

ANIMATION

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FORGING INTO 2002



In Passing 2001...

Indie Features ♦ Focus on Lille, France ♦ The Disgrace of LAAF's

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Cover: *The Frog's Prophecy.* © Folimage.

Jazz critic Gil Hunter has praised Joanie Sommers' eclectic career thusly: "Joanie Sommers successfully juggles several showbiz careers: Top-Ten pop singer ("One Boy," "Dr. No," "Johnny Get Angry," etc.), cultural icon (Official Voice of the Pepsi Generation), comedienne, actress, and a much-admired jazz singer." However, he missed an entire aspect of her career — cartoon voice acting — which has received little public attention. Until now.

I spoke with Joanie at the 1,500 seat Orange Coast College Theater as she was about to run through some new charts with Randy van Horne's Alumni Orchestra in preparation for an evening concert.



Will Ryan: Joanie, most jazz writers and music critics who praise your voice seem to be unaware of your work as a voice-over artist.

Joanie Sommers: You're telling me! My current agent doesn't even know about it, because he only books concerts. Most people in the business, though, still seem to know that I did all those Pepsi jingles.

WR: Well, the voice is unmistakable. Not only did you lead the world into the Pepsi Generation, but you introduced Diet Pepsi to a parched public.

JS: I guess somebody had to do it.

WR: Joanie, you've worked with most of the great names of the cartoon voice world. Any stand out to you?

JS: I probably had the most fun

Nine And A Half Questions...

Joanie Sommers

by Will Ryan



Joanie in Japanese.

with Mel Blanc, because it was on-camera. And the rest of the cast was fun too.

WR: Was this with Jack Benny?

JS: And Peter Lorre. The real Peter Lorre. Not Paul Frees, who did the Peter Lorre sound-alike on "My Old Flame" with Spike Jones.

WR: And you should know, because you worked with Paul Frees, too.

JS: Who didn't in those days?

WR: Come to think of it, even Peter Lorre did. They both performed together as "Peter Lorre" on a Spike Jones radio show.

JS: I guess that was before my time. I just realized I worked on a movie with Paul Frees where neither of our voices were actually heard.

WR: I give up. How'd that come about?

JS: In my first movie, *Everything's Ducky*, I played opposite Mickey Rooney. His best pal was Buddy Hackett, and Paul Frees was originally the voice of their talking duck.

WR: Based on the Shakespeare play, I gather.

JS: Of course. Post-production happened while I was performing

in Hawaii. I couldn't fly back in time, so my lines had to be looped by someone else!

WR: That's crazy! You have such a distinctive and appealing voice.

JS: Thank you, Terwilliger. Anyway, then they wanted something different with the duck too. So Walker Edmiston replaced Paul Frees' voice. Walker did a fine job, of course, but all things considered, this is not my favorite motion picture.

WR: Joanie, I've seen a record of yours and a poster featuring your photo promoting an animated film called *The Peppermint Choo-Choo*. What was that all about?

JS: That would have been the late '70s, I think. I had an agent then who was getting me lots of voice work in commercials and animation. That recording got airplay in L.A., but no real nation-wide promotion. *The Peppermint Choo-Choo* was supposed to be an animated feature. They showed me storyboards and character drawings and I recorded a few tunes for it. It was adorable. A Christmas story with really loveable characters. I really was looking forward to seeing the movie. But ... it was scrubbed.

WR: How did you get started in cartoons?

JS: Well, I always liked them. When I was a kid I used to corral a bunch of littler kids and take them to the movie theater. This would be the Rivoli and Roosevelt theaters in Buffalo. They'd have twenty cartoons and call it a "Cartoon-A-Thon" or something. Little Lulu, Sylvester, Popeye, Mr. Magoo...

WR: Who was your favorite?

JS: Little Lulu. She was cute and she could get away with a lot of mischief.

WR: What can you tell me about the *B. C. Thanksgiving Special* you worked on?

JS: I played the lead girl, who appears throughout but actually only has a few lines. But I think Johnny Hart, who created *B. C.* and co-wrote the special, liked what I did.

WR: Why is that?

JS: Because he used my name in his comic strip later. Gave me a nice plug.

WR: I just saw your name in a crossword puzzle, too!

JS: That was the *New York Times* originally. It ran in the *L. A. Times* and who knows where else. Twenty albums with some of the greatest names in jazz and I'm eternally linked to "Johnny Get Angry."

WR: The rest of the *B. C.* cast was pretty good too, by the way.

JS: Sure — Daws Butler, Don Messick, Bob Holt. Daws and Don were 90% of the early Hanna-Barbera characters. Daws alone was 70%!

WR: It goes without saying that you've worked with June Foray.

JS: Sure. She and Paul Frees seemed to do half the characters on another animated special I did called *The Mouse on the Mayflower*. John Gary and I were the leads in that. It was produced

by, oh, what were their names? Baskin-Robbins?

WR: Well, it was either Howard Johnson's or Rankin-Bass.

JS: I'll go with the latter.

WR: Wise move. Any cartoon voice greets you *haven't* worked with?

JS: The entire cast of *The Smurfs*. I had two call-backs when they were casting that series, but I didn't get the part.

WR: You mean, you almost became — ?

JS: That's right. I narrowly escaped becoming the only female in a bizarre village filled with little blue men.

WR: Whew!



Joanie Sommers is a premiere singer of Warner Bros. Records. Three of her albums have just been re-released through Warner's Rhino subsidiary and on the Collector's Choice label. More re-releases, as well as new releases, are forthcoming. She continues to tour and record. Joanie left the voice-over business around the time of The Smurfs audition but sounds exactly the same, speaking and singing, today.

Will Ryan collects Japanese releases of Joanie Sommers records. He admits to having performed in at least one episode of The Smurfs.

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

Beyond The Majors:

Independent Animation Feature Production

As technologies improve and the market for animated features becomes more broad and active, animated feature production outside of the major U.S. studios is on the rise. Let's hear from four independent studios taking the plunge and creating animated features. How are they tackling such hurdles as staffing, funding and distribution? Read on...

El Cid: The Legend

Paco Rodríguez, Head of International Sales and Co-Productions
Filmax Animation

The Filmax Group, through its production arm Castelao Productions in co-production with Bren Entertainment and Toon Factory, is producing the new ani-

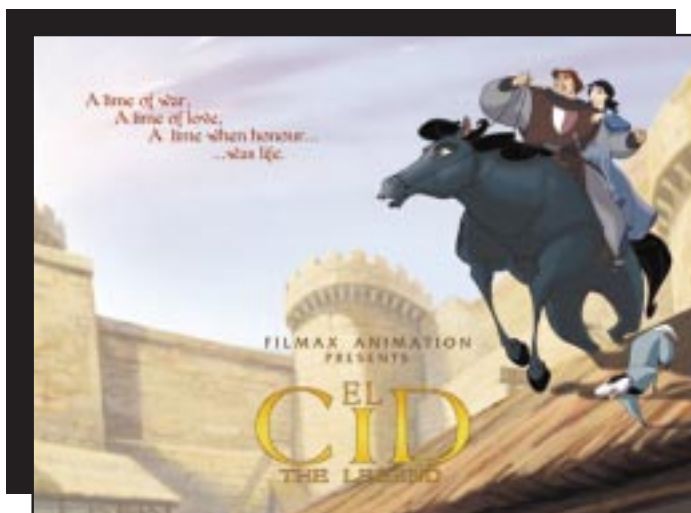
ated feature film: *El Cid: The Legend*. Based on a Spanish literature classic, *El Cid* was brought to the screen in the past by Hollywood (*El Cid* with Charlton Heston and Sophia Loren). *El Cid* is like Cleopatra or Napoleon, a 100% historical character that can be easily dramatised since it has been done for centuries. The most famous, *El Cantar Del Mio Cid*, the first masterwork of Spanish literature, was written by an anonymous minstrel of Medina Celli or from San Esteban de Gormaz in the XII century and was composed of 3750 verses. *El Cid: The Legend* depicts a time of feuding warlords, unscrupulous princelings, robber barons and marauding invaders. A time when courage had few principles, when ambition tore apart families, where loyalty bowed to the biggest bid-

by Heather Kenyon

der. A time when half the world was the battleground in the struggle between Christianity and Islam.

We think the project is a good bet because it involves a few strong ingredients:

- A great hero such as Sir Lancelot,
- Robin Hood or Richard the Lion Hearted.
- Adventures that shape civilisations, humour, the deep universal values of family, honour, love and friendship.
- A journey from hero to legend, which is a classic and historical story.
- It has national and international appeal.
- The strength of the historical facts (900 years later the story is repeated with the arrival to the Iberian Peninsula of a great number of Muslims from the northern part of Africa), where Spain has to be tolerant and support once again a religious and cultural co-existence and foster mutual respect. This is very much a message for today; we have to transmit to the new, upcoming generation that are going to live with this in the short and long term.
- The quality of the graphic designs and the strength of the characters.
- Plus, it is a children's/family feature film.



© Castelao Productions.

The pre-production studio is based at our headquarters in Barcelona, Spain. The work is shipped to our main studio in Valencia, Spain, where the production is centered. From there we feed other studios, such as Time Lapse, Monigotes, Accio and Canuk, the animation work. No animation has been done in Asia so far. We aim to produce an animated feature film totally produced in Europe with European artists. Around 10% of the film will be done in 3D in our 3D studio Bren Entertainment, based in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

It is a very ambitious project for Spanish production standards. The production budget is \$US 5.1 million. It is currently in production with most production being done in Spain with Spanish artists. Delivery is planned for December 2002. The funding for the film comes mostly from Spanish TV presales, Spanish subsidies (ICAA and the regional government of Valencia), a loan with the Instituto Catalan de Finanzas (against international presales) and proper resources from our production company Castelao and our 3D studio Bren Entertainment.

The film has already been presold for theatrical release to France & French speaking countries, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Turkey, Arabic countries, Greece, Argentina and others. Deals are on the way with the U.S., Germany, Scandinavia and the U.K. We hope to be able to close a U.S. deal and have the film released first in the U.S. Then we aim to release the film in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2003 in Europe depending on the strategy of our partners in these territories. The film will be shown



Delgo in action. © 2002 Fathom Studios. All Rights Reserved.

at the following markets: NATPE, AFM, MIPTV, Cannes Film Festival, MIPCOM and MIFED in 2002 where more presales will be done.

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Delgo – A Hero's Journey

Marc F. Adler, Producer/Executive Producer, and Jason F. Maurer, Director, Co-Writer
Fathom Studios

Marc F. Adler: *Delgo* is largely the result of the right people coming together at the right time with the right technology. We've spent a decade honing our skills and processes in animation with broadcast and commercial work. We've pulled together talent from around the globe from varying disciplines. And, we've developed software uniquely catered to our needs.

Most importantly, Jason and I have worked with our writer, Scott Bear, to create a unique fantasy epic story that will engage the imaginations of young and old audiences alike. In addition, we've teamed with industry insiders for strategic counsel and have recruited a strong ensemble cast. It's as

much a daily education as it is an adventure.

Jason F. Maurer: *Delgo* is a fully-financed feature produced for theatrical release. By putting together our own funding and maintaining our independence, we've enjoyed many creative freedoms and it shows in the story and look of our film. Throughout the process, the Fathom Studios team works closely together, each person touching many aspects of the production and not limiting their talents to one area.

We are creating this feature using Maya and Deep Paint 3D. Because collaboration is key for a project like this, we've created newsgroups for animation, reference, story, music (for the composer), tips and tricks and the major one, Digital Dailies, which we've opened up to the public via our Website, www.delgo.com. Using the newsgroups, everyone on staff can post an image or a movie of their work and get instant feedback from others, with the added bonus of the feedback being documented for later reference. This gives us the liberty to be anywhere at anytime and see what is happening with the film.

MFA: It's been a goal of mine to make a feature film since I was a teenager. I had planned to attempt it much earlier in my career, but was sidetracked by other opportunities and, instead, formed an interactive agency called Macquarium Intelligent Communications, which today focuses on business solutions employing Internet, CD-ROM/ DVD and wireless technologies. However, I never lost sight of my filmmaking goals and one fateful day in 1996 when viewing a CG animation test produced by Jason, who was then the head of our broadcast group (later to be named Fathom Studios), the idea for our CG fantasy epic was born.

JFM: We came up with a general concept and plot points and conducted anthropological and sociology research to ensure the world we created was as logical as it was fantastical. Our art directors, Mark Jackson and Jang Chol Lee, began designing the world: the characters, creatures, structures,

flora and fauna, etc. Scott Bear and I wrote the script while the Fathom team spent many months developing a ninety second proof-of-concept, which we took to Hollywood for industry feedback. The reaction was positive, so Marc gave us a green light to expand our staff while he put our financing in place. We hired additional talent and started pre-production. Fathom Studios and Macquarium Intelligent Communications are based in Atlanta, Georgia.

MFA: We knew we wanted to tell an epic, action-packed fantasy adventure through computer animation and agreed that it should also provide strong moral virtues, so we developed an original story about a world's struggle for unity. We've spent years refining the script and the look of the characters and environments and today are in the process of final animation. While Jason is working on completing the film, I have been exploring ancillary channels to expand *Delgo's* reach. We are all

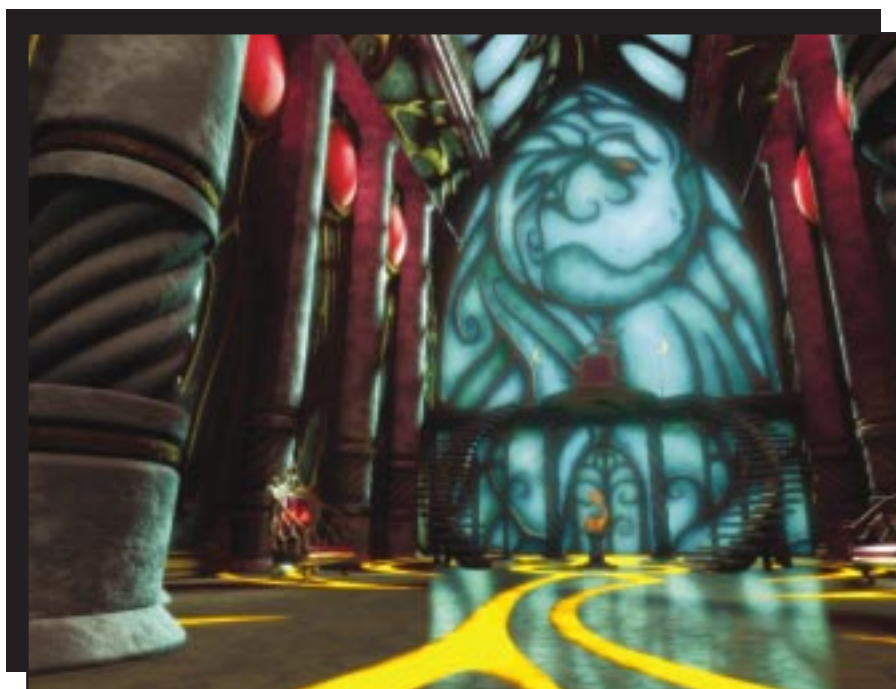
very excited to see the fruits of our labor on the silver screen.

JFM: Marc is a high-tech business leader with many successes under his belt. He is known as the guy to call when you need things done – particularly anything that merges creativity and technology. Years ago, before we embarked on the making of this film, Marc pulled together financing from a number of investors who believe in the project. It is with this funding and company earnings from past projects that we are able to bring *Delgo* to life.

MFA: I'm reluctant to reveal our marketing and distribution strategy in advance of our execution, however, I can tell you we've developed a strong following via our Website and the Digital Dailies, which enable our fans to follow the making of *Delgo* as it happens. Whether a fan is an industry professional, student, parent or child, we want them to be able to be a part of every facet of *Delgo's* production.

To aid us in achieving our goals for the *Delgo* project, we are employing many outside resources including a diverse cast composed of some of Hollywood's most respected and beloved actors, remarkable, multi-platinum musicians from different genres creating original works for the soundtrack, and Macquarium, which is working on the next iteration of the *Delgo* site and interactive components of the DVD and CD-ROM. In addition, we are exploring book and comic deals as well as videogames and other ancillary products tied to the film.

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The Frog's Prophecy

Patrick Eveno, Executive Producer
Folimage

The Frog's Prophecy project started four years ago. It has been in production for two years. Jacques-Rémy Gierd (*Charlie's Christmas* – Cartoon d'Or 1998), Antoine Lanciaux and Iouri Tcherenkov (*The Great Migration*) are co-writers of the script for *The Frog's Prophecy*.

Originally, the idea was to make a 52' TV special. But during the development phase (script writing and character development), it became obvious that we had in hand the material and strength to make a feature film. In addition, the environment in France was extremely favourable after the success of Michel Ocelot's *Kirikou et La Sorcière*, and we decided to step into the adventure. Gathering both the funding, and the creative talent, has been a major challenge. But solid partners have joined us and, so far, about 130 people have been working on this project.

The feature film was developed at Folimage Studio in Valence in the south of France. It is also being produced at Folimage Studio. In fact, the feature film is being produced 100% at Folimage Studio, from pre-production to post-production. This situation is unique in France. It has not happened for twenty years. For Folimage, this is an extension of 15 years of our 'home made' production policy. *The Frog's Prophecy* is benefiting from a strong artistic environment, inherited from Folimage's experience of producing 100% of its TV series and short animated films in its own studio.

Vivendi-Universal, through



A shot from the highly anticipated *The Frog's Prophecy*. © Folimage.

StudioCanal France and Canal +, is our main financial partner. It was also the first one to jump in. The CNC (Centre National de la Cinematographie), Rhône-Alpes Cinema and France 2 Cinema quickly stepped in to complete the funding. The production budget is 5,640,000.

From a marketing standpoint, we trust the know-how and power of Vivendi-Universal. StudioCanal France is handling the international sales, which will start with Cannes Festival 2002. The film will be released in France in November 2003 with Bac Distribution as the distributor. Universal will be in charge of the video sales. We believe that good results at the French box office will reflect on the international box office. The current come back of the French cinema industry and the growing success of animation films make us hope we will recoup our investment relatively quickly.

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Marco Polo-Return to Xanadu

Ron Merk, Director
The Tooniversal Company

How are we producing our feature film? One frame at a time. I don't mean to be flippant, but to point out that an animated feature is a long-term commitment, and literally has thousands of details which must be carefully considered. This means starting with a strong script and production design — before the animation process begins. I've seen too many animated films with great technique and poor story development. Making a film means telling a good story.

The Tooniversal Company is an independent company which makes its films "outside the system." By this, I mean that we are not relying on normal studio financing, pre-sales and other financial commitments in order to get our films underway. Once we're ready, we start the project, and somehow find the necessary resources to get to the finish line.



Adventurer Marco Polo promises he will return to Xanadu.
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Many years ago The Tooniversal Company purchased a book and film property made by Sheldon Moldoff, a well-known comic book illustrator during the golden age of comics. He created Hawkman and "ghosted" the drawing of Batman comics for 20 years. We originally were going to put a new sound track on the old film and then re-release it, but it just didn't work, and then we found that the original negative had deteriorated so badly that it was not useable. So, we essentially started from scratch, utilizing some basic story concepts and designs from the old project, but expanded it exponentially. It's a much more "today" kind of film, very much like the epic journey of Luke Skywalker. Young Marco is on a quest not his own, finds friends and allies along the way, makes enemies, and ultimately makes the quest his own.

We worked in six studios, each in a different country. Our basic unit was housed in

Woodland Hills, California. We did planning, layout, design and basic pre-production, as well as some key animation. Then the work went to studios in China, Korea, Canada and Slovakia for completion. We had two great animation/art directors, Arne Wong from Los Angeles, and Jaroslav Baran from Bratislava, Slovakia. They kept the design and animation on course over the long production period. The three producers of the film, Igor Meglic, Chris Holter and myself, kept the organization of the work and financing together. Chris Holter, Sheldon Moldoff and I wrote and re-wrote the script, until we had our final ADR script last year. All the post sound and editing work was done in Los Angeles at our studio. This was definitely a "hands across the sea" project, if ever there was one. Luckily all those hands worked well together, after a getting-to-know-you phase.

A large part of the money came from Tooniversal and its

President, Igor Meglic. Igor really believed in the idea, and when I came to him with the project, he said, "Let's do it." The company made great deals with all the suppliers and contributors, and this also helped, since we got a lot of bang for our bucks. We had a co-production with a Chinese company, Afanti International, and a Slovak company, Interline. In addition, there was a financing group out of Slovenia (Igor's place of birth) which did the "cash flowing" of the project when it was needed, or when Tooniversal simply didn't have the cash to continue. We actually stopped the production a few times to re-group, both financially and artistically. While many folks might be bothered by these delays, we took advantage by using the time to re-think, re-write and re-design things that weren't working. As a result, I think the film turned out better than if we had done it in one pass.

What is our strategy for marketing and releasing the film, i.e., recouping our investment? Therein lies the rub. Finishing the film is only part one of this journey. Getting proper and effective distribution is another matter entirely. In fact, it's a real problem, especially in the U.S., where distribution costs are so high. I've been in the production and distribution business for 34 years, and the landscape has definitely changed for the worse. There used to be distribution companies of all sizes, small, medium and large. What's gone wrong with the business is that the medium size companies, for the most part, are gone. A film like ours really needs a domestic theatrical release in order to have the visibility and recognizability needed to do well in video, TV and the ancillary markets. The big

studios are in the business of big films with big ad budgets seeking a \$100 million plus home run. So, our film is not for them. The small distributors can't afford the moderate print and ad budget that our film needs for a successful theatrical run. And since there are practically no "middle size" distribution companies (they were acquired by the big guys or went bankrupt), we're in a bit of a conundrum. So, we're looking for prints and ad money, and we'll probably take the film out there ourselves.

Part of our domestic sales strategy was qualifying for the first Best Animated Feature Academy Award. We opened in Los Angeles, for one week only, at Laemmle's Fallbrook 7 Theatres, in West Hills, California. The film screened daily at 11:15 am and we ran from December 28, 2001 through January 3, 2002. We've also entered in three other categories: Best Original Song ("When Your Heart Has Wings"), Best Music Score, and Best Adapted

Screenplay. Being a contender is a great way to get lots of press attention we could never afford to pay for in the way of trade ads.

Internationally, it's a bit more encouraging. After interviewing more than 100 distributors, we decided to go with a Park City, Utah company called Koan, Inc. They specialize in family and children's films, and we felt not only comfortable with the people at Koan, but also the films in their library. It was just a great match. They started selling the film at MIPCOM and MIFED, and the deals are starting to roll in.

Will we recoup our investment in the film and make a profit? Absolutely. Why? Because we chose traditional storytelling, with a classical "retro" Saturday morning visual style, and have seven great songs in the film. It's going to have a long life in distribution, with many re-releases after we're all celluloid history. Would we do it all again? Yes. We're now planning our next feature, *Dinosaurs*

of the Wild West. Will it be a great adventure? Absolutely, but this time, with the experience of *Marco Polo* under our belts.

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

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



An oft-quoted phrase from George Santayana warns that: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it." That venerable philosopher might have gone a step further and generated a memorable bromide about what happens when one — willfully and with full cognizance of past disasters — chooses to spit in the face of the past while simultaneously extending both middle digits. While such a quote might have taxed Santayana's inherent grace and sagacity, it would have applied perfectly to the motion picture executives who continue to stain the nation's screens with live-action versions of animated properties. It matters little that virtually all of these films have been resounding bombs, and even less that most animation fans despise these misguided mutations and decry them in droves. The perverse and self-destructive urge to waste time, talent and treasure on these abominations seems to be as endemic to Hollywood as personal trainers and tiny silver spoons.

Enough is Enough!

This is not my first rant against LAAFs (my acronym for Live-Action Animated Features); I explored the phenomenon in November of 1997 on the now-defunct *Animation Nerd's Paradise* Website. My unfortunate conclusion was that LAAFs would continue to be made, as they were an inevitable result of the tendency to market a successful property in all of its possible permutations. This is quite a different matter than having LAAFs produced because they are entertaining experiences or novel interpretations of their animated forebearers. LAAFs have proved to be encumbrances,

No LAAF-ing Matter

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman



Making the transition from cartoon to live-action can leave an unsavory smell: *Josie and the Pussycats*. © and TM 2002 Cartoon Network and Hanna-Barbera Productions.



The live-action trio.
© 2001 Universal Studios.
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rather than tributes, to the memories of the original animated properties; the only legacies they leave behind are their own videos and DVDs (as well as the consensus among moviegoers that they reeked). This has done nothing to stop the corporate machines from inflicting two more of these egregious indignities upon us; live-action desecrations of *Scooby Doo* and *Fat Albert* are up next. This, with the stench of *Josie and the Pussycats* still lingering in theaters.

It Just Doesn't Work

I am going to attempt to explain why these things don't work and why they are such economic calamities for the studios that produce them (God knows nobody will listen anyway). Let's begin with a tenet held dear by Tex Avery: If it can be filmed in live-action, why bother to make a cartoon? Avery's observation went deeper than simply depicting funny-looking characters doing impossible things. The immortal director was referring to the fact

that live-action and animated films operate by different conventions. Timing, pacing, action and flow of narrative are vastly different in animation; this is what gives cartoons their unique appeal. Cartoon characters do not walk, speak, act or even occupy physical space in the same way that flesh-and-blood actors do; this is one of the first concepts animators discovered when they attempted to animate entirely by rotoscoping.

Then there is the fact that animation can be effective at even sixteen frames per second. Great animators such as Art Babbitt would take advantage of this fact

in order to turn Goofy's feet 360 degrees for a frame or two, subliminally reinforcing the character's ungainly gait. Rod Scribner could portray a character as a loose tangle of gangly lines so fast that the eye could not catch it, then snap back into the original physiognomy. At Terrytoons, a madcap animator named Jim Tyer would (intentionally or otherwise) distort his characters from one pose to the next, model sheets be damned. The aforementioned Mr. Avery experimented with cutting individual frames in order to create action that defied the boundaries of "real time." Doing the same

things to actors and timing in a live-action film would certainly produce jarring distortions. No amount of special effects can compensate; when metamorphosis takes place in a cartoon, for example, it simply follows the conventions of animated surrealism. When the same thing is done in live-action, the special effects are what command our attention. Thus, simply by the fact that live-action is being used, the experience of animated characters "coming to life" through human actors is unexciting and slow in comparison.

Human actors: That is my next point. Why do cartoon characters have funny and amusing appearances, even when they are animated in human form? Why are they proportioned the way they are? Why should any animator care about how many "heads high" any character ought to be, and why are some characters modified in design after their original appearances? This is done, of course, to create effective and endearing actors and comedians. Friz Freleng, for example, constructed Sylvester Cat with a low-slung crotch in order to give him the physical appearance of a baggy-pants clown; ditto the big red nose. Sylvester doesn't actually look like a human clown, but neither does he resemble a real cat. Sylvester does, however, strongly suggest both. That's the whole point of his singular design.

Every cartoon character we know and love has some sort of defining feature or visual signature that is simply not replicable by a human actor, at least not without making that actor look hideous and malformed. Because of their unique appearance, these are the primary pictures we carry around

I am going to attempt to explain why these things don't work...

Separated at birth? The real Barney and Rick Moranis as the character's alter ego.



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Scooby Doo the Movie: The Classic Cartoon Slayer?
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in our minds when we think about a given character or cartoon. Try this: Close your eyes and visualize Barney Rubble. How many of you saw a mental picture of Rick Moranis? Sure you did. To make matters worse, the human actors called upon to portray animated characters are typically well-known to us, removing them even a step further from credibility. Take, for example, the upcoming *Scooby Doo* movie: The part of Daphne will be played by Sarah Michelle Gellar, whom, I believe, has a rather popular role elsewhere in the entertainment world. When she shows up on screen she looks only like herself, and thus we are deprived of the fantasy (if not recognition of the "way kewl!" casting coup).

Integrity?

Few of the writers and directors involved in LAAFs are (or ever have been) involved in animation. Most of them have experience in the typical, formulaic Hollywood product and either write their scripts or direct accordingly. Case in point: Bill Cosby is working on the *Fat Albert* script, but the co-author is a telefilm writer named Charles Kipps.

Directing this farce is Forest Whitaker, who at present has two films to his credit: *Waiting to Exhale* and *Hope Floats* (two lightweight romantic comedies which would have played better on Lifetime television had there not been a fortune spent on the stars). His animation credits: Zero. Doubtless we shall soon discover another substance that floats even better than *Hope*, though considerably less fragrant.

Live-action desecrations of Scooby Doo and Fat Albert are up next.

Finally, I am beginning to doubt that any studio executive truly cares about bringing animated cartoons to life. What they do know is that animation, especially retro animation, is hot right now and that means massive profits through merchandising and tie-ins. The goofy Great Dane and crew have never been more popular than they are now, nor have as many licensed items bearing

their likenesses been available. The movie is a natural consequence of this popularity. How else to explain the *Scooby Doo* movie? It is irrelevant, I suppose, that Freddie Prinze Jr., a Latino, has been cast as Alan and sports a bleached-blond do over his swarthy features. Who cares that Matthew Lillard has been cast as pal Shaggy? Anyone following the record knows that these lads of limited talents had major roles in sinking at least two of the wretched films they co-starred in (bombing in *Wing Commander* and booting the ball in *Summer Catch*). Did anyone in casting notice that the film's publicity stills show Linda Cardellini's Velma to be taller than Sarah Michelle Gellar's Daphne? Or that the film sports a CGI Scooby that resembles a failed experiment by Rick Baker? Does it matter that the script was reportedly a slipshod mess? I probably need not mention that director Raja Gosnell and writers James Gunn and Craig Titley have as much experience with animation as they do designing nuclear submarines. Why must studios continue to do this when there are so many experienced animation writers and directors available?

Seemingly half of Disney has been laid off, and this is the best talent that Warner could hire?

Franchise = Meaningless Vapor

I am not as outraged at the sully of the Scooby Doo legend as other self-styled "geeks" and Netheads seem to be. In all honesty, I find almost every episode after the first season almost unwatchable, and my comments regarding the later episodes (particularly those with Scooby's obnoxious relatives) are better off not appearing in print. My ire is aimed more at the fact that our common history of animated lore is being perverted and exploited for one purpose only — to create fodder for jaded mall rats who lavish their massive disposable incomes on shoddy faux-hip products like this *Scooby Doo* movie. Question any one of them four hours after watching this flick; they might remember a scene or two if you supply enough hints and nudges. I am writing this not as much for myself as for those who do take Scooby Doo to be an iconic image of their childhoods or dorm days; much the same can be said for *Josie and the Pussycats*, and yes, *Fat Albert*. How many more of these trashings do we really want to see?

I didn't want this to happen to *Fat Albert* either; perhaps millions of others feel the same, but the movie is in production anyway. Despite reused animation, forgettable junkyard tunes and rushed storylines, the original *Fat Albert* and the *Cosby Kids* had considerable sincerity. The show employed a dozen psychologists and educators from UCLA, then performed the astonishing feat of producing a cartoon that was pro-social without being preachy. Most



The next victim: Hope doesn't float for the coming live-action version of *Fat Albert*. © William H. Cosby, Jr. Exclusive Licensee: Hallmark Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

How many more of these trashings do we really want to see?

admirably, Filmation Studios deliberately held back on licensing and merchandising the characters, so as not to commercialize the animated role models who appeared on the show. In the same spirit, we shall soon see an updated live-action version with hip-hop music that will probably end up on the soundtrack CD when not being played in the background during promotions and tie-in ads. Is this a bad time to mention that Fox is also considering the property for a franchise, with several more sequels planned? It's not that I don't trust Bill Cosby; the former Dr. Huxtable will likely do his best to pit his voice against that of the gangbangers, and more power to

him. I simply don't understand why he chose to do it in this manner. Perhaps the Brown Hornet can inform Mr. Cosby as to the fate of *Mister Magoo*, *Inspector Gadget* and *The Flintstones In Viva Rock Vegas*.

Or perhaps not. Someday in the distant future, students and historians from another world may study these human artifacts and construct elaborate theories about their place in art and civilization. One school may hold that they are the completion of a ritual; after so many episodes of a given animated series, a LAAF must be made. Theorists of a more abstract bent may argue that LAAFS are an unconscious replication of evolutionary theory, in which crude artistic representations develop into actual human forms. Some may believe that animated series are some sort of training exercise for LAAFs, and so forth. Our legacy would be far better off if they never learn the truth.

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

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Unlimited Imagination

by Fred Seibert & Bill Burnett

This much I know to be true: when theatrical cartoons were on death's door, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera single-handedly (or, rather, double-handedly) rescued cartoons from oblivion.

But, I've occasionally heard Hanna-Barbera criticized for "cheapening" the art of cartoons by inventing a technique for television called "limited animation." As a cartoon blues man might say, "If it wasn't for limited animation, we wouldn't have no animation at all."

Seven Oscars Weren't Enough

In 1957 Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera were veteran cartoon directors with over forty years experience between them. These two men had created the cartoon cat and mouse team, Tom & Jerry. (That's tantamount to having "invented" Abbot & Costello.) They had won seven Oscars with Tom & Jerry, more than anybody else in cartoon history.

But in the mid-Fifties none of that mattered anymore. Television had arrived. The theatrical market for cartoons had dried up. And MGM, where Hanna and Barbera had risen to the rank of executive producers, suddenly closed up shop without warning. Overnight, Bill and Joe found themselves out of work, along with virtually all of their cartoon colleagues in Hollywood.

Never Say Die

But these two cartoonists



And to keep the entertainment value of their TV cartoons high, Hanna and Barbera turned up the burners on their imaginations.

refused to go gently. They started a studio, and figured out a way to make cartoons viable for television. You think that's easy? Consider this: The "full animation" cartoons that Hanna and Barbera made at MGM took six months per seven minute episode, with budgets that often exceeded \$60,000. Now they had to create *thirty minutes* of cartoon material *every week*, with budgets that were half

the size of what they used to spend to make a single short!

Bill And Joe Had A Plan

How did they do it? They called upon the "planned" animation technique they had developed to test out new Tom & Jerry cartoons at MGM. Instead of making twenty or thirty thousand drawings, a planned or "limited" cartoon only used 2 or 3 thousand drawings. Now Hanna and Barbera had to make this "planned" approach work for them on actual cartoons. They adopted the minimalist cartoon style which was becoming popular at the time, with its simple lines and suggested backgrounds, and turned it to their advantage. They made backgrounds that could be used in multiple scenes; cloud formations that worked whether the action was going up, down or sideways; characters with "muzzles" so only their mouths had to be animated; characters that blinked a lot, to enhance the illusion of motion.

Shooting Stars

And to keep the entertainment value of their TV cartoons high, Hanna and Barbera turned up the burners on their *imagination*s. With Tom & Jerry they had worked with the same characters over and over, dreaming up different cat and mouse gags each time. Now these men in their late forties responded to the challenge of their careers by bringing out an

avalanche of vivid, hilarious, *new* cartoon stars and stories. Limited animation coupled with unlimited imagination completely changed the rules of the game.

Ruff & Reddy, Huckleberry Hound, Pixie & Dixie, Yogi Bear, Quick Draw McGraw (and his alter ego El Kabong), Top Cat, Magilla Gorilla, Snagglepuss, Scooby Doo, The Jetsons, Jonny Quest, Space Ghost ... the list goes on and on. (Oh, and let's not forget the most successful television cartoon team of all time, The Flintstones.)

In the list above I've barely scratched the surface of what sprang from the imaginations of Bill Hanna, Joe Barbera and the other great cartoon talents they assembled at their studio in the Fifties and Sixties.

Stories, characters, ingenuity and a dedication to the cartoon cause. That's how Hanna-Barbera

rescued cartoons from death's door. Anybody who says different will have to answer to El Kabong! (I wouldn't risk it if I were you.)

Fred Seibert is a partner in the Frederator Studios and executive producer of Nickelodeon's The Fairly Oddparents, ChalkZone and Oh Yeah! Cartoons. As president of Hanna-Barbera Cartoons from 1992 through 1996, he had the honor of learning from Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera.

Bill Burnett is the co-creator and executive producer of Nickelodeon's upcoming animated series ChalkZone. He also wrote the script, music and lyrics for that network's first feature-length animated musical The Electric Piper. Before that, Bill served as creative director at Hanna-Barbera before becoming

story editor for the first two seasons of Cartoon Network's Cow and Chicken. Bill is also a songwriter. His musical material has been performed and recorded by Bette Midler, Patti Lupone, Rodney Dangerfield, Pebbles Flintstone, Bamm-Bamm Rubble and Casper the Friendly Ghost — to name but a few. Bill's live performances have been known to make grown men and women weep and laugh, often simultaneously.

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Robert Abel's memorial service was held at Hillside Memorial Park in Los Angeles on September 25, 2001. There were approximately 150 people there. The family asked me to write and deliver the eulogy.

I was a director at Robert Abel and Associates for the last 8 years the company existed. Bob and I remained close friends from the time he hired me in 1979 until his untimely death on September 23, 2001.

Bob's passion, vision, creativity, wisdom and pioneering spirit not only touched and ignited the beginnings of countless careers, but birthed an industry.

The following are excerpts from handwritten cards sent to Bob while he was in the hospital attempting to recover from his heart attack of August 20th. These words might simply begin to paint a primitive sketch of the impact he had. Each sentence is from a different person, many of whom are presently leaders in the computer animation and visual FX community:

"Lord knows how many careers and lives you've jump-started..."

"You demonstrated what it meant to be a real pioneer..."

"You have mentored an entire generation..."

"Your dedication to quality inspired me for life..."

"You showed us what we are made of..."

"You made an indelible sacrifice to cut the path for the rest of us..."

"You fostered hundreds of young creative talent..."

"You saw our gift and believed in us..."

"Because of you, now we're following our own vision..."

"I hope you know how influential you've been..."

Saying Goodbye to Robert Abel



by Kenny Mirman



Eulogy to Robert Abel

Bob's beloved family Marah and Josh, Judi, Jerry and Kirsten, and to Bob's dear friends, colleagues, students.....DREAMERS.

We've lost the man carrying the torch.

The Navigator.

The one who lit the way.

Sometimes by wildfire.

Sometimes by light alone.

Sometimes by the seat of his pants.

It was Faith.

This Visionary, he was in the front, always, and his torch treated us to a view of remarkable beauty, wisdom and truth. He showed us the way, and it was magic.

Bob Abel endeared us, gifted us, inspired us, blessed us, revived us, guided us, to BE something we never thought possi-

ble.... *True to our hearts.*

Bob inspired us to not only dream, but to make our dreams reality. And he taught us by example of his passionate life.

**Bob Abel
endeared us,
gifted us,
inspired us,
blessed us,
revived us,
guided us...**

It borders on incomprehensible how Bob Abel, this man of such unspeakably passionate creative vitality and wisdom, could be taken from us so swiftly and so soon. It's an indescribable loss. Yet I have to believe it's some kind of mysterious beauty. Life's way of perfection. And so I celebrate Bob Abel's life today....

This True Artist of a human being. The one carving the path.

*The Maverick.
The Rebel.
The Inspirer!
The Myth Maker.
The Huckster.
The Storyteller.
The Humanitarian.
The Manipulator.
The Gunslinger.
The Pitchman.
The Filmmaker.
The Pioneer.
The TEACHER.
The Godfather.*

There are many more on your own list, I'm sure of it. But one thing is certain. I bet that on all of our personal lists of "Who he

was," in capital letters it says....

Bob Abel was THE VISION-ARY.

A guiding light to not only an industry, but to art, to education and to history.

He moved us. And I miss him deeply.

The Mentor of all mentors...he was Obi Wan Kenobi with a twist.

Picture this: a tall glass of Obi Wan Kenobi, with a cup of Albert Brooks, two shots of Frank Capra, a half pint of Joseph Campbell, an ounce of the Wizard of Oz, three heaping capfuls of Akira Kurosawa, a cup of Rumi's poetry of the divine, and a spritzer blast of Cal Worthington and his dog Spot.

I say Obi Wan, because Bob's truest gift was as mentor and muse. He had the uncanny sixth sense to hand pick the truest, keenest talent, hire them on the spot, and then inspire them to be more than they ever dreamed possible. He was a builder of dreams. He used us. I know he used me. And I loved him for it.

We all have our stories of Bob. Our cherished memories. What he meant to YOU. How he touched YOU.

One of the most cherished memories I have of Bob was on his birthday a couple of years ago. We were having lunch at Chaya, and in walks this little white haired man, dashing in black overcoat and scarf, shuffling with a cane and two assistants helping him make his way over to a table. Bob then proceeds to tell me that this was Billy Wilder and he then explained, gushing with enthusiasm, how Billy had been such a key influence in Bob's life as an artist. He told me about every one of Billy's films and everything they

meant to him. I just listened, and received a lesson in cinema, and a lesson in life.

When Billy was leaving, I begged Bob to go tell him how he felt...that he would never have another chance. Bob said, "No....no, no, no." He was so bashful.

**Bob loved
nothing more
than to be
hanging from
his nails on the
further side of
the cutting
edge...**

Finally, I stood up and literally pulled Bob out of his chair. We went out and reached Billy on the sidewalk, and with tears in his eyes, Bob explained to Billy how he had inspired him to become an artist and a filmmaker. Watching MY mentor, Bob Abel, meet HIS mentor, brought me to tears too. We both stood there crying, for two different reasons.

Bob loved nothing more than to be hanging from his nails on the further side of the cutting edge, and it was FUN being there with him. Wasn't it?

At RA&A, formally known as Robert Abel & Associates and affectionately called "Abel's," he provided a paradise for creative expression. It was 24 hours a day experimental filmmaking of the highest integrity. We all had endless passion to follow the example he set. What a thrill it was to be making it up as we went along.



Many times he didn't have the money to pay us, but we worked anyway. Remember those days in the screening room he'd announce, "Half salaries!?" But Bob would always come through for us. He'd go off into a rage about how they were going to come and padlock the doors if we didn't get this project or that. He was a NUT! But he loved it this way. That was the key to him, flying blind, through a forest.

Bob spoke about this in an old interview:

"The essence of what I do is that I take risks. That's what film and special effects are all about. Every time I set out to do a project, I go out to do something never done or seen before. That means there's a great deal riding on everything I do."

And there was nothing scarier than Bob Abel pitching one of your ideas. Oh God. Hold on. He was the absolute king of salesmen. He'd make stuff up on the fly, serve every sentence with top-spin, shoot ideas from behind his back blindfolded, quote poets, classic films, and passages from

great authors, half the time he'd make them up. Then make outrageous promises about using technology that hadn't yet been invented, quadruple the complexity of what you had taken a leap designing, and promise it sooner than what you had already said was too soon.

There was nothing scarier than Bob Abel pitching one of your ideas.

He'd fight for the integrity of our ideas.

He'd do anything for them. These IDEAS; they were Bob's gold. He'd bankroll them himself. He'd mortgage his house, he'd lay down whatever he had, to maintain the integrity of the film, to keep the company alive.

Bob was a "one of."

I love Bob Abel. I love and admire him so dearly. I loved him for his insanity! I loved him for his

humor and his sharp, crack WIT. I loved him for his true caring; he was a mensch. For his kindness. For his endless soul and compassion, and his understanding of the human spirit. I loved him for his wisdom; deep and true. I loved him for his heart; huge. What a remarkable tribute he was to being a human being. What a lucky break to having worked with him. What a blessing to call him my friend.

How did I luck out? Where was the fork in the road I took that led to him? Where was the signpost I picked that said, "This way to Beauty. This way to Truth. This way to inspiration. This way to unbridled creativity. This way to dreams actualized. This way to raw humanity. This way to mass communication of absolute SOUL and love."

And now where are the signposts leading? Where does the fork in *this* road go? Who are our mentors? Who are our soul guides? Who are our torchbearers?

And so I dare us....to use Bob's life as an example, by picking up this torch he lay at our feet, and raising it high above our heads, as a tribute to him, to us, and to those who follow. And maybe, if we're lucky, we'll catch a glimpse once again, of who we are.

"The Magic Never Stops."

Thank you Bob Abel. You will live forever.

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Animation's Brick and Mortar: The Talents of Maurice Noble

by Dana J. Lamb

This past summer Warner Bros. held a tribute to Maurice Noble, one of their animated legends. When Dana Lamb returned home he did an usual thing... This "strictly pencil and sketchbook guy" wrote his own tribute...

I sit at my computer in khaki shorts and my one Hawaiian shirt, purchased for a father-daughter dance two years ago with a tropical island theme. The brightly colored shirt has served me well today, a pre-requisite to attend the tribute to Maurice Noble at the Stephen J. Ross Theater at the Warner Bros. studio. This fashion statement was decreed by the master layout artist himself in an effort to celebrate his remarkable life and career with humor and casual attire. Like many of his peers in the animation business, the appearance of suits and ties tended to cramp everybody's style.

The theatre is located on the WB backlot, blending in with the various avenues that act as architectural chameleons for whatever production is being shot at the time. It never fails to excite me to stroll through the streets and neighborhoods that have adorned the films and television shows I grew up on. The visual wizardry of craftsmen and design has truly mastered time travel from block to block.

Having arrived early, I had

the opportunity to see the table of photos and artwork of Maurice's early years with family and friends. I studied the face of the young artist and saw the eagerness and hope that would eventually settle into wisdom and compassion, leading him to the roll of mentor for later generations. I remembered the books I had read of the influence of the Depression and war that threatened his goals; but I had to wonder what kind of faith he held in the future that helped him believe in his prospects as an artist in such trying times.

I realized that the man recognized that day was one of the true solid, brick and mortar figures in this industry.

As the crowd began to gather, I spotted familiar faces representing the leadership and talents of this industry dating back generations. There was a strong feeling of anticipation among the youngest members of the group as the more knowledgeable placed faces with the names we had all grown up with on screen

and television. I overheard them whisper the titles of shorts and feature films with the same enthusiasm and awe as kids spouting sport stats at a baseball game.

This made me feel good.
REAL good.

Having been educated as an illustrator and cartoonist at a time that held little career potential for animators, I ended up working primarily for advertising where they generally eat their own. I learned quickly that a marketing creative that hadn't opened his or her own shop by the time they were in their thirties was generally considered washed up, chum for the new batch of baby sharks in the executive wading pool.

One of the many things that always impressed me about animation was the respect for its masters. Even among those current leaders who love to ride and occasionally shred the edge of the envelope will recall those who did the same in the early years, inspiring their own efforts to redefine the medium. Background painter Jill Petrilak and colleague Bob Givens spoke about the remarkable use of color and shape in Noble's work, and his daily effort to push and challenge the medium. In the recent video about Chuck Jones, they screened the interviews with both he and Maurice as they remembered the battles to maintain the vision they had for their work. It is amongst

their own, regardless of generation — those who create the animation with their pencils, brushes, voices, hearts and minds — that this understanding and reverence resides.

This sense of community was illustrated in a second panel discussion led by film critic and animation historian Leonard Maltin. Panelist Tom Sito recalled Maurice's involvement with the early days of the animator's union and his refusal to accept the inequalities he witnessed in the treatment of his peers. In light of those devastating economic times, these principles could and did cost him his status and eventual position. Luckily for us, it also led him to the infamous Termite Terrace crew and the incredible body of work that has entertained the world for generations. The other panelists, including Wild Brain's Tod Polson (resplendent in an appropriate cadmium yellow suit causing temporary blindness in the theater's front row), spoke about Maurice's mentoring skills as he encouraged them to find their own vision, yet led them gently toward what was an "appropriate" approach.

It is this aspect of Maurice Noble's personality that led me to capture what I have witnessed and share it with others. It was well over a year ago that I went down to check on the animation classroom. This is the hub for our animators and is typically chaotic with people drawing, shooting tests, videotaping live-action for acting reference and reviewing pencil tests. I walked in and to my surprise, the usual cacophony was replaced with a single voice, coming from none other than Maurice Noble. A good friend of our program, Darrell Park, had asked Maurice to drop in and speak with

our students. I just sat with the rest as he talked about what made things work in animation and why. The afternoon was remarkable in so many ways, but for me, the best was yet to come.

I asked Maurice if he would consider looking at the storyboards of two of our students who had been struggling with choosing the project that had the strongest elements of story. He agreed, and as Mike Roush and Justin Ridge pinned up their storyboards, I realized from the number of pushpins ending up on the floor that they were incredibly nervous. Maurice evidently felt the tension as well, and I wondered if I had placed all three in an awkward situation. Justin pitched one story, then Mike pitched the second, with Maurice sitting quietly as the guys proceeded. Then, the magic happened; Maurice began asking questions, leading the students carefully back into their own stories, exploring all the nuances and dark corners for potential gold.

I watched and marveled as these three artists separated by almost seven decades of social, political and cultural history, slowly became part of a community in search of an idea that would touch their audience. Maurice was bringing these two and those around him into his circle, passing on the knowledge and quest that will drive these new animators to carry on his generation's tradition of excellence. It is the bond that is frequently overlooked in the confusion that surrounds the conflict between commerce and art, especially in these days of such enormous stakes in the entertainment world.

As the fans, family and friends gathered in the lobby, the

contagious joy and humor of our sampling of everything from *Robin Hood Daffy* to the stunning visuals of *What's Opera Doc?* had everyone in a mood that matched their Hawaiian décor. And as I walked back to my car through the facades and convertible structures, I realized that the man recognized that day was one of the true solid, brick and mortar figures in this industry. In this city of illusion, his talent, commitment to his field and his willingness to share his vision so generously place him permanently in the handful of men and women that have built the community we know as animation.

I thank Maurice for a great excuse to wear this Hawaiian shirt. I thank his family and friends for sharing his tribute with his community, and his inspiration to keep this art alive.

You can visit the official Maurice Noble Website now at: <http://www.nobletales.com>

Dana J. Lamb is a professor of art and the coordinator of the Entertainment Art and Animation program at California State University, Fullerton.

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Faith Hubley Remembered

by John Canemaker



dominated by dark intense eyes and a toothy, wide, incandescent smile that always lit up a room. Faith Hubley was a human light bulb — an electric, unforgettable, illuminating presence. She was like a beacon who showed other animator/filmmaker/artists the way, through her work, to an alternative way of making animated art.

Please feel free to join our Discussion Forums at <http://forums.awn.com> and share your memories of Faith or discuss her many great films.

*John Canemaker is a filmmaker and animation historian. He heads the animation program at New York University and his books include *Before Animation Begins: The Art and Lives of Disney Inspirational Sketch Artists* (Hyperion), *Tex Avery: The MGM Years* (Turner) and *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat* (Da Capo). His latest book is *Walt Disney's Nine Old Men & The Art of Animation*.*

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Faith Hubley was a fearless woman and fiercely dedicated to the life of an artist. Her films and the way she made them will always inspire. So will the story of her life, which she lived fully and always with great joy, even during the hard times, of which there were many. She packed a lot of living into her 77 years. To have completed 23 films of quality and originality in 24 years basically by herself is a singular achievement — plus the collaborative work she did with her husband John — it is all a testament to Faith's dedica-

tion, artistic vision and strong sense of purpose.

I was privileged to be a small part of her circle for the last 25 years and enjoyed every minute of it. She was great fun to be with socially (she had a wonderful loud laugh), but she also had enormous discipline and her work always came first. Personally, I will always remember her great style and class. She wasn't conventionally beautiful, but her energy — her aliveness — made her extraordinarily attractive. She had a wonderfully animated face

To have toiled and moiled through a lifeworth of delusions, for an approximate-minimum full-life's duration, and have it add in a flash to undifferentiated molecules on the slag heap of undifferentiated nothing — now THAT is a frightening outcome to grapple with.

From Geezer (2001), by Richard Meltzer

He was. He ain't. It's that simple. Time that once stood between him and a dreamless sleep collapsed into a rubble of ashes. It's not all bad; with the threat of mass extinction once again rearing its head at least Jan Lenica had the benefit to cease in his own individual way. He got out before we were all obliterated en masse, so at least there are a few of us left to go through his luggage. Aside from daughters, wives, family and friends, he also left behind some cartoons, posters and ideas that will enrich, provoke and amuse a few of the few of those with time on their meter.

When writing of those who have laid fresh tracks within the gates of Hades, we construct complimentary sentimental gushes to honour our 'old friend' and remember what a great person they were. I can't do that. I didn't know Jan Lenica. The fragment of Lenica I encountered sporadically through letter and sight over a three-month period in the summer of 2000 (we were honouring him at the Ottawa '00 International Animation Festival) was one of a grumpy old man who appeared unappreciative and uncooperative.

But you know what? That's what makes him so important to me. He was in his early 70s and



by Chris J. Robinson

suffering from diabetes and heart disease. I encountered a man who was tired and scared. I felt his pain, frustration, weakness and fear. He didn't hide it. He couldn't hide it. I saw his humanity in all its humility. He could hear the songs of the angels in the breezes behind him getting stronger and louder with each difficult breath. Each step was selective. Each

response contained.

Now it isn't.

If Lenica had shown up with a rose in his lapel and played the role of grateful, polite diplomat, I would have appreciated it, but soon forgotten it. It would mean little. The darkness within Jan Lenica left an impression on me. His sourness led me to try and grasp why he was the way he

was. He was a son, father, husband and friend, and worst of all, just a man. Jan Lenica's naked humility shattered my fears for a moment and inadvertently led me to reach farther inside to scour through my own blood and guts.

The darkness within Jan Lenica left an impression on me.

My STUFF aside, there is a danger in freely throwing roses on the dead and living. One of the most dangerous systems we've created is the myth of the hero. A bar has been set and more often than not it's bogus and unreachable even by those supposedly in possession of these ideals. The heroic system celebrates sameness. Sameness removes what is unique, diverse and contradictory from each of us. Heroism captures a fragment of a life and the tendency in our society is simply to re-write that life without the naughty bits. As such we grow up aspiring to become someone who never existed. We learn more from the shadows and shit holes than from the plastic palaces in which we often make believe.

"Know thyself," said a wise Greek.

To know thyself, one must find oneself.

To find oneself, one must search.

To search is to live.

To live is to know thyself.

We are always in the process of becoming. Life is a process. To stop is to die. The

search for self is at the core of every Lenica film. His protagonists (think Jan Lenica as performed by Buster Keaton through Beckett and Ionesco and Gilliam) travel through a world of violence, paranoia, anxiety and absurdity. They do not know how to, nor sure that they want to, fit into an increasingly dehumanized society. Lenica's characters encounter various forms of oppression in the face of paranoia (*Rhinoceros*), language (*A*), exile (*Labyrinth*), humans, and even themselves. Each character is simply trying to define and establish a unique blip on life's map.

The characters mirror Lenica. Their search was his. He denied politics, but he was affected by it throughout his life. He was born in Poznan, Poland in 1928. Poland was an economically unstable country, but the Lenica family (father, Alfred was a musician) enjoyed a relatively cozy existence until 1939 when the Nazis forced the family into exile in Southern Poland. It was in exile that Jan Lenica began his career as an artist.

He denied politics, but he was affected by it throughout his life.

After the war, Poland was in a shambles, literally, spiritually and economically. The new generation of artists that emerged was characterized by black irony and sarcasm. They were fiercely against the old values of heroism, nationalism and other "outdated" values. (Of course, their youthful

artistic revolt was itself romantic and heroic!) By late 1948 (a year after the Russians took control of Poland), Lenica was firmly established in the Polish graphic art scene. Later his drawings were rooted in black comedy, violence and paranoia. Lenica's success was, like many Polish artists, short lived. Stalinism cut off their voices in 1953.

Existential themes and an ironic tone aside, Lenica's films were intentionally primitive.

After Stalin reaped what he sowed, things eased up a bit and artists began to re-emerge. At the same time, animation began to emerge in 1956. Not surprisingly, animation was viewed as a serious graphic art form as opposed to kiddie cartoons. Lenica, along with Walerian Borowczyk, were among the first to make animation films in 1957 when they made the film *Once Upon A Time*. After two more collaborations, Lenica found work in Paris, Poland and Germany and made his most famous films, *Monsieur Tete*, *Labyrinth*, *Rhinoceros*, *A* and the short feature, *Adam II*.

Existential themes and an ironic tone aside, Lenica's films were intentionally primitive. The cut-out animation was awkward giving the characters a thoroughly dehumanized manner. His characters, modeled after Buster Keaton, had plain, deadpan faces as they

moved about a world that was designed with more complexity often using cut out figures and photo collages.

By the 1980s, Lenica had received the flowers, heard the trumpets and stored the prizes. He moved to Berlin in 1984 where he taught poster design at a local arts school. He retired in 1994 and remained in Berlin until his death. In 2000, he was at work on a new short film — the making of which was documented in the documentary film, *The Island of Jan Lenica* (Marcin Gyzinski, 2000) — but it's not clear whether he completed the film.

At the end of William Faulkner's *The Wild Palms*, his protagonist, after being convicted of manslaughter for a failed abortion attempt, momentarily considers swallowing a cyanide capsule. Facing a life of grief in prison and

without his lover, he chooses grief: *because if memory exists outside of the flesh it wont be memory because it wont know what it remembers so when she became not then half of memory became not and if I become not then all of remembering will cease to be — Yes, he thought Between grief and nothing I will take grief.*

Jan Lenica gave me grief. That was it. That was all. To forget that is to forget Jan Lenica. To forget Jan Lenica is to forget life. To forget life is to be nothing. I will take grief.

Chris Robinson is the artistic director of the *Ottawa International Animation Festival* and founder and director of *SAFO*, the *Ottawa International Student Animation*

Festival. He is editor of the *ASIFA News*. Robinson has curated film programs and served on festival juries throughout the world. He writes a monthly column ("The Animation Pimp") for *Animation World Network* and has written numerous articles on animation. His iconoclastic tendencies have led him to be called the "John Woo of diplomacy" and most recently, "the enfant terrible of animation" by *Take One* magazine. He is currently working on a book about something.

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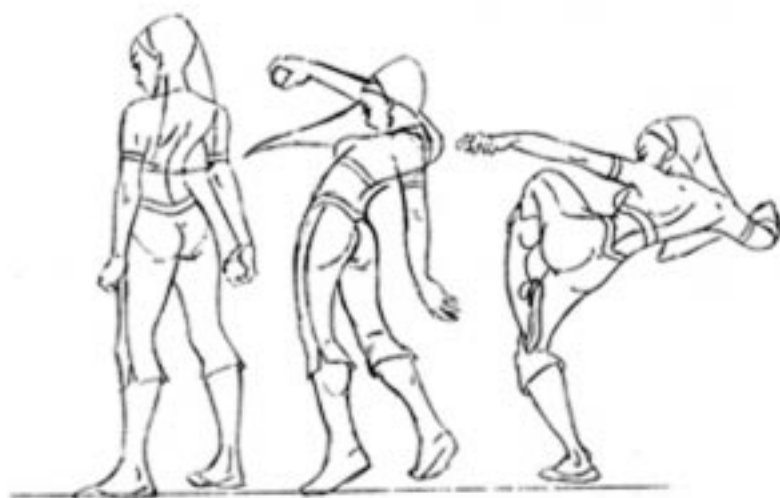
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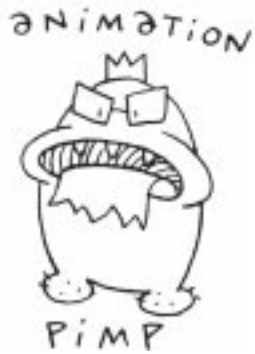


Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

Jimmy Neutron - An Atomic Reaction

by Chris Robinson

Note: To see the secret atomic message simply trace over it using the side of a pencil.

Hottie Animator of the Month

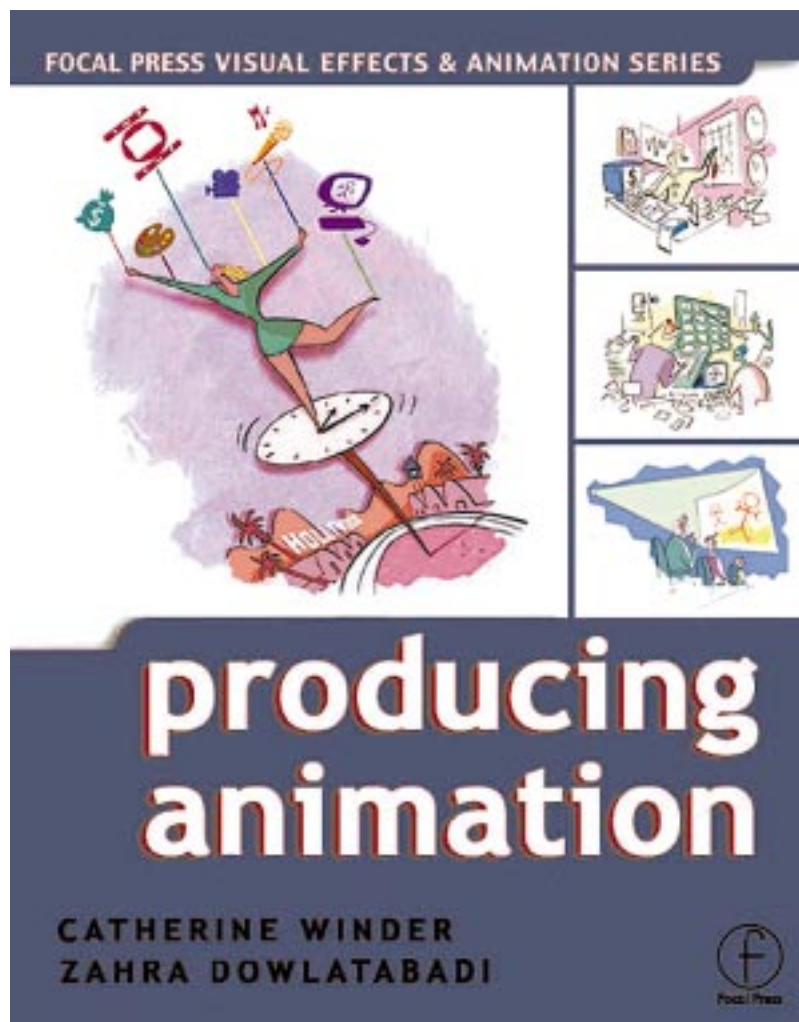
Rosana Liera. Very nice and personal new film, *Fish Hunters*. Someone with a passion and energy that will refresh this increasingly stale community; plus, she's REAL pretty.

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

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Producing Animation: The 3D CGI Production Process

by Catherine Winder and Zahra Dowlatabadi



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

We explore the nuts and bolts of production in *Producing Animation's* Chapter 9 starting with the description of the role of the producer during this phase. The production pipelines for both 2D and 3D CGI projects are also outlined here. Using flow charts, we define each stage, in addition to describing the specific background experience required for individual job categories. The 2D production pipeline starts with workbook and goes all the way through final checking, compositing and film output. The 3D CGI production process emphasizes the importance of pre-production and how integral it is to setting up a smooth production path. It covers design, modeling and rigging steps through touch up and final film/video output. The following is the introduction to 3D CGI production set up.

**CGI production
is still in the
midst of defining
and standardiz-
ing its processes.**

3D Computer Generated Imagery (3D CGI): From Pre-Production Through Final Film/Video Output

Perhaps the best way to understand CGI is to consider it a merger of two methods of film-making: 2D animation and live-action. The process for generating CGI animated projects is very similar in many ways to traditional animation, with some subtle but significant differences in production procedures. Unlike hand-drawn

animation, in CGI, artists must create a three-dimensional world in the computer. Three-dimensional sets must be built, lit and painted, much in the way that sets are constructed for live-action films. CGI also resembles live-action filmmaking in terms of spatial conceptualization, lighting, cinematography, scene hook-ups and blocking of actor's movements. To get from idea to screen, however, CGI follows the traditional animation model in which the artist must go through a series of steps to first create and then define the image.

The main advantage to CG animation is that it is a non-linear process.

It is important to keep in mind that unlike traditional 2D animation, which follows a fully established path, CGI production is still in the midst of defining and standardizing its processes. Depending on the style of the CGI show — for example, cutout animation versus 3D — the software used and the actual production process is different. The following is a basic outline of the production steps involved in setting up a 3D CGI project.

1. Design
2. Modeling
3. Rigging
4. Surfaces (texture and color)
5. Staging/workbook
6. Animation
7. Lighting
8. Effects
9. Rendering
10. Composite

11. Touchup
12. Final film/video output

Using the 2D designs as a guideline, the first step, called *modeling*, is to describe the shape of the objects and characters to the computer. These are mathematical descriptions of the three-dimensional shape of the object. Following this step, the objects must be prepared for movement. This process is referred to as *rigging*. In the case of a character, an internal skeleton is defined, which becomes the basis for the character's motion. The surface, or "skin," of the character is attached to the skeleton in such a way that when the internal skeleton is manipulated, the character's skin bends in the desired way. From here, the surface properties must be defined, including texture and color.

At the same time as the character is undergoing modeling and rigging, the environment or location is designed in 2D and is then developed in the 2D workbook stage. After 2D workbook is approved, a rough 3D set is built matching the key drawings in the storyboard sequence. By setting the camera in different locations (per the 2D workbook), the spatial requirements for the sequence are established. Throughout this process, the space is altered as needed in order to make sure that what has been planned for in 2D also works in a 3D environment. The entire workbook must be approved in 3D before the start of animation or the building of actual set pieces. The next steps are character animation followed by lighting and effects. After the scene has been completed and approved through the above steps, it is ready for rendering,

compositing, touchup (if needed), and final film or video output.

The producer must therefore allow time for problem solving during production...

The main advantage to CG animation is that it is a non-linear process. Parts of the above pipeline can be separated out and worked on simultaneously. For example, the final sets can be constructed while animation is in progress and lighting and effects are being developed for the scene. It is possible to animate the character in steps; that is, start with gross body movements and add subtle enhancements later. At the same time, different animators can work on a character's facial animation while its body movements are being worked on by other artists. When revisions are required on a scene, it is returned to the appropriate department to be fixed. This doesn't always mean the artists must start from scratch; they can often correct the existing artwork and the scene can continue on the path to final render and composite. Since this is a recurring pattern in CGI production, we refer to it as a "circular path." An important consideration for a producer is to create a schedule that will allow for as much research and development in pre-production so that the majority of the "circular path" takes place before the start of production. Otherwise, the management of a show will be close to impossible since it can't

move forward. The producer must therefore allow time for problem solving during production, while making sure that every effort is made to stay on target and meet weekly quotas.

Catherine Winder has worked as both an executive producer in television and feature animation. Her background in development, as well as production with studios from around the world has given her a rare global expertise in the field of animation. In her present position as vice president production for Fox Feature

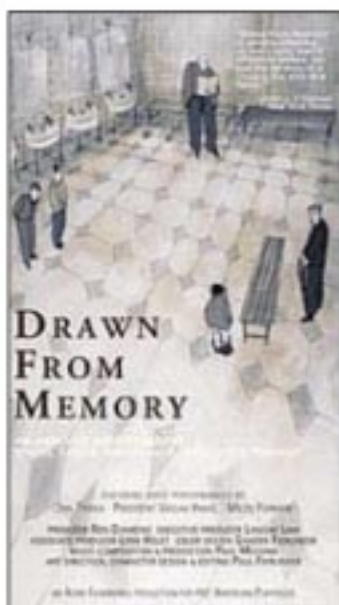
Animation, she is overseeing production of the studio's 2D traditional and 3D CGI animated movies. She has co-written Producing Animation with Zahra Dowlatabadi.

Zahra Dowlatabadi, an award-winning producer, started her animation career in 1986. Since then, Dowlatabadi has worked in almost every major studio in Los Angeles along with many internationally acclaimed animation studios and talent. Dowlatabadi is the founder of an organization entitled Animation Team, which assists studios with production

staffing needs ranging from qualified line producers to experienced production assistants. She also has co-written a book entitled Producing Animation with Catherine Winder for Focal Press.

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--Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer



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Make Luck Happen!

An excerpt from Gene Deitch's book, How To Succeed In Animation (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!).

by Gene Deitch

You need a lot of luck to make it in the movie business, but how do you get lucky? Is success really just a matter of luck — chance? Or can you lure luck your way? Here are some tips.

Many have asked me how to get started in animation, and how to prosper in it creatively and financially. Dare I mention luck?*

Luck Defined

I believe I have had plenty of that, and I couldn't expect anyone to profit from my tales of lucky incidents that propelled me. But perhaps a definition of luck would be useful: Everyone, at one time or another, happens upon an opportunity. The vital difference occurs in if or how a person perceives the opportunity, and how he or she reacts to it, grabs it and runs with it.

Many things seem to come out of the blue, a pure chance of being in the right place just as a door opens. But without preparation for that chance event, you will not be the one who will be beckoned inside.

What is luck anyway? Luck can often be manipulated — given a little nudge. After all, you just can't sit around half your life waiting for luck to bless you. You can be a complete no-talent idiot and still win \$500,000,000 in a lottery. You don't need any advice

from me to do that — just incredible, and highly unlikely, pure, one-in-a-gazillion-chance, naked luck. Theoretically, any dummy can do that. But actually, having luck in breaking into the profession of your choice can be a lot harder if you don't make moves to make it happen.

Here's how to make luck happen:

1. Be good at what you do. Do what you must do to get good. Watch, learn, practice, produce. Be ready. It takes work.
2. Make yourself known. Find an outlet. Become a name. Get in print, or on the Net. Let your abilities, your accomplishments

be out there.

3. Put out feelers. Don't hide. Write letters. Put up a Web page. Send email. Make contacts.

All of the above are really the same things. You want to get yourself in a position where you could be the person sought after. It worked for me when I was just past 20, when I was drawing jazz cartoons for no money in an obscure jazz record fan magazine. It gave me stuff in print with my name on it, and people at UPA happened to see it. You never know who will see something that is out there. Today, similar luck can be prompted on the Internet. What you want to set up is a situation where someone looking for



Bert & Harry Piel, NY Art Directors Club Gold Medal TV ad series, 1953.

talent will find you.

There are two possible approaches:

1. You can study trends; what's hot — what's not — ape a successful style — try to guess what's needed and figure a way to fill that need...or...

2. Be unique. Be outstanding. Hope to impress by indicating you are thinking ahead of the trends. That's harder and riskier, but if you can pull it off, you will be positioned for Big Things. You're more likely to score if you are in some way unique. Find a special ability within yourself and develop it.

Which of those two approaches would be more natural and possible for you? In either case, be aware of the basic truth: a potential client or employer must be made to believe that you can help him or her. You are not likely

to be hired for reasons of charity. "Here's how I can be of value to you..." That is what you have to get across, and it's far easier for that to get across if the potential client or employer comes to that opinion on his own. To paraphrase JFK: "Ask not what your employer can do for you, but show your employer what you can do for him!"

Go get'm, kid!

Want to hear more advice from Gene? Then check out *How To Succeed In Animation (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)*. An AWN exclusive.

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."

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AIR FRANCE

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Lille, France: Hotbed of the North

by Tony Coates and Franck Levis

One hour's high speed train ride up from Paris takes the curious traveler into the heart of Flanders, midway twixt London and Brussels. Here Lille stands proud as one of Europe's major production and conceptual hubs for Web animation, site design and content development.

First and foremost, the Lille area has a strong heritage in graphic design, which led naturally to well-presented and ergonomically-innovative Websites. There are gamers here too now, bringing exciting new concepts in animated entertainment, both large and small.

Moreover, in the context of convergence between television and Internet, Lille plays host to numerous businesses who specialize in toons for the Web, that are beginning to license their wares to traditional broadcasters. Finally, the companies of the region are keen to exploit the impact of "Web jams," these one-off happenings in which animated content is created live at international events, and then remains online for future consultation.

The Northern region was the traditional heartland of France's textile industry. In reaction to the decline in European textile

manufacture, Lille and the surrounding area has rebounded by going high-tech. The tertiary sector — finance, advertising, telecoms, Internet — is booming, thanks to cheaper cost overheads than Paris, for example, and the strategic geographical advantages of being situated in the middle of the London-Brussels-Paris-Amsterdam rectangle. France's biggest mail-order catalogues have their headquarters here, notably "La Redoute" and "Les 3 Suisses." Major hypermarket chains, such as "Auchan," also have their main offices and distribution facilities in the region.

This concentration of economic activity generates demand

for Web design and online content, hence the dozens of Internet firms that have sprung up since the late '90s, many of which are still operating today. Happily, to supply the staffing needs of these Web agencies, a plentiful hunting ground for recruitment is found in the various art schools of the region. Once famous for training textile designers *par excellence*, the SupInfoCom school in Valenciennes, the Esaat in Roubaix, l'école Saint-Vincent of Loos and l'école Saint Luc in nearby Tournai — amongst others — now produce bucket-loads of creative talent for the Net.

Added to this tradition for graphics, the Lille area is influ-



Let's all go to Lille! An image from the Website for French singer Alain Souchon designed by Œil pour Œil. All rights reserved. TM & © 2001 Œil pour Œil Productions.

enced strongly by the techno and indie undercurrents from Belgium: two music scenes well ahead of their Parisian counterparts. Indeed, the underground arty culture of the Belgo-Lille region pumps out an *avant garde* beat which the rest of France readily marches to. Many of the players on these underground scenes find themselves inexorably drawn to the possibilities offered by the Web. Here we see another of the reasons for the ever-growing reputation of the (Northern) "French Touch" in the world of Web design.

Flashy Sites

In terms of site design, Lille has some relatively old stagers in the shape of *Œil pour œil* (an eye for an eye/<http://www.oeilpouroeil.fr>), Nocopy Multimedia Creation (<http://www.nocopy.com>) and Tokto (<http://www.tokto.com>).

From as early as 1996, the striking graphic layout and content of the sites produced by these companies caught the eye and has enabled them to go from

strength to strength. *Œil pour œil* created a real impact with sites for musicians, such as www.alain-souchon.net and www.francoise-hardy.com, and more recently for the no-nonsense French rappers NTM. Nocopy, for their part, already accomplished "print" graphic designers, developed these skills to branch out into site design, including the northern concert arena www.le-splendid.com, the irrepressible Jojo (www.jojo.kidcomics.com), and the golden boy of European comic strips www.largowinch.com, recently seen in the launch of the new Christian Dior fragrance 'Eau Sauvage.'

On a more institutional level, Tokto were responsible for www.textile-creation.com, the French national site for Art and Industry, and Nocopy designed the site for the Dunkirk channel port — scene of one or two famous wartime incidents — now more usually frequented by pleasure cruisers at www.dunkerque-marina.com. *Œil pour œil*, Nocopy and Tokto — likewise the newer local players in Web design,

such as Atypic Labs — are all resolutely committed to making their sites as 'Flashy' and attractive as possible, a *raison d'être* which has born fruits in their increasing national and international success.

This success has been notably crowned with the recent attribution to a Lille Web agency of the prestigious job of producing and maintaining the all-new Tintin site, dedicated to the adventures and history of Hergé's world famous globe-trotting reporter, www.tintin.com. Online since October 2000, the Tintin site calls upon the inimitable graphic lines of Hergé, and encourages visitors young and old to enjoy and rediscover the intrepid voyages of Tintin, Snowy, Captain Haddock and the Thomson twins as they explore the planet and beyond (see 'Destination Moon').

In co-production with Moulinsart, the rights-holders of Hergé's universe, the ongoing development of Tintin.com continues to create a community of Web visitors, via games, education, forums, chat-rooms and regular thematic updates. These themes reflect the issues brought up in the Tintin comic books, such as advances in science and technology, the middle eastern question, organized crime, oil crises and environmental concerns. Tintin, a timeless and universal character, can be used on the Web as an important tool for both entertainment and educational purposes. The visitor numbers reflect the notoriety of Tintin and the quality of the site: 2 million page views per month, 150 thousand individual visitors and an average session of 7 minutes. These figures are increasing daily as the site grows and its content is enriched.



Jojo's home page by Nocopy. © Nocopy.



The full cast of characters from the peripatetic world of Tintin. © Moulinsart, Nocopy.

Let's Get Gaming

Along with *Œil pour œil*, the big daddy of the local Lille Web scene is generally acknowledged to be TEAMcHmAn (<http://www.teamchman.com>), whose activities range from game design to the creation of animated series.

TEAMcHmAn's most famous brainchild is a full-length interactive 3D adventure game crammed with original characters and unexpected situations, www.banja.com, where surfers can join in with and influence the narrative action involving Banja — the loveable rastaboy — and his friends. Like an unfolding screenplay, the adventures of Banja are developed through self-contained episodes, each with a strong narrative theme. On the boundary line between a server and an online game, Banja.com ensures visitor loyalty thanks to games within the game, animated sequences and communal areas.

This vast solo adventure, simultaneously played by a whole community of players, takes place in the mythical territory known as Itland, where a spirit of optimism

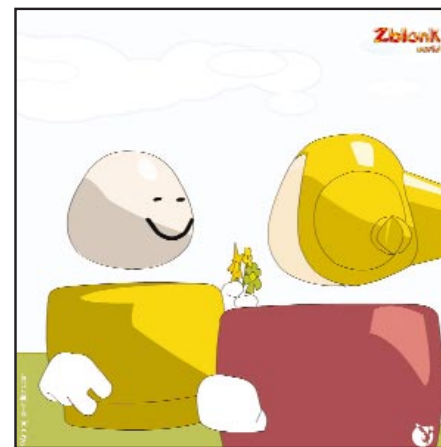
and mutual co-operation reigns. Banja is bringing together a wide fraternity of users, male and female from 8 to 35, who identify with this multi-level playground on the Web. More than 150,000 users are now registered in France, playing more than 2 hours per month. The Spanish and Portuguese versions, released in February 2001 by Terra Networks, have already attracted 120,000 registered users. As a consequence of this success, TEAMcHmAn is developing a Banja TV series, running 26 episodes, each 26 minutes in length.

Œil pour œil has a subsidiary devoted entirely to games. As well as smaller online games like 'Superhurdles,' developed for the British Athletics Federation, and work for Infogrames in the online launches of new games, *Œil pour œil* is currently nearing the final stages of production on a feature-length video game: 'Dark Khan.' A graphically-rich heroic fantasy quest, along the epic lines of 'Diabolo,' 'Dark Khan' can be viewed in preview form on the *Œil pour œil* home Website.

Tokto, meanwhile, has cre-

ated a virtual speakeasy/bar at www.surlezinc.com, where thirsty Websurfers can interact and let off steam with a choice of online games. For 'Deer Hunter' fans, Nocopy has a quaint duck shooting game in the surprise section of its home site, whilst *Œil pour œil* offers the chance to obliterate a few Yorkshire terriers on its home pages.

Among the newcomers to the Lille Webscene, there are several game specialists. These include Analogiks-Indians.com, whose latest project is a game engine called Zblonk: a multi-player scenario involving enigmas and pitfalls, developed using Macromedia Flash. Spread over 20 episodes, Zblonk turns out to be far more complex than first meets the eye. Keblow, another young Web agency, is the proud father of Sai, a laid-back explorer whose journey through life can be witnessed on the home site (www.keblow.com/sai).



Banja, the rastaboy from TEAMcHmAn. © TEAMcHmAn 2001.

Touche-etoile.com is a Web agency specialising in advertainment. They create mini sports games which feature advertising space for corporate clients inserted within their decors. These online games include soccer, rugby (NFL without the shoulder

pads), basketball and mini-golf. For IBM and *Le Figaro* national newspaper, Touche-etoile produced an animated quiz featuring a bouncy Santa Claus to celebrate the new millennium. Also highly-reputed as online game producers are Toon8.com, whose work combines striking graphics with excellent musical soundtracks, notably *Snow Rider Academy*, produced for the kids site of France's biggest television station TF1.



An image from *Sai*, a platform game designed by Keblow. The game is comprised of six episodes, four of which are already produced. © Keblow.com.

Other young local companies offering their *savoir-faire* to the world of games production include Hydravision, Wip:on and Naxos-images, the latter is particularly adept in 3D image configuration. Finally, it is worth noting the



A screen shot from the multi-player video game, *Chaoser*, developed for PCs by Hydravision Entertainment. © 2001 Hydravision Entertainment.

address www.gamies.com, a portal site hailing from the North of France, which groups over fifty easy to download online games. The site also organises world games championships and boasts over 20,000 regular visitors.

On to TV!

Some of the hottest animated series to come out of Europe are undoubtedly from the North of France. Tokto, *Ceil pour œil*, TEAMchmAn and Nocopy excel in this field. Indeed, at the March 2001 International Internet Film Festival (www.internet-film.org), both Tokto with *Inmyapartment* and Nocopy with *Coming Snow* picked up the prizes for best use of the Web and best series respectively.

More recently, Tokto has produced a new animated series



Go inside of Wip:On and see their work, staff and studio. © Wip:On 2001/Gamies.com/Macrun-Djiran.

featuring a mischievous rabbit and rapacious mole called *Mixou and Kousto*, whose adventures in the forest can be viewed in 13 x 3 minute episodes. Nocopy's *Coming Snow* has since been followed up by the *Magic Circé* series, bought by Wanadoo-edition.com/Webcartoons. Also published by Wanadoo, we have the series *Benzo P.I.*, a marvelous parody of the detective genre aimed at the 18-35 audience. And finally, at the same Wanadoo address, TEAMchmAn's *Spaceboys* splash into the galaxy in their hip-hop flying saucer, ready to take on any adversary: animal, vegetable or mineral. On a more serious tone — whilst not strictly an animated series — it is worth visiting *Manhatte.com*, a documentary type scenario described by its producers, Analogiks-



A scene from the International Internet Film Festival's Best Series winner, *Coming Snow*. © Nocopy.



Nocopy's *Benzo P.I.* parodies the classic detective genre. © Nocopy.

Indians, as an 'interactive film' set in historical New York.

Œil pour œil, whose ambition knows no bounds, have gone one step beyond the production of Web series by creating their own Web-TV. Behind the inspired name of Visiodrome.com resides a selection of cutting edge animated series, organized according to five thematic channels including Arf, for laughs, and Pulp, for thrills. The tone is acidic and irreverent, ranging from the *X-Files* parody *Murder and Scotty* to the completely delirious *Guts and Guests* show. One of the series, *Victims*, dealing with popular urban myths, has been bought for direct broadcast by Canal Plus Television, illustrating the growing *entente cordiale* between the Internet and traditional broadcasters. Counting on the quality of the ideas and the fluidity of animation in their work, Œil pour œil intends in the future to make Visiodrome a fee-paying Web-TV station. Today, Visiodrome.com has already attracted over 7,000 non-paying initial subscribers.

Again, in the context of the *rapprochement* between TV and the Net, as we have seen for Banja and *Victims*, Nocopy's animated Flash series of 52 episodes of *Kid Paddle* — an effervescent Dennis the Menace style character — is being tracked down for diffusion by French terrestrial TV stations. More importantly, Œil pour œil's series *Loana and Her Friends*, 32 short episodes featuring the adventures of a bunch of insects, has become a feature in the Canal Plus prime-time evening slot since October 2001, becoming the first Flash animation to be shown



Manhatte.com (NY series) by Analogiks-Indians.com features interactive films set in old New York. © 2002 Analogiks-Indians.com.

regularly on mainstream French television.

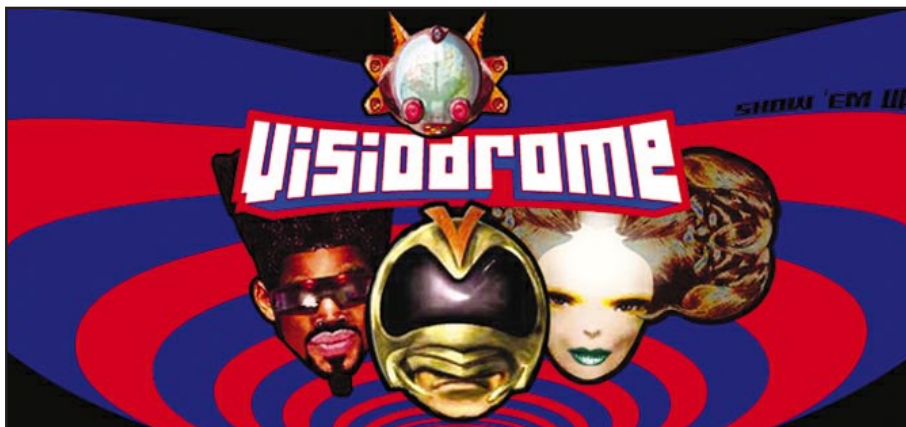
Web Jams

Finally, we should note the growing phenomena of "Web jams" as developed by Internet design companies from the North. The most famous of these is Vector

Lounge, initiated by TEAMcHmAn, which has become an increasingly popular feature at international Internet gatherings. The latest edition of Vector Lounge took place in Amsterdam in October 2001 for the FlashForward Festival. The principle of Vector Lounge is to foster the interaction between the



A scene from *Murder and Scotty*, a biting *X-Files* parody which airs on Œil pour œil's Visiodrome.com. All rights reserved. TM & © 2001 Œil pour œil Productions.



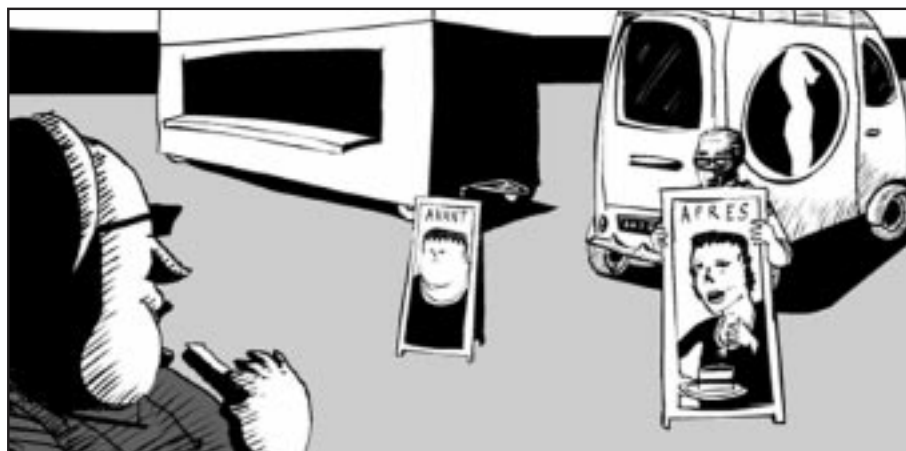
The print ad and first home page for Visiodrome.com, a Web-TV station created by Œil pour œil. All rights reserved. TM & © 2001 Œil pour œil Productions.

top creative spirits in Flash animation; to get all these wizards under one roof and give them the freedom to strut their stuff in a live situation. Invited participants hail from all corners of the globe: Japan, the USA and Europe. The results of these "happenings" are often as surprising as they are innovative, for example the amazing work by Wireframe for Vector Lounge04. Previous Vector Lounge performances include the Annecy International Animated Film Festival and the Linz Ars Electronica Festival in Austria.

Similarly, but on a far more modest scale, the Webdaysigners jammin' event is into its third anniversary year. Webdaysigners' creations can be seen on the Tokto home site. Touche-etoile have also jumped on the Webjam bandwagon, with a recent outing in October 2001 for the MixMove European Digital Music and Arts Forum. Over the weekend, Touche-etoile and other Web agencies joined forces to produce an animated video for the SayagJazzMachine song: "Amigo."

Beyond the fraternal spirit as displayed by the Northern French Web jams, several of Lille's bigger Web agencies have come together to form the Arc Numerique. By grouping Internet content developers from the region in an association, the Arc Numerique aims at presenting a united front in terms of collective bargaining with national and international structures. Another federating institution is the CRRAV, the regional audiovisual development agency, which helps finance the presence of local Web businesses at trade fairs such as Milia.

In short, Lille's Web scene has little to envy from its Parisian and European counterparts.



Secret Minceur (Victims), also on Visiodrome.com, is headed for direct broadcast TV. All rights reserved. TM & © 2001 Œil pour Œil Productions.

Despite recent world events and the uncertain economic situation, the Internet buzz in the North of France is still as strong as ever. In fact, on any given evening it is not uncommon to stumble across a cheery Lille Web designer or two chewing the fat in a dim-lit bistro, sheltering from the rain with a plateful of mussels, french fries and mayo. It is not uncommon either to bump into a merry band of Lille Internet activists enjoying a glass of pils to celebrate Lille's recent nomination as European capital of culture for 2004.

Visit this article online at <http://mag.awn.com/index.php3>

?ltype=pageone&article_no=1096 to see QuickTime clips of some of Lille's Flash animation.

Tony Coates: Web-hound, writer and translator. International development officer, Nocopy. Singer/songwriter with rock band "The Lobsterdogs."

Franck Levis: Commercial director, Nocopy. Formerly of the INA (Institut National de l'Audiovisuel). Passionate about chess.

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



See an example of Nocopy's Flash series *Kid Paddle*. © Depuis, Midam, Nocopy.



A Bug's Life French style: Loana and Her Friends went from Web-TV to mainstream French culture. All rights reserved. TM & © 2001 Œil pour Œil Productions.

Producing Animation

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

It's a whole new year — a chance to start fresh. What can you do in 2002 to make your dreams come true? Turn them into goals. A goal is a dream with a deadline.

The beginning of the year is a great time to plan what you want to accomplish in the coming year.

Define Your Dreams

Goals can be anything you want. Write down whatever they may be. Write a date after each one — the date you expect to achieve that goal. Give yourself a reasonable amount of time for each. Writing down your goals will help you stay on track. Fewer than 3% of the U.S. population actually writes down their goals so already you will be ahead of 97% of other people.

Write down both short term and long range goals so you can have a map of what you'd like to accomplish/acquire/learn/earn/do. Don't be afraid of putting down even the most impossible or outrageous goals. You'll never get those dreams if you don't know



Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

what they are.

If you prefer, you can create a dream board, which is a visual representation of your goals. Use drawings, slogans, photos or other visuals to illustrate your list of goals on a poster board. Hang it prominently so you can remind yourself of your direction every day. You can have a dream board party. Invite some friends over to share their dreams and make the boards together.

The dream board or goals list is what you want — not the expectations or wishes of anyone else. Don't worry about what others think of your goals/plans. They're your desires. This is a time to write down what is important to you. Some goals may be long term — a friend of mine wants to exhibit at the Guggenheim in New York. He hasn't had a show there yet, but he works every day toward achieving this dream.

Get Writing!

Even if you have just one or two goals write them down — no matter how extreme they may seem. Don't censor yourself into thinking that your goal is impossible.

Example:

- Goals for 2002 (January 2002).
- Get a new job.
- Meet new people.

Be Specific.

You have to be specific in order for your dreams/goals to become reality. So rewrite your goals to be as specific as possible. Goals must be specific and measurable. Your goal might be to become a better artist, but without specifics you won't be able to achieve this goal. Some examples of specific goals might be: Take life drawing classes once a week. Go to the zoo once a month and draw the animals for 3 hours. Go to the mall once a month and draw people for 3 hours. Update portfolio twice a year — once in May, once in November. Get the idea?

Goals must be specific and measurable.

Better Example:

- Goals for 2002 (January 2002).
- Get a job as a voice over actor by June 1st.
- Meet two new people a week.

Devise A Plan Of Action.

Your goal list might look

like a plan of action.

Example:

- Muriel's goals for 2002.
- Take voice over class.
- Take acting class.
- Make demo tape.
- Send demo tape to voice over agents in Los Angeles area.
- Attend two networking meetings a week.

This list of goals is Muriel's road map to success.

Be specific and you will have a course of action. Take action and make your dreams a reality.

Set Deadlines.

Deadlines will help you focus your energies. Allow yourself enough time to accomplish your goals. Don't expect changes over night. The important thing is to get started at once.

Share Your Dreams.

Don't keep what you want a secret. If you have specific goals you can share them with others. They may be able to help you reach them or give you an introduction to someone who can help. When you share your dreams, others may have ideas of how you can accomplish them. Be willing to help others with their goals as well.

Ask For Help.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. But don't expect anyone to wave a magic wand and grant you your every wish. You are going to have to work hard to earn the help of others. This includes staying enthusiastic and determined. If you are devoted to your goals, it will be easier to get

help from others as well. No one can help you if you are not willing to work hard yourself.

Stay Focussed.

Many goals can be difficult to reach but the problem is usually that we don't devote enough time or resources toward what we want. We get sidetracked. That is the key reason to write them down. You have to be committed to your goals and dreams. After you have your goals/dreams list, post it in a prominent place. Use it to remind yourself of what you'd like to do, what you want to accomplish and where you'd like to go. It will help you keep on your path.

Devise a plan of action.

Relentlessly Apply Yourself.

Pick a goal, get started and keep going. Work on your goal every day.

If your goal is to improve your drawing skills, resolve to draw for an hour every day. Pick a time of day, before work or school, after work or school, during the lunch hour, whenever is right for you, and do it. Just like a daily exercise. If you draw every day, you will become a better artist.

If your goal is to meet two new people in the animation industry every week, put yourself in play at industry networking events — a film festival, a talk at an animation gallery, a college lecture or a software sponsored event. There are many opportunities to meet people in the industry, including organizations such as Women in Animation, SIGGRAPH and ASIFA. There are many sources of help for people who want to break into

the animation industry, including this Website. These resources can help you make your dreams reality. The beginning of the year is a great time to plan what you want to accomplish in the coming year(s). But anytime is a good time to define your goals. Begin now — make a goals list or dream board and get started on creating the life you want.

I wish you all success and joy in the New Year. May you accomplish your goals and make your dreams come true in 2002.

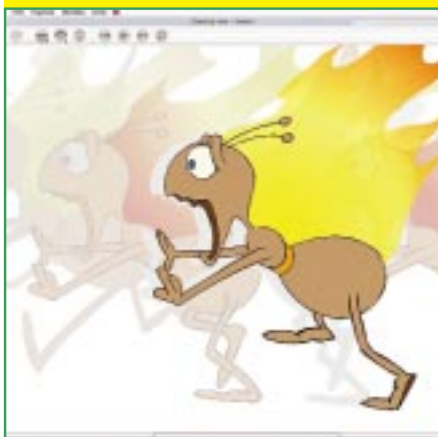
Pamela Kleibrink Thompson is a career coach and recruiter who speaks at colleges and universities about animation, art and visual effects careers. Her goal is to make a new goal list before the end of January.

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

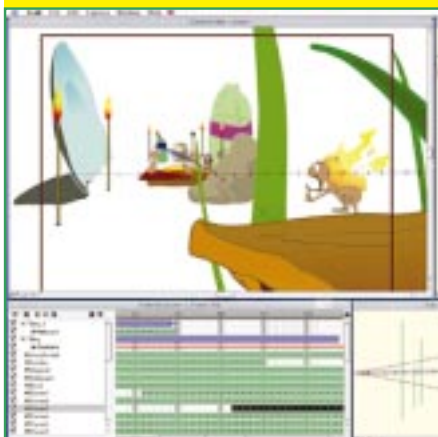
*From sketch to animation
using Toon Boom Studio.*



Step 1: Initial rough sketches.
All images courtesy of Toon Boom Studio™, a trademark of Toon Boom Technologies Inc. All rights reserved.



Step 2: Onion skinning where we see the overlay of frames within an element.



Step 3: Camera view with timeline.

Toon Boom Studio Animates the Web

By Eric Oldrin

It's the summer of 2000 and the Web has seen more stars than the Hollywood Squares. Adam Sandler, Matt and Trey, Jim Brooks, Tim Burton — they were all looking for their 15 Megs of fame. With the promise of an unprecedented audience, uncensored expression and unlimited capital, old world artists met new world technology with open arms. Well, almost.

First they had to contend with some pretty serious limitations. They discovered that online entertainment must be short form animation, with potentially very imprecise timing. This presented a unique challenge for artists accustomed to twenty-six minutes of tightly synched dialogue. Luckily, some of these issues were mitigated through the use of vector-based graphics.

Most people are familiar with Macromedia's popular vector-based design tool and for the most part Flash was the software of choice for these talented storytellers. However, Flash is primarily a design application and although it does an incredible job of simplifying the animation process, it is by no means a traditional animation tool. It was not created with the animator in mind.

Toon Boom Studio was created for animators and serves as an ideal supplement to Flash. Designed by Toon Boom

Technologies, this well-focused software offers increased drawing accuracy, better lip synching, 3D scene planning and camera effects. Not to mention it just feels more like an animation tool, with a rotating light table, exposure sheets and onion skinning. This must be how designers feel when they use Flash! Toon Boom Studio can still output to a format usable in Macromedia Flash, allowing one to add layers of interactivity.

**Toon Boom Studio
was created for
animators and
serves as an ideal
supplement to Flash.**

Facilitating Accuracy

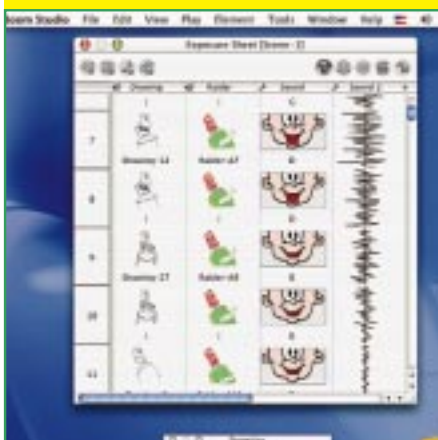
Accuracy was a major concern for all of the Hollywood talent, especially during initial development. They wanted to be certain the work they produced would be true to their vision, no matter what the circumstance. Matt and Trey swore by the importance of timing. Cartman is funny not just because of what he says but also because of how he says it. They insisted that whatever they created for the Web have precise mouth positions and movement.



Step 4: Main camera view.



Step 5: Painting and drawing using dynamic color picking tools.



Step 6: The Lyricsync exposure sheet.

Unfortunately, software cannot always control the quality of these variables. One has to consider the power of the audience's computer as well. Low-end machines will have choppy animation no matter how accurate the original production. However, there are some steps that can be taken and seasoned *South Park* animators Crispy and Todd, went to great lengths to insure precision.

In the first episode of *Stainboy*, evil Staregirl is defeated when an enormous light fixture falls on her head, creating a gory mess. As the climax of the story, the timing had to be exact. The sound effect had to match the event; otherwise the entire episode would be ruined. Burton's animators worked for days to meet his expectations and in the end, they did an incredible job of capturing the important moment by tweaking the frame rate and cheating the timing.

In both cases, Toon Boom would have brought a layer of great ease to these otherwise difficult situations. The animators would still have had to consider the processing ability of their computer but they would have been in familiar territory. They could have used familiar tools to find greater accuracy without such frustration and they could have presented their work to the talent in a more predictable form.

Zip! Pan! Zoom!

In addition to facilitating accuracy, Toon Boom Studio provides some other outstanding capabilities. The camera work is perhaps the most impressive of these attributes. "Toon Boom Studio is very much about camera moves and effects that can be done in Flash, but really aren't its

core functionality," says Mike Viner of Balloon Dog Studio. You can lay out 2D drawings in a 3D space, simplifying the creation of depth and perspective. You can use a motion path to map out where you want to move from one frame to another and you can add control points to this path to change its shape, changing the motion path the element will follow.

The opening scene to Stan Lee's epic Web adventure *The 7th Portal*, presents a long pan and zoom that could easily have been created in Toon Boom Studio. As a matter of fact, the production of the series is presented throughout the Toon Boom user guide as a tutorial. Stan Lee was a perfectionist and always pushing the medium to its extreme. In using Toon Boom Studio, he would have been at home. The type of camera effects that can be found in Toon Boom are not presented the same way in Flash.

With a little talent, this software and a computer, anyone can become their own animation studio. That was the promise of Flash but somehow it's more fun with Toon Boom Studio. "It's not for making animated GUIs that talk to a backend. It's for a Web show — not for making buttons," adds Viner. If you want to get serious, you can always import your cartoon into Flash.

For \$350, it's a pretty good deal (100 bucks if you're a student!). Maybe if we'd have had this software when all those celebrities were on the Web, they would have stuck around even after the bubble burst. But if Toon Boom Technology's track record is any indicator, those big names may just come back. Their high-end tool, USAnimation is the leading software among major stu-



Step 7: A Lyncsync drawing with audio sample.



Step 8: Camera output shows the final composition from the camera's view.

dios, including Klasky Csupo and Warner Bros., with a presence in more than 30 countries. Toon Boom Studio is considerably less expensive but follows the same standards and ideals.

The world of online entertainment is more fertile today than it ever was during the summer of 2000, despite the economy. This wonderful tool will undoubtedly

open the door to another wave of creativity and expression. Maybe this time, without the distraction of Hollywood and Silicon Valley, something exciting will evolve. Regardless, Toon Boom Studio will help everyone have a lot of fun trying.

Eric Oldrin was the senior producer of series and show content

for Shockwave, where he produced and developed some of its key content, including Tim Burton's World of Stainboy. Prior to joining Shockwave, Oldrin helped build Mondo Media's online animation studio and produced The God and Devil Show, Thugs on Film and Like, News. Before that, he created games at America Online's WorldPlay Entertainment and Sierra Online's Imagination Network. Currently, Eric is a principal at Telepathic Transmissions, his new, new media company. Eric holds a B.A. in Philosophy from Pomona College.

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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 releases not previously covered) that have merit and about which our readers should know.

Jin-Roh: The Wolf Brigade.

Theatrical feature, 2000. Director:

Hiroyuki Okiura. 102 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98/Special Edition DVD bilingual 162 minutes with extras \$59.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment and Viz Communications.

Jin-Roh was released in Japan on June 3, 2000, but it had been winning awards in international film festivals in Europe since February 1999. It was originally to be directed by Mamoru Oshii (*Ghost in the Shell*); but he turned it over to his protegee, Hiroyuki Okiura. The details, which provide an informative glimpse at how the Production I.G. studio's creative team works, are presented in the Special Edition in an hour-long second DVD of interviews, theatrical trailers and other extras. The Special Edition also includes a music C.D. of Hajime Mizoguchi's lovely though melancholy symphonic score, and an illustrated booklet.

Jin-Roh is a suspenseful but bleak political thriller, so realistically staged that everyone's first question is, "Why didn't they just film it as a live-action movie?" It is technically science fiction, set in an alternate-history postwar Japan. As the Occupation ended, there was some Communist agitation. Oshii's story exaggerates this into a major terrorist underground, the Sect, too serious for the regular police. In this fictional Japan, the government creates a separate Capital Police organization, with a paramilitary Special Unit to meet the terrorist squads with deadly force.

As the economy improves in the mid-1950s, the Sect's popular support dwindles. They frenetically step up their attacks to continue looking strong. The Capital Police are in a quandary; if they do not stop the Sect they will look



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incompetent, while if they do crush the Sect they will put themselves out of work. Some within the regular police want to disband the parallel force anyway. There is a rumored loyalist group in the Capital Police, the Wolf Brigade, willing to oppose their bureaucratic rivals with the same deadly tactics that they use on the terrorists.

Kazuki Fuse is a new member of the Capital Police's Special Unit. During a confrontation with the Sect in Tokyo's sewers, he hesitates to kill a teen "Red Riding Hood" terrorist, allowing her to set off a suicide bomb. Emotionally shaken, he visits the dead girl's crypt and meets her older sister, Kei. As a fragile romance grows between them, the viewer sees that several factions are planning to use the lovers for their own purposes. There are also hints that the lovers themselves may not be innocent. Is Kei really a terrorist trying to infiltrate the CP? Is Fuse callously using her to get information on the Sect? Is Kei innocent but being used by the Sect? Is the romance that develops real despite what their original motives may have been? Are the regular police planning to use the romance to discredit the CP? The plot keeps twisting and the audience is offered a new possibility every few minutes, but each development seems to offer less hope that Fuse and Kei will escape the fate of tragic lovers.

"Jin roh" actually means "wolf men," and that translation better describes the extremists' own self-image as savage wolves who do not hesitate to kill to protect their own pack, the Capital Police. But they also have no compassion for weaklings among themselves. Is Fuse weak for having different values? Are "different



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© 1999-2000 Shoji Kakumei UTENA Seisaku linkai.

values" a rationalization for genuine weakness? Or is the answer different altogether? While it seems unarguable that *Jin-Roh* could have been made just as well as a live-action feature, Okiura's direction is so skillful and the "acting" of the cartoon cast is so convincing that you rapidly forget that you are not watching a live-action feature.

Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Movie.

Theatrical feature, 1999. Director: Kunihiko Ikuhara. 87 minutes. Price & format: VHS English language \$19.99; DVD bilingual \$29.99. Distributor: Software Sculptors/Central Park Media.

Many anime theatrical features based upon popular TV series offer impressive visuals, but stories that are hard to follow by viewers who are not familiar with the TV series and characters. *Shoji Kakumei Utena* (translated in the Japanese series into French as *La Fillette Revolutionnaire Utena*) carries this to extremes. The TV series itself (39 half-hour episodes, April 2 to December 24, 1997) was so surrealistic that American fans compared it to Patrick McGoochan's cult favorite *The Prisoner*, in presenting an imaginative and suspenseful drama around a protagonist imprisoned in a bizarre, luxurious but unexplained community. *Utena Tenjou* is just entering the

Ohtori Academy, apparently an exclusive city-sized high school of soaring towers smothered in rose gardens. Most of the girls dress in frilly schoolgirl uniforms, while the Student Council (male and female) wear 18th century military officers' uniforms styled upon the courtiers at Louis XVI's Versailles. Admission to the Student Council is by membership in the Academy's Fencing Club. The best duelist wins the symbolic title of fiancée to the Rose Bride, the sister (Anthy) of the Academy's unseen young Headmaster Akio Himemiya. The arrogant boys on the Council abuse Anthy. The tomboyish Utena duels for the title, at first just to free Anthy from abuse, but as the story progresses their friendship takes on lesbian overtones. *Utena* is always overflowing with cryptic dialogue amidst imagery of roses, the Versailles court, Tarot cards (notably the chariot evolving into the modern sports cars fancied by the effete "Prince" Akio), impossibly attenuated towers stretching to Heaven, Indonesian shadow puppetry, and more; overlaid with portentous hints about the need to revolutionize the world. The Student Council's goal, endlessly repeated (in French), is: "If it cannot break out of its shell, the chick will die without ever being born. We are the chick, the World is our egg. If we do not crack the World's shell, we will die without truly being born. Smash the World's shell...For the Revolution of the World!" The movie (*Revolutionary Girl Utena: The Adolescence of Utena* is the actual Japanese title, animated by J.C. Staff, released August 14, 1999) condenses this into an abstract semi-religious allegory, with the Academy as a womb that needs the pampered students to

break out or eventually die still-born. Even critics who complain that the story is incomprehensible agree that Ikuhara's direction and the graphics (character designs by Shinya Hasegawa, based upon the original comic book art of Chiho Saito) are so stunning that this should not be missed. The swooping angular panoramas around the rose-emblemated ethereal campus sometimes look like a robotic multiplane camera running berserk, but they are always impressive. The character interaction remains gripping even if you are never sure just who the characters are. *Utena* is an excellent example of anime's "any given scene would look beautiful as a framed still picture" allure. (Just don't ask about the Carwash of the Gods...)

The next two reviews are of separate TV series, but both were aimed at adolescents and were broadcast on Wednesdays at 6:30 pm on Japan's WOWOW-TV satellite channel. *NieA_7*, 13 episodes from April 26 through July 19, 2000, was followed immediately by *Hand Maid May*, 10 episodes from July 26 through September 27, 2000. The two show different ways that anime humor is being targeted for today's age 13-and-up TV viewers.

NieA_7.V.1, Poor Girl Blues.V.2, Funky Water Blues. V.3, Sayonara Blues. V.4, Under Seven Blues.

TV series (13 episodes), 2000. Director/writer: Takuya Sato. V.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes; V.2 - V.4, 3 episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

"Ny-ee-ah under seven," as it is pronounced, is a combination

of soap opera, sci-fi, and frenetic humor. The setting is so ethnically Japanese that the DVD extras include "footnotes" to explain unique cultural terms and traits. One is the frequent use of the word "hetare," meaning "lame humor." The note points out that "hetare" is a good description for *NieA_7* since the dialogue is full of bad jokes, deliberately obscure references (even more so to Americans), and adolescent off-color humor.

The date is twenty years after a flying saucer has crashed in Japan, stranding its crew who look human except for Spocklike pointed ears and Teletubby antennas. They settle into human society as lower-class laborers. The setting is Enohana, a small town so far into the countryside that it has changed little since the end of the 20th century. Mayuko Chigasaki is a poor high school graduate attending a cram school to raise her grades enough to enter college. She is a tenant at the local old-fashioned community bathhouse, which desperately needs more customers to stay in business. She also has to put up with NieA, an alien girl who is a squatter in her closet. The tomboyish "no antenna" NieA has the personality of a spoiled cat; lazing in the sun and always asking when the next meal will be ready. Mayuko's attempts to make NieA "pay her way" by performing some chores, or trying to adapt some of the alien technology to the bathhouse's use, results in much *Odd Couple* humor.

The plot threads centering upon Mayuko emphasize realistic small-town life. Mayuko is concerned with earning enough to pay her college tuition, yet aware that she has no real goals once



© yoshitoshi Abe/NieA Project.

she does finish college. She and the other tenants of the bathhouse are a small family, with their own lives plus their shared effort to keep the outdated public facility open. The characters are appealing enough to hold viewer interest even when performing such actions as washing dishes. (Sato's clever directing keeps unexciting everyday activities from becoming boring.) The plot threads that spin off NieA emphasize the crazy humor. She builds miniature flying saucers out of junk and crashes through the bathhouse roof. A fellow alien becomes the manager of

the local "11-7" store; he adopts the appearance of a turbaned East Indian because it is expected that convenience store managers be Hindi immigrants. Other aliens are parodies of other cultural stereotypes, including the overweight pimply anime fanboy. There is some overlap; one of Mayuko's Japanese friends wears his hair in Rastafarian dreadlocks. NieA's lazy ways make her a pariah even among the other aliens; will she ever improve herself? So the "odd couple" is not just Mayuko and NieA, but the juxtaposition of slow-paced rural Japanese society

(drawn and animated realistically) and the clownishly bizarre alien society (grotesquely drawn and animated, allowing the Triangle Staff studio to use lots of limited animation). Two very different soap operas, deliberately clashing in every respect, intermixed during "a Summer at the Enohana Bathhouse."

Hand Maid May. V.1, Maid to Order. V.2, Product Recall. V.3, Memory Failure.

TV series (10 episodes), 2000 + 1 video episode. Director: Shinichiro Kimura. V.1 & V.3, 4 episodes/100 minutes; V.2, 3 episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: VHS English language \$24.98; DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

The rather avant-garde NieA_7 was followed by a return to the anime "safe formula" for adolescent humor of the '90s: a relentlessly cheerful fantasy with an attractive cartoon art style and chipper bubblegum pop songs, about a handsome but introverted teen boy who is suddenly smothered in cute not-quite-human girls.

Kazuya Saotome is a college student majoring in computer technology and robotics. His rival is Kotaro Nanbara, a comedy-relief rich-kid rotter who is jealous of Kazuya's academic success. Kotaro slips Kazuya a disk containing a super-virus intended to wipe out his class project. Instead the virus connects Kazuya's computer to a Cyberdyne computer superstore, and he accidentally orders a "hand maid," a Barbie-doll sized and lookalike (but bustier) robotic housemaid. May is slightly damaged during delivery, and Kazuya's tinkering to restart her without instructions results in her develop-

ing an independent personality. Kazuya is happy to turn his apartment housework over to May, who evolves from mothering him to developing romantic feelings after watching a TV soap opera (rather, a hilariously over-the-top parody of one). Nanbara wants to steal May so he can claim credit for inventing her. But Cyberdyne's bill for May is \$1,450,000, and when Kazuya cannot pay, Cyberdyne starts sending collection agents — all human-sized attractive robot girls — to repossess her. (It is obvious to the audience far sooner than to the characters that Cyberdyne is in the future and that Nanbara's virus somehow makes time travel possible.) Kazuya's modifications to May's programming prevent this, so all the girls move into his apartment building to keep May and he under embarrassingly close scrutiny. Halfway through the series May gains a full-sized human body, which gives her the hope that her romantic

passion for Kazuya may be realized. This doubles the level of the romance-comic-book comedic misunderstandings and double-entendres.

There is some mild human-rights moralizing about intelligence and memory being more important in establishing humanity than whether a person is flesh or circuitry. There are some mild crises every couple of episodes to keep the one-dimensional plot from completely stagnating. There is also some mildly sexist humor; May's breasts are almost as bouncy as her personality, and as a 1/6 scale doll she has a computer cord that plugs into an unmentionable part of her anatomy. One of the attractive human-sized cyberdolls has an I.Q. of 50,000, so she should make an ideal office secretary. But *Hand Maid May* is so happy and upbeat (even Nanbara is reformed by May's radiant wholesomeness) that it is hard to take offense. This TV production

by the TNK studio was numbered episode 1/10, 2/10, and so on, but an extra episode 11/10 was added as a sales hook for the video release.

Boogiepop Phantom. Evolution 01 - 04.

TV series (12 episodes), 2000. Director: Takashi Watanabe. V.1 – V.4, 3 episodes/85 minutes. Price & format: VHS English language \$19.98; DVD bilingual \$29.95. Distributor: The Right Stuf International.

Another adolescent TV series, but far removed from humor, is *Boogiepop Phantom*. This 12 episode surrealistic horror mystery, “produced by Project Boogiepop” through the Madhouse studio, was so grim, gory and intellectually challenging that it ran, on TV Tokyo from January 6 through March 23, 2000, in a 1:45 am slot.

A blinding shaft of light shoots into the sky from a large city one night, and an electrical power surge blacks out the city. A month later, numerous students at local high schools and colleges have disappeared. Others are showing personality changes. A joking urban legend attributes this to “Boogiepop,” a modernization of the personification of Death as the Grim Reaper.

The first few episodes each seem to focus upon a different adolescent, all with markedly low self-esteem. “That was when I still hated myself,” says Moto in episode #1. She had a crush on one of the boys who disappeared, but she never dared tell him because of her aversion to physical contact. She constantly washes her hands. Jonouchi in #2 considers himself a “sin-eater,” who can see guilt and suffering in others



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© Kouhei Kadono/Mediaworks. Project Boogiepop. English version produced by Right Stuf International.

and considers it his duty to “remove their pain.” But as the series progresses, there are increasing references to things beginning five years earlier, long before the flash of light, when a never-caught serial killer terrorized the city. Brief, inconsequential scenes in one episode become the focus of later episodes. Eventually some complete scenes are repeated, unchanged but with whole new meanings based upon revelations in the intervening episodes. By #5 it is evident that the episodes are not nearly as self-contained as it originally seemed.

Each episode is presented through a mosaic of vignettes; scenes so distinct that they are individually numbered and dated, jumping about chronologically: “The present,” “Five years ago,” “The present,” “Seven years ago.” Boogiepop is glimpsed, so briefly at first that he/she(?) may be a protagonist’s hallucination. “It” eventually seems to be real, and is not alone; a similar creature, Manticore, may be the actual cause of the disappearances and

deaths. Are Boogiepop and Manticore causing madness, or are they drawn to those who are already seriously disturbed? Are they supernatural monsters? Dimensional aliens? Or is the whole scenario someone’s twisted imagination?

This atmospheric urban horror thriller (based upon the continuing Boogiepop series of young adult sci-fi novels by Kouhei Kadono; at least eleven since February 1998) is skillfully directed to be bleak and depressing at all times. Colors are muted, with shades of brown and rusty reds predominating. There are many overhead shots, making the characters look small and vulnerable. Almost everything is seen through the eyes of that episode’s protagonist; the viewer must guess at what is real and what may be a hallucination. Although everything comes to lock together, each episode focuses upon a different character and showcases a different neurosis or physical disease: a brother who sadistically beats his younger sister; an obsessive com-

puter nerd who can only relate to girls who look like the exaggerated fantasy females on the Internet; a brain-damaged amnesiac with no memory. *Boogiepop Phantom* may not be “enjoyable” but it is intellectually demanding and artistically impressive.

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

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

The Art of **Monsters, Inc.**



reviewed by Jerry Beck

It's joyous to see a variety of professional cartoonists letting loose with a free reign...

What a treat!

Pixar's *Monsters, Inc.* was, as far as I'm concerned, the best animated feature released this year. This art book, published by Chronicle (not Disney — how odd?), is the only "making of" tie-in created for the film and a delightful visual companion to the movie.

This book is a wonderful collection of preliminary inspirational artwork created for the film. Most of the pieces selected con-

tain characters and concepts that bare no relation to the monsters and mayhem in the final product. But by allowing us to see all the hard (but funny) creative work that goes into the visual decision making, the filmmakers shed some light on the secrets of creating classic animation; they add to our knowledge of the development process and garner our respect for the enormous talent at large within Pixar.

Inspirational art is a vital component of every great animat-

ed film — but average moviegoers never get to see any of it. As John Lasseter and Pete Docter point out in their intro, "Once the film is completed, the inspirational artwork is filed away in the archives, never to be seen by the general public."

What makes this book so enjoyable is the array of talent Pixar assembled for inspiration. The paintings, sketches and layouts, done in pastels, markers, acrylics, gouache, pencils and mixed media presented here, are just plain fun to look at. Many of the artists were given a few details about the settings or the characters, and were then allowed to let their imaginations run free.

The artists themselves are amazing. Some of my favorite pieces are from Lane Smith, J. Otto Siebold and Oscar Grillo. Stealing the show however, are striking works from Geefwee Boedoe, Ricky Nierva, Lou Romano and Dominique Louis.

Though famed for their landmark work with computer graphics, this book reminds me that Pixar is first and foremost a "cartoon studio" — the finest in the world, at this point in the 21st Century. Dominique Louis' painting of Sulley's apartment exterior, showing a street filled with sinister looking brownstones, or Harley Jessup's grand concepts for the Monsters Inc. factory, are filled with tiny details that can't be written. The inherent humor of these design defy a literal, verbal description — and the wit in the color and line cannot be produced in a word processing program. (Yes, even color has wit — as amply demonstrated in Tia Kratter's color studies of Sullivan's fur and Dominique Louis' color script thumbnails.)

It's joyous to see a variety of professional cartoonists letting loose with a free reign to create creatures that defy logic and all sense of human comprehension.

The secret of Pixar's success (only one of their secrets, I might add) is that they aren't out to use the computer to recreate reality. They know the computer can already do that. They are trying to make authentic, honest-to-goodness, animated cartoons that tell great stories and touch the heart.

Walt Disney accomplished that goal in the 20th Century. Lasseter and his crew are the heir apparent. They understand what

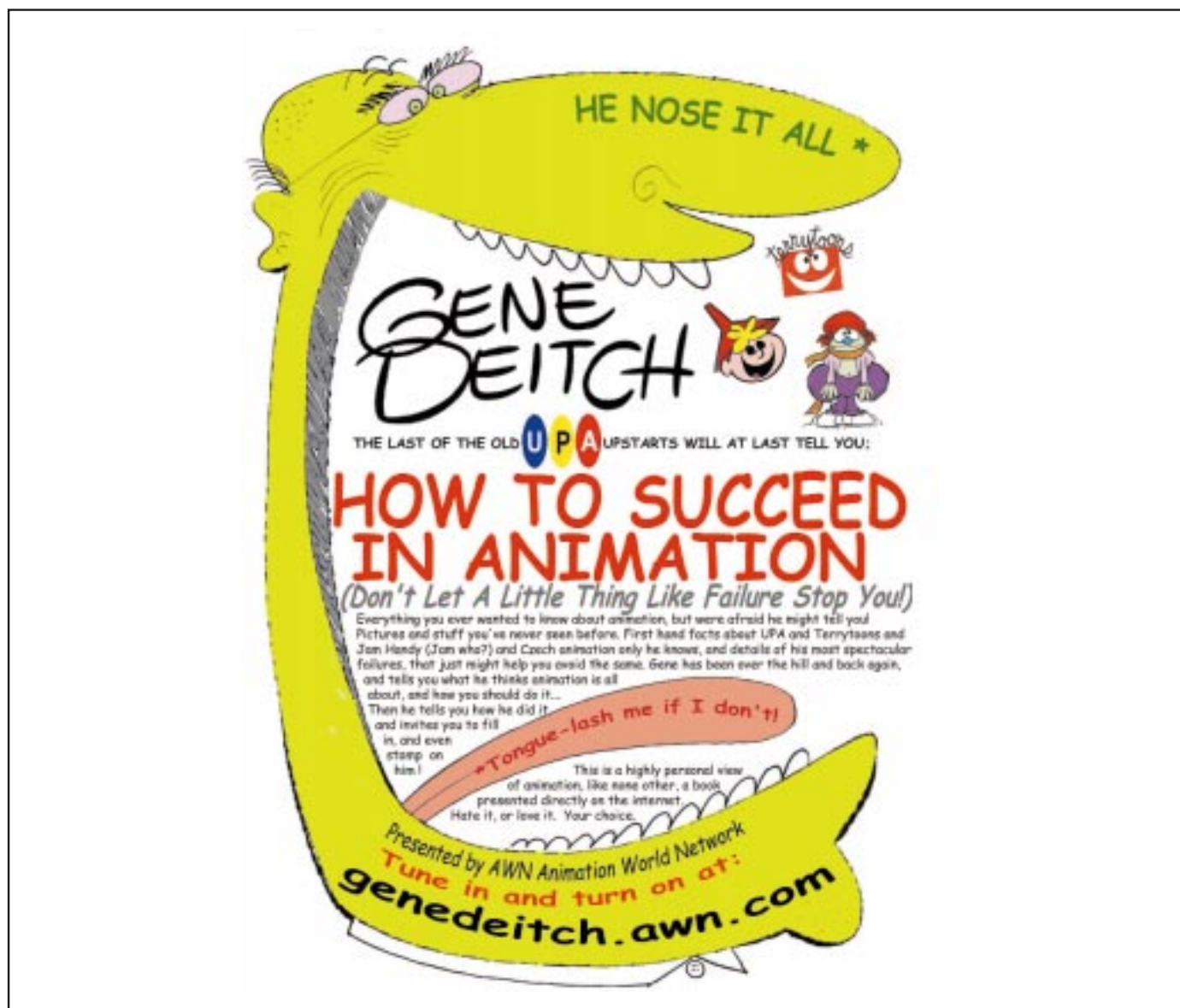
makes great, appealing characters and what it takes to bring them to life. This book gives us an over the shoulder peek, with some spectacular artwork that deserves to be seen, admired and kept.

The Art of Monsters, Inc. Introduction by John Lasseter and Pete Docter. San Francisco, California: Chronicle Books LLC, 2001. 144 pages. ISBN: 0-8118-3388-7 (US\$40.00)

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.

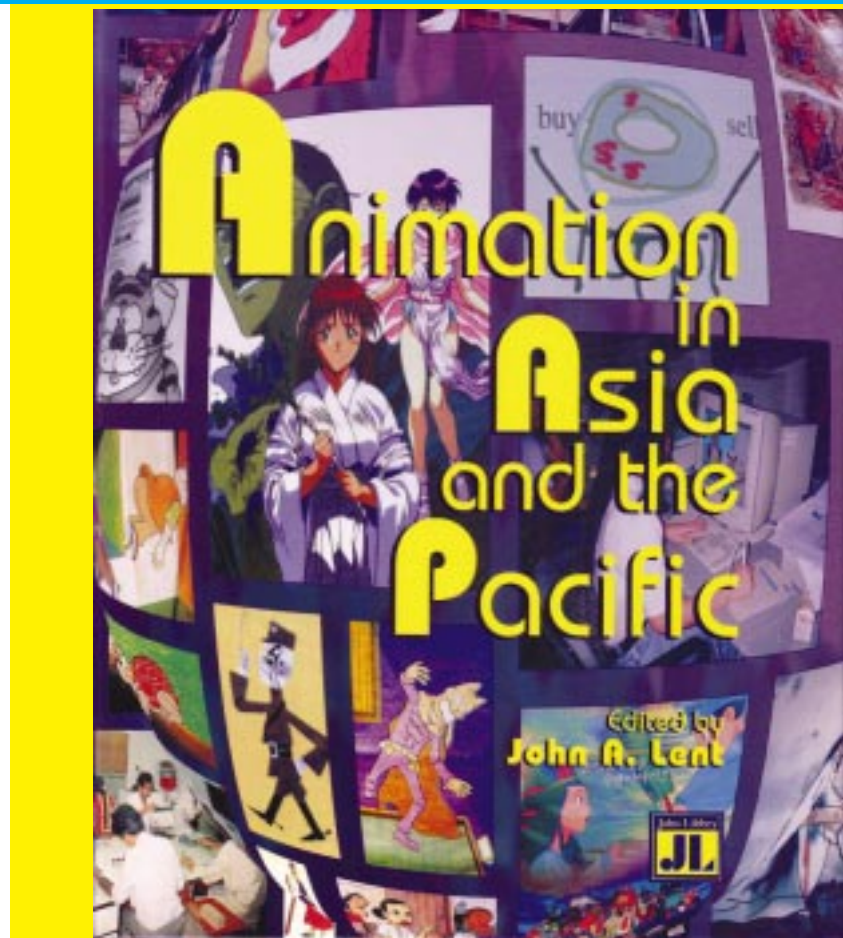
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Animation In Asia And The Pacific

As editor John A. Lent notes in his introduction to this important book, the amount of literature on Asian animation is extremely limited, focusing primarily on Japan. Following the global overview in Giannalberto Bendazzi's *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (also published by John Libbey), this is a laudable and mostly successful attempt to redress the balance. Any animation fan that loves to learn about the medium's different forms and applications round the world will find much to enjoy.

The book looks at animation from a total of fifteen countries, though Lent makes clear at the outset that the coverage is anything but even. For example, the very small animation 'industries' in Thailand and Vietnam get seven and five pages of coverage respectively, while the far more extensive field of Chinese animation gets twenty-six. Nonetheless, common themes and concerns soon crop up; for example, the way both Korean and Thai animators resorted to cannibalising military surplus equipment to make their films. More generally, animators across the region face the same artistic and pragmatic questions. Should they make crowd-pleasers or personal visions? Should their animation explore its home culture, or



book review by Alan Neal

should it be made with an eye to the world market? Or, indeed, should the animators simply subcontract to transnational giants? These options may not be mutually exclusive, but trying to balance them in a workable manner is an endless conundrum (and of course the local governments have their own ideas).

Life Applications

The book is often best when exploring how animation meets real life. David Ehrlich's chapter on Chinese animation includes riveting accounts of the experiences of animators during the Cultural Revolution, where Marxist thought police denounced animated films for "numbing the consciousness of the public" and

sentenced their creators to carry manure and dig septic canals, forbidden even to sketch. Malaysian cartoonist and animator Lat recalls how he struggled to create a culturally authentic animated series, *Kampung Boy*, often to the bewilderment of his LA-based animators, who wondered why a Muslim husband and wife couldn't kiss on TV or why the boy hero couldn't say, "Cool."

The last two chapters are especially strong in relating animation to the real world, and not just because one is written by AWN's editor in chief. Heather Kenyon's "Animation for Development in South Asia" shows how animation can play a real part against the worst real-life problems, with a fascinating profile of the South Asian cartoon girl, Meena, one of the most subtle and effective campaigners for women's rights in the area. And not just women's rights. It brings the reader up short to read of a cartoon warning against strangers who kidnap children, and to realise this is not fantasy but relates to India's very real criminal trade in body parts. Lent's chapter "Overseas Animation Production in Asia" considers what life is truly like for animators who do sub-contract work for overseas companies; the workers constantly subject to seasonal shifts in production and non-existent job security. While it would have been nice to have more direct quotes from the people who do the drudgework, this chapter lays important foundations, drawing few conclusions but giving plenty of well-sifted data for other researchers to build on.

Anime, Anime, Anime

In contrast, the material on Japanese animation, amounting to fifty pages of the book, is disap-

pointing. Anime fans will find many of the points made by familiar commentators Antonia Levi, Fred Patten and Helen McCarthy a little... well, familiar, in contrast to the exploratory spirit of most of the book. Even on its own terms, this section is sometimes unsatisfactory. Levi writes about 'the everyday hero' in anime, but her arguments that this is something distinctive to Japan, with few counterparts in Western media, are very dubious. McCarthy's chapter, mainly on anime's reception in Britain, is a very uneasy mix of fan and company history, the writer herself conceding the former has no impact on the latter. Anime is a vast industry, and it would have been more interesting to see forays into less-explored areas; for example, a look at the industrial practices and relations of some of the bigger anime studios, or a profile of the oft-neglected independent ('festival') Japanese animators outside the mainstream franchises.

The material on anime in chapters on other countries (plus the editor's vignette about anime in Asia and Latin America) is more interesting. While many Western anime fans see the medium as an underdog, unfairly marginalised by the imperialist, homogenising forces of Disney and other Hollywood animation, many Asian countries see anime in precisely the same threatening terms. Hence the authorities in South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines struggle to keep out Japanese animation and comics, even while anime shows are pirated as supposedly 'local' animation. The chapter on South Korea (co-written by the editor and Kie-Un Yu) claims 90 percent of animation on Korean TV is Japanese, obscuring the efforts of Shin Dong Hun (who

directed the first local feature back in 1967) and his successor Park Jaedong, who attempted to 'Koreanise' animation in his feature *Odoltogi*.

Fascinating Corners

Meanwhile, Thai master animator Payut Ngaokrachang, whose fifty-year career takes in some wonderful-sounding films, rails against "rough, violent" Japanese animation. And yet anime's influence is inescapable. The aforementioned Korean Shin Dung Hong is a devotee of Osamu Tezuka; the Indian religious epic *Ramayana* was animated in Japan and incorporates the 'manga style;' and Malaysian children's show *Sang Wira* is heavily influenced by Japan's iconic *Doraemon*. The relationship between Japanese and other Asian animation, tempestuous though it may be, looks set to continue for a long time.

Of the other chapters, Gigi T. Y. Hu's section on Hong Kong is one of the best, making the reader long to see the animation described, from the delicate puppet feature film *Princess Hibiscus* (1957), through the *Old Master Cute* feature trilogy of the '80s (featuring an animated Bruce Lee), to the first local TV series *McMug*, a family show featuring a benign support character called 'Excreman.' Ehrlich's vignette on the making of the US-Mongolian short *Genghis Khan* is well worth reading, as is Keith Bradbury's sound account of animation in Australia and New Zealand, where a particularly convoluted debate about art, commerce and their possible reconciliation was exacerbated when film radicals such as Albie Thorns entered the fray.

True, some of the book

feels dry in places, presenting facts and figures important for researchers, but less compelling for the casual reader unfamiliar with the films and creators being namechecked. There are occasional confusions and contradictions. For example, on page 23, David Ehrlich writes that Zhong Quan's and Wang Gang's 1990 film *Flight of the Wild Geese* was "unique for Chinese animation" in having a tragic ending. Yet a few pages earlier, on page 19, he writes that A Da's *Butterfly Spring* (1983) had a "tragic ending, a first for an animated film in China." There are other irritations in Lent's piece on

Taiwan animator James Wang, where the interesting history is hampered by a back-and-forth account, making it unclear what happened when. The most infuriating chapter is Rolando B. Tolenito's overview of Philippine animation, full of barely readable academic-speak obscuring the fascinating account of a medium playing dual roles of propaganda and subversion, and where some of the most irreverent artists were trained at a school sponsored by Imelda Marcos.

Overall though, *Animation in Asia and the Pacific* is a significant, hopefully pioneering piece of

animation scholarship, a healthy reminder that, contra Walt Disney, it's a very large world after all.

Animation in Asia and the Pacific, edited by John A. Lent. Eastleigh, UK: John Libbey Publishing, 2001. 270 pages. ISBN: 1-86462-036-6 (hardback)

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ANIMATION WORLD

• 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:

ASIFA-Hollywood Annie Award Photo Gallery

Heather Kenyon and Leigh Godfrey report on ASIFA-Hollywood's 29th Annual Annie Awards.

A great night for Los Angeles' animation community, the event was a class act — and fun too! Includes a photo gallery on-line. Visit:

http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?type=search&sval=Annie&article_no=1029

Gene Deitch's Definition of Luck

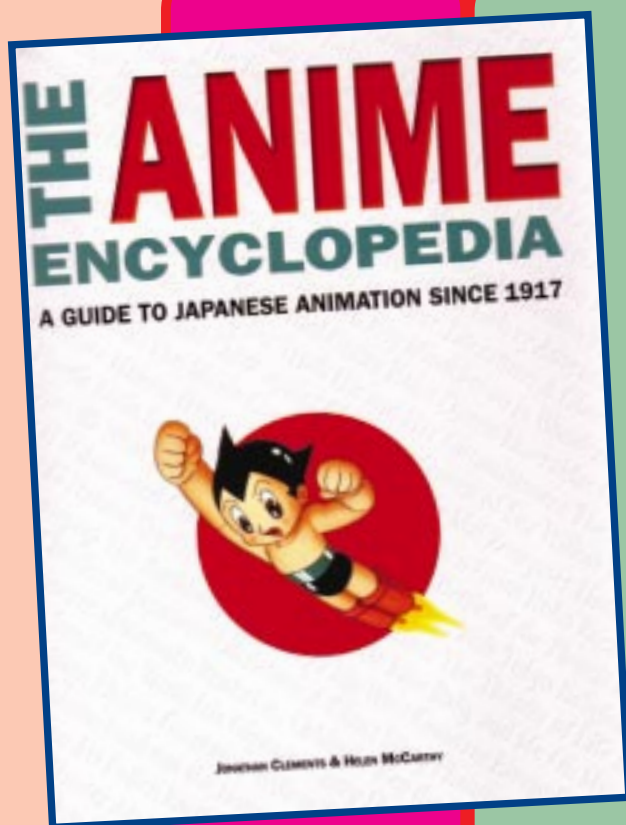
You need a lot of luck to make it in the movie business, but how do you get lucky? Is success really just a matter of luck — chance? Or can you lure luck your way? Gene Deitch gives us a few tips on tempting lady luck. You can read this chapter and more in Gene's book *How To Succeed In Animation (Don't Let A Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)*, published exclusively on AWN at <http://genedeitch.awn.com>.

Lille, France: Hotbed of the North

In the unsuspecting town of Lille, lies some of the most cutting-edge Web animation companies in the world...and what's more...they are all working together to create an environment of exploration and innovation. Tony Coates and Franck Levis explain. Visit this article online at http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?type=pageone&article_no=1096 to see QuickTime clips of some of Lille's Flash animation.

The Anime Encyclopedia:

A Guide To Japanese Animation Since 1917



book review by Alan Neal

Sazae-San (which, the writers note, “makes a mockey of *The Simpsons*’ claim to be the longest-running TV show in the world”), one-off TV specials like the baseball-themed *Hit And Run*, video releases from *Hello Kitty to Overfiend*, and movies from *Akira* to *Hakujaden* (listed here under its U.S. title *Panda and the Magic Serpent*). In short, it’s all here, or at least a sufficiently large chunk of the medium to keep any human busy for years.

The format of each entry is practical and consistent, given the space limits in such a work. The major creator credits are given (lead animators, music, directors, writers and designers), as well as company names, running times and — if applicable — number of episodes. Perhaps inevitably, the names of lead voice-actors are omitted; given the number of large character ensembles, they would have consumed much of the book. Rather than include extensive details of video availability, the book marks titles with asterisks to indicate a legal English-language release. This does not always mean a U.S. video exists, but in practice it usually does. The main text often contains information on this front, especially when there are multiple remakes of the same title (see below). When a franchise exists in several distinct

The *Anime Encyclopedia* can be seen as the third part of a trilogy begun with 1996’s *Anime Movie Guide*, written by Helen McCarthy, and continued with 1998’s *Erotic Anime Movie Guide* (a wider-ranging book than the title suggests), co-written by McCarthy and Jonathan Clements. The earlier volumes were published by the London company Titan; the *Encyclopedia* is published by Berkeley’s Stone Bridge Press, also responsible for Frederik L. Schodt’s excellent books on

manga and McCarthy’s guide to Hayao Miyazaki. The first two books offered increasingly in-depth overviews and analyses of anime, but the *Encyclopedia* goes several steps further. Far bigger than its predecessors, and exponentially more ambitious, its 500-odd close-typed pages, cover over two thousand anime titles ranging across every format and genre imaginable. Theatrical shorts like festival favorite *Glassy Ocean* and Miyazaki’s *On Your Mark* rub shoulders with endless TV series

series or formats (for example, in the many cases where a TV show spawned video and/or cinema spinoffs), the writers strive to present as much information as possible through notation. Thus “30 mins x 50 eps (TV1), 10 mins x 26 eps (TV2)” means an anime spans two TV series, one comprising fifty half-hour episodes and the other twenty-six ten minute episodes. The same notation uses (m) for movie and (v) for video. As one might imagine, this means entries for sprawling anime such as *Gundam* or *Tenchi Muyo!* resemble arcane algebraic formulae, but it works well once you're used to it. Each anime is listed under what the writers judge to be the “western title most recognisable” to readers. Sometimes it's hard to judge if they're right; how many buyers looked for *Neon Genesis Evangelion* before turning to *Evangelion*? Happily, the forty-page title index includes all variants, presented in a friendly, instantly useable format (unlike the fiddly system in *Anime Movie Guide*).

Quite simply, this is an amazing book, far and away the most extensive anime guide in English, and a reference source to be dipped into again and again. It's especially good for charting a way through the more convoluted anime sagas, which in recent years routinely spawn sequels, prequels, remakes, reworkings and side-stories in every medium available, a degree of fecundity only matched in the most inbred comic book sagas. (And that's not even counting the U.S. versions, with the composite series *Robotech* getting its own lengthy entry, as well as copious notes explaining the treatments of *Voltron* and *Transformers*.) This is

In short, it's all here, or at least a sufficiently large chunk of the medium to keep any human busy for years.

the book for readers wanting to know how the video series *Dirty Pair Flash* relates to the original (it's a next-generation sequel) or whether the continuity in the *Lodoss War/Crystania* saga makes sense (it doesn't). The main text is lively and entertaining, with endless interesting asides: learn how *Evangelion* copied its uniforms from Gerry Anderson's live-action *UFO*, or how the judo-girl epic *Yawara!* inspired a real Japanese judo champion to wear the anime character's ribbon. Many entries are unashamedly opinionated, and may alienate thin-skinned fans whose favourite title is knocked. The alternative, though, would have been a far blander book; arguing with such guides is half the fun. For the record, the writers criticise the recycling tendencies in *Ranma* and later *Tenchi Muyo!*; they also dare suggest *Evangelion* “teased viewers with the illusion of hidden depths that weren't necessarily there” and note some critics found *Mononoke* a “tedious harangue.” The writers' favourite titles include *Gunbuster*, *Perfect Blue*, *Escaflowne* and *My Neighbour Totoro*.

Understandably, any work of this kind involves compromises and balancing acts, and different fans will have different complaints.

The worst fault is the lack of any kind of general survey or overview of the medium. Would it have been so hard to have ten or twenty pages at the start, sign-posting significant anime titles and industry trends? Some anime fans already know about *Hajukaden*, *Candy Candy*, *Tomorrow's Joe* and *Doraemon*, but for those who don't and want this book to tell them, it can be infuriating searching thousands of entries. As one reads more of the book, the trends and tendencies emerge; for example, the late '90s fad to remake old anime for TV. But it would have been better if these had been itemised at the outset, or made into capsule entries of their own. There are generic sections on Early Anime, Wartime Anime (together covering the period up to 1945) and the World Masterpiece Theatre, but what about broad entries on *shojo* and *shonen*, sports anime or robot shows — or, for that matter, individual entries on Tezuka, Oshii or Miyazaki? The answer, of course, is that such entries could overrun the book, returning us to the issue of balancing acts.

Conversely, veteran fans may chafe at the proportion of space given some anime over others. This is a book where *Junk Boy* gets more type-space than Tezuka's *Legend of the Forest*, and *MD Geist* gets more space than *Heidi* or *Arion*. To take a more ambiguous value-judgement, this is a book where the pernicious but undeniably important *Cream Lemon* is discussed in more detail than nationally-beloved Japanese icon *Doraemon*. This raises several issues, hard to untangle. Many buyers, of course, will be primarily interested in anime they've either seen or can easily see. Also, com-

fact titles are easier to research and evaluate fairly than TV series that (in the cases of *Heidi* or *Doraemon*) would take dozens of hours to view in full, let alone critique. Still, it means many of the longest entries in the book are of positively rotten or worthless titles. After taking a full column, for example, to summarise the two video episodes of *MD Geist*, the writers note that it's "cheap and nasty, featuring some of the world's most half-hearted dialogue and plotting" (snip another half-column's worth of demolition). Which is a valuable service to anyone thinking of buying *MD Geist*, but it may disappoint long-in-the-tooth fans who wanted more detail on, say, *Door into Summer* (one of the few mass-marketed gay anime) or the anime *Tom Sawyer*. As the writers

note at one point, even listing anime by title skews the book, because ten niche exploitation videos will count for more than a hugely popular TV show that ran hundreds of episodes and lasted a decade. Is that bad? Once again, the answer lies with the reader.

One last note: as anyone skimming the book in a store will see, this is not a picture-heavy work. The jacket boasts more than a hundred illustrations, usefully indexed at the front, but they're tiny and monochrome, randomly scattered through the book with appropriate cross-references. (The most striking is the last image, taken from wartime anime *Black Cat Banzai*; it shows an evil and decidedly unauthorised Mickey Mouse.) This is a book to be bought for the information it car-

ries. On that basis, for all the above drawbacks, it's a classic taking anime scholarship proudly into the new millennium. Now, where's the expanded CD-ROM?

The Anime Encyclopedia: A Guide to Japanese Animation Since 1917 by Jonathan Clements and Helen McCarthy. Berkeley, California: Stone Bridge Press, 2001. 545 pages. ISBN: 1-880656-64-7 (softback).

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Everything About Animation



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CGI Reference Books Reviewed

by John Edgar Park

Have you ever stopped to consider the amount of arcane CGI related knowledge you've stuffed into your head? I was talking with some friends the other day about a few technical details concerning Ultra160 SCSI drives, render optimizations and 8-bit bump maps when something dawned on me: we speak a bizarre second language that our own mothers couldn't comprehend if their lives depended on it.

What if they wanted to learn a few phrases in anticipation of a short visit to CGI land? Berlitz, sadly, offers no relevant courses.

Two new books for computer graphics professionals could be the answer: *Visual Effects in a Digital World* by Karen E. Goulekas and *The Computer Animator's Technical Handbook* by Lynn Pocock and Judson Rosebush. Not intended to be read from beginning-to-end like a manual or instructional guide, these are instead reference books that can be pulled off the shelf to answer a technical question, illuminate a process that has evaded your comprehension, or settle debates between colleagues. Even with many years of CG development under your belt, you may be sur-

The Computer Animator's Technical Handbook



Visual Effects in a Digital World

A comprehensive glossary of over 7,000 visual effects terms

Karen E. Goulekas

prised to open one of these books to a random section and find yourself learning something new, or dispelling a false assumption.

Visual Effects in a Digital World is a comprehensive dictionary of over 7,000 VFX terms, acronyms and industry jargon. By representing terms and techniques that originate in both practical effects (such as camera lens phenomena) and digital effects, this book provides accurate definitions of the terms that are melding into the modern CGI language.

The amount of research that went into compiling this dictionary is staggering to consider. The editors should be commended for the completeness and accuracy of this work. I recommend *Visual Effects in a Digital World* to CG animators of all levels. The range of helpful information presented is tremendous, and it's nice to have it all at your fingertips.

The Computer Animator's Technical Handbook makes a good companion piece to *Visual Effects in a Digital World*. This software-independent work explains CG concepts ranging from basic to advanced. If you work in video, film, multimedia or broadcast animation, you will find in-depth examinations of the many technical issues that one faces daily. The book is broken up into chapters on topics like Anatomy of Time, The Electronics of Video, and Motion Pathways, Keyframe Animation, and Easing. Especially helpful were explanations of timecode, interlacing, pixel aspect ratios and compression. There are many clearly illustrated examples of such concepts as function curve editing, kinematics, hierarchies and constraints.

One interesting thing I noticed while reading this book

was that there are a number of technical issues I have learned incorrectly over the years. I was glad to have this book for clarification and education on things like converting between video formats, intermittent 3:2 pulldowns and film processing techniques and optical effects. As our work intermingles with film, video, multimedia, game and broadcast paradigms there are a tremendous number of details to keep track of.

**We speak a
bizarre second
language that
our own
mothers
couldn't
comprehend if
their lives
depended on it.**

While most chapters range from beginner to intermediate-level understanding, some areas are unnecessarily esoteric. Occasionally, there is a sense that the book is padded with arcane information to fill pages. For example, one chapter contains a series of mathematical curve functions (Chanchoid of Nicomedes?) presented without any real information on how to implement such formulae into your own work. This is the exception, rather than the rule, however. In general, the breadth of useful information is remarkable.

Visual Effects in a Digital World goes for \$44.95 and *The Computer Animator's Technical*

Handbook is \$69.95. Sure, much of the information in these books may be available by firing up a Google search and sifting through the results. But that's a lot of filtering — go ahead and look up "parametric singularity" online. Took a long time to find out that that's another name for "gimbal lock" didn't it! The speed with which you can access this pre-filtered and well-edited material makes both of these books worth the price.

And a quick browse could save dear, old Mom from committing an embarrassing *faux pas* in front of us natives.

Visual Effects in a Digital World by Karen E. Goulekas. San Diego, California: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, an imprint of Academic Press, 2001. 600 pages. ISBN: 0-12-293785-6 (US\$44.95/Can\$62.95)

The Computer Animator's Technical Handbook by Lynn Pocock and Judson Rosebush. San Francisco, California: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, an imprint of Academic Press, 2002. 464 pages. ISBN: 0-12-558821-6 (US\$69.95)

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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Shrek Wins Big At 2001 Annie Awards

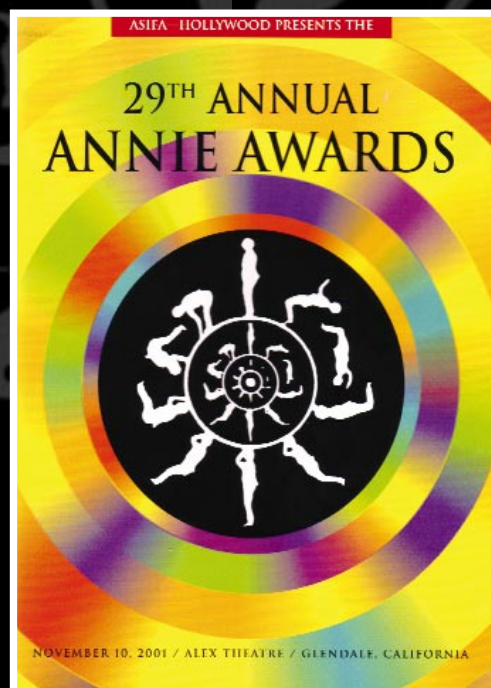
by Heather Kenyon and Leigh Godfrey

On November 10, 2001 at a gala ceremony hosted by voice actor Billy West, ASIFA-Hollywood's 29th Annual Annie Awards were presented. The big winner was *Shrek*, which took home eight Annie's including outstanding theatrical feature and outstanding directing for an animated feature. *The Emperor's New Groove* nabbed three awards, for female performer in an animated feature (Eartha Kitt as Yzma), best song and outstanding individual character animation. In television, once again *The Simpsons* took home the award for outstanding primetime show. Matt Groening's other creation, *Futurama*, took home awards for outstanding male performer in an animated television production and outstanding writing. Independent animation studio Wild Brain received awards for animated short subject and outstanding animated production for the Internet. Congratulations to everyone!

The presenters kept the show moving at a fast and humorous clip. While last year's pre- and post-parties were dampened by an usually cold snap for California, this year the weather cooperated nicely and Glendale's Alex Theater was packed with a veritable who's who in the Los Angeles animation community. While 2001 has been a tough year for the industry, the atmosphere was surprisingly upbeat with plenty of networking being done in



The Alex Theater's crowded courtyard.
All photos courtesy of ASIFA-Hollywood unless otherwise noted.



the courtyard. As usual, ASIFA-Hollywood presented a well-organized show, with plenty of time before and after to see old friends, make new ones and talk over a glass of champagne. The event presented a very nice opportunity for our community to gather and celebrate itself when it most needs it.

Our coverage of the 2001 Annie Awards continues online with seven pages of photos at: http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?type=pageone&article_no=1029

And please visit AWN's Headline News at http://news.awn.com/index.php3?newsitem_no=5974 for a complete list of winners.

Heather Kenyon is editor in chief and Leigh Godfrey is content manager for Animation World Network.

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



Shrek co-directors Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, winners for Outstanding Individual Achievement For Directing In An Animated Feature Production.



Shrek is taking home so many awards that soon Andrew and Vicky won't need to share.