ANIMATION WORLD

Vol. 7 No. 01 • MAGAZINE • April 2002

# New Markets and Approaches

Gorillaz
DVDs
Virtual Studios
U.S. Independents
and More...

**Plus:**
Disney's Home Town

# Table of Contents

APRIL 2002 VOL. 7 NO. 1

APRIL 2002

## NINE AND A HALF QUESTIONS...

4 **Animated Banter With Paul Dini**
*Will Ryan spars with Batman star Paul Dini on his favorite characters, hangouts and the effects of Green Lantern's incantation.*

## BUSINESS OF ANIMATION

6 **Here We Go! Gorillaz Takes Music By Storm**
*Paul Feldman goes behind the animated personas of the band Gorillaz to discover the creative team that put such a dynamic group together and the record label brave enough to take it on.*

10 **Crossing Over Into Gaming**
*So, you've been reading the articles about how much work there is in gaming, but you don't know if your skills will cross over? Sylvia Edwards gives us an overview of the gaming production process and where its similarities and differences lie from more traditional animation fields.*

16 **Re:vitalizing Animation Through Virtual Studios**
*In building a more personal, varied animation future, Greg Singer offers perspective for collaborating online.*

25 **Japan: A View From Inside Production I.G.**
*Justin Leach left the U.S. to experience animation production in Japan first hand. Taking a position at one of Japan's hottest studios he compares and contrasts two similar but very different worlds.*

29 **Mitsuhisa Ishikawa: On Vampires and Other Weirdos**
*Will Ryan talks with Mitsuhisa Ishikawa, founder and President of Tokyo's Production I.G.*

32 **A New Age for American Independents?**
*It seems as if the grasp that vertical integration had on the U.S. is beginning to ease...does this mean brighter days for America's independent studios? Mike Young Productions, Curious Pictures and Film Roman respond.*

## ADDITIONAL FEATURES

35 **Make Mine Marceline**
*Robin Allan paints a vivid picture of Marceline, Missouri, Walt Disney's home town. Walt truly harkened back to his days in this rural American town, which continues to strengthen its bonds with this honored native son.*

40 **Copy? Right!**
*As the U.S. Copyright Term Extension Act approaches the Supreme Court, Dr. Toon discusses how it will impact toondom. Is corporate America protecting itself or robbing the public?*

44 **The Animation Pimp: In Search of STUFF Part 2: Yummy and Yucky**
*The Pimp continues his analysis of art with a look at "taste." How do we assign judgement and why?*

© AWN, Inc. 2002. All rights reserved. No part of the periodical may be reproduced without the consent of Animation World Network.

**46 Tom & Jerry: Produced in Prague**
*Not all Tom & Jerry cartoons were produced in Hollywood, U.S.A. Gene Deitch tells how a full dozen were made in Prague, Czechoslovakia.*

**48 Notes from the Underground Part 2 -- Highjacking Animation (And Taking It Back!)**
*Jean Detheux returns to look at the path animation has strayed onto — a linear, non-experimental path — and discusses why and how we should try to bring it back onto the road leading to Art.*

**STUDENT CORNER**

**52 Sketching on Location: Using Photographs**
*Renowned drawing instructor Glenn Vilppu continues with his twelfth and final "sketching on location" teaching installment. This month we learn how to use photographs as a reference tool that will make your trip last for years.*

**56 The Career Coach: Networking Increases Your Net Worth**
*Networking is one of the best skills to have when it comes to finding and keeping a job. Pamela Kleibrink Thompson explains how.*

**TECHNOLOGY**

**59 After Effects 5.5: Fleshing Out the 3D Environment**
*Is Adobe's After Effects 5.5 upgrade a significant improvement for animators? George Maestri thinks so. Version 5.5 expands on Version 5's introduction of 3D and now contains over 90 different effects.*

**62 ATI Fire GL4: A Solid Contender**
*Continuing with his reviews of the market's leading graphics cards, John Edgar Park takes on the ATI Fire GL4. This BMW of the graphics card world definitely has its high points.*

**EVENTS**

**65 The Games That People Play**
*Greg Singer visited this year's Game Developers Conference and reports on the breadth of events and insights. From testing out the latest games to discussions of Wittgenstein as a means for simulating sophisticated social activity among game characters, there was something for everyone.*

**72 The 2002 British Animation Awards**
*Andrew Osmond reports on the U.K.'s leading animated awards. What won? Who was there? Who wasn't? All this and more...*

**FILM/VIDEO**

**74 New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews**
*Fred Patten reviews the latest anime releases Ah! My Goddess: The Movie, Plastic Little, Princess Nine, Psychic Force and The SoulTaker.*

**79 Fresh from the Festivals: April 2002's Film Reviews**
*Jon Hofferman reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: Boobie Girl by Brooke Keesling, Bill Plympton's Eat, FUV by Marv Newland, (it was . . .) Nothing at All, directed by Candy Kugel and Vincent Cafarelli, and Mona Mon Amour, directed by Michael Sporn.*

**awn.com**

**ANIMATION WORLD NETWORK**
6525 Sunset Blvd., Garden Suite 10
Los Angeles, CA 90028

**Tel.** 323.606.4200 • **Fax** 323.466.6619
**Email** info@awn.com

**PUBLISHERS**
Ron Diamond - President
Dan Sarto - Chief Operating Officer

**EDITORIAL**
Heather Kenyon - Editor-in-Chief
Leigh Godfrey - Content Manager
Gregory Singer - Editorial Assistant
Fred Patten - Editorial Assistant

**CONTRIBUTORS**
Robin Allan
Gene Deitch
Jean Detheux
Sylvia Edwards
Paul Feldman
Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman
Jon Hofferman
Heather Kenyon
Justin Leach
George Maestri
Andrew Osmond
John Edgar Park
Chris Robinson
Will Ryan
Greg Singer
Pamela Kleibrink Thompson
Glenn Vilppu

**OPERATIONS**
Darlene Chan - General Manager

**WEB\DESIGN TEAM**
Mike Dunlop - Webmaster
Alex Binotapa - Webmaster

**ADVERTISING SALES**
**AFM Advertising, Inc.**
6700 Fallbrook Ave., Suite 222
West Hills, CA 91307

**Tel.** 818.999.9356 • **Fax** 818.346.7541

Bill Buck - Bill@Afmla.com
Cheryl Rosenthal - Cheryl@Afmla.com

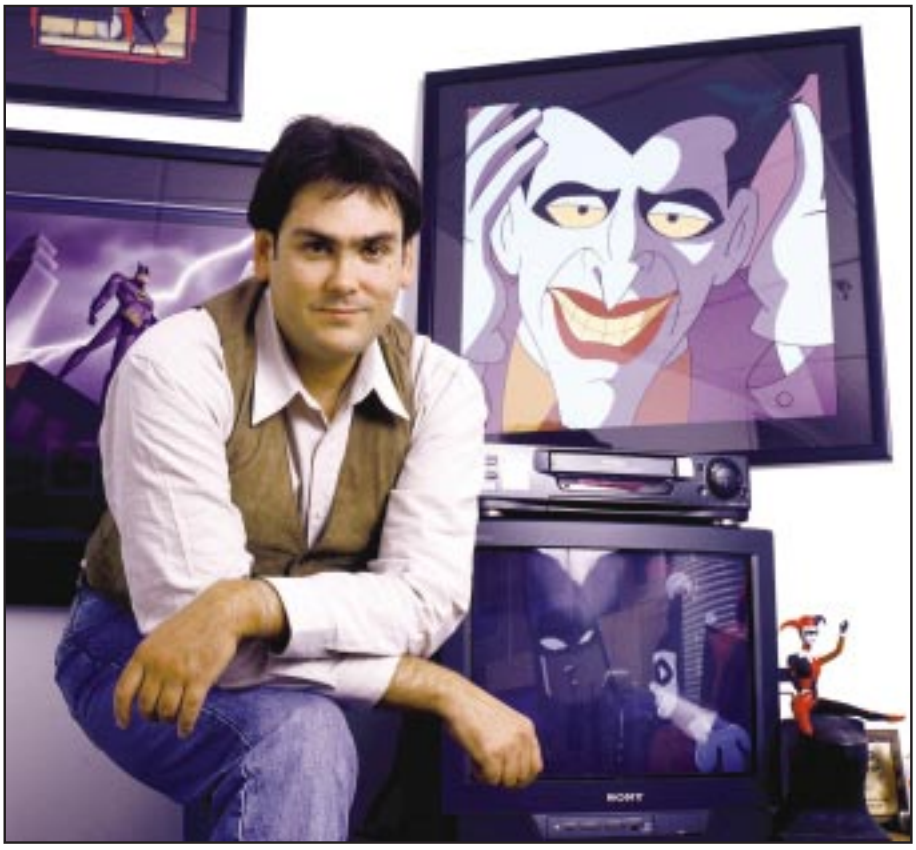
© AWN, Inc. 2002. All rights reserved. No part of the periodical may be reproduced without the consent of Animation World Network.

## Animated Banter With...

# Paul Dini

by Will Ryan

*Paul Dini entered the animation field in the mid-'80s at George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch, where he worked for four years on the Droids and Ewoks TV cartoons among other projects. In 1989 he joined Warner Bros. Television Animation to work on Tiny Toon Adventures, from which he was assigned to help develop a new Batman TV cartoon series. He has risen to fame as the Emmy Award-winning writer/producer of WB's Batman: The Animated Series, The New Batman/Superman Adventures and Batman Beyond, not to mention the Eisner Award-winning writer of key issues of DC Comics' Batman comic books (notably the Mad Love graphic novel), plus authoring some excellent Batman coffee-table animation art books.*



Paul Dini. © Warner Bros. All Rights Reserved

**Will Ryan:** *What is your favorite Fleischer Studios animated series?*

**Paul Dini:** *Betty Boop.*

**WR:** *What is your favorite 'Golden Age' comic book character?*

**PD:** *Captain Marvel.*

**WR:** *What is your favorite 'Silver Age' comic book character?*

**PD:** *Zatana, Zatara's hot daughter. (Watch for the upcoming Vertigo comic book.)*

**WR:** *Favorite Carl Barks' character?*

**PD:** *Unca Scrooge.*

**WR:** *Favorite John Stanley character?*

**PD:** *Little Lulu.*

**WR:** *Do you have a motto?*

**PD:** *"The world is not enough." It worked for James Bond, it'll work for me.*

**WR:** *Favorite poem?*

**PD:** *"How the Grinch Stole Christmas."*

**WR:** *Hey! Anapestic hexameter! Favorite city?*

**PD:** *San Francisco.*

**WR:** *Favorite fictitious city?*

**PD:** *Gotham.*

**WR:** *Do you prefer Lana Lang or Lois Lane?*

**PD:** *Lois.*

**WR:** *Phyllis Coates or Noel Neille?*

**PD:** *Phyllis.*

**WR:** *Betty or Veronica?*

**PD:** *Sabrina over either.*

**WR:** *Jingle Belle or Tinkerbell?*

**PD:** *Jingle Belle. I'm true to my girl.*

**WR:** *Alfred the Butler or Bat-Mite?*

**PD:** *Alfred.*

**WR:** *Curt Swan or Wayne Boring?*

**PD:** *Curt Swan.*

**WR:** *Did you ever meet Bob Kane?*

**PD:** *Yes. At Burbank Warner's Store. A signing.*

**WR:** *Did you ever meet Jerry Seigel or Joe Schuster?*

**PD:** *No.*

**WR:** *Favorite live-action superhero TV series?*

**PD:** *Wonder Woman.*

**WR:** *Favorite country?*

**PD:** *The U.S. of A.*

**WR:** *Favorite planet, not counting Earth?*

**PD:** *I'll have to go with Neptune on that.*

**WR:** *Favorite President of the U.S., historically?*

**PD:** *Ronald Reagan now.*

**WR:** *Favorite L.A. restaurant?*

**PD:** *The Ivy.*

**WR:** *Favorite Vegas hangout?*

**PD:** *"Venus at the Venetian." They built a bar that actually looks like Vegas.*

**WR:** *Can you recite Green Lantern's incantation from memory?*

**PD:** *Yes, and it's got me truckloads of women.*

**WR:** *Fave century in past?*

**PD:** *19th. All the cowboys and Indians.*

**WR:** *Fave century in future?*

**PD:** *32nd.*

**WR:** *Anything to say about the upcoming Duck Dodgers series?*

**PD:** *It'll be a blast!*

*Will Ryan plays ukulele, draws cartoons and asks a lot of questions.*

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

# Here We Go! Gorillaz Takes Music By Storm

by Paul Feldman

The Gorillaz hit the big time (left to right): Murdoc, Noodles, Russel and 2D.
All images © EMI Music.

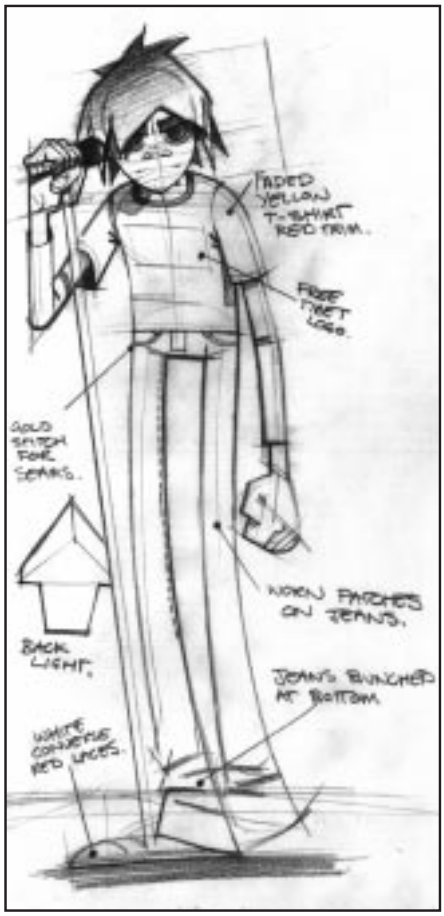
*Gorillaz's appearance on the pop music scene came not a moment too soon. At a time when major record labels continuously turn out bands and albums that seem more the result of market research than creative energies, Gorillaz proves that it is possible to achieve recognition in the mainstream music scene while remaining a truly unique and genuine artistic entity.*

*What sets Gorillaz apart the most from their contemporaries is the fact that not a single member of the band is human, or three dimensional for that matter. All four members of Gorillaz — Murdoc, Russel, 2D and Noodle — are animated characters.*

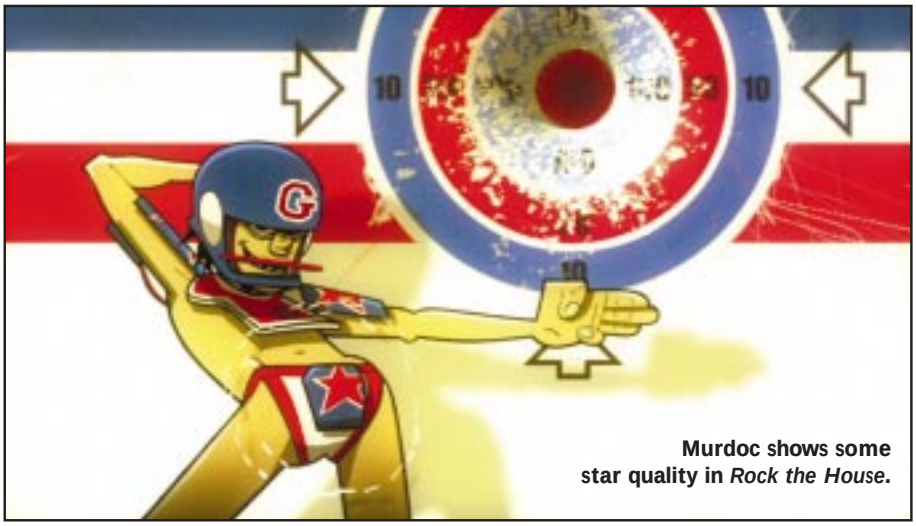
## A Unique Combo

*Gorillaz is the brainchild of Damon Albarn, vocalist for indie veterans Blur, and Jamie Hewlett, known for his authorship of the Tank Girl comic strip. Gorillaz began years ago as a germ of an idea in Hewlett and Albarn's shared flat. The resulting blend of pop, hip-hop and truly visionary character design and animation is a phenomenon whose popularity has outlived its novelty.*

*Hewlett recently took the time to speak with AWN about the various facets of Gorillaz, including*




**The initial drawing of the Gorillaz's lead singer, 2D.**



**Murdoc shows some star quality in *Rock the House*.**

*how he and Albarn went about convincing EMI to sign and promote an entirely animated band. "We obviously prepared everything up front. We were working on it for six months before we went in," explains Hewlett of the original pitch. "They saw it had potential."*

*The band members themselves are humanoid, but not entirely human, much like the characters encountered in the cult animation classic Rock N Rule. "We had the idea and I started drawing the next day," says Hewlett. "Damon was a part of that as well. We're always in each other's studios, [but] we don't stick our noses in each other's business."*

*Hewlett finds inspiration for his characters from many sources. "I really like Chuck Jones, old Mad Magazine artists like Mort Drucker, Ralph Steadman… I'm into lots of different artists. I get inspired by bands, films…seeing someone on the street who's dressed cool can inspire me."*

**Passion's Animation Team**

*Since the band is animated, their every action and word must be written and coordinated before an actual performance. A Gorillaz concert consists of the band's animated show projected on a stage while the musicians are hidden away out of sight. Likewise, any of their other appearances or live interviews are all animated and therefore, quite a bit more work to coordinate than a more conventional group's performance.*

## The band members themselves are humanoid, but not entirely human…

*Passion Pictures is the animation production house behind the band. Based in the fashionable West End of London, Passion is one of the most innovative animation houses in Europe, working on commercials, music videos, credits for feature films, short films and more. Their commercial clients include Sony, Levis and a recent award-winning ad for Aero chocolate bars which features a CGI hula-hooping mouse. Another recent high profile job, in addition to the Gorillaz of course, was Coldplay's "Don't Panic" video. What is striking about Passion is that they consistently create unusual looking pieces, frequently provoking even the most seasoned animation professional to ask, "How did they do that?"*

*Therefore, it seems only fitting that Passion Pictures has proved to be a great match for such an avant-garde project. Andrew Ruhemann, executive producer at Passion, discusses his company's involvement with Gorillaz: "Passion Pictures is the company that Jamie Hewlett has asked to turn his 2D designs into moving images. We feel that interpreting design from an animation point of view is one of our greatest strengths."*

*Going on to elaborate on Passion's role in the overall production of Gorillaz, he continues, "Passion Pictures has been involved in any aspect where the characters move, for example the promos, clips for TV interviews, right up to a performance-based event like the Brit Awards. Animation director Pete Candleland was pivotal in the process of figuring out how the drawn style of Jamie's designs could and should move."*

*With so many hands working on a vision originating with two very individually minded artists, one might think that certain creative compromises would be made, or at the very least some feathers ruffled. Oddly enough, this does not seem to be the case at all.*

**Creating a 3D version of 2D was required for an awards ceremony. Here we see him in wireframe and 3D CGI.**

**A scene from *19/2000*, the third video from Gorillaz (left) and a striking profile of 2D from *Clint Eastwood*.**

*"We wanted them [Passion] to be the animation company. They always want to make sure I'm pleased. They had to do the characters the way I created them. The first few videos I was very hands on, but Pete got his head around it. I trust them," explained Hewlett.*

*"Both Jamie and Damon have watched the project very closely. Jamie works very closely with Pete on the storyboard, art direction and original designs for each video and comes into the studio regularly to look at work in progress," explains Ruhemann. "Trust in Pete and the animation team at Passion has built up as the project has progressed. They have been very open to ideas that Pete and others in the team have brought to each project."*

**Building on the Vision**

*Wasn't there any trepidation on the part of Gorillaz's record label, Virgin, for signing and promoting such an unusual act? David Wolter, Senior Director of A & R at Virgin, explains: "An animated band wouldn't work if it not for great music. In this instance, we had brilliant ahead of the curve artwork which I felt touched upon anime, video games, and in general, youth culture."*

*Even so, some at the label did remain hesitant about committing to such an eccentric project. "As with anything great, there are always instances of people not seeing the vision. Fortunately, there were a small group of us who believed in the project and would stop at nothing short of success," says Wolter. "The non-believers slowly jumped into our little group until our little group was the entire record company. This project was a victory the entire label was able to celebrate."*

Since the band is animated, their every action and word must be written and coordinated before an actual performance.

*With numerous animation awards, neither the Gorillaz nor their creators are resting on their laurels, however. The Gorillaz team is currently working with Henson in the U.K. to develop the band to where the members can be interviewed in real-time using Pulse technology. An interactive TV show has been given the greenlight and a toy line is also in the works.*

*"We want to do toys," enthuses Hewlett. "I don't want to do a comic or a computer game. Figures, yes! We'll do good stuff and bring them out in time for the film."*

**Murdoch drives 2D down an American freeway in the video *19/2000*. He demolishes the jeep in a fiery crash when an errant moose wanders out onto the road and forces him to fire a missile at the beast.**

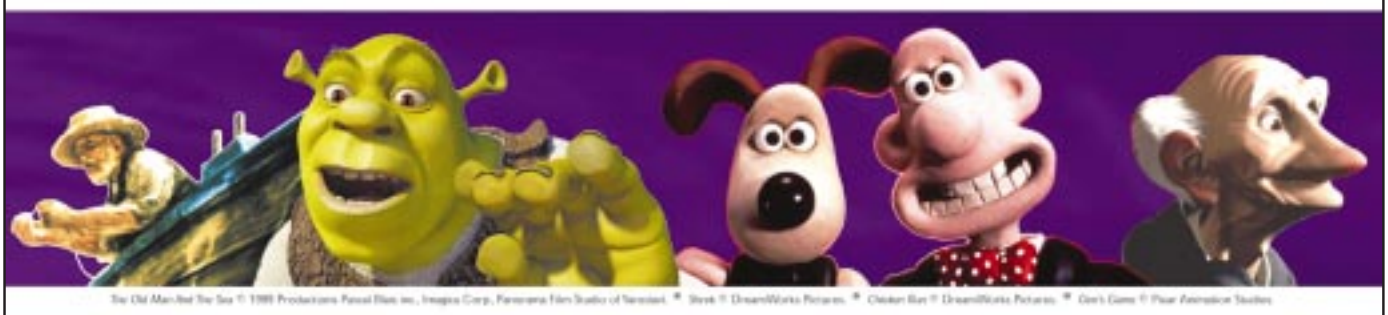
*Yes, you heard it! A feature film. Work has already begun on the next album, which will be the soundtrack to a full-length Gorillaz animated feature.*

*"I'm just writing it [the script] now. I'll probably story-board and direct it with Pete," explains Hewlett. "It's going to be dark. We're setting up our own production company and we just had a meeting with DreamWorks. My main concern is that we do a really good film. I don't want to compromise."*

*Paul Feldman is an L.A.-based freelance writer who has covered entertainment industry stories for on-line journals such as the Creative Planet community sites of Director's World and Cinematographer.com. While he aspires to one day have rock 'n roll pay his rent, he is sticking to live-action for now and refuses to turn the reigns of destiny over to his animated alter-ego.*

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


articles • news • reviews • jobs • store • discussion forums • galleries • tutorials • events • schools



Everything About Animation

AWN

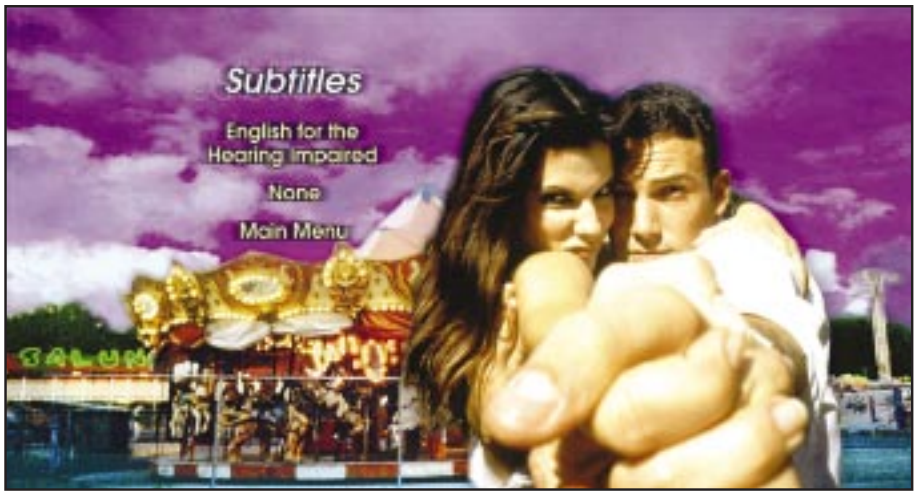
www.awn.com

# Crossing Over Into Gaming

by Sylvia Edwards

**Brent Young (left) and Dina Benadon brought their individual areas of expertise to Super 78. Photo by Michael Rababy.**

*If you are currently involved in animation for television series or feature production, it's a pretty sure bet that you've considered entering the world of animation for game production. Surely, there must be skills and knowledge that cross over from the world of animated series or animated feature production into the world of games. I've been looking into what similarities there are and how one goes about finding the right match.*




***Forces of Nature*: a sample of B1's work. © DreamWorks SKG.**

**Basic Similarities**

*The elements common to games animation and other animation venues fall into the general areas of script, dialogue recording, character and background design, animation, color, camera or composite and render, editing and post production, including the addition of music and sound effects. The differences can occur in how these elements are created or, if created traditionally, how they are transformed into a digital format.*

**A screenshot from the *Blade Runner* DVD, on which Anthony Zierhut served as storyboard artist. All *Blade Runner* images property of Electronic Arts, Inc.**

*Scripts for games production are similar to traditional scripts, but have 3 – 5 versions of the same scene in order to include all the possible results of a game player's action. The result is that scripts can be upwards of 700 pages long. Each version of the scene must be voice recorded and storyboarded. The board artist is given color renderings of the background sets to use for blocking out character movements within the scene. If motion-capture is used for character movement, each version of the scene must be performed by the actor. The designs for digital material can start as drawings on paper or can be completely generated by computer. In either case a digitized version of the design is the desired*

*end point. Animatics or leica reels are done, just as they are for most animated series and features as blueprints of the final picture. As the project progresses, finished elements replace the scenes on the temp reel. Temp reels generally come in two different formats: a CG temp or a paper temp (with the animatic shot over the live-action BG plate). The process of production differs for digital projects in the emphasis at the front end of production to nail down designs and create a library of reusable character animation and expressions in order to expedite the animation process. It takes approximately 18 months to complete a game. Of this, six months involves producing the cinematics for the game. Throughout the process, the client typically approves or gives notes on material on digital files or via a server.*

## I approached a number of people who are transplants into the business of DVD game production to get their takes...

*In live-action, the director has almost total control of the creative aspects of the project. By contrast, in animation for a series, the director is often only in charge of the timing of the animation and usually works under the guidance of a supervising director or producer who oversees all the creative aspects of the show. In games, the game designer is the visionary lead of the show, working closely with the senior producer who is the "hub" for all elements and who follows the direction of the game designer.*

**A giant geisha looms over the city in the game *Blade Runner*, produced by Westwood Studios.**

### Many Paths Lead to Gaming

*In my quest to find out more about animation for games, I approached a number of people who are transplants into the business of DVD game production to get their take on games and how producing them differs from their previous experiences in the entertainment industry. Ben Zev and Brian Johnson of B1 Media come from a background of advertising and graphic design. Following their interest in the creative process for all mediums led them down a path that resulted in their founding of B1 Media. They have received wide praise for their work on the many DVD menus they've created for such works as The Haunting for DreamWorks SKG and Psycho (1998) for Universal,*

**B1 partners Ben Zev (left) and Brian Johnson both came from the advertising and graphic design worlds before joining forces. Photos courtesy of B1 Media.**

*among many others. B1 Media has also produced the animated game elements for several Disney DVD editions. Most recently, this included Beauty and the Beast: Platinum Edition and Monsters, Inc., both due for release in fall of 2002.*

*Dina Benadon and Brent Young of Super 78 come from the world of live-action production, but from separate divisions. For Benadon the road to games production started with commercial and music video production. She moved into the universe of computer graphics and working with theme parks in the production of "ride films" such as Race for Atlantis. Young came to California to pursue a career as a musician. He also developed into an accomplished editor while working at visual effects studio Rhythm and Hues, where he worked on many high profile projects, including Babe and the Polar Bear ad spots for Coca-Cola. It was at Rhythm and Hues that the two finally met and had the opportunity to work with a company then at the forefront of CG production. Their decision to leave Rhythm and Hues and launch Super 78 allowed them to apply what they each had learned over the course of their separate careers and to use their combined experiences to push them forward into new frontiers. Super 78 has been lauded for the animation created for video games such as Sonic the Hedgehog (Sega) and Pac-Man (Namco). They have created animation projects for clients such as LEGO and Ogilvy and Mather. They also recently produced the 2002 Interactive Game Show Awards.*

*My last interview subject was Anthony Zierhut who has worked on live-action/CG combo projects such as the upcoming Scooby-Doo movie and the Fat Albert movie. Zierhut was also one of the storyboard artists to work on the Blade Runner video game produced by Westwood Studios in Las Vegas, Nevada.*

*What drew each interviewee to games in the first place? B1 Media's Johnson: "I started at TV Art, working on DVD projects and doing TV art. Joining up with Ben for B1 was a chance to take things to the next level." Zev responded, "My start was in doing designs for show openings, ID packages, interactive Web designs and ultimately interactive gaming and DVD work. The earlier versions of games on DVD editions of movies were basically trivia games. These eventually evolved into interactive games like those for Mortal Kombat II, Dark City and Lost in Space. The shift toward the interactive offered B1 a terrific opportunity to grow." For Super 78, Young's interest in video games was the spearheading factor according to Benadon. "Brent was the one who was the game expert. He really liked them and*

**Super 78 worked on *Pac-Man World 2* and *Sonic the Hedgehog*.**
**All *Pac-Man* images: Super 78 for Namco; *Sonic the Hedgehog* image credit: Super 78 for Sega Dreamcast of America.**

*wanted to get involved in the production of them. I supported the move. We started with doing the cinematics or cut scenes [animation used to explain the game or that plays between the action sequences of the game] and grew from there." Anthony Zierhut responded, "I came to games from a background of traditional animation from my college days. I've worked as a production illustrator, storyboard artist and production designer for live-action."*

**B1 created this thieves' POV for the game *Entrapment*. © 20th Century Fox.**

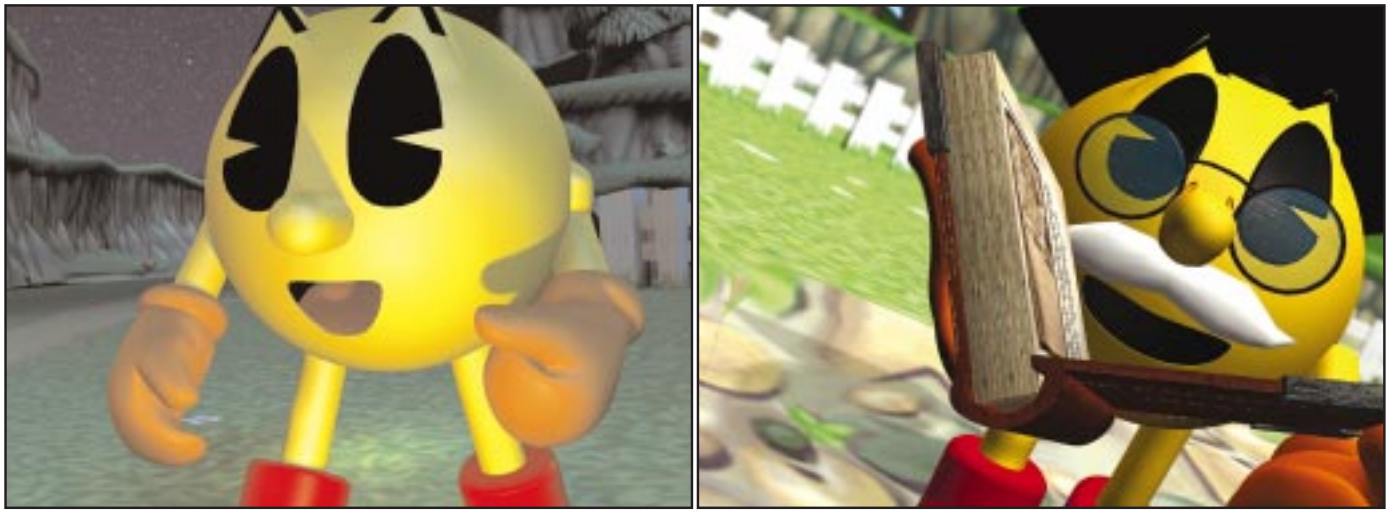
## A Larger Role

*The most appealing aspect of the games industry is the amount of creative input compared to traditional animation or live-action outlets. For my interviewees this was overwhelmingly the primary "plus" factor. Said Johnson, "Working on the creative side with the clients is the most exciting aspect for us. DVD is such an interactive medium, lots of push and pull." Zev agreed, "Creating the DVD games with the client is the most challenging because of the parameters of the medium. You're forced to think out of the box because of the constrictions. You've got to keep your mind open for other solutions in DVD to make sure that the game is as exciting as it would be in other mediums." Benadon and Young expressed similar feelings. Benadon said, "Compared to work with commercials we're much more involved in the creative process from the very beginning. We [Super 78] help the client to create the concept for the cinematics of the game and how best to proceed with the project. One example of this is how Brent came up with the idea for creating a 'history' for Pac-Man and developed the character of Sir Pac-a-Lot. The client was thrilled with the idea and using it in various ways." Young agreed that their active participation in creating is a key factor. He said, "We feel like an important part of the process, because of this early creative involvement." Zierhut too lists the amount of creative involvement as being the biggest magnet to games. "Working with Westwood Studios [on the Blade Runner DVD game cinematics] was such an enjoyable experience. I had more creative input and control of the action to be played out on the screen than with live-action."*

*Folks migrating to gaming will not be in for a shock when entering the gaming world as far as technology is concerned. The equipment/software is much the same, with upgrades frequently introduced as artists hear about the latest and greatest tools. As Johnson stated, "We use Mac 3D, Mac PC, Maya, Lightwave and Electric Image. Our team is really into this. They're always on the lookout for changes and how useable software is for our needs here at B1." At Super 78 Benadon responded, "We use 3D Studio Max for animation generally. If a client wants a certain look or if control of costs is a big factor, we've found that Flash animation is a great solution." Young added, "Our animators come from digital and traditional backgrounds. They do a great job in keeping us aware of changes in software that will benefit the company."*

## A Different Focus

*However, gaming does indeed have its differences from other production experiences. Apart from the increased amount of creative input, the biggest change is in the expanded need for time at the front end of the project. Benadon said, "It's important to be able to give your main creative efforts at this point. All the time and money spent here is invaluable to the success of the project." Young agreed, "The front end is where the important experimentation takes place." One of Zierhut's biggest surprises was the length of the scripts. "Of course I only had to deal with boarding my section of the script, but it was quite challenging. I had to work out 3 – 5 different courses of action for the same scene. I would board one version where the guy runs into the room and shoots at the other guy, a version where he*



**Brent Young came up with a back story for characters in *Pac-Man World 2*.**

*runs in and fights the other guy and one where the two guys never see each other in the room." B1 Media's Johnson and Zev also felt that the time spent on the front of the picture was a different experience and one that they've handled in part by involving the entire team. Zev commented, "This up-front time is the most critical time on the project. Our entire team is made aware of the goals of the project. We brainstorm, do mock ups and determine if the ideas that surface are feasible or not." Johnson rejoined, "Our past experience has paid off in helping us determine early on if an idea can actually be done, start to completion, within the time and money constraints."*

*The future of animation in the games industry is wide open. The possibilities are endless as technology continues to develop and creatives embrace it and its possibilities. Zierhut states, "Have a look at the X-Men DVD and the sequence at the end with the Statue of Liberty. A program called Poser was used to do this. I think that this is the next level for storyboarding for games. Poser has the capacity to pre-visualize by moving 'mannequins' around in a 3D environment. The great thing is that it's a very intuitive program. You don't have to know anything about programming to use it." B1 Media is branching into other areas including broadcast, network IDs, bumpers and commercials. "Our future looks very bright," said Johnson. "There's always a need for design and our goal is to excel for our clients. We're working on a number of new titles for DVD. When DVDs can also play DVD ROMs and on the Internet, it will greatly broaden the scope of what can be accomplished." Zev offered, "The gaming world is advancing everyday. We like to think that we're helping to make that happen. We're hungry to do more." At Super 78 Young said, "For me the excitement comes from the fact that we can't see where the 'end' of the technology is. I read the trades and am constantly amazed at the latest creations." Benadon concurred, "The game industry is a 9.4 billion dollar industry that is still evolving. Video games remind me of the work I did on the 'ride films' and how our main focus was to immerse you in a world that is totally believable. Games still offer new challenges with new obstacles to overcome and that's exciting. I'm so happy to have this feeling of being on the frontier of this industry. The new ways of creating games will be what commercials were to people like Ridley Scott. He set up his own production company in order to practice filmmaking by making visually exciting commercials." Young concluded, "I totally agree. The next pool of creative talent will spring from the world of games."*

**The future of animation in the games industry is wide open.**

**For the *Blade Runner* game, Anthony Zierhut recreates the unique retro-futuristic noir look of the original movie.**

*The crossover from traditional animation (such as for series or features) to digital animation requires research and a certain*

**On the left, a look at B1's design room. Photo courtesy of B1 Media. Right, a menu screen shot with players' choices listed from *There's Something About Mary* by B1 for Fox. © 20th Century Fox.**

*amount of updating knowledge and skills. Crossing over into the dynamic and growing arena of games animation requires even more. An understanding of the needs of the games format is a "must have" in order to carry out the production process in an effective manner. While the production process is very similar to traditional TV and feature animation, the interactive nature of the end result needs to be kept in mind throughout the process so that it is right on target!*

*Sylvia Edwards is a former school teacher who made a career leap into animation nine years ago. She has worked at Hanna-Barbera, HBO Animation, Nickelodeon and Disney. Ms. Edwards has worked on a number of animated TV series and video productions including: What-A-Cartoon!, Dexter's Laboratory, Cow & Chicken, Oh Yeah! Cartoons, ChalkZone, Dora the Explorer and Cinderella II: Dreams Come True.*

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

# Re:vitalizing Animation Through Virtual Studios

by Greg Singer

*"Whether you think you can, or think you can't, you are probably right." – Henry Ford*

With the advent of the commercial Internet, it was inevitable that filmmakers would be able to coordinate their efforts online, to work on projects of personal meaning and mutual benefit. Drawing upon the talents and skills of a community of artists, engineers and managers worldwide, a virtual studio literally and figuratively never sleeps. Whether doing service work for outside contractors, or developing independent properties that appeal to niche markets, the opportunity to create is limited only by one's creativity.

Producing films in cyberspace is not only a possibility, but an opportunity that has yet to realize its fullest potential.

This article will highlight three examples of animated films that were created using the Internet as an intermediary among project collaborators. These case studies are meant as encouragement for you, to stir your imagination toward the realization of your own creative goals and dreams.

**Imagination**

*"No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars or sailed to an uncharted land or opened a new heaven to the human spirit." — Helen Keller*

**Cynthia and Geoff Wells, director and producer of *The Shadow of Doubt*, and founders of The Digital Theater Group.**

Cynthia and Geoff Wells, founders of The Digital Theater Group, have produced the traditionally animated film *The Shadow of Doubt* using online ingenuity.

The ten-minute film passes with grace and uncertainty through the memory of Talullah, as she returns to the Paris nightclub where she got her break years before. In thinking about the club owner, who was once himself a great musician but now content to serve drinks from behind the bar, Talullah reviews her life as a Jazz singer, and wonders with haunting doubt about her success and what it has done to her art.

Cynthia and Geoff Wells are no strangers to the entertainment business. Cynthia, the director on the film, graduated from the California Institute of the Arts, and has over 80 animation and directing credits to her name. Before *Shadow*, she made *Interview with Talullah, Queen of the Universe*, a satiric docu-drama with the same protagonist that garnered her two Annie Award nominations. Cynthia directed the animation sequences in the Academy Award nominated feature documentary, *A Sense of Life*, and was supervising animator on *Once Upon a Forest* and *The Thief and the Cobbler*. She has also worked as an animator on such features as *Anastasia*, *Space Jam* and *The Quest for Camelot*.

Geoff Wells, for his own part, began his career in advertising as a graphic artist and art director in South Africa. He has since worked as a director of marketing in the motion picture distribution business, and now, in heading up the information technology department for a major television and radio network (Disney's ABC), he concentrates on digital convergence strategies and business integration in broadcasting sys-

tems. For *Shadow*, using his creative background and technical experience, Geoff wrote the screenplay, edited the sound and picture, penned the lyrics for the film's title song and produced it with composer Steve Orich.

"In over twenty years of professional work, nothing was ringing true," Cynthia Wells explains, of why she and her partner bothered to establish a virtual studio. "We wanted to do our own projects."

In working on *Talullah*, in muddling through the process of financing and producing the film, Geoff and Cynthia found that it was a great experience. "We didn't even necessarily know what we were doing," Cynthia remembers, "we were figuring it out as we went along." She continues, "But it was so satisfying, that was when I found the true meaning of happiness. I thought, 'This is it, this is what I'm doing now, forever and ever, I don't care if I have to go shoeless.'"

It was a real enjoyment when the film started winning praise at film festivals, with its song "Shadow Days" getting airplay on local Jazz stations.

Though it is generally the hope and aim for an artist to exhibit his or her work to audiences, the feeling of vulnerability in such open, public expression can be both exhilarating and terrifying. Interestingly, this undercurrent of desire and trepidation is the theme of *The Shadow of Doubt*, in exploring the conflict of creativity and insecurity within an artist.

**Talullah, running from the ghosts in her head, in *The Shadow of Doubt*.**
**© Digital Theater Group, 2001.**

"There's a creative side to everybody, and you always go through this process of self-questioning," Cynthia Wells says. "It's very challenging, but it's a healthy process you have to go through."

Cynthia is interested in the theory of theater that "because a thing contains a contradiction within itself, it moves and acquires impulse and activity." She adds, "The distortions of form and shape that are necessary to achieve movement in animation are not unlike the layers of contradiction within each of us."

In addition to cultivating a unique style and voice, in creating films that are challenging and that have emotional and aesthetic appeal. "The other aspect, the reason we did all this," Cynthia says, "was just for quality of life." She asks, "Who do you want to spend your time with? Who do you want to collaborate with? At work, eight hours a day, you're spending most of your life with these people."

Historically and currently, the production pipeline has its origins in factory work. Geoff explains, "I think what you need to do is take the factory mentality out of the creative process of making a film, and bring it back to a cottage industry mentality, where you have people, as during the early part of the Industrial Revolution, making these crafts out of their homes and then collaborating at the marketplace." He suggests, "The Internet does that today. That's why we call it a virtual studio, or global village."

**A café scene from *The Shadow of Doubt*. © Digital Theater Group, 2001.**

Cynthia and Geoff made

*use of the hub and spoke model of production, whereby the director and producer act as a central touchstone for an array of collaborating artists and technicians.*

*Given the artists' varying degrees of familiarity with the Internet and the tools involved, Geoff comments, "It really shocked me, in a way, how successful it was. We would get an email, we'd review it, we'd instantly respond, because it took two seconds to evaluate what changes or direction were needed... We'd shoot a reply back to the artists, at their desks... They'd pick it up, do their work, and say, 'Here, take a look at this.'"*

*In speaking to the productivity of artists working from their homes, and the possible loss of studio culture in working remotely, Cynthia remarks, "You can have virtual meetings, and exchange the same amount of information over the Internet – through emailing; the occasional trip of the director or producer to visit artists; or you can meet as a team every once in a great while."*

*Geoff adds, "I think there is a necessity to bond, but it doesn't have to happen on a daily basis. In fact, it sometimes gets in the way."*

*In comparison to traditional brick-and-mortar studios, Geoff and Cynthia are convinced that, given the scope and the highly distributive nature of the Internet, one can get the same amount of work done, of equal or better quality, in less time and with better economics.*

*"Simply the logistics of moving people around and maintaining a facility incurs huge overhead costs," Geoff says. In a virtual studio setting, this same money can be invested directly in the artists and film. More attention and consideration can be given to the quality of the work being produced, and in providing the necessary technical training and equipment to ensure platform and software compatibility among team members.*

*"If there is a [facility] that you need to keep pouring costs into," Cynthia explains, "the pressure is on, out of necessity ... which drives you to constantly have to find projects, any old commercial work, just to keep the lights on. But that is a grind. You eat up a lot of time on projects on which you don't necessarily have creative say-so, in terms of time, budget or artistic direction... And then you look back, wondering, 'How many years have I been doing this?' Fussing over the look of a candy bar or some other commercial product... That's not really what I want to do with my life." She concludes, "Sure, do it for a while, make some money... But what have I really said, artistically?"*

*In establishing and running a well-oiled and efficient virtual production, it is a continual process of experiment and refinement. In finding the occasion to tell the stories that we would like to tell, as artists, we need to trust "beyond a shadow of a doubt" in our own ability, resourcefulness and imagination. For anything to be possible, we must first be able to imagine it.*

## Infrastructure

*"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." — Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*Over the course of its two-year production, the short CGI animated film Major Damage passed through the volunteered time and hands of roughly 100 teammates from all over the world, from the United States, New Zealand, Brazil and points in between.*

*Producer Kellie-Bea Cooper says, "Our wrap party was remarkable for the fact that most of the crew had never met in person until the party!"*

*Inspired by the comic book artists of his youth — such as Harvey Kurtzman of MAD Magazine, Marie Severin and Stan Lee of Marvel Comics, and the Jack Kirby monster comics of the 1950s — director Chris Bailey originally developed the superhero mayhem of Major Damage as a comic book.*

**Chris Bailey, director and co-executive producer of Disney's *Kim Possible*.**

*Bailey's day job, over the years, has included animating on such Walt Disney features as The Little Mermaid and Hercules, as well as directing the 1995 Academy Award nominated short Disney film Runaway Brain. More recently, Bailey directed Kevin Smith's animated television series Clerks (1998), which has led to his current position as director and co-executive producer on Kim Possible, a traditional animated series for the Disney Channel.*

*During his spare time,*

Bailey expanded the *Major Damage* comic into a storyboard for a short film, where the idea sat for several years. "I wanted to make it in CG," he says, "but the technology didn't exist for me to produce it as a one man show."

While a guest speaker for a Women in Animation group, Bailey mentioned *Major Damage* and attracted the interest of independent film producer Kellie-Bea Cooper. Bailey recalls, "Kellie-Bea put *Damage* on the fast track. Between her, myself, and CG supervisor Doug Cooper, we had the creative, technical and organizational chops to make it happen."

**Kellie-Bea Cooper, producer and founder of The Better Mousetrap.**

Bailey adds, "I thought about doing *Major Damage* with an existing CG house as a partner, but there were always strings attached where I would have had to give up the rights to the characters. That wasn't a trade-off I felt comfortable with. Luckily, Kellie-Bea understood that and put our studio together around that limitation."

Having studied interactive media, children's literature and puppetry, Cooper has worked for the Jim Henson Company, Warner Bros. Television Animation and Phil Roman Entertainment. She is presently the owner and director of her own studio, The Better Mouse Trap, as well as The Webisode Academy, a specialty school teaching episodic animation skills for the Web.

For *Major Damage*, Cooper negotiated alliances with Hewlett Packard and Alias|Wavefront to secure the hardware and software for the project, and she was on a constant recruiting drive to solicit help from friends and colleagues in the animation industry.

Cooper says, "Since the project was a volunteer effort, we needed a way to work that would accommodate people's lifestyles and family time. Letting people work from home, and not require a central gathering to do their work was key to recruiting the kind of talent we needed for the show."

"Given that we all had day jobs," Bailey agrees, "working virtually gave us the most flexibility with our time."

The production process was broken up into departments: modeling, rigging, character animation, facial animation, effects animation, skinning, layout, lighting and so on. Most departments had a supervisor who was responsible not only for his/her own shots, but for communicating and directing the shot assignments for the entire departmental team. The lighting team, for example, was comprised of artists in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, the United Kingdom, and other locales, with the lighting supervisor in Tampa, Florida. Departments were often scattered globally, with no middle management other than the producer and the Internet-based assignment and shot status Web pages.

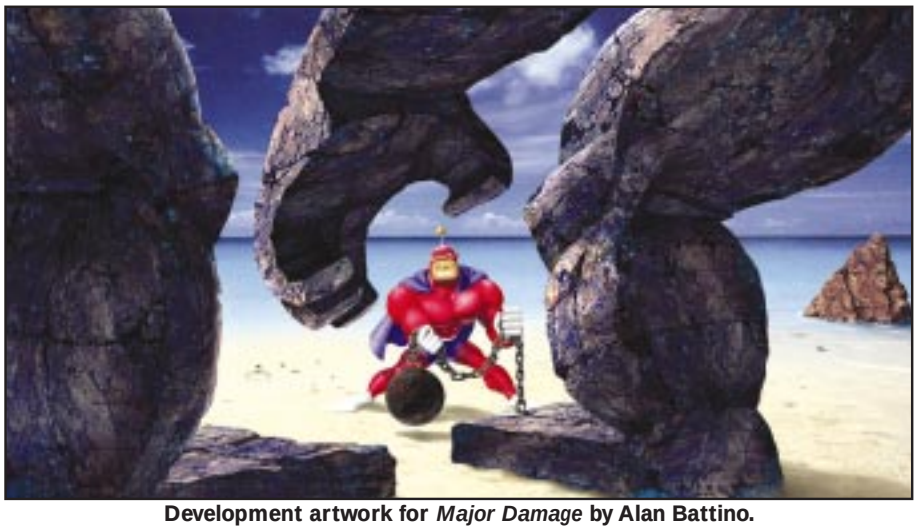
Doug Cooper, CG supervisor for *Major Damage*, has always been interested in combining computers and art. Programming since an early age, Cooper worked on *Balto* at Amblimation, and he is now a CG supervisor at DreamWorks, having worked on *The Prince of Egypt* and most recently *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.*

**Doug Cooper, a CG supervisor at DreamWorks Animation.**

In describing the off-the-shelf tools that made *Major Damage* possible, Cooper explains, "Everything was produced in Maya – modeling, animation, textures, effects, lighting and rendering. Artists had their own computers, or computers that we provided to them loaded with Maya and an Internet connection. Animators would download the character and set models from our Website, then animate and upload individual shots. Our director would review AVI's and JPEG images of the work they uploaded and send creative direction and commentary back to them via email."

In moving around such heavy graphics files, the speed, reliability and security of the studio's infrastructure was an essential component for the project's success. Besides the workstations at individuals' homes, the key to supporting the production workflow

**Major Damage, in his 3D superhero glory.**
**™ and © Chris Bailey, 2001. All rights reserved.**



**Development artwork for *Major Damage* by Alan Battino.**
**™ and © Chris Bailey, 2001. All rights reserved.**

*was the centralized Web and file server. The server was run on the Linux operating system, and had several custom Web applications developed for it – including a graphical scene browser, which showed thumbnails of the current renders for every shot; and the File Depot, which was an online database of all the files created for the show.*

*Doug Cooper says, "We used a great deal of open source and freely available software, such as Linux, and MySQL, but also developed some of our own. The server was connected to the Internet through a consumer DSL line, and most artists dialed into it through 56k modems. Some artists also had DSL or cable modems to get better performance."*

*Necessity is indeed the mother of invention. Cooper continues, "In addition to the server infrastructure, we developed a number of custom tools for Maya in MEL that assisted in packaging up scene files and all of their components (such as textures, and animation files) for uploading to the File Depot. Our MEL scripts helped to make sure that all of the pieces needed to render a shot were delivered to the server as one package."*

*One of the challenges of working virtually, nonetheless, is keeping everyone productive. Producer Kellie-Bea Cooper emphasizes that a virtual studio can only thrive in an atmosphere of self-motivation, professionalism, communication and managerial trust.*

*Cooper comments, "Professionalism is a big factor in working virtually. Working alone can create great focus, but it can also create perfectionism. Virtual workers still need to respectfully take directions and mind deadlines."*

*Director Chris Bailey says, "To make things interesting for the artists involved, I tried to keep my direction broad so that they could inject some of themselves into the work, or at least more of themselves than usually allowed at the major studios. In general, I have found that people do better work if not directed too tightly." He adds, "Besides, it's more exciting to be surprised with what people come up with than for everyone to just be extensions of my hands."*

*Cooper observes, "Probably the most difficult factor for managers to accept is having trust among the working staff; meaning, the ability to put full responsibility back into the workers' hands without second guessing or middle managing them. This trust factor establishes a sense of worth and accomplishment for everyone on the project.*

*On Major Damage, the constant stream of email communication, plus the online shot status reports, helped to keep us updated on the progress of scenes. This open and trusting tracking and management system worked very well."*

*Whatever the hardware or software needs for the production, whether it is scanning, pencil testing, editing, compositing, ink and painting, video conferencing, or otherwise, a lot of the enabling technologies are available for relatively little or no expense. There are limitations, of course, but it is nothing that proper communication and effective production management cannot surmount.*

*There already exist database and tracking software (e.g., www.alienbrain.com), or applications to whiteboard one's work on a shared desktop during real-time meetings (e.g., www.microsoft.com/netmeeting). Or one can build simpler versions of these programs.*

*During the coming years, as virtual pipeline software and processes become more user-friendly and function more smoothly, we can expect more elaborate and ambitious productions. Producer Kellie-Bea Cooper says, "Now that 'the damage is done,' I'd like to begin work on a CGI television series or feature as a virtual studio. I have begun mapping out these two productions and I'm tremendously excited about the possibilities."*

**Integrity**

*"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the sea." — Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

*For the last several years, the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) has been guiding the Cartoons for Children's Rights campaign, a broadcast initiative to educate about the rights of children. Partnering with animation studios and independent animators from all over the world, 30-second public service announcements have been created to promote understanding and awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a landmark 1989 treaty that outlines in forty or so articles the rights that should be guaranteed to every person under eighteen years of age: the right to protection from armed conflict, to health care, to education, to adequate standard of living, to freedom from abuse and exploitation, to name and nationality, and so on.*

*Among the previous contributors to the campaign have been Disney Feature Animation, Nickelodeon, MTV Animation, Pixar, Fil-Cartoons, Saban, HBO Animation, Children's Television Workshop, DIC and Warner Bros.*

*During the Spring of 2000, a Web-based public forum of animation artists and enthusiasts was considering the possibility of collaborating on a project, using the Internet as a facilitator and platform for production. In corralling together everyone's time, talent and enthusiasm, it was suggested to create a public service announcement for the UNICEF campaign.*

*Gord Groat, an award-winning and professional artist of twenty-five years, and also a leading instructor and technical advisor for the SCETCH College of Art and Design in Saskatchewan, Canada, remembers, "I felt fortunate to have been introduced to the Cartoons for Children's Rights project. As a father of three, I cherished the opportunity to help UNICEF communicate this important message."*

**Gord Groat, animator, director, instructor and sometimes basketball champion.**

*Groat, a graduate of Sheridan College, served as the writer, conceptual and storyboard artist, and director for the forum-inspired public service announcement. He says, "What sparked my imagination was the idea of creating an animated film of international scope, using a global talent pool. I was intrigued by the creative possibilities and wanted to explore the technical, organizational and management challenges inherent in such a project."*

*The moderator of the forum graciously agreed to host the production on the Website. Roles were determined among forum members, as character designers, sound designers, animators, cleanup artists, colorists, and the like. The fledgling team was drawn from people in Texas, California, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Missouri, Utah, and from such "faraway" places as Canada and Slovenia. In correspondence with UNICEF, the team*

*decided that they would animate Article 2 of the Convention treaty, the right of every child to non-discrimination.*

*The Internet became a window for the online community to follow the making of the short animation, as well as a central exchange for contributing members to post, review and access the materials of the production.*

**Paul Naas, independent animator, and one of the original supervisors for the UNICEF spot.**

*Paul Naas, who has fifteen years of experience working as an independent animator and director for video games and location-based entertainment, and one of the early animators hired by the Disney Institute, served as a supervising animator for the Web-produced UNICEF cartoon. He remarks, "The great part of collaborating online is that geography is not a limitation. Our physical distance was not an issue, as we were able to use a central site to communicate information and coordinate workflow. Also, for the same reasons, an online production allows you to work with folks whom you might otherwise never work with in your career."*

*Groat adds, "There were many benefits to working in a virtual environment. The most profound was freedom of access. When a studio crosses numerous time zones, the tradition of nine to five becomes a moot point. Artists are freed to work during the hours they are most productive, because it doesn't matter where they are in the world, it's the middle of the work day somewhere on the planet."*

*Naas says, "I found the whole process of the UNICEF production to be very well organized. The director handed out scene assignments via the Website, and made the necessary model sheets, boards and animatics available for download, and I dug right in. Doing the actual animation was no different than any other production I've worked on. Once I'd finished my keys and prepared the x-sheet, I scanned the drawings and did a quick test to make sure the timing was right. Once I was satisfied, I forwarded everything on to the director, along with any related production notes I thought he should have. From there, my materials were sent to the inbetweener, who finished up the scene."*

*Because of time constraints for delivery of the spot to UNICEF, there was a special interest to use readily available Internet-friendly software such as Macromedia Freehand and Flash. Steve Spatucci, a New Jersey-based graphic designer and illustrator, and owner of Plasmic Studio, through his tireless efforts helped to achieve the final animation.*

*Spatucci comments, "I would regularly update the piece online, sending notes to the producer on what had been added, altered or deleted with each new file posting. At times phone calls would be needed to work out more involved points, or just to have a real-time discussion rather than a volley of back-and-forth email." He adds, "I work from my home regularly, and though there is always temptation (more so than usual) to fall behind schedule this way, with a good dose of discipline and regular communication, this can be a more flexible and productive style of working than a traditional in-studio situation."*

**Steve Spatucci, graphic designer, illustrator and owner of Plasmic Studio.**

*Communication is one of the biggest challenges for any virtual production. Being physically separated from people complicates the process of giving creative direction, as well as addressing technical issues. Artists who are best suited for working in a virtual studio are excellent communicators, and capable of doing a great deal of technical support and problem solving for themselves.*

*While working at home during odd hours can be enjoyable, freeing and rewarding, nothing can really replace working face to face with other creative people, in maintaining enthusiasm and focus on a project.*

**Screenshot of the production Website for the UNICEF "Right to Non-Discrimination" public service announcement. Courtesy of Joe Tracy.**

*Naas says, "One of the biggest differences in collaborating online is that you never really meet or share space with the people you're working with."*

*"There are always advantages to working directly with someone," Spatucci agrees. "Being able to see the expression on a person's face and hear the tone in their voice allows for much more immediate and accurate interpersonal communication, and often clears up or avoids potential misunderstandings."*

*In remarking on the working conditions and virtual studio culture, Groat recalls, "No one complained about the room temperature, bad lighting or the commute to work."*

*"But seriously," he continues, "I developed a better understanding of virtual environments, and the communities they support. Studio dynamics such as artists learning new skills and techniques from each other, encouragement in the form of inspirational and motivational conversations, random brainstorming — and many other casual day to day interactions that naturally occur in a traditional studio environment, and that foster a team atmosphere and make a studio a fun place to learn and work – it had to be emulated online."*

*In June 2001, along with the works of other studios, the completed "Right to Non-Discrimination" animation screened at the Annecy International Film Festival in France. The public service announcements created for the Cartoons for Children's Rights campaign have been distributed on videotape to UNICEF field offices in 170 countries for broadcast.*

*Virtual studios can benefit the animation industry as a whole. Groat explains, "Animation companies maintain a fluctuating work force, that expand and contract in relation to industry demand. This fluctuation plays havoc on an artist's life. They either have to live in one of the major animation centers, or move every time there is a change in demand. A virtual studio allows the artist to choose their location and work in their own communities. They also have the ability to move from job to job at anytime, whether the job is downtown, or on the other side of the planet."*

*Given the nature of the work, it is imperative for online collaborators to be professional, reliable and committed team members. In juggling personal and professional obligations and responsibilities, artists need to be self-disciplined and self-directed, so they can work with minimal supervision within the schedule and budget.*

*Groat concludes, "A virtual studio is a viable business model,*

**Storyboard panel and final Flash-based render from the UNICEF cartoon. © UNICEF.**

*because it's merely a mechanism. The heart of any business is the people. The mechanism only provides a space for these people to congregate, whether it's a building or an electronic environment. As technologies advance and virtual environments become as pervasive as telephone conversations, decentralized work forces will become more commonplace."*

**Theory And Practice**

*"The future is not to be forecast, but created." – Arthur Clarke*

*At a minimum, these are the three essential ingredients for the success of any "interprising" animation team: imagination, infrastructure and integrity.*

*Imagination not only for what to create, but for how to get it done.*

*Infrastructure for providing a safe, reliable environment to collaborate and to protect your intellectual property.*

*And, integrity for offering your commitment, dedication and professional best.*

*In building a more personal and varied animation future, you have more power and resources available, at your fingertips, than you may realize. Make your own luck. Have patience, diligence and fortitude in working, stepwise and piecemeal, toward the realization of your artistic goals. Build your own relationships, and carve out your own happiness and niche.*

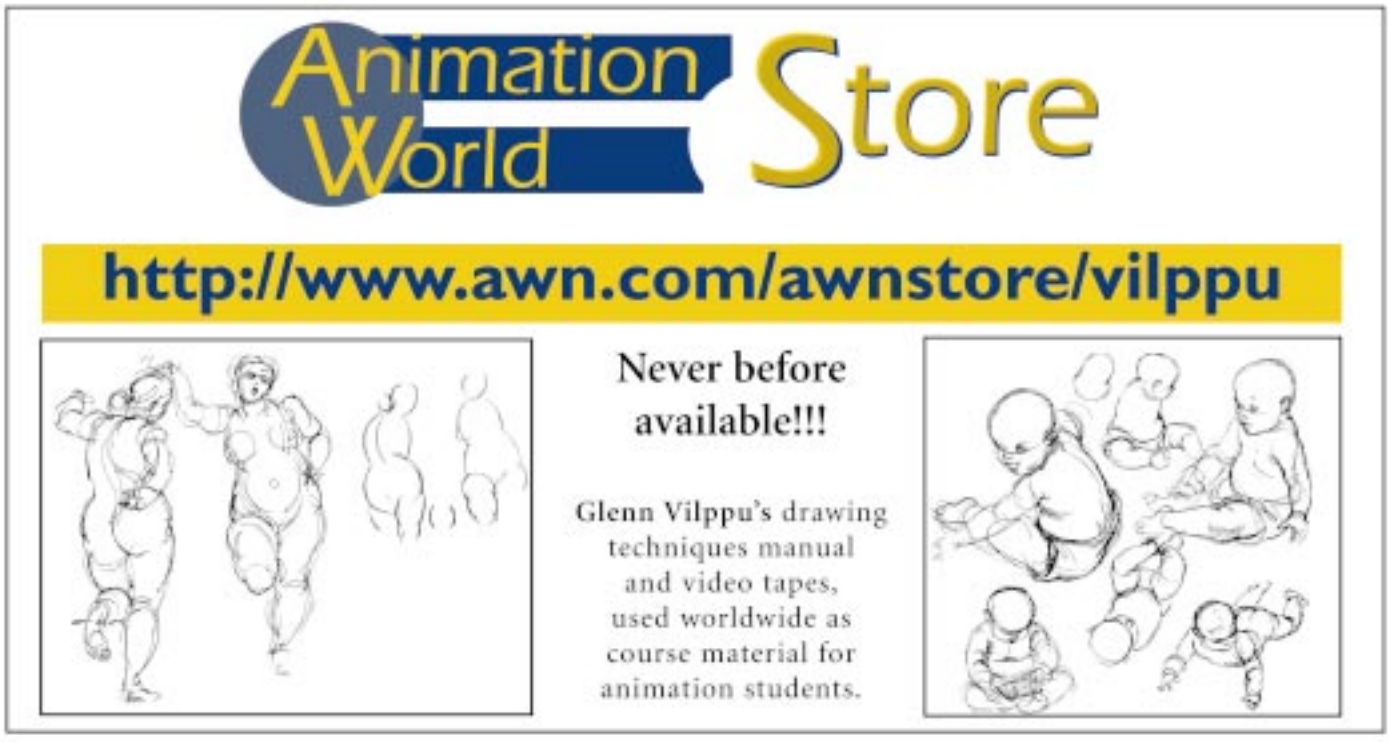
*As we gather around the modern fires and flicker shows of our computer, television and cinema screens, what kinds of stories are we telling ourselves? What kinds of stories are we living by?*

*By every clever and moral means under the sun, find the talent, find the time, find the resources to make it happen. You are only limited by your own imagination.*

*Online, this article contains a clip from The Shadow of Doubt. You can view it now at http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=1392*

*Greg Singer has worked as an assistant editor for* Animation World Magazine *and* Animation Journal*, as well as part of the production management teams for such animation houses as Flinch Studio, Netter Digital Entertainment, VirtualMagic Animation, Fox Feature Animation and DreamWorks Feature Animation. Presently, he takes long walks through his neighborhood, watching the skunks waddle down the sidewalk with complete and carefree oblivion to the rest of the world.*

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

# Japan:

## A View From Inside Production I.G.

by Justin Leach

*About a year ago, I was very fortunate to receive the opportunity to work at Production I.G., the studio most known for creating the animation for Ghost in the Shell. Incidentally, Production I.G. had never hired a full-time foreigner at the company before so I don't think either of us knew what to expect. Japanese animation had always intrigued and inspired me and I wanted to understand the process first hand by moving to Japan. The purpose of this article is to give those interested in Japanese animation a glimpse of what it is like to work at one of the more prominent Japanese animation studios. While the two worlds possess some similarities, generally the two couldn't be more different. The studio environment, typical work day and economics of animation in Japan are just some of the key differences that stand out when compared to Western animation production.*

**A typical animator's desk. All photos by Justin Leach, except where noted.**

### The Work Environment

*When I tell my friends that I get to rub elbows with famous Japanese directors like Mamoru Oshii, I am actually not joking. Due to lack of space, most of the employees have to fit in the best they can. Production I.G. is divided up into 4 separate studio spaces scattered throughout town with about 200 people employed all together. The ING Studio (where I work) does the bulk of the animation work for current television, video games, direct-to-video and feature film projects. The ING Studio building has 4 floors, each with 2 small rooms. I have a very small desk space (not really any cubicles here, just desks divided by shelves) and sometimes if I push my chair out too far, I'll bump into the guy working behind me. I guess the words that come to mind when working here are "garage spirit." Network cables all over the floor, florescent white lights buzzing, employees smoking at the office, and everything shoved into every possible nook and cranny. Sometimes when I am talking on the phone, the employee sitting behind me has to crawl under the telephone cord to leave the room. This is a stark contrast from the big feature film studios in America. From time to time, I dream of my old window cubicle in America overlooking the Manhattan skyline and sigh, "Ah, that was nice."*

*During the day, work in the studio is generally very quiet and*

**The parking lot at I.G.**

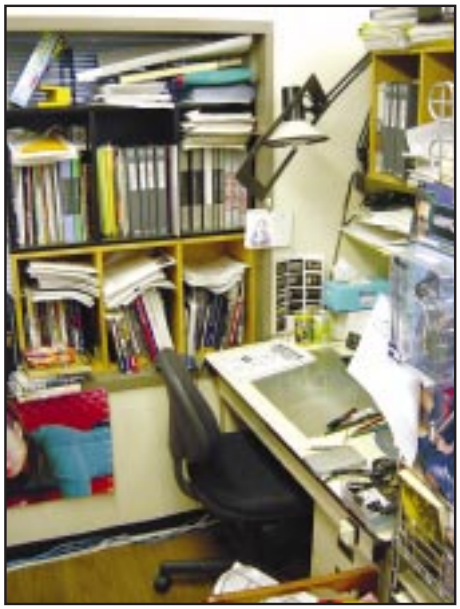
*usually only the humming of the computer fans can is heard. The quietness at the studio often makes me feel like I have to whisper when having a conversation on the phone. At lunchtime, many employees pull out their bento lunch boxes and quietly eat lunch at their desks.*

*One similarity does stand out however: the animator's desks. Rows of toys in unopened boxes, Star Wars memorabilia, movie posters, stacks of DVDs and twelfth generation photocopies of "Timing for Animation" can be seen. I once even saw a photocopy of some notes created by animation master Hayao Miyazaki on how to animate. As a matter of fact, I think Japan is somewhat of an animator's paradise. Japan is one of the few places I know where it is completely acceptable by society to play with toys and read comics your entire life.*

## A Typical Work Day

*Every morning at about 10:00 a.m., I ride my bike (about ten minutes) from my mini-sized apartment to my mini-sized studio.*

**An example of the crowded work space.**



**An animation director's desk.**

*Although the typical workday at the studio officially begins at 10:30 a.m., most of the senior level creators roll in between 1 to 4 p.m. and work late into the early morning. There is sort of this easy going spirit here at the studio as the work always seems to fall magically into place. The work week is from Monday to Friday and every other Saturday is a required work day. As in the United States, many of the employees here are extremely dedicated to their jobs and often people will work 12-14 hour days and occasionally even sleep at their desks.*

**Our author Justin Leach.**
**Photo by Kazunori Suga.**

## The Animation Production Process

*As in the West, once a concept has been established, a great deal of research is done. At this time, the director and his key creative staff work together to decide the look and style for the film. After the influences have been identified, the director's staff travels around the world gathering photo reference and information related to the story. After returning from the research trip, the director will finalize the script and create the storyboards (called "ekonte" in Japanese) for the entire film (usually in about a month's time). After the storyboards are finished, the director will add notes, and*

The animation director's room at I.G.

Animators Ryuji Mitsumoto (left) and Kazunori Suga.

*estimate number of frames per shot. From this point, the director may decide to make an animatic but is not really considered necessary for production. During this time the character designer, mechanical designer, weapons designer and layout designers begin to create work based on the research and director's input. Next, the final approved designs are handed to the 3D and 2D animation staff and the production begins. Once the animation for the shot is approved, it then goes to digital ink and paint. Once the colors have been added, the shots will continue to undergo various tweaks and fixes. After the final animation has been approved, it goes into post-production where the music, sound fx and voice recordings are added to the film. In Japan a great deal of respect is given to the film's director who has a major influence on all of the final creative decisions.*

### CG Production in Japan

*In Japan, computer animation production is usually made by a team of "CG creators" who are generalists responsible for handling all aspects of a shot from beginning to end. In addition, off-the-shelf software is usually used, with the software packages of choice being Lightwave and 3D Studio Max. While most major animation studios in the West typically divide the tasks among a team of specialists in an assembly line fashion, Japan usually has many people assigned to many different types of jobs. For example, although I originally came to Production I.G. as a technical animator, I have done many different types of jobs such as editing animatics, designing Web pages, assisting in international business and documenting production. I think the reason for this generalization by employees is mainly a result of having to work within very restricted budgets.*

### The Economics of Japanese Animation

*Probably one of the greatest differences I have noticed between Japan and America is that the Japanese feature animation industry is very poor – money poor that is. Budgets for feature films can be anywhere from as low as US$1 million to $15 million at the very highest. This pales in comparison to the United States which typically invests 10 to 20 times more per film. This lower budget also reflects employee salaries.*

*Typically animators in Japan earn the equivalent of $15,000 to $20,000 a year.*

*The experience of living in Japan and working at Production I.G. has been one of the most fascinating adventures of my life. I am greatly inspired by the spirit and passion of the creators at Production I.G. and admire their courage and tenacity for taking creative risks and daring to change our perceptions of animation. The Japanese culture has made a very important observation: Animation isn't only for kids. Whether 2D, 3D or stop-motion, animation is just another story telling medium capable of moving the hearts and minds of the audiences that watch them.*

**A row of animators' desks.**

**Back to Back: working in very close proximity.**

*Justin Leach's earliest professional credit was as a video game design consultant in 1992. Since then he has worked on commercials, music videos and theatrical features; notably for Blue Sky Studios from May 1997 through March 2001 where he was on the teams for* Bunny *and* Ice Age, *among other projects. Since April 2001 he has been an employee of Production I.G. in Tokyo, where he is currently working on Mamoru Oshii's next feature animated film.*

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

# Mitsuhisa Ishikawa:

## On Vampires and Other Weirdos

by Will Ryan

Mitsuhisa Ishikawa. All photos by Justin Leach.

*On November 14, 2001, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences hosted the 7th Annual Marc Davis Lecture on Animation. Entitled "Drawing from Japan," its subject was anime and its influences. It was a lively review produced for the Academy by Randy Haberkamp, hosted by Jerry Beck and featuring a gallimaufry of clips and an international handful of guests. An audience favorite was Mitsuhisa Ishikawa, the founder and President of Tokyo's Production I.G., Inc. His company produced Blood: The Last Vampire, a stunning film which was ineligible for Academy consideration due to its less than 70-minute running time.*

*Mitsuhisa Ishikawa had several provocative and amusing comments, which surprised and delighted the audience regarding the "harmfulness" factor of anime and the "weirdo" nature of some of its practitioners. A follow-up conversation seemed to be in order, so I caught up with him at a restaurant near the Los Angeles airport shortly before his return to Tokyo.*

*Our conversation was made even more delightful by the presence of Maki Terashima-Furata, Production I.G. USA's international representative, who acted as our interpreter.*

### I was a big fan of Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon movies.

**Will Ryan:** *You got quite a reaction from the audience at the Academy with your blunt statement that, while American animation is harmless to children, at Production I.G., you make films that are harmful to children.*

**Mitsuhisa Ishikawa:** *In Japan, there aren't any "harmless" shows that do well commercially. And by "harmful," I don't mean 100% harmful.*

**WR:** *You mean, a narrative, which contains material suitable for adult sensibilities.*

**MI:** *Yes and this may be only 1 or 2 percent of the show.*

**WR:** *I suppose we might get*

*philosophical and suggest that the supposedly "harmless to children" American animated productions are harmful in a more subtle and insidious way, in that they may turn children into mindless zombies of consumerism.*

**MI:** *I agree.*

**WR:** *So maybe we should all get out of business.*

**MI:** *The argument for that would be to point out that the very act of living in this world puts each of us in harm's way.*

**WR:** *You mean there is the potential for danger everywhere and yet we persevere?*

**MI:** *Yes.*

**WR:** *I think we can agree that some things are more harmful than other things.*

**MI:** *Agreed.*

**The Japanese animated films that are most commercially successful are the ones that are targeted toward the U.S.**

**WR:** *Whilst avoiding life's perils and pratfalls, one thing I do enjoy is seeing films with beautiful artwork and stunning storytelling. Skillful timing, sound and visual design, and a hint of mystery make the experience even better.*

**Ishikawa-san with Kunihiko Ikuhara, the director of *Sailor Moon* and *Revolutionary Girl Utena*.**

*I saw all of that in Blood: The Last Vampire. And I congratulate you on that.*

**MI:** *Thank you. I had highly qualified experts handling each section of the production. That's why we were able to make such a beautiful film.*

**WR:** *Speaking of your co-workers, something you said about some of them evoked noticeable merriment at the Academy.*

**MI:** *Ah, yes. I said, "As a producer, the best directors I work with are all considered weirdos." But I didn't mean that in a bad way. They're considered a bit strange by society in general because, even though they are adults in age and appearance, they are still like children. They still haven't "grown up." They have their pure kid's mind in themselves. And this is not considered socially acceptable in some places. However, because they have that child-like purity, they are extremely talented filmmakers.*

**WR:** *If they had been regular "salary man" types, they would have been useless as filmmakers.*

**MI:** *But because they have that unique sense of mind, they make wonderful films.*

**WR:** *The "weirdos" line was a refreshingly direct way of stating that.*

**MI:** *I think it shows how close I am with the directors. Usually, if a*

*person says somebody is "weird," they would probably upset that person. But I can guarantee that they are not upset by what I said, because we have a very good relationship between director and producer.*

**WR:** *You are the founder and president of five companies involved in the development, production, marketing and licensing of animated television shows, theatrical releases and games. What is your early background? Did you begin as an artist?*

**MI:** *I never went to art school. I produce. I studied economics, but in college I was already interested in traditional Japanese puppet plays. I worked as a puppetmaster.*

**WR:** *Sort of a "real-time" animator.*

**MI:** *Yes.*

**WR:** *Are there any American animated films that you've enjoyed over the years?*

**MI:** *Most recently, I liked Monsters, Inc.*

**WR:** *How about as a kid?*

**MI:** *I was a big fan of Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon movies. All the old black and white movies. As a kid, I also liked the Kurosawa films because I like action.*

**WR:** *An appreciation you bring to your animated films.*

**MI:** *Yes.*

**WR:** *As a producer, how do you work?*

**MI:** *In the Japanese animation industry, there are three types of producers: (1) the executive producer, who collects funds for the production; (2) the line producer, who manages the production; and (3) the producer who plans the production. I do all three of those roles. I try to train the young people at I.G. who want to become producers in the same way: to manage all three categories. This production method is one strong point about Production I.G., and helps explain why we have been able to last this long while targeting solely the Japanese market.*

**Left to right: Maki Terashima-Furata, Mitsuhisa Ishikawa, Kunihiko Ikuhara, Randy Haberkamp, AMPAS Program Coordinator, and Ken Wakita, the evening's translator for Ikuhara-san.**

**WR:** *Do you see the American market as part of your future?*

**MI:** *Definitely. The Japanese animated films that are most commercially successful are the ones that are targeted toward the U.S. and other English-speaking territories. Seventy to eighty percent of non-Japanese profit comes from English language sales.*

**WR:** *Would it be a fair prediction that your next feature will be 70 minutes or longer?*

**MI:** *(laughing) Yes. The Academy, you know.*

*Will Ryan is an Emmy and Writer's Guild award nominee for his work as a writer/producer. He has also done voices for more than 1,000 film and television productions including* The Little Mermaid. *Among his current projects is the Annie Award-winning series* Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective!, *which he created.*

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

# A New Age for American Independents?

by Heather Kenyon

*U.S. independents have suffered through the heavy vertical integration of the 1990s. However, with large corporations deciding that perhaps in these tight times budgets could be better served by cutting big studio overheads, it seems like a bright new day could be on the horizon for the U.S.' brave independents. As competition looms from other animation nations, those with tax relief and government subsidies, it looks like the future will include diversity, co-productions and lots of ingenuity and innovation. Here three leading U.S. indie studios sound off on their prospects for the future.*

◆◆◆◆◆

**Bill Schultz**
**Creative Director**
**Mike Young Productions, Woodland Hills, California**

*It is an exciting time for independent animation studios. In 1989 Fox commissioned Bobby's World from us at Film Roman. They offered to buy up all the rights by paying us a fee that was equal to what would have been, on any other network a license fee. Thus the beginning of vertical integration into the kids business. Next came the buildup of animation studios at Disney, Saban/Fox, Warner Bros. and soon after Nickelodeon. All of this squeezed the independents into a recession, where not only could they not own the shows they produced and created, but they were limited in terms of the work for hire business, as more and more owners had their own facilities.*

*Well flash forward to 2002, the apex of the vertical integration craze and the future is looking better for independents and animation in general. There's 2D, 3D, Flash, stop-motion... There are more channels with more specific programming niches — action, cartoony, adult, very adult, gay, straight, sci-fi, comedy ...or a mixture of all of the above!!! All the majors want to talk "co-production" or "acquisition." That Wall Street investment capital is being replaced by the sweat equity of creative, lean mean animation machines. Everything is cyclical, but better the second time around.*

*The year ahead will point to more change and in ways we never imagined. But that's why you better enjoy the ride, 'cause you never know if you'll get there....where ever that is. I have learned to accept radical changes in the landscape and look forward to what the future brings.*

◆◆◆◆◆

**Richard Winkler**
**Vice President/Executive Producer**
**Curious Pictures, New York City, New York**

*The only sure way to improve one's golf game is to go back and start playing at a younger age.*

*So my plan to deal with the "TV industry landscape" is to go back and get re-born as a Canadian.*

*I'll let you know how it works.*

*But seriously, our plan at Curious is to continue to develop innovative shows that work in*

*multiple media, and to partner closely with broadcasters and marketers to co-develop properties.*

◆◆◆◆◆

**Eric Radomski**
**Executive Creative Director**
**Film Roman, North Hollywood, California**

*At a minimum it will be a pivotal year. The events of September unfortunately have been used as the excuse for just about everything from passing on projects that might be perceived as "insensitive" to "economic adjustments" forcing delayed start-ups. Most annoying of all September 11th is the number one reason most often given to justify "staff reduction" and overall "budget cuts." It's quite disgusting, but true.*

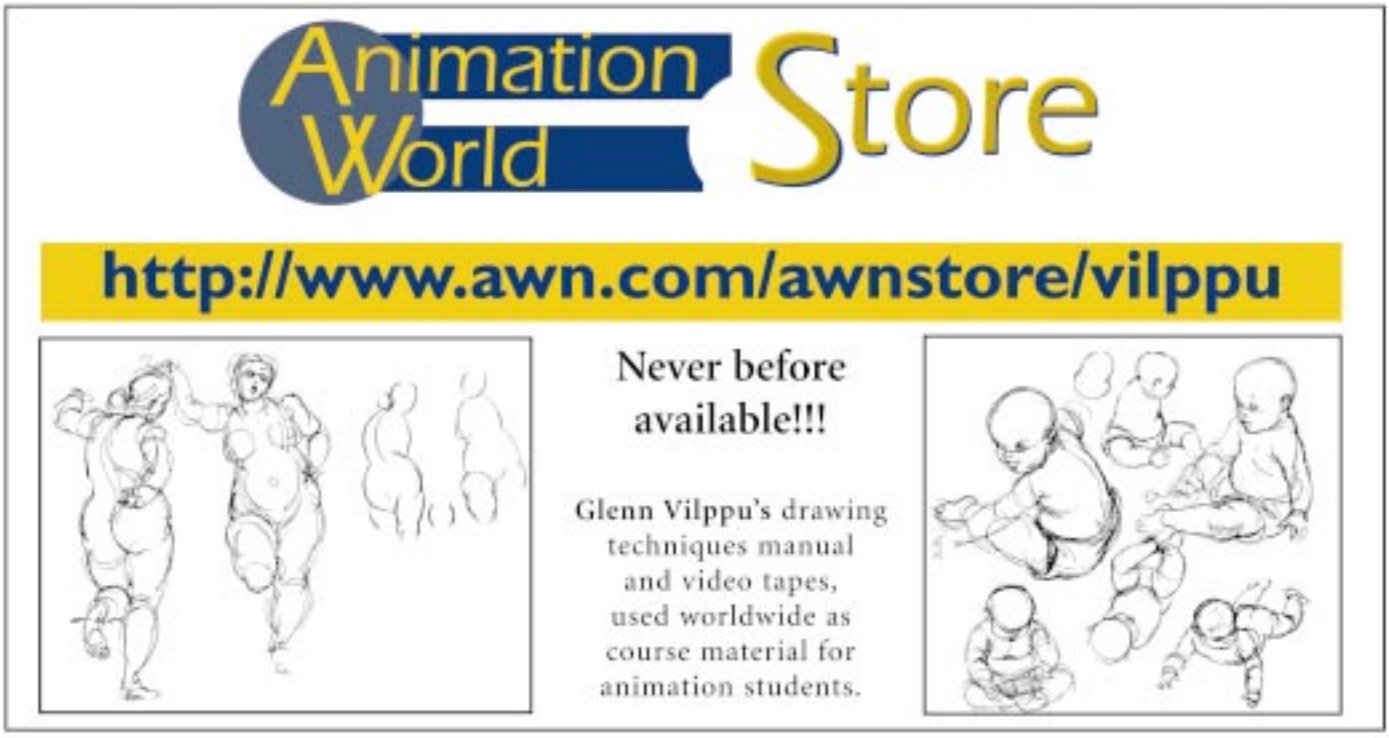
*This year's executive mantra suggests that animated television shows are no longer "economically feasible." That's horse shit! The fact is networks/studios are greedier than ever and driven by their desire to increase their profit margin, short-term gain has become the norm.*

*As a result, the burden rests firmly on the shoulders of the U.S. production teams and overseas studios to produce and deliver the same quality product at a reduced rate. I believe in the integrity of most of the artists in the animation field and expect they will make their best effort in the coming year to produce the finest entertainment possible… all things considered.*

*This evolutionary bump in the entertainment industry offers an opportunity for independent studios and creators to capitalize on the sleeping giants of our industry, although everyone would just as soon distance themselves from their horrible memories of "Dot Com Dumb."*

*The digital world is the force to be reckoned with, from practical applications in production to the brave and bold world of wireless distribution. I believe we are on the verge of a new golden age of entertainment, which offers unlimited opportunities for any creative individual interested in side stepping the traditional "Hollywood" methodology, which is quickly securing its place in the halls of your local natural history museum.*

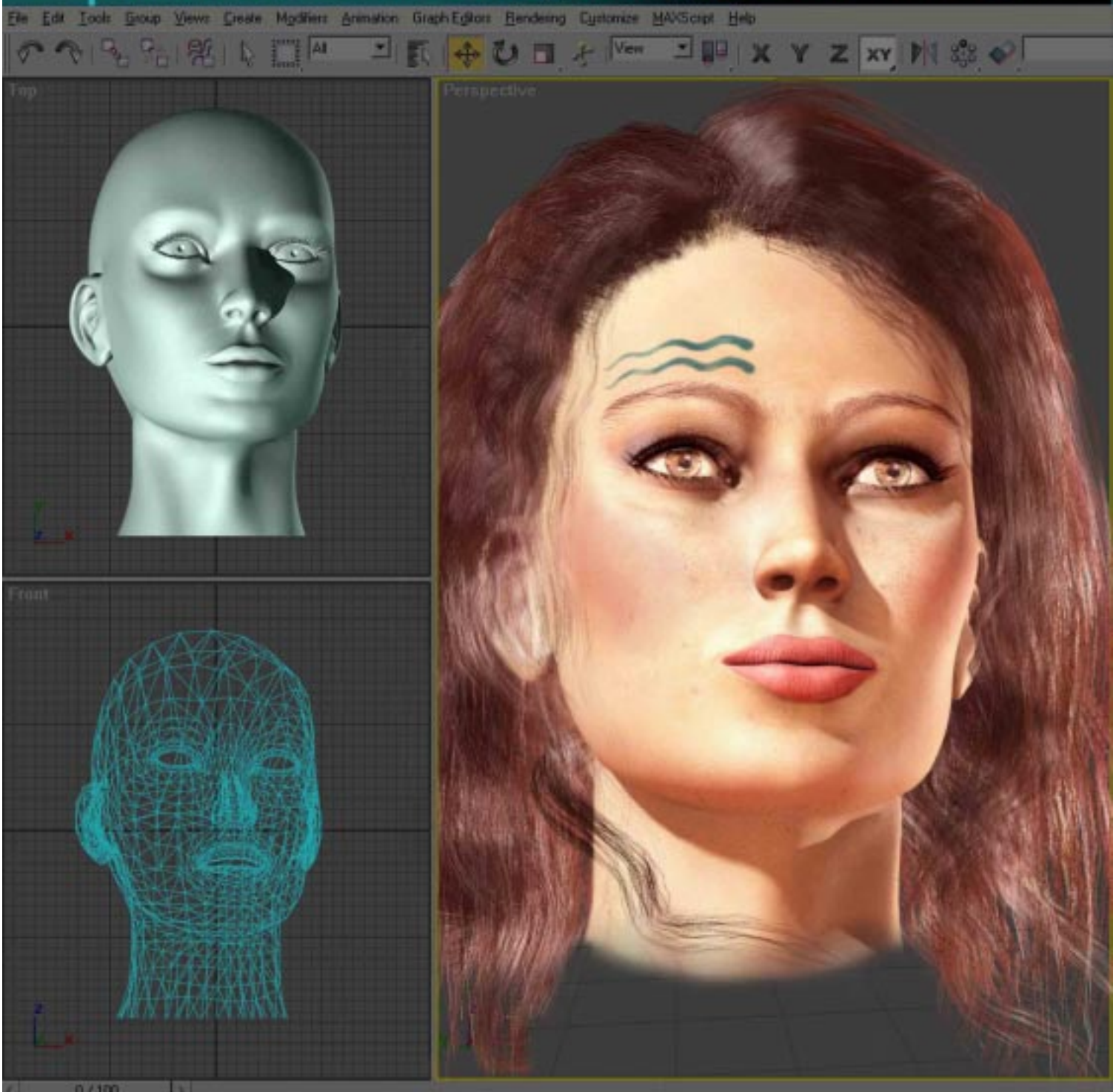
*Heather Kenyon is editor-in-chief of Animation World Network.*

UACT

# Learn how to use 3D Studio MAX and MAYA

## University of Advancing Computer Technol




## Online Classes also Available!

call 1-800-658-5744 | www.uact.edu

# Make Mine Marceline

by Robin Allan

*"Marceline was my town."*
*— Walt Disney*

**A specially commissioned postcard commemorating the Centennial Celebration. Art by: Dave Brooks.**

*What has a small Mid-Western town, population 2558, in the rolling hills of Missouri and some three hours drive east of Kansas City to do with Walt Disney? Well, quite a lot actually, because this was the place where the four year old Disney spent the happiest years of his childhood, the place where his itinerant family settled in 1906 to farm forty five acres of land just north of the town. This was the place where the boy Disney could run free and experience the security of life close to the land. He was part not only of farm life and could work with and observe the animals on the farm, but could also explore the life of the little town itself. And, too, there was the railway — the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad ran right through the town, and the town itself grew up because of the railroad, having been founded only eighteen years beforehand in 1888. The Disney family had to move on in 1911 but those five years, a vital period in any child's upbringing, meant a great deal to Walt Disney.*

*Years later, after Disney's first success, he sent his parents to Marceline for a holiday in 1933 and he wrote to the town in 1938 on the occasion of its golden jubilee, commenting in a characteristically authentic tone — this is not the phraseology of a ghost writer — that Marceline had made an indelible impression on him as a youngster. The letter bears quoting at some length:*

*"More things of importance happened to me in Marceline than have happened since — or are likely to in the future. Things, I mean, like experiencing my first country life, seeing my first circus parade, attending my first school, seeing my first motion picture!… One of my fondest childhood memories is of Doc Sherwood. He used to encourage me in my drawing, and give me little presents for my efforts...My brother Roy reminds me of another flyer I took in the line of art at that time. I painted one side of our house with black pitch. The outcome must have been slightly frightening, to say the least, and I wasn't thanked for my efforts by the family...Everything connected with Marceline was a thrill to us, coming as we did from a city the size of Chicago. I'm glad I'm a small town boy and I'm glad Marceline was my town. Thanks a lot for letting me write my impressions, and say hello to all the folks..." (1)*

*Many of Disney's interests can be traced back to Marceline; the farmyard and rural ambience of the early shorts (Mickey was never an urban mouse) and the love of trains. Trains still roar their way frequently through the town, past the little station, or depot as it is known. (Alas, Amtrak's passen-*

*ger service no longer makes a scheduled stop.) The boy Disney would run down the lane from the farm to listen to the trains roar over the bridge. The lane is still there, unsurfaced, and the bridge is there, and many of the places associated with him are still there in Marceline. Many people remember him as a genial visitor in the late 1950s.*

**The restored Marceline Depot Museum. Photo courtesy of Dennis M. Bradley.**

*The ambience of small town America and the rural communities that surrounded little towns like Marceline formed a visual equivalent to many of Disney's films, from the early shorts to Mary Poppins (1964); its Kansas Avenue, the high street of the town, formed the basis of Disney's "Main Street USA" in Disneyland. To honor the link, Marceline changed the name Kansas Avenue to Main Street USA at a special ceremony in 1998.*

*Disney himself returned to Marceline in 1956 — by train of course -– to dedicate Disney Park and to open the Walt Disney swimming pool. He came back again in 1960 to open the new Walt Disney School, dismissing his staff and telling his host Rush Johnson, the Mayor of Marceline, that he didn't need any retainers. "This is my home," he said. After his death the entire family returned to Marceline in 1968 to dedicate a commemorative stamp issued from the Marceline post office.*

*It is not surprising, therefore, that Marceline is proud of its boyhood son, and Disney was relaxed and happy on his visits; he was thinking in his last years about a small theme park to be called the Walt Disney Boyhood Farm, but was too ill to elaborate his plans and had to cancel later projected visits (2). Disney was a charismatic personality, grouchy and difficult with staff, defensive when threatened; he never forgot his early struggles and the way he had been betrayed by colleagues and associates on a number of occasions. Away from work he was another man; film and photographs taken at Marceline, and oral histories from those who remember him, portray a man at ease with himself and the world.*

**Return To Marceline, 1994**

*My first visit to Marceline was in 1994 after I had been doing some research in California for my book on Walt Disney. As an Englishman my experience of the States had been of her big cities, New York, Washington, Los Angeles. All were different experiences — the intoxication of nervous, hectic New York, the sunny sprawl of Los Angeles, constipated with traffic, the grandiose opulence of Washington were all exciting cities, but rural America was a new experience. On a hot August day the Amtrak train (at that time it still made a scheduled stop at Marceline) drew up at the little depot. I was the only passenger to get off and the train pulled away, its mournful hooter reminiscent in my mind of so many other trains featured in Hollywood films over the years. Where to go? I knew only that this was Walt's boyhood home, as the depot noticeboard proudly announced:*

*"WALT DISNEY'S*
*BOYHOOD HOME*
*MARCELINE*
*MO.*
*WELCOMES YOU"*

*And that is what happened to me. In the midday sunshine I walked round the back of the station and found a mechanic who was fixing a car. I asked him if I was near the center of the town and he said, smilingly, that it was one block away. So into the then Kansas Avenue I walked, and felt that I was on the set of a film, a quiet town basking sleepily in the sunshine, with Murray's department store (where Mrs. Disney bought Walt his first farm overalls and where my wife would later buy me two pairs of splendid braces — or suspenders as they are called in the U.S.). I went first to the newspaper office, and it was like walking into a Norman Rockwell painting — you know,*

**The barn raising nearly complete in Marceline.**
**All photos courtesy of Robin Allan, unless otherwise noted.**

*the one in that series "Norman Rockwell Visits..." The kindly young editor took me to the Disney sites and introduced me to Rush Johnson, who had been Mayor on Disney's visits and who became a great friend of Walt Disney. In turn Rush introduced me to his daughter Kaye Malins who had presented Disney with a bouquet of flowers when she was six, and who now lives in the much altered Disney farmhouse. Kaye, along with her enthusiastic family and colleagues, generated the steam needed to launch the celebrations to honor the 100th anniversary of Walt Disney's birth.*

*Everywhere I met with courtesy and a sturdy affection for the boyhood home of the town's famous son, and a pride in its own community — as well as loyalty to Disney himself, for by this time the rebarbative biographies starting with Richard Schickel's were current.*

*After spending the night at the Lamplighter Motel (the sign displays Mickey tucked up in bed, his shorts hung up beside him, shoes on the floor and the zzz of slumber hovering over him), Kaye took me to the station and warned me that the train might be late. She gave me a bottle of water, and an apple, and supplied me with a chair so "I sat in the shade, listening to the sounds of Marceline around me — children playing in Ripley park, cars bouncing over the level crossing, the crunch of cyclists' tires on gravel, men calling to each other across their back yards, a woman hanging out washing with the click of clothes pegs, a workman using a drill, bird calls, the wind in the leaves, peaceful until the train arrived an hour late, glittering in the sunshine and bellowing out its plaintiff siren." (3)*

## The Spirit Of Mickey 1998 And Walt Disney's Hometown 100th Birthday Celebration 2001

*"The Spirit of Mickey" in 1998 was a run-up to the centenary celebrations of 2001, both charming festivals, modest in their aspirations; the latter culminated in the reopening of the depot railroad station as a museum, thanks to the indefatigable efforts of Rush Johnson and his colleagues. A special Amtrak train arrived bearing not only the Governor of Missouri and his family, but Mickey and Minnie too. There were other delights on hand including tours of the Disney elementary school, a barn raising on the Disney farm not far from the cottonwood tree where local legend has it that Walt and his little sister Ruth would go and dream together and make up stories. A picture of the dreaming tree and the children standing nearby made a delightful publicity motif. Other events included music in the park, Flora Disney's Wolf Apple Pie Eating Contest, a "Walt Sketching Rupert the Horse" competition, and other events including a Main Street parade. The highlight was the opening of the depot as a museum, lovingly and tastefully restored under the direction of the architect Dennis Bradley. Distinguished guests included Walt Disney's nephew Ted Beecher, son of Ruth Disney, and his wife and family; many of the letters and documents on dis-*

**Kaye Malins welcomes guests to the Disney Elementary School during the birthday celebration.**

**Missouri Governor Bob Holden, wife Lori Hauser Holden and family and friends attend the opening of the of the Marceline Depot Museum. Photo courtesy of Dennis M. Bradley.**

**The Friends of Marceline meet up with the Disney Scholars (l to r): LaVerne Stevens, Don Perri, Dennis Bradley, Robin Allan and Professor John Tibbets of the University of Kansas.**

*play came from the Ruth Disney Beecher collection.*

*In the Uptown Theatre (where Walt Disney had personally premiered The Great Locomotive Chase in 1956) a continuous stream of lectures was given by Disney scholars, including Michael Broggie, Don Perri, LaVerne Stevens, Steven Watts, David Williams (4) and others including myself. We felt honored to be speaking from the same platform as Walt Disney, and in the same beautiful art deco cinema.*

*There was so much going on that we couldn't possibly see it all — we missed the Gandy Dancer Review, the Crop Maize, the Raising of the Barn and many other events. This was barely ten days after September 11th and crowds were not as great as the organizers had hoped — nevertheless, Small Town America was out to enjoy itself and there was an air of quiet jollity and a sense of patriotism and appreciation. Many flags were on display.*

**And Did You Once See Disney Plain?**

*Where does the Walt Disney Company figure in this? Well, not at all except for the loan of Mickey and Minnie from Disneyland. Since Marceline means nothing financially to the current regime, it is ignored. The importance of the town, its independence and continuing nurture of the memory of its famous son, is of no import to a corporation concerned with milking as many dollars out of the public as it can, while it can. It boasts at its parks of "100 years of magic," cashing in on the anniversary of its founder's birth, but the magic did not begin there until 27 years later with the arrival of Mickey Mouse.*

*This freedom from the Disney Company's embrace has, however, been of advantage to Marceline — it has been able to proceed on its own way, to produce its own images, its own distinctive logos and merchandise. We never looked for good taste even from Walt — well, there it is in Marceline today, alive and kicking and what a breath of fresh air this is — to enjoy Disney and his legacy without the stultifying Company hand and brand.*

**Where Now Marceline?**

*The organizers of the 100th anniversary celebrations are determined to continue to raise the profile of their town and its connection with Walt Disney. The depot*

*museum will need financial support and a curatorship that will understand the parameters of its association with Disney. It will take a special interest in the history of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad company. Tragically, there is no Walt Disney Foundation, no Walt Disney Library, no Walt Disney Research Center, no Walt Disney Institute, or Museum, or Art Gallery. Isn't this simply extraordinary when you think of the importance of this man and his heritage not only for the United States but also for the world? Marceline is absolutely unique in promoting the first museum in the world to contain original material pertaining to Disney and his early life. May it continue to pioneer this enterprise for which our children and our children's children will be grateful for years, perhaps for centuries to come, long after the corporations of today and "the captains and the kings depart."*

*There is another reason for extolling the enterprise of this little Mid-West town. It lies some 125 miles north east of Kansas City where another group of devoted men and women are working to restore the Laugh-O-Gram Studio where Disney worked as a young man before he went to Hollywood (5). Marceline also lies more or less midway between Kansas City to the west and Hannibal, to the east, with its Mark Twain associations.*

*What more suitable figures from the 19th and 20th century heritage of the popular culture of the United States than these two story tellers – one choosing the written word and one choosing the animated image? There is already an established tourist association for Mark Twain; how enterprising it would be to see a tourist trail linked from Hannibal via Marceline to Kansas City. I am sure that this thought is not far from the minds of that nucleus of enthusiasts who, with little financial resource but with immense good will, have honored the boyhood son of Marceline. As George Mendoza wrote for Norman Rockwell's Americana ABC, "I am America. I begin with A and I end in a. I am America as long ago as I can remember and as far ahead as I can dream."*

**Dennis Bradley, the architect who is consulting on the restoration of the Laugh-O-Gram Studio in Kansas City, points out structural damage to the building.**

*Robin Allan is a writer and art historian based in Derbyshire, England. He has written extensively on Disney and has lectured on the subject in Britain, Europe, Canada and the United States. His latest book,* Walt Disney and Europe, *was published by John Libbey to rave reviews.*

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

## Notes

*1. Walt Disney, "The Marceline I Knew," The Marceline News, 2 September, 1938.*

*2. For more details about the Disney Boyhood Farm project see the author's Walt Disney and Europe (London: John Libbey, 1999) p. 245. There is also admirable comment on Disney and Marceline in Steven Watts' The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life (NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).*

*3. Author's diary, 27 August, 1994.*

*4. Michael Broggie is the author of Walt Disney's Railroad Story (Pasadena: Pentrex, 1998); Don Peri is a Disney scholar who has interviewed many of the Disney artists; LaVerne Stevens is the author of Bread and Butter Days (Lakeland: Bread and Butter Press, 1992); Steven Watts is the author of The Magic Kingdom (see note 2 above); David Williams is the author of many articles on Disney, as well as curating exhibitions of Disney art. He presented his Fantasia exhibition to Marceline after its display there for the 100th birthday celebrations.*

*5. The Laugh-O-Gram Studio, disgracefully neglected over the years, is at last being restored by the diligent "Thank You Walt Disney Inc.," of which Dennis Bradley, who supervised the restoration of the Marceline Depot Museum, is Building Committee Chairman. This is a building of immense importance to the American history of animation. Here the young Walt Disney made his first cartoons and worked with other young men who would later make distinguished careers of their own in Hollywood. I am grateful to Mr. Bradley for taking the trouble to show me all the extant Disney sites in Kansas City.*

# Copy? Right!

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

These characters are the icons of an empire that reaps between $8 - $10 billion per year.

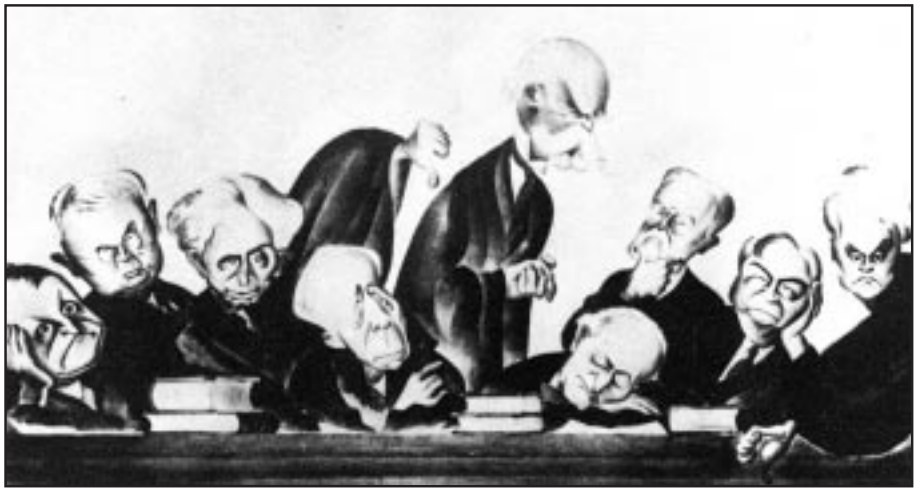
*"Forever Yours" may be a declaration of love, but "Forever Mine" has become a declaration of war, one that will soon be fought behind the doors of the U.S. Supreme Court. The reason for this battle? To determine whether Congress has the authority to perpetuate copyrights ad infinitum. At stake? Literally thousands of artistic works that are being denied widespread public access by the media corporations that presently own them. This battle was ignited by a former Unix system administrator named Eric Eldred who, in 1995, began putting literary works that had fallen into public domain on the Internet. Making Mr. Eldred's vocation interminably difficult were America's copyright laws.*

**How Did We Get Here?**

*These laws, first addressed by the United States Copyright Act of 1790, provided for a term of fourteen years renewable in the final year for another fourteen. In actual practice Congress tended to add extensions as time rolled on. Since 1960, in fact, Congress has seen fit to extend copyrights on artistic works eleven times. Without going through the entire history of this issue, suffice it to say that copyrights eventually came to enjoy 75 full years of protection. This situation might have been well and good, but yet another extension was passed in 1998. The Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act tacked another twenty years of life on to existing copyrights, becoming in the process a cause celebre for legal scholars, entertainment corporations, archivists, historians, and last but not least humble entrepreneurs such as Eric Eldred. This document covers a wide spectrum of intellectual property, but it has become most widely known as the "Mickey Mouse Extension Act."*

*Why? The world's most famous mouse was due to become public property in 2003, and Mickey (along with thirty-five of his early cartoons) would have passed from Disney to The People. Donald, Pluto and Goofy were soon to follow suit. Not surprisingly, their parent studio was more than a bit reticent to let them pass without a fight — especially since these characters are the icons of an empire that reaps between $8 - $10 billion per year. According to Boston Globe Magazine (8/29/99), Disney lobbied extensively to have Mr. Bono's bill passed. Ten of the thirteen original House bill's sponsors received contributions from Disney (or its employees) during that election cycle; so did eight of the twelve Senate sponsors. Disney CEO Michael Eisner personally lobbied Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R., Mississippi). Lest Disney seem like the only corporate entity dispensing campaign largesse to the lawmakers, it should be noted that solons such as Patrick Leahy (D., Vermont) received contributions from both Disney and Time Warner (custodians of a few famous toons in their own right). While the nation's attention was riveted on President Clinton's impeachment proceedings, the bill quietly slipped through into law.*

*So, business as usual, right? Not according to Lawrence Lessig, a Stanford law professor who took up Eldred's cause. Lessig believes the Extension Act to be unconstitutional for the following reasons:*



*The Act violates the First Amendment as it fails to protect freedom of expression; Congress is exceeding its authority to extend copyright protection; and the bill represents a corruption of the original intent behind copyright law. Enter the Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court, who will decide whether or not Congress has acted in a Constitutional manner. Those who maintain (in an even louder voice since Enron) that the U.S. government has become a "corporatocracy" under the control of wealthy special interests are already predicting defeat. Those who retain their idealism hope for a victory on behalf of the people, who would finally gain access to artistic works previously denied them.*

*I am by no means an expert in legal affairs. It's all I can do to catch the latest episodes of Justice League, let alone follow Supreme justices; all the legal and economic repercussions of this convoluted case are beyond my province to discuss here. My main concern is, what does this brief mean to We the Animation Fans?*

**The Downside**

*To begin with, the past would be effectively frozen should the Bono Act be upheld. Arizona State University law professor Dennis S. Karjala commented that: "For the first time in our history, no new works will enter the public domain for a full twenty years." Fellow AWN columnist Jerry Beck also notes: "Hundreds of cartoons, particularly black-and-white cartoons (think Scrappy, Oswald, Bimbo and others), are currently held prisoner by the big corporations that own them." These cartoons are likely not worth the effort on the part of these companies to restore and release because they are not profitable enough. They certainly won't be released to theaters as before; they can't compete with the hip, digital products available on TV; and they are not likely to cause stampedes at the local video store. Therefore, said cartoons sit and deteriorate into piles of nitrate ash to the chagrin of Jerry, Jere Guldin, and other animation historians and preservationists.*

*The unfortunate point is, there is still a profit to made on these films. Entrepreneurs of works that fall into the public domain can package and sell these films to the public. These toons may not end up enshrined on flashy DVDs; in fact, if the history of public domain cartoons is any indication, they are more likely to be going for $4.99 per tape at Big Billy's Toy Warehouse. This does not in any way diminish their intrinsic value; should the Supreme Court grant a second, publicly-owned life to Scrappy, Yippie, Oopie and Co., they will once again be seen and thus rejoin our cultural heritage. I can't say whether releasing the surviving manifest of Farmer Al Falfa, Krazy Kat or Dinky Doodle cartoons to public domain would make America a better place or give its citizens a deeper appreciation of art, but doing so would be closer to the original intent of the Constitution and its Framers.*

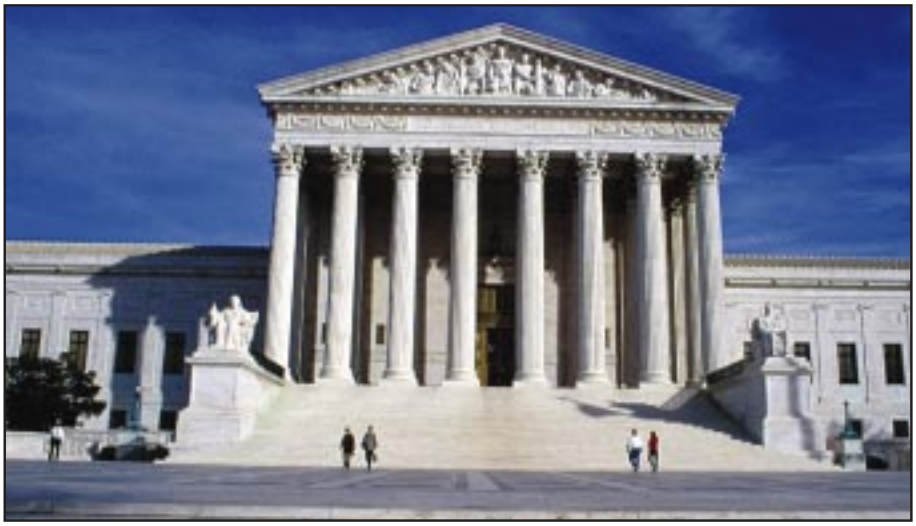
**The Debate**

*The Framers, however, were not exactly detail-oriented when composing the original laws. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution states that exclusive rights expire after "limited times." Although the document clearly doesn't say "in perpetuity," one could argue that (relative to the time elapsed since the Whigs last ran a candidate) ninety-five years isn't really all that long. Thus, a legal conundrum: "limited times" may not be infinite, but the ink on the Constitution never quite dries, either. Another problem is that the Framers did not foresee the rise of multibillion-dollar business conglomerates and the influence that their lobbying could wield on future lawmakers. Professor Karjala summed up the issue rather succinctly for the Los Angeles Times on February 21, 2002: "It (the case) is one where we simply can never expect Congress to follow the Constitutional requirements because there is a built-in bias in the legislative process for copyright. The beneficiaries are*

*organized and the general public is not. It's no one's fault. It's structural. It's a problem of democracy."*

*It is the nature of that Constitutional democracy to solve problems through amendment, negotiation and compromise, and in that spirit some interesting ideas have been proposed. Eldred's lawyer Lawrence Lessig, in an interview with The New Yorker (January 21, 2002), suggested that "copyrights should last five years but should be renewable fifteen times, except for copyrights on software, which should be renewable once." Jerry Beck opined that, "If it were up to me, I'd compromise with the studios when their film copyrights expire. For example, give the studios a choice: make your black-and-white cartoons...available on video and profit from it or forfeit your holdings to the public domain." Both suggestions are worthy of King Solomon, but the fact remains that unless the original intent of the Constitution is upheld and enforced by the highest court in the land, these solutions are subject to end-runs by influence peddlers. Disney and AOL Time Warner are no doubt priming the pump for 2019 even as I write this column, and this is precisely what Dr. Karjala fears.*

*The debate will be a bitter one. Steven Gillers, vice dean of New York University, told the Los Angeles Times (2/21/2002) that: "This case is sexy because it's about money and the arts at the same time. Probably billions of dollars ride on this decision, so millions will be spent on lawyers and amicus briefs and research on the history of copyright going back to King James." In the same article, Los Angeles lawyer Neville Johnson was more specific: "It's*



*Mickey Mouse, is why they're all freaked out." Disney marketing expert Kevin Lane Keller concurred: "In the case of Mickey Mouse this is a huge issue. Mickey still has huge symbolic value and he still has a lot of commercial value." It should be pointed out at this time that even if early depictions of Mickey Mouse fall into public domain, the character still enjoys formidable protection as a Disney trademark. Those who try to develop new cartoons, stories or venues for the Mouse will undoubtedly be hit with the legal equivalent of the daisy-cutter bomb by Disney's crack team of lawyers.*

It seems that the copyright laws, as presently construed, represent the victory of corporate interests over the people.

**Is This What Was Meant?**

*It seems that the copyright laws, as presently construed, represent the victory of corporate interests over the people. I am not anti-Disney; free-market capitalism is the economic theory that underpins our culture, and few companies have done a better job under its tenets. I am also not anti-government; for the most part, Congress does a passing fair job of negotiating between two increasingly contentious parties in the greater interest of the country. What I most vehemently decry is the fact that major corporations can, in their own best interests, overstep the bounds of economic competition by influencing the political process with self-serving contributions. Dr. Karjala is only partly correct; the current copyright flap is less a problem of democracy than a tortured distortion of that ideal. Attorney Gerry Margolis, who represents some of the mightiest copyright holders, also spoke with the Los Angeles Times on the subject of public domain entrepreneurs: "We're not talking about people who want to make intellectual property available to the free world, we're talking about people who want to go into business...and make a profit on what yesterday was someone else's property." That may be, but isn't that what the Constitution intended in the first place?*

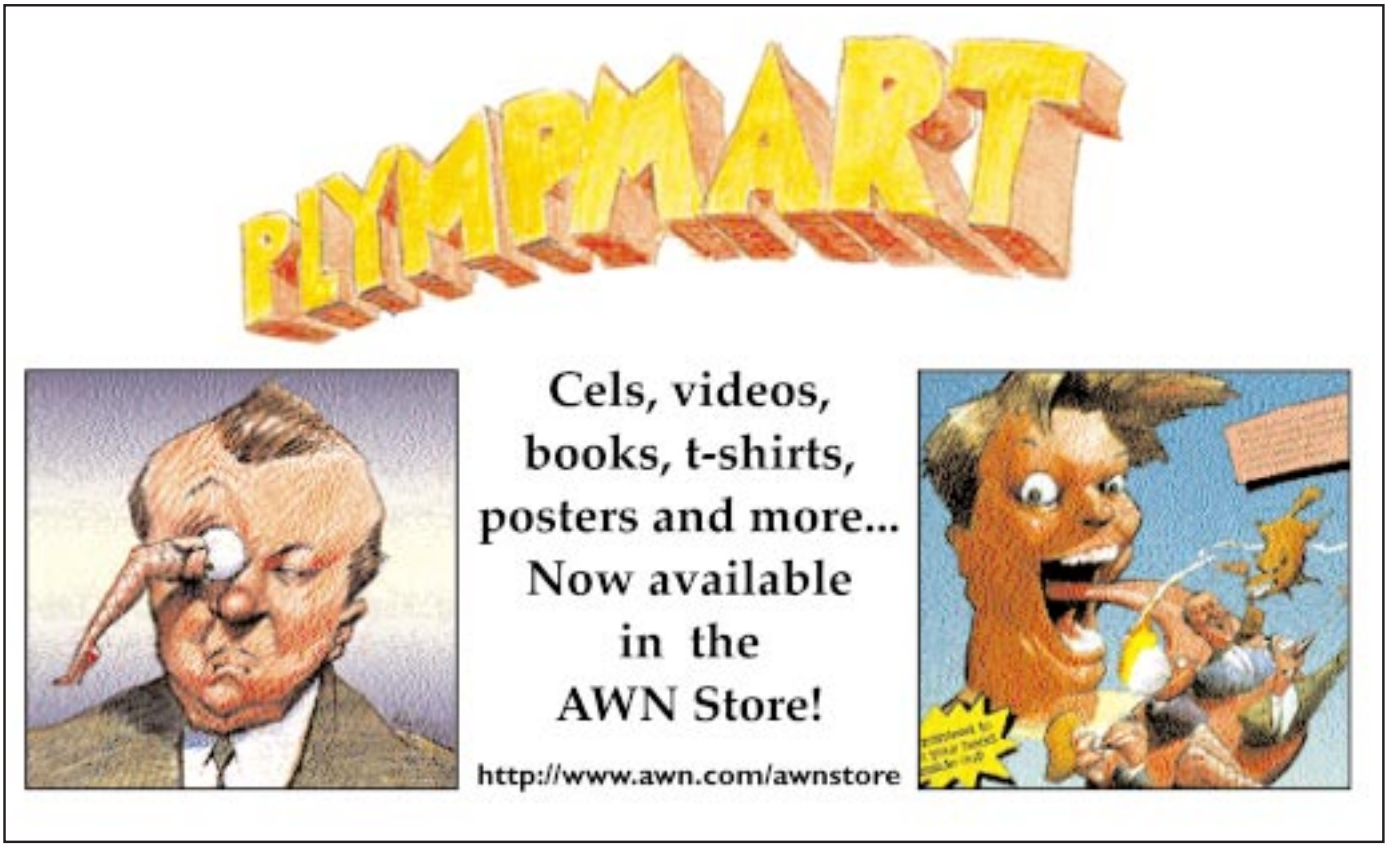
*If the nation is indeed on its way to becoming a "corporatocracy," then we don't need a Constitution; well-defined business regulations and a Standard Operating Policy will do fine. If, however, the Constitution is indeed the founding protocol of all our existing laws, it is time for the Supreme Court to acknowledge it as such. This august body must issue a call for legislators to draw up a binding and definitive copyright law, one that ensures the release of intellectual property into the public domain after a just and reasonable amount of time. That law should then be given permanence. As for Mickey Mouse, that supreme synecdoche of the copyright controversy, even he must bow to the law. Walt Disney passed away nearly forty years ago. Virtually everyone who originally worked on Mickey has followed Walt to the grave, and the few who have not are close to joining the choir invisible. They have profited from the Mouse, as have their heirs, and it is now time for their creation to be turned over to the people, just as the Constitution allows.*

**"Give the studios a choice: make your black-and-white cartoons...available on video and profit from it or forfeit your holdings to the public domain."**
**– Jerry Beck**

*Should a few daycare centers now paint off-model Mickeys, Donalds and Goofys on their walls, or some six-year old don a Plane Crazy T-shirt that did not come from a Disney Store, it is doubtful that Eisner's empire will crack into a billion pieces. Those most aggrieved will likely be our elected representatives, particularly those who are already most threatened by campaign finance reform. I believe that the public will serve as competent custodians of any animated films and characters released by law into their care. Copy? Right!*

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

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



*Monthly provocative, drunken, idiotic ramblings from the North…*

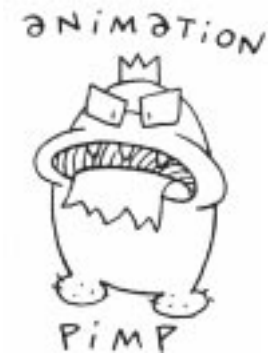



**Illustration by Andreas Hykade. Courtesy of Chris Robinson.**

# In Search Of STUFF Part 2: yummy and yucky

by Chris Robinson

*Last month we checked out some philosophical takes on what art is and why people do it. Now that we've determined that basically anything made by humanity is art, we can turn our attentions to judgement and specifically how we determine what we like and don't like.*

*We are always judging STUFF: I don't like this. I don't like that. Thumbs up. 4 stars. This tastes like shit (a strange statement because it implies the classifier is familiar with the taste of shit — and even then there are different types — man, woman, child, dog, cat, bird). This is beautiful. This is ugly. These are pronounce-ments of taste. Taste is subjective. Feeling and Knowledge are taste's guides.*

**What is Judgement? (Kant)**

*Brain = thinking / feeling/desire*
*Thinking = understanding/ judgement/reason*

*Understanding = Halle Berry is a woman. Women are human.*

*Reason = I see Halle Berry + my penis rises = I find Halle Berry attractive.*

*Judgement = Halle Berry is a hottie.*

*Judgement = reflective and determinant*

*Determinant = Halle Berry has boobs (particular) = Halle Berry is a woman (universal)*

*Reflective = Halle Berry is a hottie (particular) = Women are hotties (NO universal) = what is a hottie? (Need to find a universal)*

*When u judge u go through 4 processes or "moments:"*

*1. Detached – You don't "lose yourself" in the movie but still find it pleasurable.*

*2. Universal – I expect you to share that belief.*

*3. Multiple meanings – Walt Disney wanted to tell a love story. I like the design. You like the story. Halle likes the acting.*

*4. Necessity – I want to convince you philistines that my judgement is right.*

*Detachment + Universal + Multiple Meanings + Necessity = Common Sense*

*Common Sense = Common Cognitive Reactions*

*(e.g. "Check out Tex Avery's Magical Maestro, you'll laugh your ass off.")*

*\ experience of art = experience of life = ethics?*

**What Does It Mean To Have Taste? (Bourdieu)**

*Pierre Bourdieu (in his nice little scribble, Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste) says that our tastes are not, as Kant seems to think, some "gift of nature," but rather closely tied with our education (quality, duration) and social origins (i.e. family, friends). These origins generally dictate the manner in which we consume culture.*

*Consumption of culture is an act of communication that requires deciphering. So a work of art (whether it is Sleeping Beauty or Flying Nansen) is only going to be interesting to those who have the code that can decipher the work. Those who don't have that access will be limited to superficial chaos. For example, "That Eddie Murphy sure is funny in Shrek." This person will be stranded (according to typical ART views) at this superficial level and be unable to identify the "stylistic properties" of the work.*

*When we ask this person why they think Eddie Murphy is so goddamn funny, they might not be able to articulate a response and instead say, "I dunno…he just makes me laugh…there's something about him."*

## "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifer," says Bourdieu.

*When Mr. Pop encounters a work it is almost as if he applies the experience of life to art, whereas Mr. Pure (i.e. intellectual) actually breaks with the ordinary experience of the world and detaches himself from WHAT is represented. Bourdieu suggests that those detachers are, in the process, distancing themselves from all that is human. Mr. Pure rejects the common passions or emotions that we invest in our daily lives. Mr. Pop relishes in empty involvement or vulgar pleasure. In short…Mr. Pop is willing to lose himself in a film while Mr. Pure detaches himself. As such, Mr. Pop goes right in the face of Kant's 4 moments because he obviously does show interest.*

*"Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifer," says Bourdieu. We judge each other by the choices/judgements we make and this is unfair because we are not all playing from the same level playing field (education/social origin). Some tastes are "tastes of necessity." Mr. Pop eats filling, economical food (McDonalds) out of necessity. Mr. Pure fine dines, notes presentation, serving and etiquette because he's got a "taste of liberty."*

*What does all this mean? First, Kant's notion of taste as something natural is a load of cow chew because, as Bourdieu suggests, it is tightly connected with social rearing. Secondly, taste becomes a means of social control because it serves the interests of power and distinction because of its emphasis on individuality and rivalry (i.e. academics are notorious back stabbing status seekers). In short, taste (and its rejection of natural enjoyments — low, coarse, vulgar, servile) is a word those in power have (consciously or otherwise) created and defined to keep us slugs in line.*

## Kant's notion of taste as something natural is a load of cow chew...

*But hold up here…we're only talking about THOSE twits who DENY Mr. Pop (i.e. not all), there are plenty of us who appreciate both the vulgar and the refined. And what about the reverse? What about those who ignorantly lash out at/reject the world of Mr. Pure and denounce, for example, McLaren, Quays or Breer as self-indulgent wanks? Is this not just a reverse form of discrimination on the part of Mr. Pop? If we understand Mr. Pure's rejection of Mr. Pop as a denial of sameness is then Pop's refusal of Pure a rejection of difference? If so, what does this say about Mr. Pop's ethics? Is his rejection of non-narrative, experimental, abstract or foreign art, xenophobic?*

## Taste is a word those in power have (consciously or otherwise) created and defined to keep us slugs in line.

*Well kiddies…stay tuned till next month when in this Pimp column, different Pimp link, we explore sex, death and the FEAR OF A NON-NARRATIVE PLANET!*

*Chris Robinson is but a man. His hobbies include squirrel taunting, meat dancing and elderly peeping. You can find the results at http://asifa.net/robinson*

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

# Tom & Jerry:
## Produced in Prague

by Gene Deitch

**I drew all of the key poses and layouts for our 12 *Tom & Jerry* films. This is a shot from "High Steaks." © AOL Time Warner.**

*Joe Vogel was the head of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1961, when our Prague-produced Munro won us the Oscar. MGM had belatedly realized that they had made a big booboo when they fired Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera and closed down their animation unit. Vogel began casting about to find a possible way to continue their prime cartoon property, Tom & Jerry. Bill Snyder, my producer, stepped quickly into the breach, brandishing our Oscar statuette, and assured Vogel that we were the very ones to do it — not having the faintest idea whether or not we could. Willy-nilly, we became the very first to attempt continuing these characters!*

### Biting a Bullet

*Personally, as a UPA man, I had always cited Tom & Jerry cartoons as the primary bad example of senseless violence — humor based on pain — attack and revenge — to say nothing of the tasteless use of a headless black woman stereotype house servant. Then there was the Prague animation studio itself, with its diametrically opposed school of storybook animation, always tastefully designed and restrained.*

*Even if the spirit was willing to give it an honest try, the fact remained that these communist-era, isolated animators had never in their lives seen even one Tom & Jerry cartoon! I had seen more than a few, and in spite of my ideological distance, I did appreciate the perfect craftsmanship, the expressive animation, with its exquisite timing, the endless gag inventiveness and the characters' incredible damage survival.*

*I felt that I understood the idiom enough to adapt to its basics, but how in the world was I going to get it across to the capable but totally Tom & Jerry-innocent group of Prague animators?*

*Adding to these obvious hurdles was the time and budget restrictions we were presented. Whereas Bill and Joe, and mostly the same four or five animators, had been doing Tom & Jerry for about twenty years at that time — surely knowing the characters better than their own children — and whereas they had been producing the cartoons for over $40,000 each (I think making about six of them per year), we were contracted to produce 12 in a year, from a standing start, with a peanuts studio budget of only $10,000 a piece!*

### Bringing Hollywood to Prague

*It was clear to me that the undertaking was basically impossible, and I knew that my colleagues in the animation industry would be unforgiving in their appraisal of our results. Yet there were overriding personal and financial considerations that made it imperative that I take on this guillotine project. Readers of my book, For The Love Of Prague, will know that in 1961, receiving an Oscar and having production offers such as this as a result, was the key to my being able to stay in Prague long enough to sort out my personal life and be able to marry Zdenka. So Tom & Jerry were actually battling each other to save me! So I had to suppress my preconceptions, rise to the challenge and do my very best to*

adapt to the idea that mayhem can be fun.

The first step was for my new colleagues to see some examples. MGM sent me exactly four 35mm *Tom & Jerry* prints, plus the most recent model sheets, and a few stacks of actual pencil animation, the original drawings on paper. We all studied the material over and over, running the films in projection and on the studio's editing tables. We watched for the little timing tricks, the "takes," the basic attitudes and facial expressions. We practiced drawing the characters in their typical poses.

I knew that story would be the vital ingredient, so I called on my old colleagues, Larz Bourne, Eli Bauer, Tod Dockstader, and even some *Tom & Jerry* veteran gagmen, for storyboards. I also did some and reworked those that came in. I was the only one present who could draw American style cartoon characters and their facial expressions, so I personally drew all the layouts and key poses. (So there, I am taking the blame for those vital elements! But it was a struggle to get the non-violent Czech animators to hold to them.)

But even though our *Tom & Jerrys* were never good enough for the animation history mavens, Joe Vogel and his MGM team were well-satisfied with our results. They were only nervous about the communist Czechoslovak connection. We were able to use the classic MGM roaring lion logo to head up our *Tom & Jerrys*, but the originals always had the line, "Made in Hollywood, USA" on the end titles. Obviously, we could not put, "Made in communist Czechoslovakia" on our titles! We were not even allowed to credit any Czechs with their true names. To belatedly set the record straight, here are some examples:

"Victor Little" was actually: Václav Lídl, composer

"S. Newman" was actually: Zdenka Najmanová, production manager

"M. Clicker" was actually: Milan Klikar, my premier animator

"Dennis Smith" was actually: Zdenek Smetana, animator

**A Shortened Run**

Before we had even finished our first 12 cartoons, Joe Vogel, who had seemed to me to be the very symbol of the powerful movie studio tycoon, was booted out of MGM. Thus we lost our *Tom & Jerry* patron. The new bosses wanted the production closer to home. So just as we felt we were beginning to get the hang of *Tom & Jerry*, we were not allowed to develop further, as had the original Hanna and Barbera crew. Just look at the first 12 *Tom & Jerry* films they did and tell me they were hilarious classics!

I am confident that whatever failings our 12 *Tom & Jerry* cartoons had, they were very close to the Hanna and Barbera originals in appearance. The great master, Chuck Jones, the next to try continuing *Tom & Jerry*, went his own merry-melody way with the character models, and I don't think they survive as examples of the series, nor were they necessarily funnier than some of ours. The later attempts by others went back toward the same models we followed, although dressing the cat and mouse in trendy duds and taming them way down to the point of palship.

Today, our *Tom & Jerrys* are mixed right in with the earlier Hanna-Barbera's on the Cartoon Network, and I am confident that few viewers find them that much out of synch with the originals, whereas Chuck's are easily spotted as odd. Chuck himself wrote me that he simply remade the characters as his own.

But hey, Tom & Jerry sure did work for me. Along with the following *Popeye* and *Krazy Kat* series for King Features TV, it kept me in Prague long enough to marry Zdenka and assured us of enough work to keep me busy here quite possibly forever!

You can read more about Gene's roller-coaster career in the world of animation in *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 and the instigator of the CBS-Terrytoon "renaissance" of 1956-1958. He was also: 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, President of Gene Deitch Associates, Inc. New York, 1958-1960, Creative Director for Rembrandt Films, 1960-1968, and star director for Weston Woods Studios, Inc., Weston, Connecticut, 1968-1993. He has worked for over 40 years with the Prague animation studio, "Bratri v Triku."*

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

## Notes from the Underground Part 2 —

# Highjacking Animation (And Taking It Back!)

by Jean Detheux

***Emeute 62z19q*** **by author/painter Jean Detheux. This is part of a bitmap animated work in progress. All original artwork © Jean Detheux.**

*In "Part 1 — Animation, Prozac or Kyosaku?" I basically accused the North American popular culture of being guilty of murdering Rembrandt (and Amélie) by way of (habitual) animation!*

*The main differences between the Amélie trailers as made for French and for English speaking North American audiences are very striking (if you have not done so yet, please go compare them and see for yourself).*

*The French trailer is constantly whispering in one's ear, confiding in us, appealing to our complicity, and our intelligence. It relies a great deal on "subtext," on all sorts of innuendoes that enrich what is shown and said with so much depth. (The French narrator did a fantastic job, I know he worked with the director for countless hours to get the tone of his voice just right, and right it is.)*

*The North American English version is all in your face, leaves no room for whispering and complicity, and definitely fills in the blanks/silences with whiz bang stuff that totally kills the subtext (the narrator has that annoying "voice of bullshit" we are constantly bombarded with in all things commercial, really addressing us as if we were "dopes").*

*Make no mistake about this, the implications of those differences are enormous, and need to be looked into: while the French Weltanschauung credits each one of us with a uniqueness of vision embodied in the particular experience, and supports it as a manifestation of the universal, the U.S. popular culture negates it all together, and basically, posits personal experience as being "merely subjective," assuming that all we are "good enough for" is yet another bout of materialistic pursuit seasoned with worthless entertainment, making life more or less bearable while we await death ("Life is a bitch and then you die!").*

*This difference is visible not only in the Amélie trailers, but in most of the cultural production born of the two respective "agendas."*

*As I write this, the Oscar ceremony just took place, and Amélie went home without a single award.*

*Yet, to me, that movie is like a paradigm shift, and I am very sorry to see that, once again, genuine groundbreaking work is superseded by the usual "more of the same," and that just as in popular U.S. sports, the U.S. claim of "universality" is a disguise for very parochial values (need I say "baseball?").*

*The U.S. entertainment juggernaut is eating away at much of the best of what we, as a species, have created over many, many centuries. All the particular experiences that are entry points into — and manifestations of —*

*the universal are progressively being dismissed in favor of a "generic" look and feel which are to intrinsic worth what a "Big Mac" is to "Roquefort" cheese. (Interesting note: after French farmers complained that McDonald's France did not offer any of the traditional French foods in its "restaurants," Roquefort was tested by McDonald's and declared to be "not up to McDonald's standards!")*

*To me, this Roquefort story has the feel of the fate of Amélie at the Oscars.*

*One word about "entertainment" compared to European, especially French "divertissement."*

*I receive most "entertainment" productions as a form of catering to the lowest common denominator, without any effort made to raise standards (unlike what Cézanne said: "Art is a religion. Its aim is the elevation of thought").*

*Yet, I receive "divertissement" productions as an effort to cater to the "light" part in us, the part that can indeed criticize, but that does so in good spirit, giving "the other" the benefit of the doubt (to say the least!).*

*I believe that the Europeans in general, and the French in particular, ought to be supported in their efforts to maintain the "cultural exception," an exception that would keep all works of culture away from being considered as mere "manufactured goods."*

*The U.S. juggernaut claims that all things are "goods" and therefore must come under the regulations of trade agreements. This not only can kill agencies like the National Film Board of Canada (to name one great example of a state agency with a proven record), but it also promotes and even imposes a need to compete with the big commercial studios on their own turf, increasing the "generic" look we see more and more now, no matter where the work comes from. The French cultural exception means that a state can (and in my book must) subsidize its own cultural agencies (and workers), and that means that a movie such as Amélie can and will be possible again (that movie would likely never have been made were it not for substantial public help in its financing).*

**Unlike "habitual animation," life is a bit more complex than a mere "good versus evil" duality.**

*What is at stake is enormous, it literally signifies whether or not "Rembrandt" will survive (let alone thrive), or if South Park will totally prevail.*

*It does not take a lot of imagination to understand the fate of future "Rembrandt/Amélie" if the bean counters and other shareholders were to control whatever will be "allowed and supported" in all fields of creative work. Budgets are most often defined and policed by people who are very much in touch with a very narrow and limited idea of "the possible," and Art is made by those who dare explore the impossible. (Reading about the pioneers of animation, even those who started what are today major commercial interests, one is struck by how "experimental" it all was, and by how "frozen" things seem to have become since. There used to be a "let's see where this goes" attitude, now replaced by "make sure you/we know what it will be like before you start, or don't even bother.") Even though Amélie calls on minimal animation (though the little that is present is oh so well integrated), its made-for-the-U.S. trailer typifies what is wrong with the mindset behind "habitual animation."*

*"The world is not merchandise!"*

*What are "we" (it should really be: "what am I") doing animation for?*

*What is it "we" are aiming at when putting in those long hours?*

*This may seem to be a trivial question, if not an intrusive one, but I suggest that it would be very healthy if many amongst us were willing and able to ask themselves that question, and stay with it for a while.*

*After all, is animation in crisis, or not?*

*Why is it that, so often, Hollywood and the "North American popular culture" take something that has depth and complexity, and almost invariably, transform it into something that is so very bland, so full of clichés, based on recipes, so predictable, so tasteless (in all the meanings of that term)?*

*Disney reigns supreme amongst those guilty of borrowing (stealing?) civilization-forming myths, and turning them into entertainment, in effect "de-mythicizing" them, rendering them "harmless" and depriving them of their deep significance and impact, nullifying their*

*formative mission.*

*The appallingly simplistic world view this approach instills in the audiences that succumb to that kind of "message" is no doubt responsible for the overly narrow "understanding" of life's inherent complexity that governs the current U.S. political and cultural agenda (after all, political leaders are fed the same "entertainment pabulum" most of us have been raised on, their values and frame of reference are set by the same dumbing-down regimen).*

*Unlike "habitual animation," life is a bit more complex than a mere "good versus evil" duality.*

*So, what could animation contribute to this debate in a way that would raise the current standards? If all that we see in Art is a form of entertainment that provides a respite from the harshness of life, we will increasingly demand more and more of the same (the "Prozac" in Part #1). If, on the other hand, we see that Art is not a respite from "the real," but a privileged way of deepening our experiencing and understanding of it, we will want to lower the level of "entertainment noise" we are constantly being bombarded with, something akin to saying, "Shut up please, I can't hear myself think!"*

*Cézanne's "Art is a religion, its aim is the elevation of thought" comes to mind again.*

*Reflecting on the kind of art and music I live with, I was almost at a loss trying to find in animation something that belonged to the same "sphere." Most of the animation choices I have seen do belong to a world I feel very little connection with. Going to animation festivals and looking at most of the offerings, I often wonder what "they" are doing in "my" world.*

***To Jean-Paul Riopelle (1932-2002)* is a tribute to the late artist.**

*Where's the equivalent of chamber music in today's animation?*

*Where are the likes of Rembrandt, Vermeer, Chardin, Cézanne, Giacometti, Pollock, de Kooning, Guston, Riopelle? (Or, as in cinéma, the likes of Fellini and Kieszlowski?)*

*In fact, what happened after McLaren and Mary Ellen Bute left us?*

*How did the world of animation get invaded by (and succumb to) this domination by the story tellers, especially the invasion of the "one-dimensional-linear-supersimplistic-story tellers?"*

*How is it that this overwhelming invasion of the animation space by the permanently juvenile "escapists" was allowed to take place?*

*I wonder if the shift that took place happened when "animation as a genuine Art form" was progressively absorbed and assimilated by this relatively new monster, the "culture industry?"*

*Animation seems to be a privileged medium by which viewers are easily touched; there seem to be very few barriers between an animation and its audience. Most people are sucked in as soon as "it" starts moving, and this is so much the case, it seems to me that a story need not necessarily be told, the experience of seeing form unfolding in time already provides a structure, a "content." (Just as Maurice Merleau-Ponty said that "perception is constitutive," one could suggest that the perception of an animation, even story-less, constitutes a content by the sheer fact of it being seen.) As soon as "it" moves, and especially if it moves "with" sound, the magic is established, the bewitching has begun!*

*Who needs a story "on top" of that?*

*The magic of form unfolding in time makes most stories unnecessary, at least redundant.*

*Why kill that magic by once again reducing everything to a level at which we (think we) understand?*

*Can't we function efficiently within "unresolved and equivocal space?"*

*One aspect of animation that is almost totally ignored today even though it is most likely very close to being at its core, is its "form." Beyond, or rather "beneath" what one can do with animation, is that*

***Emeute xxxx*, another image from Detheux's work in progress.**

*which animation does, what it is before we "use" it.*

*For a fairly long period of time, Philip Guston worked on large paintings he prevented himself from seeing from a distance, relying exclusively on what he called "inherent composition."*

*Jean-Paul Riopelle (who died a few weeks ago) also knew that the minute he would see any of his large paintings from across the room, the journey would be over, or in need of being restarted.*

*We too could approach animation with the same "gaze," and pay attention to what "it" wants, rather than constantly try to impose our will on it, trying to get a glimpse of that which needs us to exist, but which we never can foresee.*

*Very few things, if any, are truly random, there is some form and order in what we do even if (I would even say especially if) we do not know what we are doing. Guston and Riopelle relied on their commitment to see the painting not as a whole in order to work on it with a deep faith in another order ("inherent composition"). We can do the same if we prevent our discursive mind from constantly recuperating the overall form of the work that is emerging.*

*Saying no to closure as long as we possibly can, and refraining from jumping on (or being seduced by) the deceptive train of the linear sense, we too can enter the ("our") unknown, and allow animation to take us where, for example, painting could never go (painting may have implied motion, animation paints with it).*

*As a painter, I would say that animation as an Art form lags far behind painting, and yet, as a painter who had to abandon natural media (allergies) and enter the digital realm, and animation, I am certain that animation has the potential to be the next phase ("face?") of painting.*

*Today animation seems to be stuck within the confines of the already known, and to get out of that box, to break down those walls we talked about in Part #1, we need to be able to work without relying on the already known, without necessarily securing our work in the safety of, for example, a story, also freeing ourselves of all that we take for granted about the appearance of the visible world, finally reaching beyond the limitations of "beginning, middle and end" (this applies to not only stories, it applies as well to images).*

## I would say that animation as an Art form lags far behind painting…

*There must be ways that can help us do just that, and I hope to be able to point to some of them in the next article.*

*In about two months, I will go into "drawing without knowing" in greater detail. As soon as we begin drawing "knowingly," we are stuck in "habitual ways." The minute we surrender to those "habitual ways," we miss the (only?) chance we have for a much needed renewal.*

*Jean Detheux is an artist who, after several decades of dedicated work with natural media, had to switch to digital art due to sudden severe allergies to paint fumes. He is now working on ways to create digital 2D animations that are a continuation of his natural media work. He has been teaching art in Canada and the U.S., and has works in many public and private galleries.*

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

Glenn Vilppu.

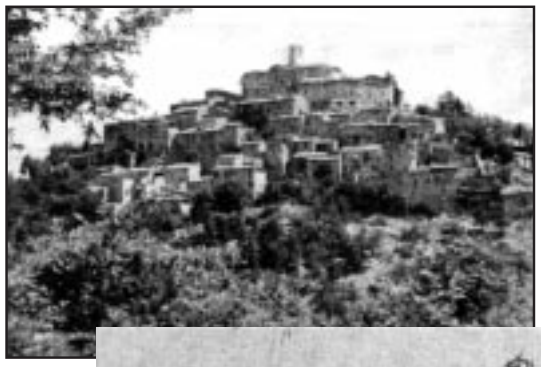
## Sketching on Location:

# Using Photographs

by Glenn Vilppu

*This is the twelfth and last chapter in a series of bi-monthly articles about sketching on location. The articles are based on my Sketching on Location Manual. The manual was developed as a series of lessons that I use on my guided sketching tours of Europe and as material in my regular drawing classes. As such the lessons can be part of a regular course or used by individual students as a practical learning guide. If you have not seen the previous lessons starting in the June 2000 issue of Animation World Magazine, it is recommended that you do. The lessons are progressive and expand on basic ideas. It is suggested that you start from the beginning for a better understanding of my approach. If you really want to start at the beginning open with the lessons based on the Vilppu Drawing Manual.*

*In the last lesson we discussed "Atmosphere." The main purpose was the use of atmosphere to create the illusion of 3D form, this was one of the corner stones of the Renaissance and a useful tool in expression and as a strong picture making tool.*

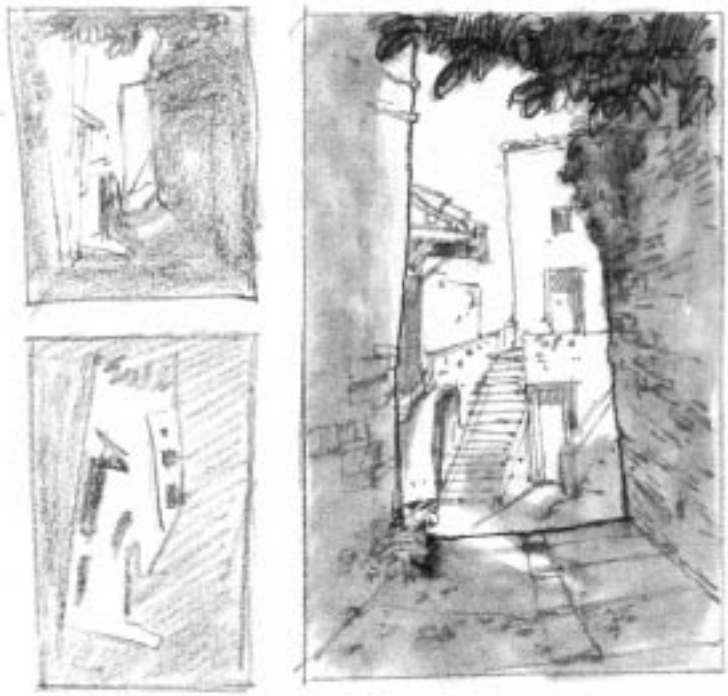


**All drawings in this article are by and © Glenn Vilppu.**

**The biggest difficulty in using a photograph is the natural tendency to copy it as it is.**

### The Camera As A Tool

*Many times while traveling the camera becomes the main tool for gathering information. We all have stacks of pictures taken with the intention of one day turning them into drawings or paintings. The professional artist has organized scrap files of not only his or hers photographs, but also photos clipped from magazines and newspapers that could one day be of use in a project. Since its development, many artists, including Degas, Paul Gauguin, Alphonse Mucha and Maxfield Parrish, have used the camera as an integral part of their creative process. Many photographers have started out as painters. Keep in mind that the camera is a tool and, like any tool, there are practical as well as impractical uses for it. My objective in this manual is not to discuss the photograph as an art object in itself, but as a tool and resource for the artist who sketches on location.*



*The camera does a great job of gathering information if you know how to use it. First, the camera cannot be surpassed for speed and convenience in "capturing a location" for future use, but, with the speed and convenience, come certain pitfalls.*

*The biggest difficulty in using a photograph is the natural tendency to copy it as it is. This copying generally ends up giving everything in the photograph equal importance and emphasis. Of course, while looking at a scene and sketching on location, we do not give everything equal weight of importance. Another difficulty is the speed itself. In general, when we draw a subject we spend much more time looking, allowing interesting details or unusual views to be discovered. Being aware of the difficulties goes a long way to help us to overcome them.*

*This chapter hopes to minimize these difficulties in using the camera while taking advantage of its usefulness as a tool. The key to the usefulness of the photographic reference is to treat the situation as if you were actually at the location in the photograph. It is important to remember that the drawing or painting is the point of your effort, not the photograph.*

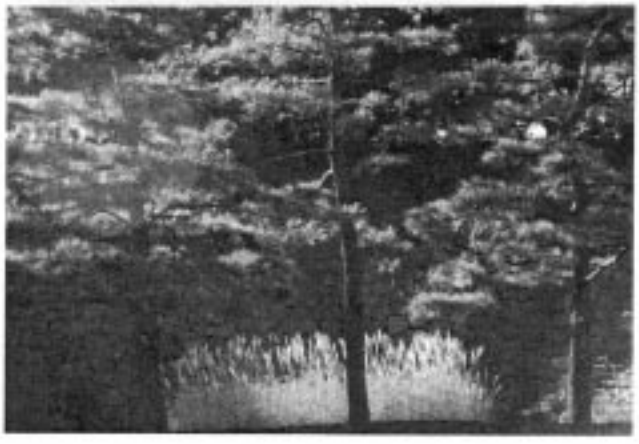
**It is important to remember that the drawing or painting is the point of your effort, not the photograph.**

**Don't Copy — Use the Photograph**

*The first step should be to do simple thumbnail sketches from the photograph. In doing these thumbnails, compose the elements developing your visual ideas; another words, don't copy — use the photograph. In the following pages you will see examples of this approach using many of the elements discussed in previous chapters along with the photographic references.*

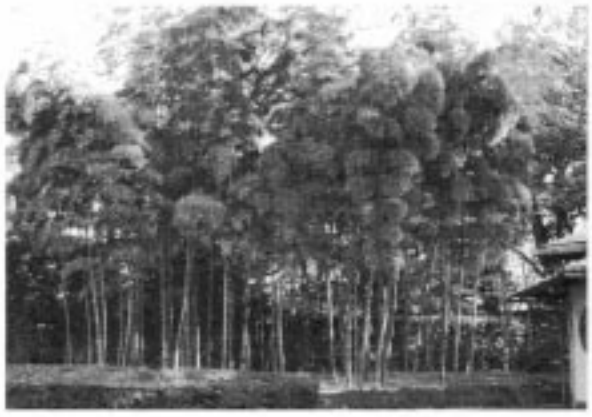
*In the following, I have combined elements from different photographs. The places as drawn exist only in my imagination. Working in this manner will give you endless possibilities for creating drawings and paintings. Remember that you are using photographs and should have no qualms about changing their elements. The camera allows you to continue your sketching tour for years as you go through your photographs, remembering the enjoyment of your trip and giving you a chance to do those drawings you just didn't have time for.*

*Glenn Vilppu first wrote for Animation World Magazine in the June 1997 issue, "Never Underestimate the Power of Life Drawing." His drawing manuals and video tapes may be purchased in the Animation World Store.*



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

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



## The Career Coach:

# Networking Increases Your Net Worth

Pamela Kleibrink Thompson

*"I not only use all the brains I have, but all I can borrow." —Woodrow Wilson, 28th President of the United States*

*President Wilson recognized the value of networking and the truth that behind every successful person there are other people.*

*What exactly is networking? Networking is establishing relationships and maintaining them. Basically it's staying in touch with contacts, friends you've made, and calling them when you need help or information, or helping them with information, referrals or mentoring when they call you.*

*Networking can help you in both your career and personal life. Your network can help you get whatever you need — a promotion, a new job, a new client, a place to live, a mate. Ask people for referrals to doctors, florists, caterers, mechanics.*

*Like every business, the entertainment business is built on relationships. Those who advance quickly in a career recognize that working hard is only one requirement for success. What you do is important, who you know equally so, and who knows you is more critical still. Most jobs in the entertainment industry are never advertised. Often they are filled by a friend of a friend. Friends of friends is exactly what a network is. Help them and they will help you.*

**Pamela Kleibrink Thompson**

*I recently got a message in a fortune cookie — "A wise man knows everything. A shrewd one, everybody." That message is the essence of networking. No matter what you do in the entertainment arena, networking is key. Make networking a habit.*

*Don't be reticent about talking to other people. There is a lot of competition out there for jobs but often the person who gets the job is the one people know. The more people you know and network with, the better the chances you'll hear of job openings. Go to lunch with friends who work at places you'd like to work. Meet them at their office so you can check it out. Ask them about the company and projects that may be in the works. Keep aware of what your friends are doing and let them know how you are.*

*You've heard it before. To get a good job in the entertainment industry, you have to know someone. But that's okay, because you do know someone. And that someone knows someone. If you have enough "someones" in your network, you can get a good job. Networking helps not only to hear about jobs but it can also help you get an advance notice of a layoff. If you network with people in different departments at your company, you can get a good idea if the company is doing well.*

### Tips

*Here are some networking tips to try out at the next function you attend:*

- *If you have trouble getting started, think of it as a game. Make a goal of meeting at least 2 people at the next party or meeting you attend. Years ago I went to a party with 3 friends, one of whom issued us all a challenge. Our assignment: to meet 5 people. Instead of hanging around together, we went off in all directions and reported back the results. We had all met 5 different people — so now our network had expanded by 20!*
- *If you are painfully shy, go to events with someone who is good at networking. He or she will take you around and*

*introduce himself or herself and you to someone new.*

*● Listen and learn. If you have little to contribute to a particular conversation, concentrate on learning the names and interests of the others.*

*● If you forget someone's name, admit it and reintroduce yourself. If you dread doing that, and you have a friend with you, reintroduce yourself to the person and then introduce your friend. Then pause so the person can introduce himself.*

*● Be prepared to meet people, follow up and keep in touch. Bring plenty of business cards and exchange them with everyone.*

*● In a group made up of strangers and acquaintances, talk to someone you don't know. Once you introduce yourself to a stranger, he or she is now an acquaintance and could be part of your network.*

*● You have something in common with everyone. Make it your goal to find out what it is. This is fairly easy to do at any animation event. Everyone at an event has a common interest.*

*● The most important thing about networking is to be prepared to give before you get. Find out what you can do for someone else. Perhaps someone is having back trouble (not uncommon in the animation industry!) and you know a good chiropractor or acupuncturist. Be ready to lend a hand and hands will reach out to help you when you need it.*

*● Make it a goal in 2002 to meet two new people a day and build your network. The more you put into it, the more you'll get out of it.*

*● Don't keep what you want a secret. Tell people what you are looking for — ask them for help.*

*● Never whine, gossip or speak badly of a fellow artist or employer. Be nice to everyone. It's a small world, especially in the entertainment industry.*

*● You don't have to wait for an event to try networking. Form a relationship with people in charge — go to lunch with the boss. Network with people on other projects at your company. Network with people from other companies too. Your next job may come from one of them.*

*Pamela Thompson is a career coach, recruiter, business consultant and mentor for hire. She depends on networking in everything she does. As a career coach, she helps clients focus on and attain career goals. She speaks regularly at colleges and international conferences.*

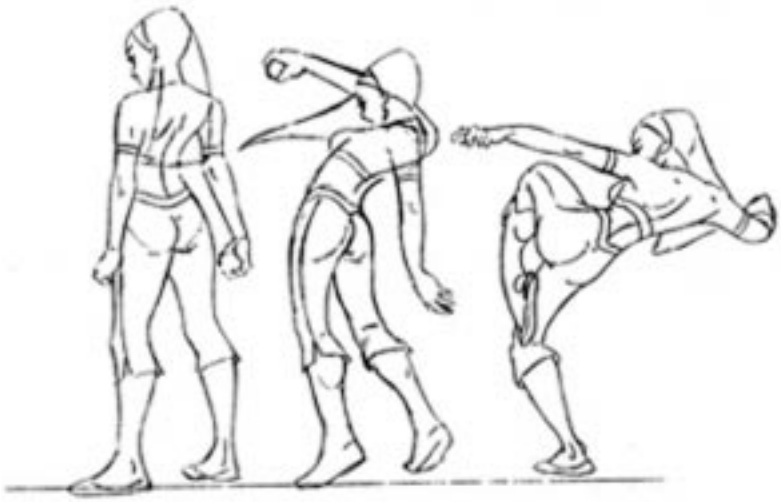
*Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to editor@awn.com.*

# Imagine . Create . Animate .

## Vancouver. Institute .of. Media .Arts

**"My observations have only been extremely positive and I can but applaud the program of training offered."**

Bill Matthews, Retired Manager of Artist Development, Walt Disney Feature Animation



**Show us What ya got!**

- Classical & Computer Animation
- 1 and 2 year programs
- Maya now integrated
- Summer Intensives
  with Special Guest Instructors
  Bob Godfrey, Academy-Award Winner
  Ken Southworth, Veteran Animator

**1-800-396-ARTS**

**Financial Aid**
available for eligible students

604 - 682 - 2787 info@vanarts.com 837 Beatty street , Vancouver BC V6B 2M6

PPSEC ACCREDITED

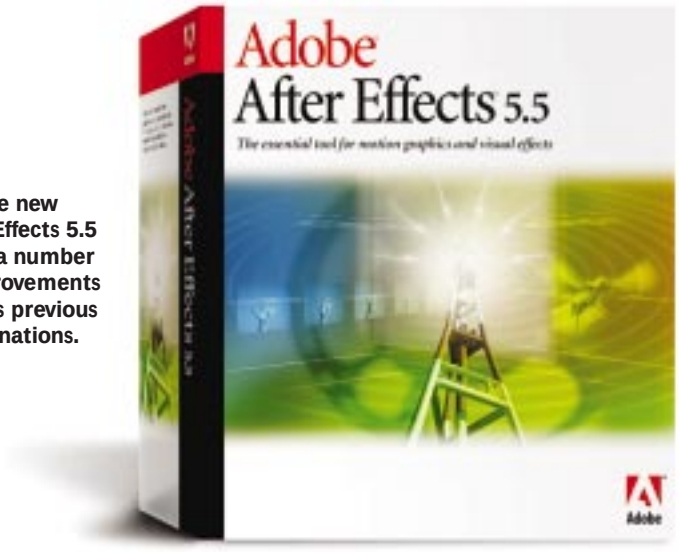
VANarts

www.vanarts.com

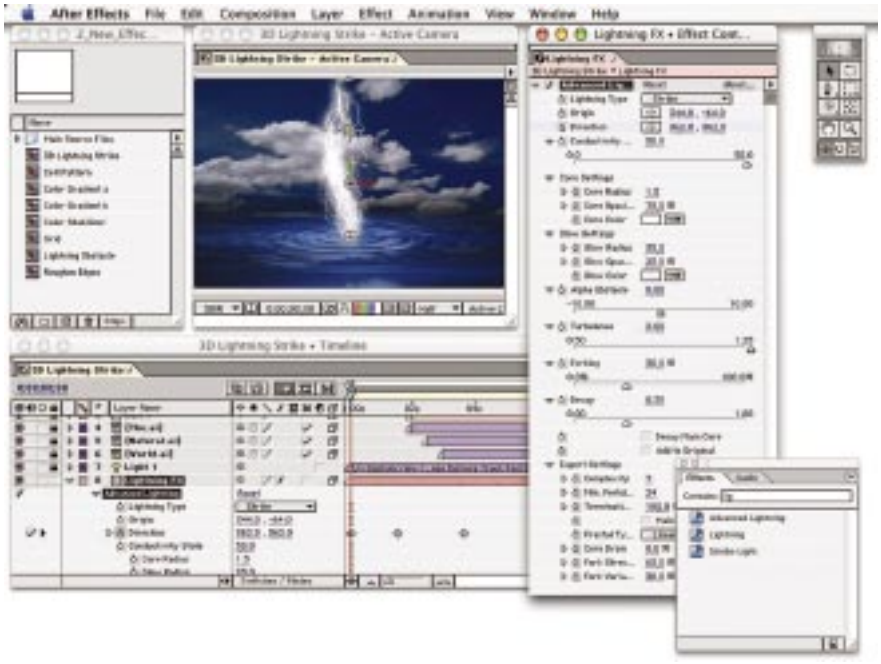
# After Effects 5.5:

## Fleshing Out the 3D Environment

by George Maestri




**The new After Effects 5.5 offers a number of improvements over its previous incarnations.**



**AE 5.5 now has the capability to handle intersecting layers better.**
**© 2001 Adobe Systems Incorporate. All rights reserved.**

*Adobe's After Effects has had a long history in the animation and motion graphics community. The software is the de facto standard for motion graphics designers, but After Effects has also found a solid following in the animation and special effects communities. Version 5.5 offers a significant number of advances that make it an excellent choice for anyone involved in creating moving images.*

*Michael O'Donnell, head of the digital department for Acme Filmworks, a Los Angles based animation studio, has chosen After Effects as the standard compositing and post-production software for the studio. Acme produces a wide range of unique animation styles, including digital, stop-motion and cel animation among many others. "We use it on almost every project that goes through here," claims O'Donnell*

*After Effects is available for both the Mac and PC platforms. As with any compositing application, a fast hard disk and lots of memory is a plus. The software is also multithreaded, which means those with multiple processors will get an added boost in speed. Version 5.5 is now fully native on Apple's OS X operating system, which Adobe claims will increase performance. Nicholas Mermet, a digital artist at Acme confirms: "The speed increase with OS X is very dramatic."*

### Expanding On A Good Thing

*The biggest feature with After Effects 5 was the addition of 3D. Having 3D in a compositor can be a real lifesaver, as it allows you to easily animate the layers of your composite forward and back along the Z-axis. This means that*

*artists no longer have to "cheat" the third dimension. Version 5.5 builds on this foundation with a number of tools to flesh out the 3D environment. Multiple viewports are now available, and the software has improved the way that it handles intersecting layers.*

*Another advantage to 3D is the ability to have multiple cameras and lights in a scene. Cameras allow you another way of moving through the composite. Lights give you the ability to highlight an area of the scene, or colored lights allow you to tint it. Lights can also cast shadows, and in version 5.5, colored shadows are supported. This gives you some nice tools for compositing animation with live-action. For those who use 3D software, the Production Bundle can now import camera data from Maya and 3ds max, which enables After Effects to integrate into the special effects pipeline seamlessly. In addition, the Production Bundle supports full 16-bit images, which opens up the package to feature film production. The software can import and export industry standard Cineon and RLA files. On the PC, After Effects offers full support for DV based codecs.*

*In animation production, the software has become a Swiss army knife for the people at Acme. Mermet likens it to being a "one man band," in that the software can do many tasks well. "I'm grateful for the mesh warping and deformation tools. These are very useful when working with hand drawn animation," says Mermet. He also uses the software for other tasks required by the studio.*

**The final output of the Charmin tissue ad after using AE 5.5. © Procter & Gamble Productions, Inc. 2001.**

*One example is a series of Charmin bathroom tissue ads directed at Acme by Joanna Quinn. In these ads, hand drawn colored pencil animation was scanned into the computer and output directly from After Effects. The software was used to finalize all of the animation, correct minor problems with the drawings, such as smudges, and color correct for final output.*

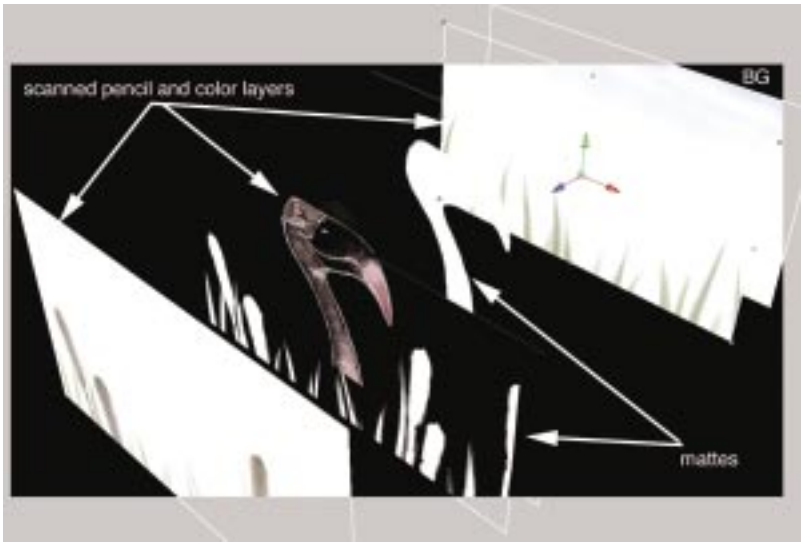
*Color correction is one of the many effects that are bundled with the package. A number of new effects have also been added or improved with version 5.5. One of the more important additions is some enhanced masking tools, including the Smart Mask keyframe assistant. This makes it much easier to animate between complex masks. The software can now add motion blur to masks as well as duplicate mask shapes. Masks can also be created and edited on the fly in the composition window. Each mask can be a unique color to make it easy to tell them apart.*

## A Full Bundle

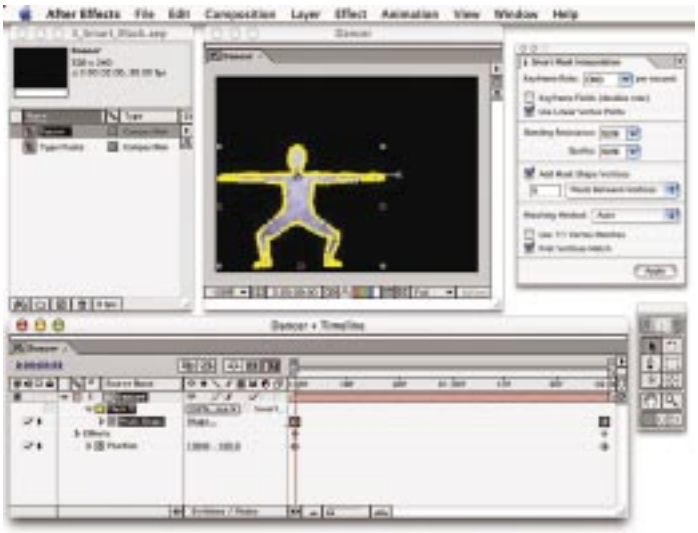
*Other effects have also been added. Lightning offers a number of ways to create electrical discharges. Cell and Grid are new texture-based effects. Roughen edges allows you to "roughen up" the edges of text or an outline. This is perfect for those wanting to add a "grunge" look to their projects.*

*With these, After Effects now has over 90 different effects bundled with the software. Add in a few extra third-party plug-ins and the list becomes pretty hard to manage. To address this, After Effects 5.5 offers a new Effects Palette that lets you organize things to your liking. Effects can be alphabetized or sorted by type. You can also create custom folders for groups of effects as well as search for effects by name.*

*For those dealing with complex projects, After Effects allows you to link layers together in a hierarchy. Moving the parent*




**A cutaway look at the Charmin tissue ad in progress. © Procter & Gamble Productions, Inc. 2001.**



**The addition of the Smart Mask tool makes complex images easier to animate. © 2001 Adobe Systems Incorporate. All rights reserved.**

*layer also moves the children. A lot of people have been using After Effects for creating cut-out style animation, composing characters from many layers. Hierarchies will help stitch together characters, making complex character animation much easier.*

*Another nice feature is Vector Paint, which is part of the Production Bundle. Vector Paint allows you to paint color interactively on a layer. The brushes have soft edges, as well as opacity. The strokes can exist for a single frame or be animated over time. You can also use brush strokes to reveal an image over time, which is great for handwriting and wire-removal effects. Another application for Vector Paint is in the area of animation. You can literally draw animation into the system with a tablet, using an onion skin feature to see the previous frames.*

*After Effects also supports expressions. This allows you to create procedural animations automatically by linking different parameters from different layers together. One example might be to tie the opacity of one layer to the position of another. As the second layer moves in, the first fades out. Version 5.5 has simplified the expression syntax, making it much easier to program.*

*Overall, this is a very good upgrade and the package is a great addition to any animation studio. I'd recommend it to all After Effects users as well as those just purchasing a desktop compositing and motion graphics package. The software remains a standard. After Effects offers a great set of tools for an affordable price.*

*George Maestri is a writer, director and producer working in Los Angeles. His characters "Karen & Kirby" have been seen on the Kid's WB! George was the original animation producer for South Park and has worked for studios such as Nickelodeon, Warner Bros. and Disney. He has also written and edited numerous books on character animation and CGI for New Riders Publishing.*

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

**After Effects 5.5**

*For Windows or Macintosh*
*$649 Standard*
*$1499 Production Bundle*

**Windows**

- *Intel® Pentium® II or faster processor (multiprocessor recommended)*
- *Microsoft® Windows® 98, Windows Millennium Edition or Windows 2000*
- *128 MB of RAM installed (256 MB or more recommended)*
- *Apple QuickTime™ 4.1.2 software (recommended)*
- *CD-ROM drive*
- *120 MB of available hard-disk space for installation (500 MB or larger hard disk or disk array recommended for ongoing work)*
- *24-bit color display adapter*

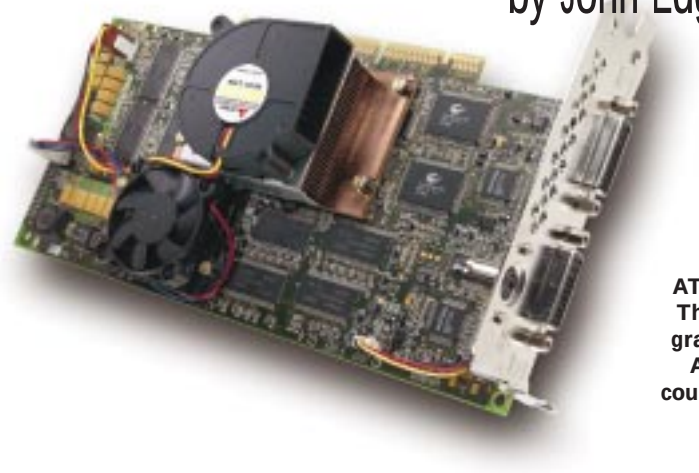
**Macintosh**

- *PowerPC® processor (multiprocessor G4 recommended)*
- *Mac OS version 9.0.4, 9.1, or Mac OS X Classic*
- *64 MB of application RAM (128 MB or more recommended)*
- *Apple QuickTime 4.1.2 software (recommended)*
- *CD-ROM drive*
- *120 MB of available hard-disk space for installation (500 MB or larger hard disk or hard-disk array recommended for ongoing work)*
- *24-bit color display adapter*

**For More Information:**
*Adobe Systems Incorporated*
*345 Park Avenue*
*San Jose, California 95110-2704*
*800-833-6687*
*www.adobe.com*

# ATI Fire GL4: A Solid Contender

by John Edgar Park



**ATI Fire GL4: The BMW of graphic cards. All images courtesy of ATI.**

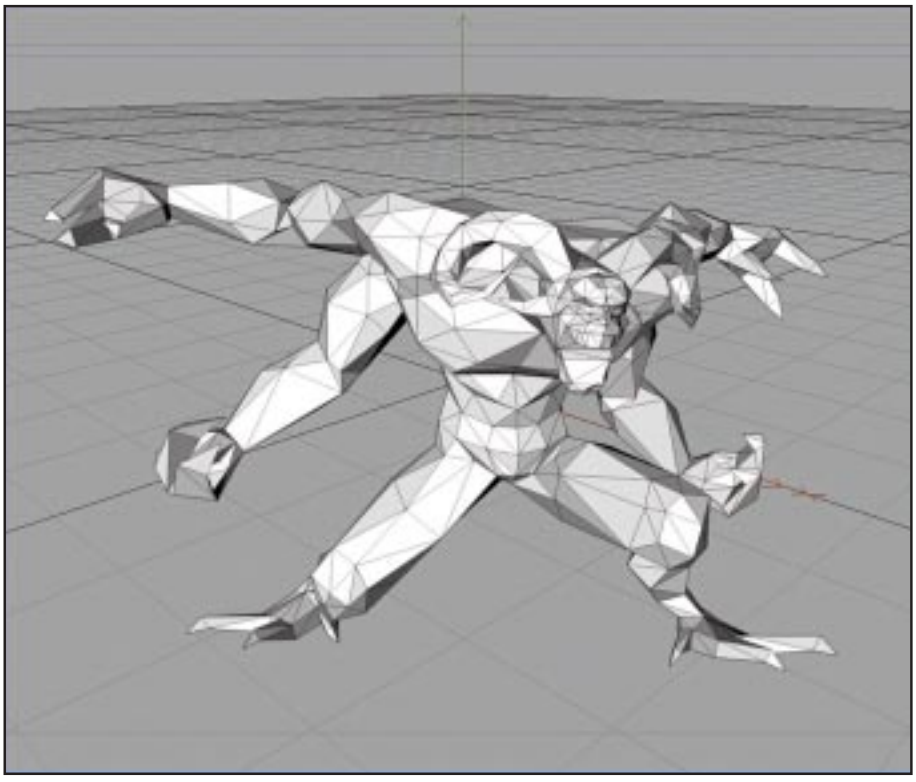
*It's hard to ignore the raw power factor of an $1,800 graphics card. Even in this day and age of fast 3D gaming cards (like the GeForce 4 and Radeon 8500) that are capable of high frame-rates and beautiful effects, there is still nothing quite like a hardcore, workstation-class graphics card. The ATI Fire GL4 is just such a board. What it lacks in bells and whistles, it makes up for in pure polygon crunching horsepower.*

*The Fire GL series has a bit of a convoluted history. The original Fire GLs came from Diamond Multimedia. This company was bought by S3, who later became SONICblue. Finally, the Fire GL division was bought by Canadian graphics powerhouse ATI. Through all of this, the Fire GL development group has remained in Germany, where its engineers continue to push the highest end of OpenGL graphics.*

**Installation**

*Much like the Wildcat II we reviewed in November 2001, the Fire GL4 is a high-wattage monster of a board. It utilizes the AGP Pro50 slot of a high-end motherboard in order to draw maximum power and bandwidth. In order to keep things cool, as well as avoid conflicts with the neighboring PCI slot, this card takes the space of two normal add-in cards.*

*Installation under Windows 2000 was painless. After downloading the latest drivers from ATI's Website, I uninstalled my existing card. Next, I removed the plastic spacer that resides in the AGP slot when using a non-AGP Pro50 card. Then, I snapped in the Fire GL, rebooted the machine and ran the ATI driver executable. The drivers added a custom display driver for 3dsmax 4, as well as advanced display settings for Windows.*



**A model in rough polygon form.**

*Once installed, opening the ATI display panel gives you access to preset OpenGL configurations for most 3D software packages. Just select your application from a dropdown list and go. If you prefer to fine tune things, there are myriad of options for OpenGL customization, dual monitor setup, gamma correction, Direct3D settings and more. In the resolution settings, you'll find that this card will drive the largest of monitors beautifully, while maintaining a high refresh rate.*

**Specifications**

*What is it that makes this card hum? Under the hood is 128MB of DDR SDRAM, an IBM GT1000 geometry processor (clocked to 205Mhz) and an IBM RC1000 raster processor (clocked to 150Mhz). That's a lot of RAM and two speedy, dedicated processors. In building this card, the engineers took the previous Fire GL3, redesigned it for use with AGP Pro50, and cranked up the speed of the two processors.*

*The high clock speed means lots of heat, so they've added active cooling to the Fire GL4 – it has a copper heat sink, and two fans just to keep things running smoothly. Unfortunately, there is a downside to this approach: noise. I don't own a decibel meter, so I'm making a subjective guess when I say that the Fire GL4 runs about as loud as a Comanche helicopter landing in your office. My advice is this: put your workstation under your desk and throw on some headphones.*

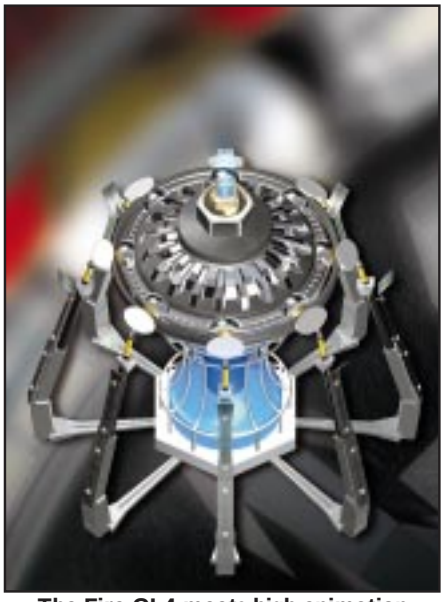
*To get all this data out of your computer and onto your monitors, the Fire GL4 boasts two DVI-I digital monitor outputs. These can be used with both digital and analog monitors. Most flat-panel displays use the DVI-I standard for cabling, as do newer, high-end CRTs. Just in case, ATI provides a DVI-to-VGA adaptor.*

**The ATI Fire GL4 offers dual monitor support. Here is a demonstration of two monitors hooked to one card.**

**Performance**

*If you're expecting a BMW of a graphics card (for this price, who isn't?) you won't be disappointed. The Fire GL4 gets excellent marks all around. I've never been one to put too much stock in benchmark testing, but that said, the Fire GL4 ranks a pretty close second to the Wildcat II 5100 in most standard 3D benchmarks.*

**If you're expecting a BMW of a graphics card (for this price, who isn't?) you won't be disappointed.**



**The Fire GL4 meets high animation standards. This is an image rendered in a 3D application.**

*Compared to the Wildcats and the QuadroDCC, it's not as strong with heavy texturing tasks. However, it eats high-geometry models for breakfast. This card's strength is modeling, animation, object deformations, lighting and camera moves. The Fire GL4 had higher framerates than any other card I've tested during high-poly-*

*gon shading and lighting tests. (These tests were performed in 3dsmax 4.2 and Maya 4.0.)*

*Not only does the Fire GL4 have brute strength, it has refinement. It is one of the only graphics cards granted an unconditional thumbs-up by Alias|Wavefront's qualification lab. This means that it can perform any shading, painting or overlay task in Maya without reservation. This is due to the high-quality implementation of OpenGL in the ATI drivers. Other 3D applications it has been optimized for include Softimage XSI, 3ds max, Lightwave and Houdini.*

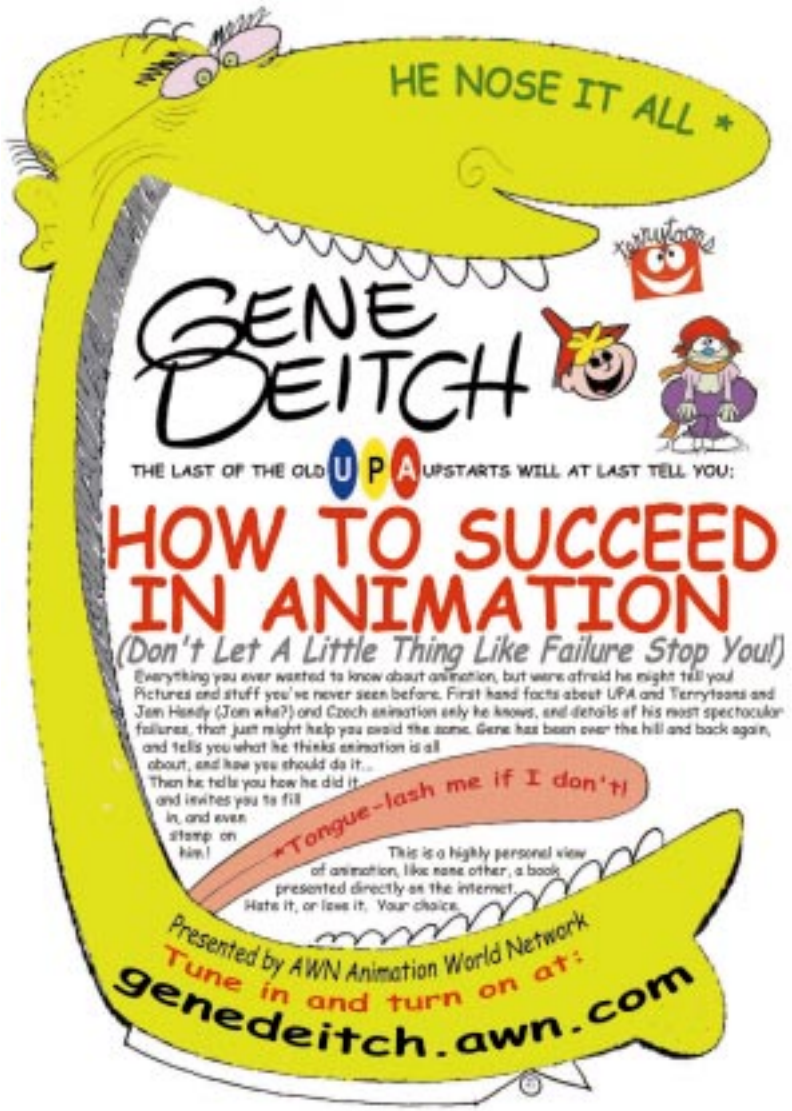
*Beyond 3D software, I found it performed very well in other major graphics applications, including Photoshop, AfterEffects and Premiere. It even played nicely with an add-in video editing card, thanks to its DirectX support.*

**Fire GL4 is a great choice for the 3D animator who wants a seriously powerful, hassle-free graphics card.**

*Overall, Fire GL4 is a great choice for the 3D animator who wants a seriously powerful, hassle-free graphics card. Now, there are some newer cards that are definitely worth looking into, such as the Wildcat III 6110, but at this price point, it's tough to beat the ATI Fire GL4.*

*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.*

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

# The Games That People Play

## by Greg Singer

*Game Developers Conference, March 19-23, 2002*
*San Jose, California*

When people think of animation, their mind naturally turns to feature films, television or perhaps even the Internet. All have enjoyed varying degrees of attention and success as outlets for animated talent. However, comparatively little regard has been given to that other medium, that forgotten sibling, of games.

**All photos, unless otherwise noted, courtesy of the Game Developers Conference.**

Gaming, of course, appeals to a variety of end users, with certain games suited best for certain platforms. Games are distributed for PCs, consoles, arcades, online and, increasingly, wireless devices. Even so, in the hierarchy of animation, gaming is sometimes given only peripheral consideration as an opportunity for meaningful, artistic expression.

This is ironic, given the huge amount of business that gaming does. Research forecasts that computer and video game sales, worldwide, will reach approximately $20-$25 billion during the next few years, with mobile gaming alone expected to reach global revenues of $5 billion by 2005.

Gone are the simpler, nostalgic days of *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders*. Since its inception in 1961, gaming has evolved into a medium that is remarkably popular and visionary. Having endured decades of criticism and stereotype, blamed for everything from truancy to theft to violence, gameplay is now emerging as an acknowledged, even helpful, presence in our professional and personal lives.

The Game Developers Conference (GDC) in San Jose, California, organized by the International Game Developers Association, is in its sixteenth year, providing a collective voice for the influence, potential and business of games. This year's event, with the simple thematic imperative of "Make Better Games," hosted upwards of 10,000 visitors, with hundreds of tutorials, panel and roundtable discussions, an independent games festival, awards ceremony night, and beer-swigging "booth crawl" around the conference floor of vendors, among other highlights.

Because the weeklong conference was so ambitious in its scope, catering to the interests of game developers, publishers, artists, programmers, writers and enthusiasts, it would be impossible, in the space here, to articulate the breadth of lectures, gameplay and networking opportunities offered. With talks ranging on topics anywhere from creating algorithms for the adaptive tessellation of polynomial surfaces; to understanding Wittgenstein as a means for simulating sophisticated social activity among game characters; to simply "making games that don't suck," as one discussion was curtly self-

**The faces of GDC 2002.**

*described — you can appreciate how the small arms of my words will not begin to hold the hugeness of the event.*

*Nonetheless, with that as part preface and part apology, we will take a look at some of the overarching considerations of game development, with respect to its merits both as an industry and as an ever-refining art form.*

**The Cultural Relevance of Games**

*"It's only a game" is the kind of language that we use when referring to the social life and general psychology of play. There is an ambiguous dismissiveness toward games, as they are simultaneously embraced and despised within the popular culture and media. Even when dressed up in phrases like "interactive media" and "leisure software," the attendant associations and prejudices toward gaming suggest that it is, at best, a harmless and friendly pastime, and at worst a symptom of social aggression and moral decline. The debate quietly rages about the creation of so-called low versus high culture, between the "dumbing down" and "wising up" of mass entertainment.*

*These very traditional, indignant fears about the deviancy and inferiority of popular entertainment are certainly nothing new. Coin-operated amusements such as phonograph machines (1890s), kinetiscopes (1920s), pinball parlours (1950s), and more recently video game arcades, have always aroused the suspicion and paranoia of society's gatekeepers. Yet, with the same theoretical concerns and tools used to examine other media, such as television and film, it would be helpful to turn an equally critical and objective look toward the successful phenomenon of gaming. While the content of modern games is well variegated, and therefore difficult to generalize, it is hard to ignore a popular cultural experience that gameplayers often compare to sports, sex, or even transcendental meditation.*

*The documentary film Avatars Offline premiered at GDC 2002, highlighting the emotional and psychological nature, and the cross-cultural and trans-generational appeal, of gameplay. With respect to understanding issues of multimedia literacy; of iconic characters and the manipulation of identity; of how virtual settings contribute to the well-being and meaning in people's lives – it becomes clear that an important and powerful form of social interaction is emerging. How often does a new medium come along that allows us to express ourselves in novel ways? The shared and participatory experience of gameplay provides an opportunity for dialogue and community not previously known.*

*Games, and other media in general, are inherently attractive because they tend to simplify complex relations into something much more easily accessible. The mythology, the deeply satisfying and clear distinction between right and wrong, is easier to approach and to deal with than the unforgiving ambivalence of the "real world." The possibility for audiences to participate safely in the horror, heroism, guilt and guts of life, without fear of consequence, helps to cultivate some imagination and relationship toward these everyday realities.*

*In light of the growing respectability and appeal of gaming, the Academic Summit at the GDC brought together pioneering members of the university and game development communities, in hopes of fostering collaboration between the two. The game industry itself is often hard-pressed to answer questions regarding the cultural or social relevance of games, especially in the market-driven world of shipping titles. But ties with academia may support growth within the industry, in promoting research initiatives, analysis and examination of the medium in a formal and conceptual way.*

**A glimpse of the expo floor at GDC 2002.**

*From southern California*

*to upstate New York, from Vancouver to Liverpool, fledgling baccalaureate and masters degree programs are cropping up, allowing students to pursue game design and development as a means of expression and academic discipline. Similar to the film schools of only a decade or two ago, video games are becoming recognized as a viable career opportunity for computer engineers, programmers, artists and business persons. Gaming curricula reflect the common agenda of developers and academics in addressing the economic and social interests of how games are a part of our lives.*

*As further indication of the popularity and cultural significance of games, Charles Hirschhorn, former president of Walt Disney Television Animation, has launched a 24-hour cable channel called G4, featuring original programming devoted to covering news, events and reviews of the latest games.*

**Oh, the debauchery of it all. Partying during the wee hours at GDC 2002.**

## GUT Feeling:The Grand Unified Theory of Interactive Play

*Storytelling Within Games*

*Not all games need to tell a story (e.g., Tetris), but for those that do attempt to engage us in the drama of a tale, players like to feel they have some creative say-so in navigating through the game's world. Whether the storytelling is authorial based (i.e., carried along according to the invisible dynamic of a prefabricated sequence of events) or emergent (created by the decisions and choices of the player), the mantra for any good game design is, "Take me someplace I have never gone; make me someone I could never be; let me do things I could never do."*

*Applying to game storytelling those lessons gleaned from literature, drama and film, it is possible to create games that are immersive, emotionally involving and meaningful. Adapting dramatic elements to gaming – conflict, suspense, pace, consistency – it is helpful to remember that, ultimately, story is borne on the backs of characters about whom we can care, for good or bad. Gaming, like other media, makes use of dialogue, sound, geography, and point of view to establish its emotional and thematic setting; however, the mechanics and structure of gaming allow players to interact with characters in unique and undefined ways. In the process, players will be solving puzzles, embarking on quests, engaging in politics and combat, amassing wealth and fame, exploring landscapes, socializing and forming relationships – as just a small example of the interactivity built into the gaming environment.*

*In this context, stories benefit from being "modular" in their plot, such that a player can move within the game world as he or she likes, skipping around or missing parts entirely, and yet the entire story still holds together as a satisfying whole. The player should be able to interact with the world as he or she chooses, and to have the world and its characters respond and adapt. The pact between writer and player is that the game will endeavor to be as entertaining and fulfilling along all possible paths.*

*This modularity, wherein any scene can be played in any order without loss of meaning for the larger drama, has roots within literature as well. A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens, for example, with the individual chapters of the three ghosts of past, present and future: any one of the tales can be told in any sequence, with the story still retaining its meaning and resolution in the end. Also, Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote (1605), often considered the first novel, has a similar episodic structure: each chapter is distinct and can be shuffled around, adding another layer to*

*the growing theme and morality of the tale.*

*The cumulative emotional effect of this kind of nonlinear storytelling has been described as a "symbiotic escalation of tension and suspense." As the player moves deeper into the nuances and details of the story, there is a feeling of accomplishment and discovery in building toward the successful resolution of all questions and conflict.*

**The mean streets of *Grand Theft Auto III*, winner of the 2002 Game Developers Choice Award for Game of the Year. © DMA Design/Rockstar Games.**

*Emotional Content of Games*

*The general freedom of moving through the "possibility space" of a game can be tremendously exciting for players. The path one takes through a large, open space toward a particular goal is very much an expression of the gamer's own creativity, and this exploration of what is possible contributes in no small way to the activity and fun of gaming.*

*It is difficult, therefore, to manufacture and to manipulate emotions within gaming when players are continually distracted by all of the littler tasks of collecting information, items, and generally wandering through the environment willy nilly.*

*It is challenging, from a storytelling standpoint, to try to create meaningful moments and lines of action for the gamer to perform. In helping the player to suspend disbelief, in maintaining the "fourth wall" of immersive storytelling, how is emotional content achieved?*

*Games do not deliberately try, or even succeed, in presenting one view of the world. In fact, a significant measure of a game's fun is often how expressive or interpretive (i.e., how open to a player's personal experience or understanding) it is, even as the game moves toward a seemingly predetermined outcome. What differentiates gaming is that, if there is a story to be "told," it is a story that cannot and will not happen without the player's input.*

*Do gamers really want to have their thoughts and emotions scripted? A lot of people will fast forward through the game's narrative or expository cinematics, because the real attraction of gaming is in the play, the participation.*

***Ico* won accolades for its visual and narrative brilliance. © Sony Computer Entertainment.**

*Yet, even though we are consciously aware of staring at pixels on a screen, our brains filter all of the sensory data into some symbolic interpretation of the experience, a kind of "metaphysical mapping" of the emotional content. The sound design, the graphics, the bond of relating with other characters, the insertion of our own identity into the role of protagonist – all combine to captivate, enthrall, and elicit our emotional involvement (e.g., fear, amusement, disgust, elation), despite ourselves.*

*Beyond Entertainment*

*But it's not all fun and games, of course. Interactive play is finding usefulness and application outside of entertainment. Other industries, chief among them education, also exploit the qualities of gaming to enhance learning, assess and hone skills, and nurture productivity. Manufacturing, architecture, aerospace, medicine, retirement and financial planning all have had games developed to instruct and to experiment with different tactics and techniques toward predefined goals and measures of success. Contractors of national defense also have long been interested and invested in "war games." Video games, in particular, provide useful simulations of actual conditions in warfare, and soldiers have been trained in gunnery, aircraft landing and missile launching, among other things. In general, applying game technology to any real-time task has the potential to make learning or productivity much more enjoyable and efficient.*

## Animation Within Games

*Admittedly, character animation in games lags behind the advancements of other aspects of game design, such as environments and audio. However, one obviously does not need a complex character in order to convey personality or emotion, as when animating a carpet, a lamp, or a sack of flour.*

*All of the classical principles*

*still apply in creating quality animation for games: timing, anticipation, stretch and so on. One suggestion for bringing the traditional aesthetics of hand-drawn animation to the computer is to plot the arcs of action on the monitor's screen, using a safe wet marker, to help guide the keyframing as opposed to letting the computer do all the guessing and grunt work of inbetweening. This helps the animation to look solid and achieve the poses and movement that one intends.*

*Until recently, game animators have mostly just worked to supply assets to programmers, in a kind of grocery list style of animation: run cycle; jump cycle; stand idle, look right; stand idle, yawn. These assets are then incorporated into the game engine.*

**Gameplay develops character personality via artificial intelligence programming in *Black and White*.**
**© Lionhead Studios and Electronic Arts.**

*Nowadays, with artificial intelligence programming, an animator can conceive of a flowchart of possibilities for how a character may act, given the exigencies of its environment and a player's decisions. These possible behaviors are programmed into the game to allow for a more fluid movement between different and varied states of action, even to the point where dynamic social relationships can form among characters based on their past experiences.*

*Animators and programmers work hand in hand to engineer this creative interaction and to populate the game world with a whole palette of animation states. Within the confines and needs of the story, an artful balance of animation must be designed that will work in a host of possible combinations.*

*The job for animators is to make the transition between states work smoothly, in a process known as animation blending. Blending interpolates between the different animations, so this can be a challenge to isolate the corresponding and necessary keyframes between two separate sets of actions. But providing animations that can move outside of predefined routines helps to create an illusion of spontaneity and autonomy within gameplay – and that, frankly, is what it's all about.*

*Naturally, many animators would like to do full animations for all behaviors, but studios usually do not have the luxury of budget or schedule to do so. Instead, animation blending offers a compromise in matching up different animation states, and thereby enlarging the vocabulary of behaviors within a game.*

*Characters are no longer "dead assets," moving through the game world as repetitious and predictable automata. Rather, characters programmed with a variety of possible states play off one another in interesting and quasi-intelligent animated sequences.*

**And the Award Goes to...**

*In celebration of interactive entertainment, GDC 2002 hosted the Independent Games Festival, and the Game Developers Choice Awards.*

*The Independent Games Festival awards prizes to new, unpublished games. This year's recipients included, among others: Bad Milk, from DreamingMedia, for Independent Game of the Year; Insaniquarium, from Flying Bear Entertainment, for Innovation in Game Design; Banja Taiyo, from Team cHmAn, for Innovation in Visual Art; and Kung Fu Chess, from Shizmoo, which won the Audience Award.*

*In honor of the technical and artistic achievement of professionally published games, recognition was given to game developers for "their talent, their inspiration, their respect in the industry, their commitment to community and, mostly, their role in the advancement of the art form," the International Game Developers Association says.*

**The industry honors its peers for technical and artistic achievement at the 2nd Annual Game Developers Choice Awards.**

*This year, the GDC advisory board gave out three special awards in addition to the other award categories: Yuji Naka, president and CEO of Sega's Sonic team, received a Lifetime Achievement Award for his career's work, including the creation of the Sega mascot, Sonic The Hedgehog; Hubert Chardot*

*received the First Penguin Award for Alone in the Dark, a game that started the "survival-horror" genre; and Jeff Lander received the Community Contribution Award for his writings on game development, community building efforts and student outreach.*

**In Conclusion**

*On a final note, as an aside of sorts, one of the more uplifting and inspirational talks of the week came from freelance artist Peter Chan. Having designed layouts, backgrounds, characters, creatures and storyboards for LucasArts Entertainment, Chan now makes his living from a small island home off the coast of Washington state. Which island? "It's the one with the color copier," he explains. Instead of automobile traffic swimming by, he and his family watch a passing pod of orca.*

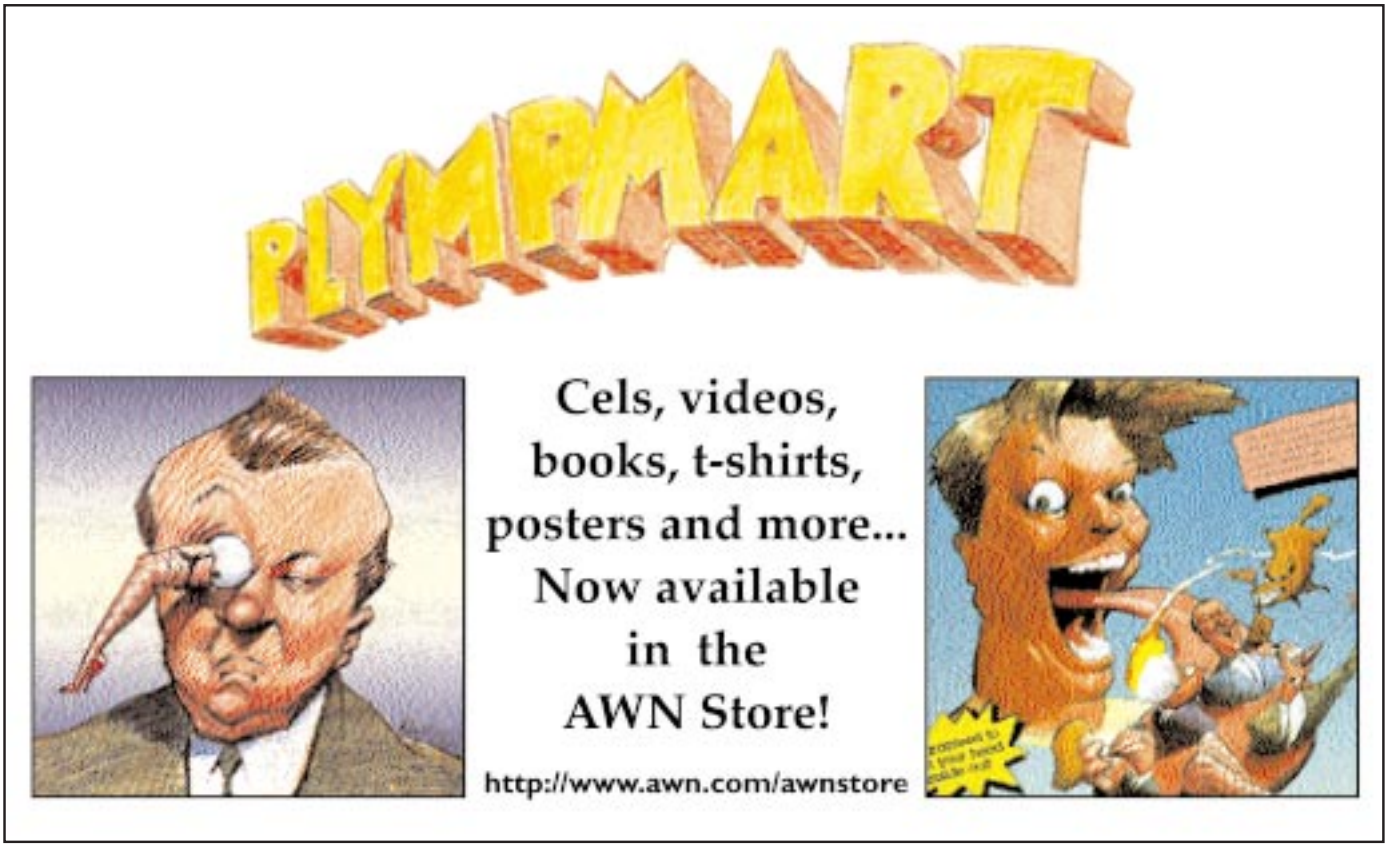
*Even though Chan has enjoyed working from his personal studio on such films as Antz, Monkeybone and Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone, he recommends that artists would do well to invest their skills and time in the gaming industry. The work is less stressful than other entertainment-related jobs, there is more creative freedom, and the employment is reliable and steady. Chan encourages artists to bring the same level of commitment and passion to games as they would to film, in taking the extra time to compose their artwork and scenes.*

*In all, the events of the GDC were very hopeful, and it was a fantastic introduction to the whole process and scope of game development: design, production management, negotiating deals with publishers, quality assurance testing, programming strategies, venture capital boot camp, and the list goes on. Moreover, the showroom floor and the awards ceremony night demonstrated the sheer expansiveness of technology, innovation and camaraderie of everyone involved in this burgeoning business.*

*For the European game development community, the Game Developers Conference is scheduled to take place this year in London, August 30-31.*

*Greg Singer is an animation lover, and you are welcome to call him such to his face. In deference to their unfailing generosity and support, special thanks to the Gama Network for all of the iced tea and grilled eggplant sandwiches.*

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

15. SVJETSKI FESTIVAL ANIMIRANIH FILMOVA

# ZAGREB 2002

15th WORLD FESTIVAL OF ANIMATED FILMS

18. - 23. 06.

Poster design by Kresimir Zimonic

# The 2002 British Animation Awards

by Andrew Osmond

The biannual British Animation Awards (BAA) were held on March 15th in the traditional venue of London's National Film Theatre. It's one of many animation events staged by the NFT. Luminaries like Matt Groening and John Lassetter give talks here, and a few weeks ago there was a presentation by the legendary Richard Williams. The big audi-torium was packed out for the ceremony, though hostess/comdienne Linda Smith dryly observed, "It's great to see an entire British industry in one room."

Smith's acerbic comments and put-downs livened the evening tremendously, though her opening spiel was a little too long. The title BAA animation was wonderful, showing sheep on a perilous migration to the ceremony. The (in)famous prize sheep paintings, 21 in total, were drawn by artists including Derek Hayes, Jerzy Kucia, Phil Mulloy and Michel Ocelot. Hayes' design — a picture of three lamb-chops — prompted Smith to praise the piece as "very '90s."

In 2000, the star of the awards was the British stop-motion special *Robbie the Reindeer*. This year, the hat-trick went to a drawn short, the melancholy *Father and Daughter* by Holland-born director Michael Dudok de Wit (*The Monk and the Fish*). *Father and Daughter* had already collected the 2000 Oscar for Best Animated Short, as well as the Annecy Grand Prix and Cartoon D'or in 2001. BAA added three awards to the list; the Craft Award, Best Scenario and Best UK Short Film. The runners-up in the latter were Sarah Cox's *Plain Pleasures* and Phil Mulloy's brutalist *Intolerance*.

**The BAA Class of 2002. All BAA photographs courtesy of Richard Wolff.**

**Michael Dudok de Wit, director of *Father and Daughter*, turned a hat trick with wins for Best Scenario, Craft and Short Film.**

**British comic Linda Smith, host of the evening's events, presents Best Animation at the Cutting Edge to the Brothers Quay for *In Absentia*.**

The Brothers Quay were present to collect their Cutting Edge award for *In Absentia*, a study of madness. Smith, perhaps overawed by the brothers' manes of hair, commented she'd never seen people looking more like far-out animators. Primate band Gorillaz, animated by London's Passion Pictures, won Best Music Video for their film *Clint Eastwood*, beating another Passion video, Coldplay's *Don't Panic*. However, *Don't Panic* won the Public Choice Music Video award, as selected by audiences in nine UK cities. The Coldplay film was directed by Tim Hope, who won two BAA awards in 2000 for his short *Wolfman*.

The Most Creative Use of New Technologies went to Leigh Hodgkinson for *Novelty*, a reality-hopping tale of a girl's friends from a more colorful world. Best Comedy Series was won by the

foul-mouthed election show *People's Britain*, directed by Chris Shepherd of Slinky Pictures and shown on late night Channel 4. Best International Short went to auteur Jerzy Kucia for *Tuning Instruments*, while the Public Choice Short was won by *Metalstasis*, made by Matthew Hood at the National Film and Television School. Another student, Suzie Templeton, was honoured for her stop-motion drama *Dog*, animated at London's Royal College of Art. Perhaps appropriately, *Dog* won the Paul Berry Award for Best Student Film, named after the British model animator who tragically died last year.

**The Future of Animation: Suzie Templeton won the Paul Berry Award for Best Student Film for *Dog*.**

Coincidentally, Berry had begun his career at the Manchester studio Cosgrove Hall (*Dangermouse*, *Wind in the Willows*), which won its own award, Best Children's Series, for its brand-new *Albie*. Like many of Cosgrove Hall's recent series, *Albie* is an inventive mix of techniques, with a hand-drawn look combined with CG textures on some characters. The Best Pre-School Series was *64 Zoo Lane*, directed by An Vrombaut. Best TV Special went to Barry Purves' *Hamilton Mattress*, though the absence of the revered director drew scathing comments from Smith.

The Children's Choice Award went to the historical drama *War Game*, directed by Dave Unwin of Illuminated Films, the studio behind the recent *Christmas Carol: The Movie*. (Kate Winslet has voice-roles in both films.) The award was chosen by a hundred children from primary (elementary) schools in Norfolk and Suffolk, and their videotaped views were a delight to watch. The World War I drama beat top-rated kids' show *Bob the Builder.*

On the commercial side, Passion Pictures' "Kiosk" commercial for Aero chocolate, starring a hula-hooping rat, won Best Animation/Craft in a Commercial. The Best Directed Commercial was won by the proudly primitive (and very funny) Q4 Music.com campaign, produced by Nexus Productions and directed by Sam Morrison. The Public Choice Commercial Award went to the scary spoof-thriller "Pintlings" for Tennents, about an unknown menace draining luckless pints. "Pintlings" was directed by Aardman's Darren Walsh, creator of the notorious Angry Kid.

**See Hamilton Mattress in action.**
**© Hamilton Mattress Limited 2002.**

Aardman was joint winner of the evening's last award, Best European Feature, a new category for the BAA. Poultry epic *Chicken Run* shared the prize with Michel Ocelot's African folk-tale *Kirikou and the Sorceress*. Ocelot's film has never been distributed in Britain, reportedly because of concerns over nudity. As the award was given, Ocelot announced *Kirikou* had found a British distributor, to much applause. The film's opening drew its own tribute from Linda Smith, who praised its stark depiction of childbirth.

**Director Michel Ocelot accepts Best European Animated Feature Film (tie) for *Kirikou et la Sorcière*.**

**Peter Lord and Nick Park, directors of *Chicken Run*, tied for the Best European Animated Feature Film Award.**

And on that barbed note, it was over — except for the post-awards party of course...

*Andrew Osmond is a freelance writer specializing in fantasy media and animation.*

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

## New from Japan:

# Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

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

**Ah! My Goddess: The Movie.**
*Theatrical feature, 2000. Director: Hiroaki Gohda. 106 minutes. Price & format: video dubbed $24.98/DVD bilingual $29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.*

*The comic book and previous anime video serial of Kosuke Fujishima's Aa! Megami-sama have been published in America as Oh My Goddess!. The theatrical feature (released July 22, 2000; produced by A.I.C.) was licensed to a different company, whose translators chose the more literal Ah! My Goddess. This gives anime collectors the headache of whether to shelve the video series and the movie separately, or if together, whether under "A" or "O."*

*The many fans of Oh My Goddess! had expected the popular 1993 OAV series to be followed up with a theatrical sequel well before 2000. This lovely movie looks like seven years' work went into it, and the fans have been delighted. But, as usual with movies based upon popular TV (and, in Japan, OAV) series, audiences who are not already familiar with the plot will feel they entered in the middle of the story.*

**© Kosuke Fujishima/Kodansha. © 2000 "AH! MY GODDESS" PARTNERSHIP. Presented by Kodansha in association with "AH! MY GODDESS" PARTNERSHIP. The original work's copyright reserved by Kosuke Fujishima. MM copyright reserved by Kodansha and "AH! MY GODDESS" PARTNERSHIP.**

*This romantic fantasy is roughly similar to the American Bewitched or I Dream of Jeannie. Fujishima's comic book stories are usually more comedic, while the animated versions (not counting the spinoff Adventures of the Mini-Goddess) aim for romantic melodrama. Shy nice-guy college freshman Keiichi Morisato gains a "guardian angel" in young goddess Belldandy from a Heaven depicted as a technological updating of Norse mythology (Yggdrasil, the Tree of Life, is a computer program). Belldandy's lively older and younger sisters, Urd and Skuld, move in to chaperone the pair, and to provide most of the comedic action while the demure teens carry on a gentle romance.*

*The movie, set three years later, threatens both a personal and a literal end of the world. It seems Belldandy had received her early training in miracle-working from Celestin, a handsome older angel who later became arrogant and had to be imprisoned for defying God. Celestin has now escaped and is determined to outdo God by creating a better human race. First he has to destroy the current world. He wants his best pupil, Belldandy, to assist him, and he will not let her refuse. Keiichi, with the help of Urd and Skuld, must stop Celestin and rescue Belldandy. Keiichi is now in his late teens, and while his relationship with Belldandy is still chaste, his feelings toward her are clearly more mature than those of the embarrassed mid-teen in the earlier animated story.*

*A.I.C.'s animation is excellent. Celestin's sabotage of the Asgardian supercomputer that controls the world combines the spectacle of both supernatural and sci-fi disaster epics. The music is delightful, and anime fans who are into costuming will want to take notes on the dress styles of the Gods. But the plot is still more for fans of human-interest*

*romance than of fantasy action-adventure or comedy; and romance aficionados will appreciate it more if they have seen the 1993 Oh My Goddess! series to better know the main cast.*

**Plastic Little.**
*OAV, 1994. Director: Kinji Yoshimoto. 50 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual $24.98. Distributor: A.D. Vision Films.*

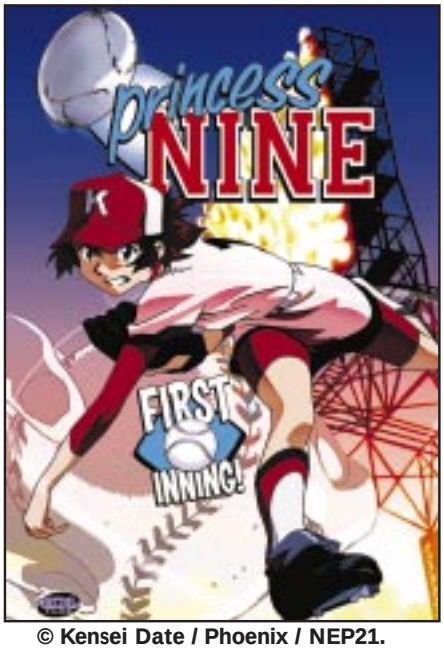
**© 1994 Kinji Yoshimoto * Satoshi Urushihara / MOVIC Co., Ltd. / Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) Inc.**

*Plastic Little was one of the first and most notorious of the "for teens with raging hormones" direct-to-video productions of the mid-'90s. Released in Japan on March 21, 1994 (produced by Animate Film, in cooperation with Studio Pierrot), it was quickly snapped up by A.D.V. for a U.S. release (July 1995) in the days when under-an-hour dubbed anime videos retailed in the $35 range. It was labeled "Mature Audiences" then; now it is merely 15+.*

*Plastic Little is a Star Wars-type space opera with the most buxom teen girls you ever saw as action heroes. "Heroes" is the right word. 17-year-old Captain Tita Koshigaya and 16-year-old Elysse Mordish lead the "assault on the Death Star" action while Tita's male spaceship crew rely upon her for inspiration and orders. The plot is shallow but skillfully directed to blend humor and suspense into nonstop action. Tita is captain (inheriting from her deceased father) of the Cha Cha Maru, a "pet shop hunter," specializing in capturing dangerous native animals for zoos, on the human-settled planet Yietta. Stopping for repairs and some R&R at the luxurious capital, Tita rescues a girl (Elysse) fleeing from obvious villains. Elysse is the daughter of a scientist who has just been murdered by Guizel, commander of Yietta's military who plans to overthrow the Galactic Federation civil government and turn the planet into his personal kingdom. Elysse holds the secret of her father's improved antigravity device for Yietta's floating cities. Guizel orders his Storm Troopers to kill the Cha Cha Maru crew and sieze Elysse. Tita realizes their only hope is an immediate surprise assault on Guizel's stronghold before he can get the full force of his troops into motion. The action is well choreographed, and backed up by a lush dramatic score of theatrical quality by Tamio Terashima.*

*Actually, everything about Plastic Little is "lush," thanks especially to character designer and animation director Satoshi Urushibara, one of Japan's most popular cheesecake pinup artists. Yietta's capital city (by director Yoshimoto) looks modeled upon European Rivera travel posters. The ship's women's bath is a futuristic sybaritic delight. All the men are handsome, and the girls — well, so many anime fan clubs held "jiggle contests" to count the bouncing boob shots that A.D.V.'s new DVD includes as one of its Extras a "Jiggle Counter." This production did not spare any expense in animating the sensuous movement of smooth, round pink skin, especially in the nude bathing and dressing scenes. Adolescent males can ogle Tita and Elysse, while the girls' beauty plus their fortitude and common sense in the action scenes (no airheads here) make them attractive role models for adolescent women. Plastic Little's success became a go-ahead for numerous OAV productions such as Agent Aika and Burn Up W starring beautiful busty women with a strong command presence, featured in action scenes often emphasizing panty shots.*

**Princess Nine. V.1, First Inning! V.2, Double Header! V.3, Triple Play! V.4, Strike Zone! V.5, Bases Loaded! V.6, Grand Slam!**
*TV series (26 episodes), 1998. Director: Tomomi Mochizuki. V.1 & V.6, 5 episodes/125 minutes; V.2-*



**© Kensei Date / Phoenix / NEP21.**

*5, 4 episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual $19.98. Distributor: A.D. Vision Films.*

*The anime subject genre least represented in America is the teen school sports drama. Princess Nine was a 26 episode TV serial, broadcast from April 8 to October 14, 1998, which combined girls' sports with adolescent romantic melodrama.*

*15-year-old Ryo Hayakawa is a tomboy about to graduate from junior high school. Her father, a pro baseball pitcher, died ten years ago. Ryo is an ace pitcher on the local amateur team, but she plans to leave school to help her poor mother run an old-fashioned neighborhood diner. But Mrs. Himuro, the feminist Chairman of the Board of Trustees at elite Kisaragi Girls' High School, wants to start a girls' baseball team to prove that women can compete in the traditional male "hard" sports. She has a scholarship sent to Ryo, who enters Kisaragi to find herself out of her league socially. The idea of competing in mens' sports is ridiculed by pompous Principal Mita, who supports the school's girls' tennis team which is dominated by Himuro's proud daughter Izumi. Ryo accepts the challenge to help cynical Coach Kido create a girls' team good enough to win its way to the National High School Baseball Championship at famous Koshien Stadium. This involves finding eight more girls with latent sports talent; helping them to bond emotionally into a team of loyal friends; and overcoming condescending male dismissal by the established baseball sports world. Additional melodramatic subplots include Izumi's discovery that her mother may have loved Ryo's father rather than her own father in their youth; Izumi's emotional struggle over whether to sabotage the baseball team or join it and dominate it; Ryo's romantic involvement with two rival handsome and supportive boys, Seishiro and Hiroki; and the revelation that Ryo's father may have been involved in a scandal before his death.*

*The limited animation by Phoenix Entertainment is uninspired at first glance. However, the viewer quickly becomes engrossed in the story and the characters instead of consciously thinking about the cinematography; thus the animation accomplishes its purpose effectively. The DVD has some surprisingly helpful Extras such as a history of baseball in Japan, and a social history of neighborhood udon bars like Ryo's mother's including recipes and a glossary of the Japanese food names heard in the drama. Princess Nine is excellent as a sample of a type of animation rare in America, and for adolescents interested in modern Japanese school and sports sociology.*

**Psychic Force.**

*OAV (2 episodes), 1998. Director: Fujio Yamauchi. 64 minutes. Price & format: video dubbed $19.98; DVD bilingual $24.99. Distributor: Image Entertainment.*

*Psychic Force is a popular Japanese video arcade game. This is a "movie" compilation of two half-hour OAVs, animated by the Triangle Staff studio, released on February 25 and May 25, 1998. The video is just a bad movie, but the extras on the DVD turn it into a fascinating case study of anime dramatizations of video games.*

*The story is like Marvel Comics' X-Men concept stripped of any depth and exaggerated into absurdity. In 2007, children and teens all over the world start developing immense mental powers. Since normal humans hate and fear mutants, I mean psychics, all adults start killing everyone under voting age, except for those powerful enough to defend themselves. By 2010 all cities look like Berlin in April 1945, reduced to battlefields between ruthless commando squads of human soldiers and teen psychics with cool super-character costumes and improbable hair styles. Back in 2007, 14-year-old Burn Griffith befriended a gentle psychic visionary, Keith Evans, and helped him escape from government Men In Black killers. Burn, now 17 years old and developing his own "flame on!" powers, searches for Keith who hoped to create a peaceful refuge for psychic youths. Instead Burn finds Keith as the messianic leader of a nascent totalitarian psychic nation. Keith is actually a naive figurehead manipulated by his sinister secretary, Richard Wong. Burn must fight his way through Wong's murderous psychic henchmen with names like Booladon to reach Keith, who has been misled into*

**© Image Entertainment.**

**© Tatsunoko Pro * The SoulTaker Production Committee.**

*believing that it is Burn who is the evil villain who must be destroyed.*

*Aside from Burn, Keith, Wong and a token girl named Sonia (her power controls sonic waves), there are fleeting glimpses of others whose presence is pointless except that they are major characters in the arcade game so they had to make at least a token appearance. This is clarified in the DVD extras, which total almost as much running time as the movie itself. A 4-minute "promotional video" is really a nice music video of the theme song, "Friends." The real explanations are in the "Special Interviews" with the voice actors of Burn, Keith and Wong, and a long video documentary of the "Psychic Junky Fair Three" in Tokyo on April 5, 1998, where 700 fans gathered to meet the actors and character designer/director Kenichi Onuki. The commentary identifies some of the other game characters briefly seen but not identified. The actors talk about the different personality interpretations they had to portray in this direct to video drama, which differed from those for the same characters in the radio or CD dramatizations. Apparently some star Keith and Burn as young pals at the beginning of adolescence (the phrase "guy friendship" is used often), while others feature them as older teens interacting more with the female psychics like Sonia and Wendy. Psychic Force is an interesting example of trying to create personalities for video game cyphers. Too bad the plot is shallow and implausible even by comic book superhero standards.*

**The SoulTaker. V.1, The Monster Within. V.2, Flickering Faith. V.3, Blood Betrayal. V.4, The Truth.**

*TV series (13 episodes), 2001. Series director: Akiyuki Shinbo. V.1-3, 3 episodes/75 minutes; V.4, 4 episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual $29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.*

*Here is a stylish anime series in which the plot is not nearly as gripping as the imaginative animation. The SoulTaker was a late-night (Pioneer's age guide is 16+) 13-episode sci-fi/horror thriller broadcast from April 4 through July 4, 2001, produced by Tatsunoko Pro. "You've come a long way since Speed Racer, Tatsunoko!" 17-year-old Kyosuke Date, who believes himself to be a normal youth, is unexpectedly murdered by his dying mother "to save him." He revives when a giggly teenage girl digs up and opens his coffin. Kyosuke is still recovering from this trauma when she is kidnapped, and he is attacked by a psychotic supervillain in an operating-room gown who materializes out of thin air screaming that he is a doctor and he must cut Kyosuke open. Kyosuke horrifiedly finds himself mutating into a devilish monster to defend himself. The audience and the bewildered Kyosuke do not even begin to understand what is going on until the end of episode 2.*

*What holds the audience's attention is the abstract direction by Shinbo (directors of the individual episodes are also credited, as well as character designer Akio Watanabe) and art direction by Junichi Higashi. (There are also credits for Chief*

*Animation Director, Visual Director, Color Director and Director of Photography.) The first scene is of the stained-glass windows in a ruined church, and stained-glass-like backgrounds appear in many later scenes although the styles range from Medieval religious subjects to 1930s abstractionism to 1960s flower-power art. Battle scenes are in stark flat poster colors dominated by sharply contrasting masses of red, blue, black, olive and purple; usually of figures in two colors slamming into each other against a background of a third color. Arms and legs shoot out gigantically toward the camera from distant background figures in a grotesque parody of perspective. A cute pastel anime girl who clashes horribly artistically will appear with an armload of sharp objects intended for sadistic purposes. It is no coincidence that action figures of The Soul/Taker are being manufactured in America by McFarlane Toys, the company of Todd McFarlane, creator of the literally devilish Spawn comic book and HBO-midnight animation series. Although the story is quite different (except for coverups by The Authorities, but what drama series these days doesn't use that plot device?), The Soul/Taker has an atmosphere very like Spawn's degenerate cynicism.*

*Aside from the art, the deliberately murky story holds the viewer by cryptic but intelligent dialogue (and Japanese voice acting that makes the characters sound clever), and a sci-fi plot in a Terminator/Matrix-like destroyed future world that at least promises some unusual developments.*

*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.*

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:

**Re:vitalizing Animation Through Virtual Studios**

See clips from the projects discussed in Greg Singer's article, which discusses building a more personal, varied animation future by collaborating on line. View the projects now at: http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=pageone&article_no=1392

**Fresh from the Festivals: April 2002's Film Reviews**

Jon Hofferman reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: *Boobie Girl* by Brooke Keesling, Bill Plympton's *Eat*, *FUV* by Marv Newland, *(it was . . .) Nothing at All*, directed by Candy Kugel and Vincent Cafarelli, and *Mona Mon Amour*, directed by Michael Sporn. The online version includes QuickTime movie clips at: http://mag.awn.com/index.php3?ltype=search&sval=Hofferman&article_no=1383

## Fresh from the Festivals:

# April 2002's Film Reviews

by Jon Hofferman

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

**This Month:**

**Boobie Girl** *(2001), 5 min., directed by Brooke Keesling, USA. Info: Brooke Keesling, 12400 Ventura Blvd. #189, Studio City, CA 91604. Email: brooke@boobiegirl.com.*

**Eat** *(2001), 9 min., directed by Bill Plympton, USA. Info: Bill Plympton, 119 W. 23rd St. #206, New York, NY 10011. Tel: 212-675-7643.*

**FUV** *(1999), 11 min., directed by Marv Newland, Canada. Info: Marv Newland, International Rocketship Limited, 204-1338 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia V6H 1A7, Canada. Tel: 604-738-1778. Fax: 604 738-0009.*

**(it was . . .) Nothing at All** *(2000), 5 min., directed by Candy Kugel and Vincent Cafarelli, USA. Info: Candy Kugel, Buzzco Associates, 33 Bleecker St., New York, NY 10012. Tel: 21-473-8800. Fax: 212-473-8891. Email: info@buzzco.com.*

**Mona Mon Amour** *(2001), 8.5 min., directed by Michael Sporn, USA. Info: Michael Sporn Animation, Inc., 632 Broadway, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10012. Tel/Fax: 212-228-3372. Email: MSAnimation@aol.com.*

***Boobie Girl.* © Brooke Keesling, 2001.**

**Boobie Girl**

*This sweet-tempered moral tale explores the old caveat about being careful what you wish for, in this case, large breasts. Director Brooke Keesling uses simple line drawings and straightforward exposition to present her quasi-autobiographical story of a little girl who discovers the many disadvantages — from unwanted attention to poor balance — of being well-endowed. It's clearly a contrarian point of view in these days of mammary-fixation, but, aside from presenting an unusual subject from an alternative angle — and despite the talents of narrator June ("Rocky the Flying Squirrel") Foray — Boobie Girl is too generic and its message too pat for it to rise much above the level of the mundane.*

*Boobie Girl is Brooke Keesling's Cal Arts thesis film, as well as her first attempt at drawn animation. Funded by a Kodak Film Grant, it won a Student Academy Award and a College Television Award, and has screened at Sundance, the HBO Comedy Film Festival, the Ottawa Animation Festival, and many other venues. Among her influences, Keesling lists John and Faith Hubley, Jules Engel, and Ray and Charles Eames.*

**Eat**

*Anyone familiar with the work of Bill Plympton will have no trouble identifying Eat as a product of his distinctive sensibility. Essentially a chronicle of a (typical?) evening in an elegant French bistro, the film begins innocently, even poignantly, with some nicely understated characterizations, then rapidly degenerates into sociopathic mayhem and, finally, an exercise in disgust. (This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but if you're going to show voluminous vomiting, it's better if it has narrative justification.) The film features the familiar Plympton-esque concern with extreme anatomical distortion, as well as several funny and imaginative tableaux along the way. Ultimately, though, Eat is too*

disjointed and psychologically opaque to function effectively as a narrative, and too rooted in a specific context to be successful as the kind of free-form exercise in absurdity that comprises Plympton's best work.

Bill Plympton worked for many years as an illustrator and cartoonist before making his first animated film, *Boomtown*, in 1983. Since then, he has made a string of highly successful shorts, including *Your Face*, *How to Kiss* and *25 Ways to Quit Smoking* and the animated features, *The Tune*, *Guns on the Clackamas* and *I Married a Strange Person*. *Eat*, which was created using cel animation, received a "Best in Show" award at ASIFA-East and the Grand Prize for Short Films in Cannes Critics' Week. It has also screened at Annecy, Anima Mundi, Edinburgh, Toronto, and many other festivals.

***Eat*. © Bill Plympton Studios, 2001.**

***FUV*. © Marv Newland, 1997.**

## FUV

In *FUV*, Marv Newland continues to march resolutely to his own drummer with another minimalist narrative incorporating objects and events the exact meaning of which may be known only to him. With its deliberately slow pace, "poor" framing and often obscure imagery, *FUV* is clearly designed to test the patience of its audience, forcing viewers either simply to dismiss the piece or, perhaps, to reflect on the conventions of narrative, the nature of time, and the meaning of life (which could ultimately turn out to be the same thing if the key question becomes why one is spending 11 minutes of one's life trying to make sense of a largely impenetrable narrative). Still, one has the feeling that Newland's hand-drawn animation and Paul Plimley's subtle soundtrack are for the most part doing exactly what they're intended to do, and the director's obvious skill and conceptual ambition are admirable. Whether in the end the payoff is worth the investment of effort is a decision left to the viewer.

Best-known for the classic *Bambi Meets Godzilla* (1969), his first film, Marv Newland has worked in all aspects of animation in both a commercial and non-commercial setting. In 1975 he founded the production company, International Rocketship Limited, where he made *Sing Beast Sing* (1980), *Anijam* (1984), *Hooray for Sandbox Land* (1985), *Black Hula* (1988) and *Pink Komkommer* (1991). Recently, in addition to pursuing his own work, he has worked as a freelance director and storyboard artist, and has produced a number of films under the International Rocketship aegis. *FUV* has screened at Annecy, Ottawa, I Castelli Animati, and Anima Mundi, among others.

## (it was . . .) Nothing at all

Based originally on a poem by director Candy Kugel, which was then set to music by Lanny Meyers, *(it was . . .) Nothing at all* was ceated scene by scene without a script or storyboards to guide the animation. Considering its ad hoc creation, the film, while episodic, is remarkably cohesive, and its theme-and- variations format poignantly explores the nature of loss. Kugel and co-director Vincent Cafarelli, working in Photoshop and After Effects, employ an endlessly imaginative

*series of techniques that effectively complement and expand on the meaning of the song, neatly avoiding the twin pitfalls of redundancy and the use of flashy effects for their own sake. If the film is a tad overlong and the sheer variety of transitions a bit much (and the ending dangerously close to bathos), (it was . . .) Nothing at all is nonetheless a happy example of a text-centered animation in which the competing elements achieve a pleasing harmony.*

***(it was…) Nothing at all*.**
**© Buzzco Associates, Inc., 2000.**

*Vincent Cafarelli and Candy Kugel have been working together since the mid-1970s. As Buzzco Associates, their work has been seen on MTV, the USA Network, ABC, PBS and HBO. Among their other works are the multi-award-winning A Warm Reception in L.A. (1987), Snowie and the Seven Dorps (1990), Fast Food Matador (1991) and KnitWits (1997). Their current work includes commercials, PSAs, interactive projects for the Web, and network and cable productions.*

**Mona Mon Amour**

*Director Michael Sporn describes Mona Mon Amour as "a reality-based Sex and the City," which sums up the film's subject matter pretty well. Based on a character created by author and illustrator Patti Stren, who also provides Mona's voice, the film is an extended monologue in which Stren mostly discusses the ins and outs (and shoulds and woulds) of dating in New York. The author's insights and observations range from the incisive to the banal, but overall the material is pretty funny and the whimsical drawings and minimalist animation are a nice accompaniment to the rambling narrative. Mona doesn't have the synergy of the best narration-driven animated shorts (the spoken monologue on its own would have much the same effect), but there are many amusing touches, as well as a number of nice moments when the visual and verbal components come together to create a greater whole.*

***Mona Mon Amour*. © Michael Sporn Animation, Inc., 2001.**

*Michael Sporn has been producing and directing animated films — including more than thirty television specials — for over twenty years. His first experience was in the studio of legendary animator John Hubley, where he worked for six years. In 1980, he founded Michael Sporn Animation, Inc., a studio specializing in adapting the work of children's book author/illustrators. Mona Mon Amour was created using watercolors and markers on cels backed with cel vinyl. It screened at the Shorts International Film Festival in New York.*

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

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

# Everything About Animation

## only on the web
## www.awn.com

- articles
- news
- events
- reviews
- store
- jobs
- forums
- galleries
- tutorials
- schools

"Animation World Network is a great resource for the entertainment industry. Not only do they deliver comprehensive coverage of animation events, production and personalities, but it's also a fun site - providing everything from Bill Plympton's cartoon of the week to clips of Academy Award® contenders. So kudos to AWN!"

- Chris Wedge
Director of the 20th Century Fox feature *ICE AGE*

AWN
awn.com

*Chicken Run* © DreamWorks Pictures. • *Shrek* © DreamWorks Pictures.. • *Geri's Game* © Pixar Animation Studios.