unique language" was the universal, primary language of fear. As for the viewer's entertainment at the expense of another's vulnerability, the subjects themselves went for the thrill. I was much more impressed by the sharp simplicity of another work of art located next to *Case Study 5510/Case Study 5510-B* and dealing with the same topic.

Texas Moments (www.TexasMoments.com, Tarikh Korula, USA) is a screen saver featuring the 40 Death Row inmates executed by the state of Texas in the year



Eunmi Yang shows us a preposterous, but amusing *Poem Vacuum Cleaner*.



Participants experience the guillotine in Tammy Knipp's *Case Study 5510/Case Study 5510-B*.

2000. Here, the fanciful images we have come to expect from screen savers are instead replaced by pictures of the inmates slowly scrolling by, following the content of their last meal. They cycle one after the other in the order in which they were executed. When a user rolls over an inmate's thumbnail image, a larger picture of him fades in with his final statement, or a blank message stating that the offender declined to make a final statement. All images and texts were pulled from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Website.

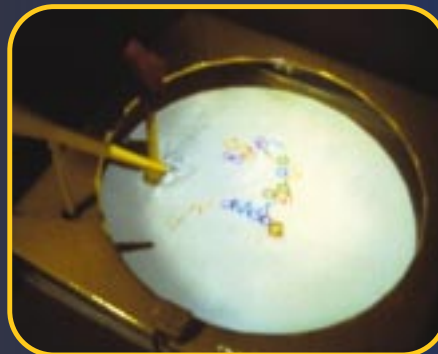
Texas Moments is a screen saver featuring the 40 Death Row inmates executed by the state of Texas...

Genius!

By far, the most popular displays in the Art Gallery were *The Floating Words* and *Contact Water*, two Japanese installations playing with virtual reality and how it affects our senses. *The Floating Words* (Satoko Moroi, Japan) is a mischievous installation playing with (what else!) words. When a viewer speaks into a microphone, his words slowly flow out of a pipe into a pool and reform, with beautiful color letters falling one by one into the water. Using a stick or a ladle, the viewer can stir the letters or pour them back into the water, undistorted. The artist commented her main goal was to play a joke on people,



The final meals and statements of Death Row inmates make up *Texas Moments* by Tarikh Korula.



Talk soup: Letters swim like fish in *The Floating Words* created by Satoko Moroi.



High tech toys allow participants to play games and explore nonverbal communication in Taisuke Murakami's *Contact Water*.

who are surprised and happy with her trick. She also wanted to create a happy, warm space, like in our childhood. I was curious to know why she chose to display words in a visual and tactile way, as words represent verbal (abstract) communication. She explained that her motivation was primarily to play with the sense of touch. She didn't want the material that flows out of the pipe to take

shape as fish, which is what would be expected in water. Instead she decided to use letters and yet give the illusion that letters had substance, like fish. She was really pleased when a viewer asked if the letters were edible!

The most popular displays in the Art Gallery were two Japanese installations playing with virtual reality and how it affects our senses.

Contact Water (www.iamas.ac.jp/~taisum98, Taisuke Murakami, Japan) is an interactive art installation using mixed reality (MR) technology, which merges the real and virtual words in real-time. Real world scenes are augmented with virtual world images (water and aquatic animals) synthesized by computer graphics. With *Contact Water*, each player is wearing a head-mounted video camera and a glove. The video camera incorporates a magnetic sensor detecting the head position and a pair of cameras capturing real world information. The glove is equipped with a magnetic sensor, to follow the player's hand movements, and a speaker to output the whistles and squeaks of the aquatic animals. Each player can visualize a computer-generated water surface on his palm and get aquatic animals such as dol-

phins from a fountain in the center of the playfield. The animals display various gestures following the player's orders, given via hand movements. A player can also interact with other players by exchanging animals, i.e. throwing animals at another player while looking at him (the animals jump through a ring of particles to the other player's palm). This installation was very successful and visitors were queuing to play. The creator says he created this installation as a tool to enable people to see the importance of face to face communication, especially non-verbal communication through facial expressions and gestures. The awkwardness of the players in recreating and coordinating simple movements through virtual reality was in full agreement with the message... MR technology gets a lot of attention in Japan.

The MR Lab, founded by the Japanese government and Canon, Inc., was launched in January 1997 as the core organization for promoting research projects on Mixed Reality systems. The goal is to apply MR technology to attractions at theme parks and exhibits at science museums, as well as home entertainment and wearable virtual city guides. *Contact Water* was awarded the grand prize at the first contest put together by the Mixed Reality Entertainment Conference (MREC) in 2000.

To me, the most intriguing aspect of *Contact Water*, as well as the other projects presented at SIGGRAPH this year, was the paradox between the technical sophistication of the work and the motivation of the artist, which was to go back to the essential, the most primary aspects of

human relations and feelings.

After five years as AWN's General Manager Annick Teninge returned to France, where she is now in charge of production and distribution at La Poudrière in Valence, an animation school offering a 2-year program where students study the process of filmmaking and develop their own film projects. She is also heading AWN's marketing and public relations efforts in Europe. Annick began her animation career as assistant director at the Annecy International Animation Festival, a post she held for six years.

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AWN Spotlight

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New from Japan:

Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

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

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World.

By the end of 2001, the entire *El-Hazard* anime series will be available on video and DVD from Pioneer Entertainment. The variety of titles and formats is

rather confusing however. Below we list the variety of compilations.

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World. V.1, Battlefield of Confusion. V.2, The World of Beautiful Girls. V.3, The World of Thunder. V.4, The World of Endless Adventures.

OAV series (7 episodes), 1995-1996. Director: Hiroki Hayashi. V.1 - 3, 50 minutes; V.4, 75 minutes. Price & format: video dubbed \$19.98 each; subtitled \$24.98 each. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

El-Hazard: The Wanderers. V.1, The Adventure Begins. V.2, The Ultimate Weapon. V.3, The Winds of War. V.4, Final Adventures.

TV series (26 episodes), 1995-1996. Director: Katsuhito Akiyama. V.1 & V.4, 7 episodes/175 minutes; V.2 & V.3, 6 episodes/150 minutes.

Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98 each. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

El Hazard 2: The Magnificent World. V.1, Awakening of Kalia. V.2, Promise for Reunion.

OAV series (4 episodes), 1997. Director: Yoshiaki Iwasaki. 60 minutes each. Price & format: video dubbed \$24.98 each; subtitled \$29.98 each. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.



El Hazard 2: The Magnificent World, Volumes 1 - 2. © 1998 AIC, Pioneer LDC, Inc., TV Tokyo.

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World DVD Box Set.

El-Hazard: The Magnificent World. OAV series (7 episodes), 1995-1996. Director: Hiroki Hayashi.



El Hazard: The Magnificent World, Volumes 1 - 4. © 1995, 1998 AIC, Pioneer LDC, Inc.

El-Hazard 2: The Magnificent World. OAV series (4 episodes), 1997. Director: Yoshiaki Iwasaki. Price & format: 3 DVDs, bilingual, 365 minutes, decorative box & 16-page booklet, \$119.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

Take a shy teenage boy and surround him with beautiful girls from straitlaced sisters to sexy nymphettes in a fantasy-comedy situation. This formula made the A.I.C. studio's *Tenchi Muyo!* one of the major anime sensations of the early 1990s (September 1992 for the next half-dozen years). By the mid-'90s A.I.C. felt it was time to try a fresh variation. *El-Hazard: The Magnificent World* moved the formula from Earth to a fantasy world, most obviously a mixture of the *Arabian Nights* with *The Prisoner of Zenda*; although scripter Ryoei Tsukimura admitted to being a big fan of Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter of Mars* novels, and director Hayashi to being an addict of the Marx Brothers movies.

A superscientific and/or magical artifact beneath Shinonome High School in Japan sends three students and a teacher to a Persianesque alternate dimension. Makoto Mizuhara, 17, is a cross between a nerd and an idealistic knight. Katsuhiko Jinnai is the stereotypical rotter from a British school novel; a cheat and a schemer, though not a coward. His sister, Nanami, is a bit bossy and materialistic but basically good-hearted. Mr. Fujisawa doubles as chaperone and comedy relief; he is an amiable but weak-willed drunkard and chain smoker. The world of *El-Hazard* is at war, with the good nations (allied under leadership of Roshtaria) defending themselves

from the evil Bugrom Empire whose femme-fatale Queen Diva leads an army of giant insect warriors. The Eye of God, an orbiting satellite doomsday weapon left over from an earlier technological civilization, can only be controlled by the two princesses of Roshtaria, but one of them, Princess Fatora, has just disappeared. If news gets out it could destroy the morale of the allies. Makoto happens to be an exact lookalike of Fatora, so he is drafted to impersonate her until she can be found: the *Zenda* setup, except that it requires a very embarrassed boy to dress in drag, with appropriate risque setups like trying to sneak into the men's room when he has to go. Jinnai offers his services to Bugrom as a would-be conquering Napoleon (he names the giant bugs of his command staff after his favorite Japanese movie actors), so Makoto idealistically has to help the Roshtarians. There are three priestess/magicians of Fire, Air and Water. A love rivalry develops between Nanami and Shayla-Shayla the hot-tempered Fire Priestess over Makoto, who wants no part of it. Mr. Fujisawa wants to get back to Earth before his cigarettes run out, unaware that husband-hunting Water Priestess Miz Mishtal has her eye on him. And so forth. A detailed cast and synopsis of all the subplots would fill several pages. There are assassins, evil "Phantom tribesmen" (fantasy Dark Elves under another name), and lots of other major characters (not to mention the minor ones), all of whom have distinct personalities that usually clash amusingly, alternating smoothly between humorous and dramatic scenes. The pseudo-Middle Eastern fantasy costumes and landscapes by Nobuhito Sue are truly beau-

tiful, and the music score by Seiko Nagaoka is of theatrical feature quality.

The original *El-Hazard* was released as seven OAVs (the first is 45 minutes, numbers 2 through 6 are 30 minutes each, and the climax is 40 minutes) between May 1995 and January 1996. The first episode was so popular that plans were quickly made to milk *El-Hazard* to death. A 25-episode TV remake, *El Hazard: The Wanderers*, started on the air before episode 5 of the OAV came out (October 6, 1995 through March 24, 1996). It retells the same basic story, but with more emphasis on the subplots (lots of aimless wandering about the world) and eliminating most of the risque humor (the cross-dressing situations; the nude bathing scenes). The costumes and landscapes are still lovely but it is painfully obvious that the animation quality has been cut by almost 50%.

An actual sequel, *El Hazard 2: The Magnificent World*, was only four OAV half-hour episodes, released between March and October 1997. (It is the final DVD of the beautifully-packaged 3-DVD boxed set.) The poor-quality animation is still evident. In this rendition, Mr. Fujisawa gets cold feet on his wedding day and runs off to explore *El-Hazard*. The others set off on a quest to find him, joined by the real Princess Fatora who only appeared in the last moments of the first series. She is a spoiled bitch lesbian, and a running gag is that she constantly uses her resemblance to Makoto to try to seduce the girls who are in love with him. They all cross paths with Jinnai, still trying to become the generalissimo of a Bugrom Empire; he has discov-



El Hazard: The Alternative World, Volumes 1 - 4. © 1998 AIC, Pioneer LDC, Inc., TV Tokyo.

ered a new doomsday device from that earlier civilization and is about to try it out ... *El-Hazard 2* definitely suffers by comparison with the original series, but it is a pleasant sequel for fans who want to spend a couple more hours with the charismatic characters.

El-Hazard: The Alternative World. V.1, The Priestess of Water. V.2, The Spring of Life. V.3, Ruler of the Universe. V.4, Dreams of Tomorrow.

TV series (13 episodes), 1998. Director: Yasuhito Kikuchi. V.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes; V.2 - 4, 3 episodes/75 minutes each. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98 each. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

The final entry in the franchise is a second TV series, *El-Hazard: The Alternative World*; 12 episodes broadcast from January 7, 1998 to March 26, 1998 with a 13th epilogue episode added to the later video release. This is a sequel to both OAV series. Miz Mishtal has stepped down as Water Priestess to marry Mr. Fujisawa, and a new Water Priestess, Qawoor, is being coro-

nated when the whole cast is swept off to an alternate world. There they find the same-old same-old. Arjah, an evil self-styled "ruler of the universe," is trying to conquer the Kingdom of Creteria. He needs a mystic weapon, the Spring of Life; the attempt to activate it has drawn Qawoor and those around her to this world. Makoto & Co. nobly have to save Creteria as they did Roshtaria; Jinnai finds this world also has giant bug warriors who will take his orders; etc. The main difference lies in a major subplot involving Gilda, the young commander of Creteria's royal guard. Gilda is well-intentioned, but her pride in her own abilities and her lack of confidence in Creteria's apparently-weak ruler leads her to plot a military coup "for the good of the nation;" an internal weakness in Creteria's defense which both Jinnai and Arjah are quick to exploit. A.I.C.'s animation is again clearly limited in comparison to the original story, and Makoto has to figure out how to save the day while fighting off the distracting romantic attentions of Nanami, Shayla-Shayla and Qawoor. There are certainly many worse anime

titles than *El-Hazard: The Alternative World*; but as with *El-Hazard 2*, this is a sequel which suffers in comparison with the original work.

Summary: If you just want one sample of the original series, which is a classic, Volume 1 of the *El-Hazard* video (dubbed or subtitled) should suffice. There is unfortunately no individual DVD release. If you want the entire original series, the DVD Box Set is a good buy, which will also give you *El-Hazard 2*. If the lower animation quality of *El-Hazard 2* is acceptable to you and you want still more of what has turned into a formulaic plot, go on to *El-Hazard: The Alternative World*. As for *El-Hazard: The Wanderers* TV series, comparing it with the original OAV series provides some insights between what is considered acceptable risqué adolescent humor in Japan's video market versus what is acceptable for family TV programming.

Oh My Goddess! V.1 - 2.

OAV series, 1993-1994. Director: Hiroaki Gohda. V.1, 3 episodes/87 minutes; V.2, 2 episodes/69 minutes. Price & format: DVD

(bilingual), \$24.95. Distributor: AnimEigo.

One of the genuine fan hits of the 1990s, to the extent that there were impassioned arguments among fans as to whether the Japanese title *Aa! Megami-sama* should be translated literally as *Ah! My Goddess* or more loosely as *Oh My Goddess!* to get in the English pun on “Oh, My God!”; until creator Kosuke Fujishima went on record in favor of the latter. It began as a manga in September 1988; another variant on the teen “magical girlfriend” formula, but with an unusually sweet and romantic plot. By 1992 the manga was so popular that its beginning was adapted into this five-episode OAV release. College freshman Keiichi Morisato is the

stereotype of the nice guy who lets everyone impose on him. He is shocked when young goddess Belldandy appears to grant him a wish. He wishes that he could have a girl friend just like her; and Belldandy herself is assigned to remain on Earth with him. The “Relief Goddess Office” in Heaven alters reality so that the two teens are able to set up housekeeping in absolutely chaste circumstances, with Keiichi’s younger sister moving in to provide a chaperone. The setup is so proper that Belldandy’s more extroverted older sister goddess Urd joins them in episode #2 to deliberately spice things up with some mild *femme fatale* humor. Episode #3 brings in their youngest sister, Skuld, a tomboy whose magic runs toward mechanical gadgets. Having set up the basic plot, the last two episodes throw it into jeopardy. The goddess’ attempt to leave Fate running on automatic while they are on Earth is breaking down, and God orders them back on the job. Keiichi and Belldandy are heartbroken at being separated. Urd and Skuld determine to help the two lovers, even if it means risking the wrath of God...

The OAV skips much background, assuming viewers are familiar with the more detailed comic-book serial. Fortunately, AnimEigo included extensive notes in its 1994 American video release, which are also in the new DVD version. Belldandy (present), Urd (past) and Skuld (future) are the three Fates from Norse mythology (“Belldandy” should be Verthande), Heaven is Asgard and God is Wotan. In the myths the three Fates guard the world-tree Yggdrasil from the monsters and demons that would destroy it. In Fujishima’s version Heaven is a

futuristic computer center; Yggdrasil is the master program that controls Fate, and the three sisters are the programmers who keep the fate of humanity running smoothly. (Skuld “debugs” Yggdrasil by chasing after the bugs — spiders with rabbit heads — with a mallet.) Many more revelations appear gradually, although they are less important than the interplay between the characters. *Oh My Goddess!* is a rare title in which the story is less important than the attractive personalities. Keiichi, Belldandy, and the others are so darn *nice* that you would want to spend an evening with them if all they did was sit around drinking tea and chatting. Fujishima’s comic book, which goes on far past the events in the anime, is one of the most popular translated manga in America, appearing monthly from Dark Horse Comics since August 1994.

The five-episode OAV was one of A.I.C.’s highest-quality productions. The first four half-hour episodes appeared quarterly between February and December 1993; the 40-minute finale did not come out until May 1994. The animators clearly took enough time to do a good job. The music by Takeshi Yasuda has been a fan-favorite CD import for years. AnimEigo’s DVD includes not only the usual options of both English and Japanese audio tracks, with or without subtitles, but a “dub your own” option for would-be voice actors with the music and sound FX but no dialogue.

Mobile Suit Gundam. V.1, The Battle Begins! V.2, The Red Comet. V.3, The Threat of Zeon. V.4, Desert of Despair. V.5, Ambush! V.6, The Black Tri-Star.



V.7, Back to Space. V.8, The Battle of Solomon. V.9, New Type. V.10, Lalah's Fate.

TV series (43 episodes), 1979-1980. Director: Yoshiyuki Tomino. Price & format: video & DVD English language, V.1-2 & 10, 5 episodes/125 minutes, V.3-9, 4 episodes/100 minutes, video \$14.98/DVD \$24.98 each. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.



Mobile Suit Gundam, Volumes 1 - 2.
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Mobile Suit Gundam: The 08th MS Team. V.1 - 4.

OAV series (12 episodes), 1996-1999. Directors: Takeyuki Kanda, Umanosuke Iida. Price & format: V.1-4, 3 episodes 75 minutes, video English language \$19.98 each; DVD bilingual \$24.98 each. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

There are several TV anime

series that have been massively influential. *Mobile Suit Gundam* is without doubt one of them. It revitalized the exhausted "giant robot" genre by taking it from a juvenile fantasy scenario and putting it into a more realistic military-action science-fiction setting. Instead of the mighty robot and its righteous adolescent pilot-companion performing as a simplistic superhero team fighting evil villains, the robot became an advanced battle vehicle, one of many in an air/space force fighting in a futuristic war; and the action focuses upon the human interest story of the young pilot. *Macross* /*Robotech*, *VOTOMS*, *Patlabor*, *Evangeliion* — every giant robot anime series during the past twenty years that has achieved any popularity has followed the new formula created by *Gundam* in 1979.

Gundam has become an industry in its own right, catapulting its producer, Sunrise Inc., into the ranks of Japan's major animation studios. The original *Mobile Suit Gundam* was 43 episodes, broadcast from April 7, 1979 - January 26, 1980. These were



Mobile Suit Gundam: The 08th MS Team, Volumes 1 - 2. © Bandai Entertainment. All rights reserved.

condensed into three theatrical features. The sequels started gushing out in the mid-1980s, with new TV series, theatrical features and direct to video series; not to



The influential Mobile Suit Gundam. © Bandai Entertainment. All rights reserved.



Mobile Suit Gundam revitalized the exhausted giant robot genre.
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mention the live-action TV movie, the video games, the Japanese amusement park attractions, etc., etc. *Zeta Gundam*, *Gundam-ZZ*, *Gundam Victory*, *G-Gundam* ... anime fans have been both amused and frustrated by America's first taste of the franchise being the 1995 *Gundam Wing*, one of the more recent variants.

Mobile Suit Gundam was created by director Yoshiyuki Tomino, who has admitted that he wanted to film Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* but Sunrise couldn't afford the TV rights. So he wrote his own version, focusing upon realistic warfare using plausible advanced military technology but turning the alien-creature menace into human adversaries. The action begins six months into a war in "Universal Century 0079" (around 2200 A.D.) between an Earth world government and Zeon, an artificial orbital space colony that has declared independence but is really trying to

establish a dictatorship over all humanity. 15-year-old Amuro Ray, a civilian on another orbital colony being evacuated to Earth, is drafted into using his scientist father's Gundam battle-suit prototype to keep the evacuees alive as they are harried by Zeon's fighters. The complex military soap opera follows Amuro's relationship with his estranged family, his civilian buddies and new military companions (including budding romantic fumbblings), and his increasingly personal rivalry with Zeon's "Red Baron"-like ace pilot Char Aznable (with glimpses of Char's own secret war against his superiors); as he grows during the last half of "the One-Year War" from a naive schoolboy to an experienced and bitter combat veteran. *Gundam* featured a large but charismatic cast (designed by fan-favorite character designer Yoshikazu Yasuhiko), believable emotions and dialogue, gripping political and battle situations, and a rare

hard-science sci-fi plot that blended technology (the space battle hardware) and biology (hints that Amuro and Char were superior "Newtype" humans due to being raised outside of Earth's biosphere).

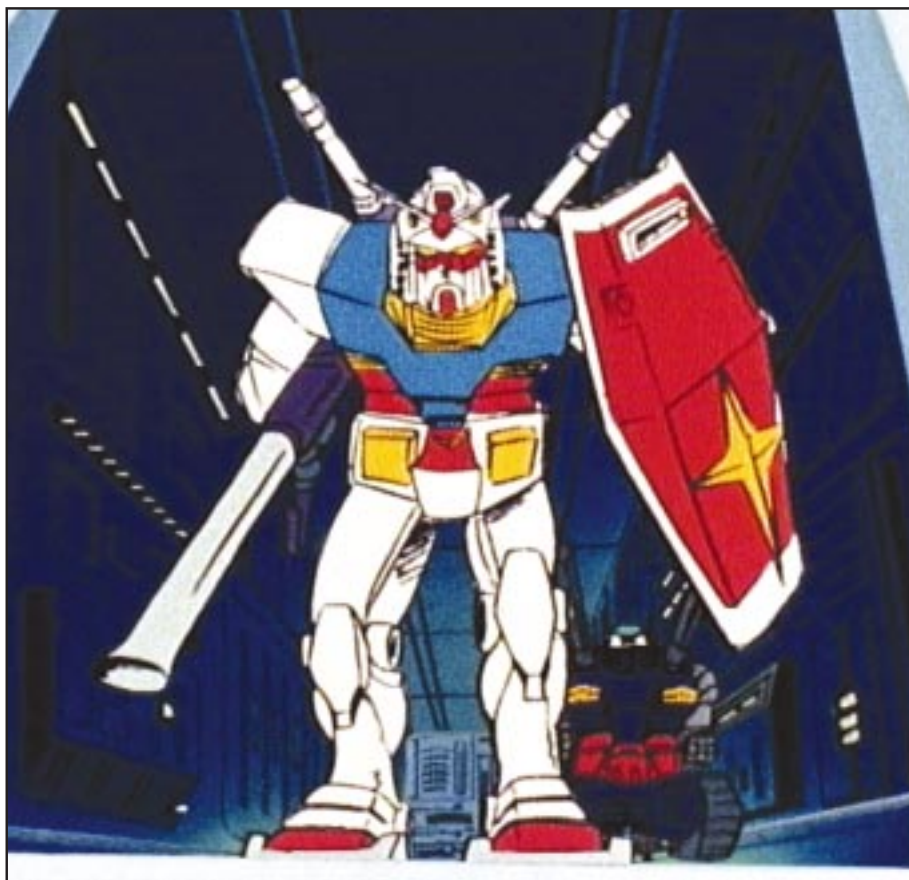
The first sequels were set between one and thirty years following *Gundam*'s conclusion with the defeat of Zeon. They generally established that "everybody is no damn good," switching back and forth between the Earth Federation and Zeon as the good and bad guys depending upon which political faction is in charge of which nation; with the civilian population sinking into despair as the fighting continues apparently endlessly. *Mobile Suit Gundam: The 08th MS Team*, set on a different battlefield of the One-Year War, attempted to recreate the relatively positive mood of the original story, when both sides expected a quick and permanent victory. The Earth Federation has manufactured enough Gundams to send a division to Southeast Asia to take it back from an occupying Zeon army. Freshly graduated Lieut. Shiro Amada, assigned to command the 08th Mobile Suit Team, must prove to his veteran squad that he has what it takes to lead them; must help still rawer rookies fit onto the team; must win the friendship and aid of native guerrillas who consider both the Feggies and the Zeeks to be destructive invaders; and must overcome and defeat the Zeons' experimental Apsalus super-weapon. The 08th MS Team starts out as basically a cleaned-up boys'-adventure version of the 1965-1975 Viet Nam War with giant robot battle armor instead of tanks, evolving into an improbable Romeo & Juliet romance between

Shiro and Zeon's Apsalus test pilot, the lovely Aina Sakhalin, as the two former idealists for their causes become disillusioned by seeing the reality of war. The twelve half-hour episodes were released to video between January 1996 and July 1999; an unusually long period caused in part by original director Kanda's death in July 1996.

Mobile Suit Gundam, which started it all, is still considered the best of all the series in story depth and character development, although the animation quality (produced when Sunrise was a poor, struggling newcomer) is primitive compared to the sequels. The VHS video version presents *Gundam* as it has been edited for American TV broadcast; the DVD version is uncut. Unlike most DVDs, however, the original *Gundam* series is dubbed in English only. Due to business decisions in Japan, the original Japanese dialogue with English subtitles could not be included. Both English dialogue and the Japanese dialogue with subtitles are available on *The 08th MS Team* series. Its twelve episodes offer a good summary of the *Gundam* plot and spirit in a new story featuring the higher-quality animation of the late 1990s.

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

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The robot as an advanced battle vehicle in *Mobile Suit Gundam*.
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Military action meets sci-fi in *Mobile Suit Gundam*.
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Fresh from the Festivals:

November 2001's Film Reviews

by Jon Hofferma

Within the world of animation, most experimentation occurs within short format productions, whether they be high budgeted commercials, low budgeted independent shorts, or something in between. The growing number of short film festivals around the world attest to the vitality of these works, but there are few other venues for exhibition of them or even written reviews. As a result, distribution tends to be difficult and irregular. On a regular basis, *Animation World Magazine* will highlight some of the most interesting with short descriptive overviews.

This Month:

Bike Ride (2000), 6.5 min., directed by Tom Schroeder, USA. Info: Tom Schroeder. Email: tom.schroeder@pcae.k12.mn.us.

E=mc2 (2001), 8 min., directed by Alina Hiu-Fan Chau, USA/Hong Kong. Info: Alina Hiu-Fan Chau. Tel.: 310-592-6751. Email: alinac@ucla.edu.

Insect Poetry (2001), 6 min., directed by Marilyn Zornado, USA. Info: Sandi Serling, Serling & Associates, Inc., 14495 Fosberg Road, Lake Oswego, OR 97035-1813. Tel.: 503-697-0649. Fax: 503-697-3139. Email: sandis955@aol.com.

Lint People (2000), 7.5 min., directed by Helder K. Sun, USA. Info: Helder K. Sun/Umba Jumba, 1377 Lucile Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90026. Email: heldersun@hotmail.com.

Maaz (1999), 8 min., directed by Christian Volckman, France. Info: Atom Films, 815 Western Avenue, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98104. Tel: 206-264-2735. Fax: 206-264-2742.

Bike Ride

This entertaining and wonderfully low-key film tells a simple, heartbreaking story: James Peterson rides his bike fifty miles to see his girlfriend, gets dumped, and rides home again. Conceived as an exercise in improvisation, *Bike Ride* sets the protagonist's first-person narration against an accompaniment by drummer Dave King and simple white-on-black drawings. Sometimes literal, sometimes ironically impressionistic, the images loosely follow the ebb and flow of Peterson's sad

tale, combining with the other elements to create a jazz-like composition that's an apt vehicle for relating the spontaneous nature of the ill-fated journey. There are a few moments when the drumming overwhelms the narration, making it difficult to hear, but otherwise the conceit works extremely well.

It's not surprising that director Tom Schroeder lists legendary Canadian animator Norman McLaren among his influences, as *Bike Ride* is very reminiscent of the abstract, coolly witty work of McLaren, and other notable mid-century figures such as Saul Bass. For *Bike Ride*, Schroeder used ink and paper, which he scanned into Photoshop. The film was then assembled using Macromedia Director.

Schroeder lives in Minneapolis, where he teaches and makes independent films. *Bike Ride* has screened at numerous festivals and was named Best Animated Film at the 2001 Atlanta Film and Video Festival.

E=mc2

Alina Hiu-Fan Chau's conceptually ambitious film is a revisionist creation myth that gives human form to the cosmological ideas of Albert Einstein and Stephen Hawking. Opening with a funny Lucasfilm sound parody, *E=mc2* goes on to tell the story of "Proton" and "Electron," a brother and sister whose falling out leads to the Big Bang and the creation of the universe. The film is beautifully made using traditional character animation rendered in Photoshop and After Effects and features a live orchestral score (inevitably one thinks of *Fantasia*), but the Disney-ish characters and overly simple



See visual jazz in Tom Schroeder's *Bike Ride*.
Courtesy of Tom Schroeder.

storyline aren't up to the cosmic ideas being considered. The denouement, in which the narrator is revealed to be a young Albert Einstein telling this story to his sister, is a nice idea that doesn't quite come off.

The lush musical score for *E=mc²* is by veteran composer Mark Lathan, who also conducted the UCLA orchestra. Chau was required to book the orchestra a year in advance and had one hour to record the score in a studio without film or sync sound equipment. She and Lathan had to time the film frame by frame to prepare a click track to guide the recording session.

Alina Hiu-Fan Chau has been drawing since she was four and has won forty-two awards in art and design. *E=mc²* is her thesis project in the MFA program at UCLA.

Insect Poetry

Marilyn Zornado, a long-time producer at Will Vinton Studios, brings together several of her enthusiasms — as well as the talents of friends and family — in this first directorial effort. Based on the poems of Meme Marie Meyers, *Insect Poetry* employs stop-motion and 2D animation to create a charming and highly civilized entomological literary gathering, in which several eloquent insects read their poems. In three of the segments, Zornado uses her calligraphic skills to enhance the spoken text, and at times the combination of visual and aural elements gets to be a bit much, hindering rather than enhancing comprehension. The final segment, featuring a particularly sultry butterfly and a lovely sequence of

3D fly-throughs, is the most successful; here, words, music, graphics and motion blend together in a flowing and harmonious whole.

Insect Poetry was shot on 35mm after-hours at Will Vinton Studios. In addition to Meyers, other local participants included members of the Portland, Oregon theater community, who per-



Alina Hiu-Fan Chau shows us The Big Bang in *E=mc²*.
© 2002 Alina Hiu-Fan Chau.



Glide with a literary-minded butterfly in Marilyn Zornado's sultry *Insect Poetry*.
© Will Vinton Studios.



Perfect comic timing is displayed in *Lint People* by Helder K. Sun. © Umba Jumba.

formed the readings, and Zornado's entomologist husband, Alan Garren, who served as anatomical advisor. The music was composed by Judith Gruber-Stitzer and arranged for mandolin

orchestra by David Gossage.

In her fifteen years as a producer for Will Vinton, Marilyn Zornado's commercial work has included the Dominos Pizza Noid and the California Raisins. She has also produced longer-form programs for *Sesame Street*, the Smithsonian and others, and teaches Book Arts at the Oregon College of Arts and Crafts.

Lint People

Helder K. Sun's *Lint People* has two key ingredients that immediately identify it as a potential classic: a horde of small, oddly shaped creatures and the use of funny, high-pitched and largely incoherent voices. (OK, maybe this says more about me.) In any event, this very funny stop-motion film presents a grim peek into the dysfunctional world of a cotton/rayon blend family, in which the father — for unexplained reasons — has developed a taste for his children. There are echoes of the Brothers Quay in the beautifully detailed, decrepit sets, and the characters' movements are executed with perfect comic timing. The impressive, deceptively simple score by Dan Cantrell and sound design by Craig Smith are extremely effective and funny in their own right. Unfortunately, as in so many otherwise accomplished films, the story and motivations (such as they are) are underdeveloped, which gives the film a shapeless feel, and detracts from the overall effect.

Director Helder Sun received his MFA from Cal Arts and lives in Los Angeles, where he makes films, paints, draws and sometimes works as a motion con-



Enter the maze in Christian Volckman's *Maaz*.
© Onyx Films.

trol camera operator. Among his roommates is a family of snails, which will star in his next film, *The Snail Parade*.

Lint People was funded in part by a Princess Grace Film Award, and has screened in over 60 festivals, including Sundance and Annecy.

Maaz

Maaz is a visually stunning film that combines live-action and 3D animation with a clutch of digital effects to produce a kind of paranoid nightmare, in which a caped figure runs (is chased?) through a surreal, threatening

landscape. Director Christian Volckman demonstrates a high degree of imagination and expertise, using expressionist lighting and camera angles, and playing with subtle shifts and sudden changes in scale, tempo and perspective, to create a visceral dream world of muted colors and uncertain meaning.

The reverberant soundtrack, featuring music by Jibril Lahbabi, is as impressive and complex as the visuals. Yet, *Maaz* seems less like a unified narrative (or a suggestive evocation of a state of mind) than it does a collection of techniques in search of a story. It's beautiful to look at and listen to, but it doesn't leave the viewer with much beyond the immediate experience.

Christian Volckman, a graduate of Ecole Supérieure d'Arts Graphiques in Paris, is a painter, graphic designer and photographer. His other film work includes two clips and the short, *Le cobaye*,

which received a Prix du Jury at Annecy in 1995. *Maaz* has been shown at nearly 100 festivals and has won 30 prizes, including two for sound.

Go online to see QuickTime movie clips from each of the films at: http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?type=pageone&article_no=860

Jon Hofferma is an independent filmmaker, writer and graphic designer, as well as the creator of the Classical Composers Poster (www.carissimi.com). He has a B.A. in Philosophy & Religion and an M.F.A. from UCLA's School of Film & Television. Appropriately enough, he is currently working on a documentary about the nature of religious experience.

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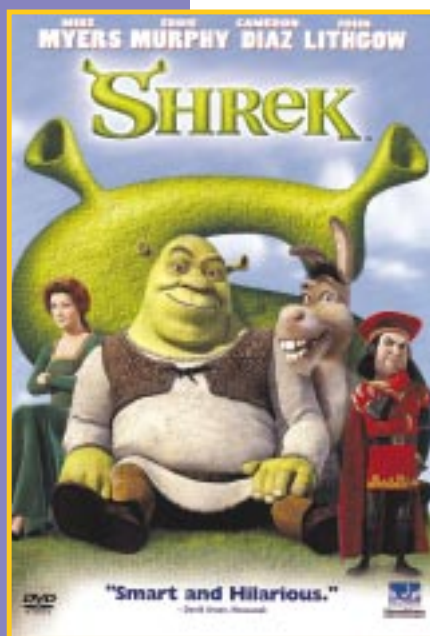
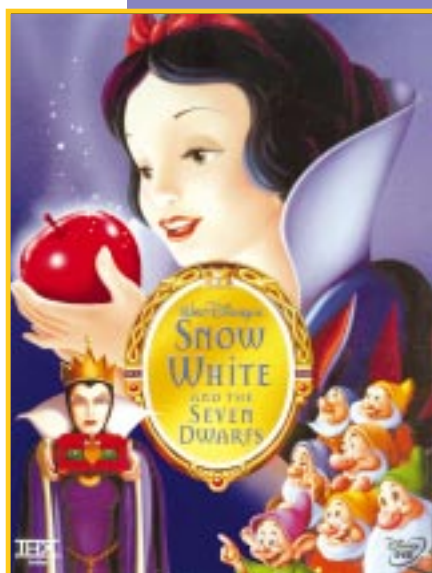
Glenn Vilppu's drawing
techniques manual
and video tapes,
used worldwide as
course material for
animation students.



DVD Review:

Snow White and Shrek

by Jerry Beck



It's an animated showdown at the video store this month, with a "beauty" (Snow White) versus a "beast" (Shrek). Animation's first feature-length blockbuster is going head to head with 2001's biggest animated hit. Both are superior examples of what DVD technology can provide — whether you are a tech-

no-junkie, animation historian, devoted fan or just-plain love movies.

The First Lady

Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs was, as anyone reading this Website should already know, Walt Disney's first animated feature film. Released in 1937, it was the

Titanic of its day; a huge gamble that became a mega-blockbuster and beloved classic. Though a little primitive by later standards, the film was a major accomplishment in the art of animation, as well as a landmark in motion picture storytelling.

This DVD release gave the studio a reason to, yet again, restore the film to pristine perfection. The picture and sound here are a revelation. The soundtrack is crystal clear and the visuals are very bright and clean. Maybe too bright and clean. Looking at the movie on DVD makes it hard to believe this film was produced in 1937. There is no film grain and the colors are bright, sharp and vivid. (Compare them to the numerous theatrical trailers contained in the bonus materials.)

Can a restoration be too good? I have not done a side by side comparison to the previous laser disc or VHS versions, but if I had one observation to note, it would be that some of the lit scenes here seem a tad too bright. When the Dwarfs first come across Snow White, they are searching around their cottage with a small candle lantern. The light emitted feels like a halogen bulb — 500 watts of brightness — illuminating every nook and cranny.

"Clean" is the other big word coming to mind while watching this DVD. If this is what today's digital technology can do for a 1937 cartoon, then bring on *Silly Symphonies*, *Happy Harmonies* and *Merrie Melodies*! "Old" Hollywood cartoons need not look and feel like ancient relics — and this disc proves it.

As for the bonus materials — this is a film buff's idea of heaven. While there is a fair amount of extra material here for families and

kids (a Barbra Streisand video, sing-along sections and a Dopey video game — and I use the word “dopey” here as an adjective), the archive material for the serious film fan is priceless. I cannot think of a thing they’ve left out. There are deleted sequences and animation art presented here I’ve never seen or heard of before.

Here’s a quick rundown of a few of the extras I really appreciated: two behind-the-scenes production shorts from 1937 and 1938, eight theatrical trailers, seven radio spots, five deleted sequences, rare radio broadcasts, a deleted song, behind the scenes on how the restoration was done for DVD and tons of production artwork. Also included is the 1934 Silly Symphony short *The Goddess of Spring*, which tested the animators on drawing a realistic female figure, in anticipation of animating *Snow White*.

I also love that they provided the original RKO opening and closing titles. Audio track commentary by John Canemaker and Walt Disney (himself, from rare interviews) runs concurrent with the film and provides wonderful insights and anecdotes. Walt mentions at one point that he came to hate *Snow White*, because all his subsequent features were compared unfavorably against it. There are hours of material here, much more than I mentioned above. This is clearly a must-have for anyone who cares about animation.

Inside Shrek

PDI/DreamWork’s *Shrek* shares with *Snow White* a storybook opening, seven dwarfs, a magic mirror and the honor of being the largest grossing film during the year of its initial release. This animated smash won over

audiences by being a clever spoof of fairy tales, at the same time telling a great story with real heart.

I enjoyed *Shrek* mainly due to its funny script, its clever direction and the excellent performances by an all-star voice cast. I have some reservations about the character designs and animation, but I still recommend this film to any and all for its pure entertainment value. While I prefer Pixar’s cartoony visual approach to CGI, DreamWorks and Pacific Data Images certainly have concocted a real audience pleaser here — and I especially liked the film’s digs at Disney’s happy empire.

Professional animators and rabid cartoon fans got an early Christ-mas treat with the release of these two wonderful DVDs.

The feature, presented both in full screen and wide screen versions, looks terrific on DVD and the Dolby digital surround sound is crisp and clear. The DVD features a staggering 11 hours of bonus materials — however six of those hours are devoted to kids’ games. Animation buffs can settle in with plenty of extra goodies starting with the informational (and entertaining) audio track commentary by directors Vicky Jenson, Andrew Adamson

and co-producer Aron Warner. Behind the scenes documentaries, outtake footage, storyboards, deleted scenes, trailers and music videos fill the two discs. One of the production documentaries, “The Tech Of Shrek,” is particularly detailed about the CGI work on the film.

Professional animators and rabid cartoon fans got an early Christmas treat with the release of these two wonderful DVDs. For the price (both are listed under \$30.00), *Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs* and *Shrek* are two films well worth adding to your permanent collection.

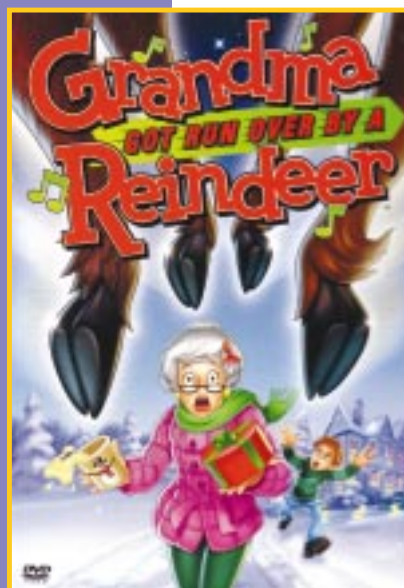
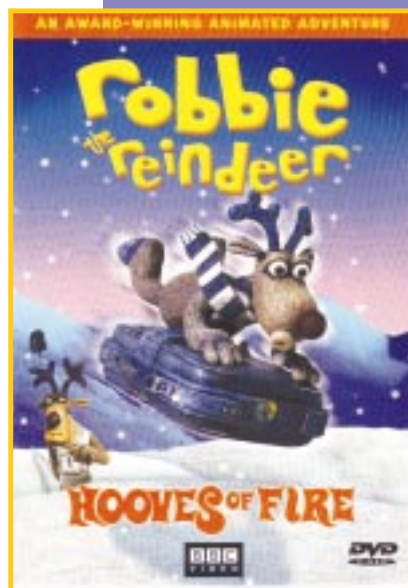
Jerry Beck is an animation producer and cartoon historian who is simultaneously developing a show with MTV Animation and writing a book for Harry N. Abrams Publishers. He also has a cool Website at www.cartoon-research.com.

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DVD Review:

Robbie The Reindeer and Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer

by Jerry Beck



Warner Home Video has released a disparate duo of DVDs in time for the Christmas season, and while both are animated and have the word “reindeer” in the title, their similarities end right there.

Robbie to the Rescue

Robbie The Reindeer In

Hooves Of Fire is a modern stop-motion holiday masterpiece. It's a zany British sequel-of-sorts to *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* — though use of Rudolph's name is purposely avoided, and its avoidance is used as a running joke.

Though the animation and design is from the Aardman school, this is an independent BBC

production for Comic Relief. The story by Richard Curtis (*Notting Hill*, *Bridget Jones's Diary*) is very clever and loaded with witty observations, *MAD* magazine-like gags and sharp dialogue.

The story concerns the arrival of Robbie at the training camp of Santa's reindeer. Robbie, who inherited an incredible sense of direction from his dad, was sent there by Rudolph to take his place at the lead of Santa's sleigh (apparently his red-nosed papa has gone off to considerable fame and fortune). There he meets the crew, including Blitzen, the captain of the team who has no use for Robbie's special talents, the sexy Vixen and the sweet Donner who eventually becomes his girlfriend. When Santa introduces his souped-up “Sled Mark 2,” which includes an automatic navigational system, Robbie sees no use in staying and leaves the squad.

After a disastrous try at toy making with some wacky elves, Robbie decides to seek his true destiny and enter the Reindeer Games with the help of his wacky trainer, Old Jingle. The games themselves are treated as a spoof of the Olympics with the legendary Bigfoot, and a Snowman companion, as the sportscasters (“Brought to you by HAY, the official snack food of the Reindeer Games!”). Needless to say, Robbie wins by a nose and rejoins the team to deliver toys on Christmas night.

This simple plot is enhanced by an excellent British voice cast (think *Wallace & Gromit* quality) and superb stop-motion models, sets and animation. The DVD contains a great behind-the-scenes video and audio track commentary by director Richard Golezowski. This is a superb holiday special for all ages.

Poor Grandma

Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer is a 60 minute, drawn animation (or, as they say these days, "2D") film based on a hit novelty song by country singer Randy Brooks.

Animation vet Phil Roman certainly directed this direct-to-video show with enthusiasm. It's obvious the writers, actors and crew did the best they could with the (low) budget and considering the source material is a comedy record about a dead grandma, they succeeded in creating a mildly entertaining family video.

In their scenario, *Grandma* (Sue Blu) doesn't exactly die — she gets amnesia and is cared for by Santa at the North Pole. Grandson Jake is the only one in town who still believes in Santa — and believes that Grandma is alive — and must prove both before his

These animated reindeers may renew your Holiday spirit — and provide a few well-deserved laughs.

wicked Cousin Mel (Michele Lee) can take over the family business.

There are echoes of *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Miracle On 34th Street* in the script, and lots of good old-fashioned American values intertwined into the plot. None of this is very original, and considering the Randy Brooks hit was especially clever, it may disappoint a few adults. But small kids, the ones who know Santa is real, should enjoy all the goings on just fine.

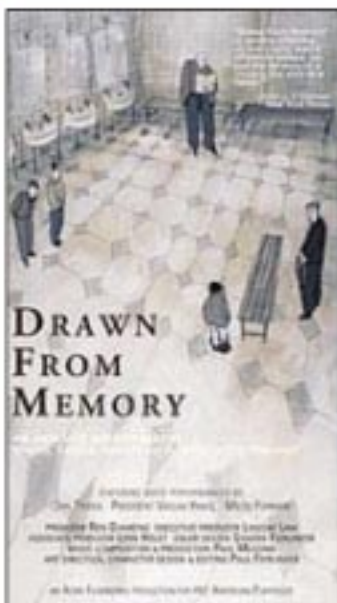
As for me, how can I hate a cartoon where the biggest laugh is the sight of Grandma, face down, knocked out in the snow by a hit and run Santa.

So if you are getting tired of Charlie Brown and Rankin Bass this season, these animated reindeers may renew your Holiday spirit — and provide a few well deserved laughs.

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.cartoon-research.com.

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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



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Top Story Man – New Biography!



A self-portrait.
© Odense City Museums.

Time was in Hollywood, only the stars and studio heads received public recognition. Same rules applied in the animation game. But, little by little, the spotlight is widening to include others: animators, voice actors, composers and designers.

Even the guys who develop stories for animated films seem to be actually getting some recognition nowadays. A recent book by John Canemaker, *Paper Dreams: The Art and Artists of Disney Storyboards*, sheds light on some of the fellows who toiled at Hyperion and on Alameda. And now, along comes a new biography, which celebrates one of the top story men of all time.

His tales have been animated by all the top cartoon studios and his stories have been set into motion by dozens of independent animators as well — not only in the U.S., but around the world.

Disney's studio in particular has profited by their association with this talented individual. One of his stories formed the basis of a

Book review by Will Ryan

recent animated feature, which yielded an Academy Award for the studio. And in earlier years several short cartoons were based on his stories. In fact, one of his plots had such elemental appeal it was animated two separate times under Walt Disney's supervision. As far as I can determine, this is the only non-Mickey Mouse short film so honored. Oh, and by the way, the second version of this simple and powerful story won an Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film.

You may be now wondering who this story man is. Could it be Joe Grant? Or maybe Dick Huemer? How about Bill Peet? Possibly Ted Sears? It couldn't be Roald Dahl, could it? Stick around. I'll give you some clues. Maybe you know him.

By most accounts, he's an oddball — gauche, egocentric, given to wild mood swings. A walking caricature. His new biographer, Jackie Wullschlager, describes personality traits he had to overcome as: "Liabilities of temperament — wild imagination, inner rage, tormenting anxieties and hypochondria, insatiable ambition."

On the other hand, Ms. Wullschlager continues with: "He is a writer of whom one never tires, who grows in depth and maturity...whose sense of the adventure of life is infinite." To this I will add that he's excellent at pitching his own work. He is a

master at using his considerable public relations talent to create an appealing and near-miraculous image of himself. His survival skills are exemplary. He can hone in on a potential sponsor and find himself with a patron who will back him forever.

Also, like many animation storytellers of the present, he was not unskilled in the visual arts.

Still don't know who it is?

Well, the worst that can be said of him was written by a near-lifelong friend whose personality was completely out of synch with our writer's. "I cannot deviate from the opinion that the best service to [him] is done by showing the world how diseased a mind he had, so it is clear to everyone, that everything repulsive, everything that the world was scandalized by, was caused by this mind."

No, our mystery story man is not John Kricfalusi, Tex Avery or Mother Teresa. But you've got to admit, whoever this is must be awfully interesting!

The passage quoted above, I should add, was penned by the fellow whose job it was to clean up the spelling and grammar of our writer. Perhaps some petulance crept into his unsympathetic opinion of his illustrious contemporary.

So how's about an unbiased, independent eyewitness account?

Here are some excerpts from an English girl's recollections of meeting him one summer: "...his shabby, ungainly, slouching figure, in its ill-fitting, unbrushed clothes...and his ugly musing face, abstracted-seeming but keenly observant." As to her summation of his personality, he "seemed to me to live in a world peculiarly his own, all his ideas, thoughts, and actions differing

from those around him."

Some more clues?

Family background: Blue-collar father. His mother died an alcoholic. His aunt was a business-woman; she owned and operated a brothel. His grandfather was an inpatient in a lunatic asylum. As a youngster, our hero visited the asylum, where his grandmother was an employee, and would listen to his grandmother and her co-workers as they spun yarns, some of which served as the basis of his later writings.

But our story man created his own world in more ways than one. Despite his disadvantaged early years, our writer grew up to hobnob with the leading musicians, composers and theatre people of his day. He loved to travel. He became something of a groupie to the most popular female singer of his time; befriending her, courting her, following her on tour. He left extensive diaries with shocking personal revelations at which I shall not even hint. You may wish, however, to

buy the book, so as to satisfy whatever prurient curiosity you may possess.

A penultimate hint: At least two feature films have been made purporting to tell the story of our writer's life. One of them was animated.

If you're still wondering who this fabulous story man is, I will give you one final clue. After that, you're on your own and you'll have to read the title of the book at the conclusion of this review.

(By the way, I also recommend that you read the book itself. It's an excellently researched narrative, told with an unflinching yet sympathetic point of view. The subject is an absolutely fascinating individual who pretty much knew how absolutely fascinating he was.)

Okay, here's your final clue. The first Oscar he inspired was given for Walt Disney's color remake of the earlier black-and-white *Silly Symphony, The Ugly Duckling*.

Yes, the story of a poor cob-

bler's son who, through his storytelling, rose to become the toast of European royalty and peasantry alike is a tale of perennial appeal. And in this literate, unvarnished, warts-and-all telling, the story is more revealing, more astonishing and more human than ever.

Hans Christian Andersen: The Life Of A Storyteller by Jackie Wullschlager. New York, New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 2001. 492 pages, 44 illustrations and 2 maps. ISBN: 0-679-45508-6 (US\$30.00)

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.cartoon-research.com.

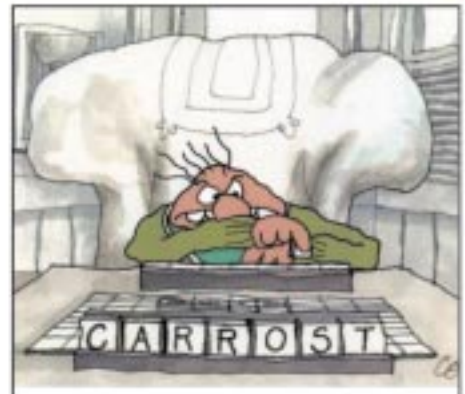
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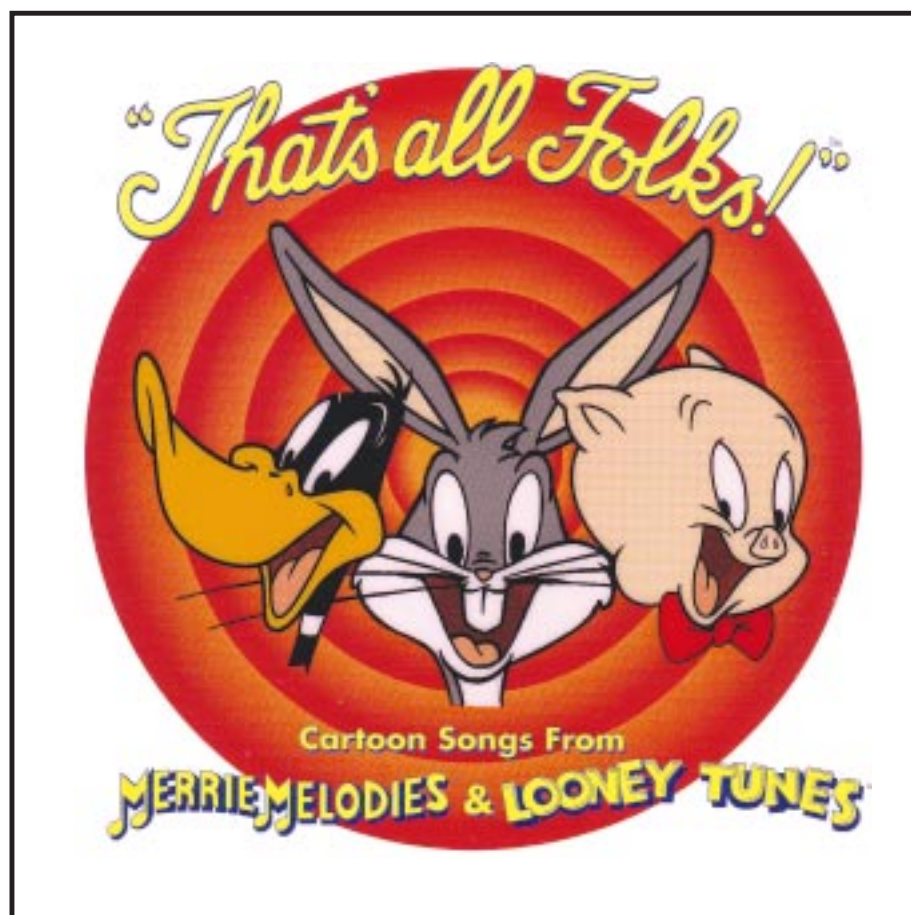


With many thank-yous to the endless efforts of Daniel Goldmark, a former staff producer/researcher at Rhino Records, the civilized world welcomes this long-planned collection of music. It is quite a package indeed.

I will begin my review with the very package itself — a one-hundred-page hardcover mini-book containing tiny Warner Bros. cartoon art and several essays. First among the reading materials are the notes from the producer of the project, setting the CD contents in context. Next is a condensation of an earlier published writing by Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald which gives an overview, if slightly Friz Freling-tilted, on the history of this studio's cartoons.

Most impressive (because it has not before been published) is the essay by Keith Scott on the voices you can hear on this recording. Scott is one of the few voice actor professionals who also qualify as animation historians. His notes reveal for the first time to the general population the names of many of the talented individuals whose vocal gymnastics were either credited to or presumed by even "experts" to be "Mel Blanc." Mr. Blanc was a gifted performer who received sole credit in several films for which he provided no voices whatsoever. (Make that "many films," if you count the all the *Roadrunners* for which he provided neither of the celebrated beeps.)

But you will enjoy his performances on this disc as well as those of many previously-uncredited singers. Carl Stalling and his many uncredited arrangers also shine. But who are his many uncredited arrangers? Sadly they remain precisely that — uncredit-



ed. We know that Milt Franklyn was one of these anonymous music men, for he later ascended to the position formerly held by his

credited supervisor, Stalling.

As for the artwork, some of it you have seen before and some of it you have not. It is a very tiny

package, and thus the pictorials no matter how vital or rare cannot live in their full glory. This artwork was not designed as miniature paintings, which hold their own delight.

I cannot say too much about the music on this compact disc, as you, if you are a Westerner, have probably heard it all of your life. There are several fine medleys of singing and there are six complete cartoon soundtracks, including a personal favorite of mine, *Book Revue* (1946). In this film Daffy Duck sings in the style of Danny Kaye. But since the director, Robert Clampett, sped up the voice of Daffy to such a great extent, the resulting effect is one of superhuman vocal rapidity. This is most risible, as you may well imagine!

The sound quality of this recording is probably as good as it

can be, and by that I mean that there is some distortion to be heard on some of these tracks. We must presume that only the finest quality source materials were employed and that, sadly, this is the best that remains from recordings originally made over sixty years ago. As the years draw closer to our own, the sound quality is noticeably improved.

I will conclude by stating that Mr. Goldmark has done a judicious job of selection and is to be commended, not only for his wise editing, but for his perseverance in seeing this project through before accepting a teaching position with a distinguished American university. He has provided the world with a great service by using his political skills and musical knowledge to make this CD available. My congratulations to his many future students. May he inspire

them to follow his own noble path!

That's All Folks! Cartoon Songs from Merrie Melodies & Looney Tunes, compilation produced by Daniel Goldmark. Warner Bros./Rhino Records. 2 discs with 100-page booklet with black-and-white and color illustrations.

G. P. Gotsu is a published poet and filmmaker. His family's Manhattan-based restaurant is a popular dallying spot for artists, animators, high-powered ad agency executives and the occasional dissipated flaneur.

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