

# AW

**ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE**

November 2002 • Volume 7 Issue 8 • awn.com

BELGIUM'S ABSURD  
*Panique au Village*

**TV Animation's  
New Heights**

**PLUS: FILM, BOOK AND DVD REVIEWS  
WRITING FOR ANIMATION AND MORE!**





## Television

### Prime Time Animation Isn't Dead – It's Just Moved...

While prime time animation might have disappeared from the big three, it is alive and thriving on cable. Rick DeMott reports on where the sauciest of television animation can be found.

BY RICK DEMOTT

### Panique au village: Belgium's Absurd Beast

*Panique au village* "The Cake" caused a riot of laughter at Annecy 2001 where it won for best TV program. Now this certifiably crazy show is coming to television. Philippe Moins reports on the insanity.

BY PHILLIPE MOINS

## Other

### Creating Successful Music for Animation

Four working composers discuss the creative challenges of making music for animation. Denis M. Hannigan, Don Grady, Jody Gray and James L. Venable offer tips and advice for both composers and creators, directors and producers.

BY DARLENE CHAN

### Getting Into Gaming

Three game designers working for Sucker Punch and SCEA discuss how they got to where they are today.

BY JOAN KIM

## Columns

### At War No More

Why do our super-patriotic favorite toon characters no longer help with our war efforts? Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman investigates how times have changed since WWII.

BY MARTIN "DR. TOON" GOODMAN

### The Animation Pimp: Can't Escape You

The Animation Pimp discusses his recovery from alcoholism and the animated films he found that discuss the subject.

BY CHRIS J. ROBINSON

### The Mighty Principles of Animation

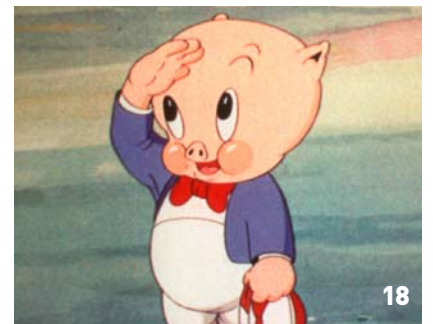
While the basic technology of animation changed little prior to the advent of the computer, the principles of animation that are used today were all developed in one amazing decade. Gene Deitch explains.

BY GENE DEITCH

# AW

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

An ANIMATION WORLD NETWORK Publication



## Student Corner

### Animation Comedy and Gag Writing

28

Jean Ann Wright finishes her series on writing for television animation with some tips on how to add comedy and gags to your script.

BY JEAN ANN WRIGHT

### Career Coach: A Thank You Note

32

As Thanksgiving approaches, Pamela Kleibrink Thompson encourages us to think back and thank those who have helped us throughout the year.

BY PAMELA KLEIBRINK THOMPSON

## Reviews-Film/Video

### New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

34

Anime expert Fred Patten reviews the latest anime releases including *Carried by the Wind*, *Dai-Guard*, *FLCL*, *Hyper Police* and *Orphen*.

BY FRED PATTEN



40



46

### Fresh from the Festivals: November 2002's Film Reviews

40

Maureen Furniss reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: *Hessi James* by Johannes Weiland, Tomek Baginski's *The Cathedral*, *The Lark* by Gil Kenan, *Passing Moments* by Don Phillips, and Slava Ushakov's *Orange*.

[QuickTime movie clips available online!](#)

BY MAUREEN FURNISS

## Reviews-Books

### Kim Deitch's Boulevard of Broken Dreams

44

Chris Lanier discusses the new graphic novel by Kim Deitch, which follows the ups and downs of an old time animation studio, through the metamorphosis of their star character, Waldo the Cat.

BY CHRIS LANIER

### Comic Wars: How Two Tycoons Battled Over the Marvel Comics Empire — And Both Lost

46

Danny Fingeroth reviews Dan Raviv's book on the legal wrangling between two businessmen for control of Marvel Comics, which reveals the power of dollars and its impact on the art.

BY DANNY FINGEROTH

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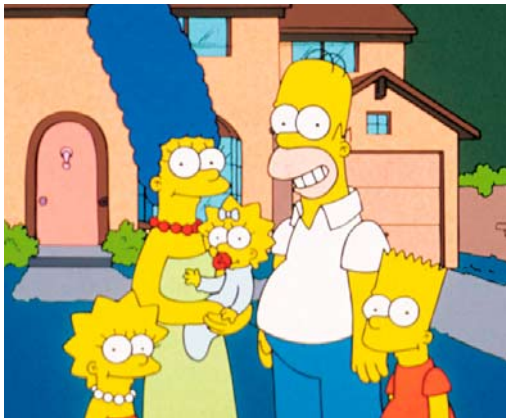
ADULT ANIMATION

# Prime Time Animation *Isn't Dead* —It's Just Moved...



*Space Ghost: Coast to Coast* formed the foundation for the "Adult Swim" block on Cartoon Network. Courtesy of Cartoon Network.

"ADULT SWIM" ORGANICALLY GREW OUT OF SPACE GHOST'S SUCCESS AND ALLOWED A TIME SLOT FOR MORE ADULT-ORIENTED SHOWS.



*The Simpsons* proved that animation wasn't just for kids. © & TM 1997 20th Century Fox Film Corp. All rights reserved.

WITH FAILURES LIKE *SAMMY*, *CLERKS*, *MISSION HILL*, *STRESSED Eric* and *God, the Devil and Bob*, some people in the industry are saying that primetime animation is dead. However, with the networks shying away from toons, cable is bursting forth with animated projects left and right. And the big deals are for toons geared toward an adult audience. I chatted with execs from Cartoon Network, Comedy Central, Showtime and TNN, each of whom have made big deals in the past year, to see what they think is the current climate regarding animated programming for the grown-up demographic in the U.S.

## IT'S GOING SWIMMINGLY!

First let's start with the network that is striving to be the #1 destination for every kind of animation in the world — Cartoon Network. Due to the resounding success of their Sunday night "Adult Swim" block, the network recently announced that it would expand the block to five nights a week. "Adult Swim" is the highest rated time slot on the network and is bringing in advertising dollars from companies that have never advertised on the Toon Net before. The adult programming especially allows the cable station to sell ad time to R-rated films and adult clothing lines like Levi's. "Adult Swim" was a long time in the making and really started 8 years ago when Keith Crofford, vice president of production for Cartoon Network Productions, spearheaded the creation of *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*. Quickly the subversive and adult nature of the show grew a cult following, which proved that adults — especially 20 and 30-somethings were really interested in watching mature animation.

"At first, we didn't know if we were going to last 13 days, 13 weeks, or 13 months. And now it's eight years later," Crofford said.

In regards to whether primetime animation is dead, Crofford said he felt the industry is cyclical. He went on to say that lousy product is destined to fail and that when "people find a program they identify with



they keep watching." Crofford pointed out the success of *The Simpsons* as proof that primetime animation is still vital. That series he said was the "holy grail" that others must look up to.

Cartoon Network wanted to air more adult animation because a third of their audience was between 18-34, however there wasn't a proper niche in which to air such programming. "Adult Swim" organically grew out of *Space Ghost's* success and allowed a time slot for more adult-oriented shows. Crofford said with "Adult Swim" they now have the opportunity to search out more mature content from other markets. For instance, the expanded "Adult Swim" will feature six series from Japan including *Cowboy Bebop* and *InuYasha*. Moreover, the network has rescued several series that moved off the major networks like *Futurama*, *Baby Blues*, *Home Movies*, *Mission Hill* and *The Oblongs*. Plus, the network gets a chance to develop



*Cowboy Bebop* (left) came from Japanese television, while *Home Movies* was developed for UPN before it re-found a home on Cartoon Network. *Cowboy Bebop* © Bandai Entertainment; *Home Movies* courtesy of Cartoon Network.



## COMEDY CENTRAL IS DEFINITELY SHOWING THAT TOONS FOR ADULTS IS A VIABLE PART OF THEIR BUSINESS PLAN.

their own original programming like *Aqua Teen Hunger Force*, *The Brak Show* and *Sealab 2021* and create specials like *The Groovenians* and *Private Eye Princess*. With the viewers and the demand already there, Cartoon Network is clearly addressing the desires of their audience for more grown-up entertainment.

### ANIMATION IS CENTRAL

Next we have Comedy Central, which has never shied away from adult-themed toons. *South Park* still ranks as their most watched program. Recently, the station announced that it too had resurrected four programs that came and went from the networks. The cable net obtained 30 episodes of *Dilbert*, which is based on the popular comic strip; 6 episodes of *Clerks*, based on the cult-hit film of the same name; and 13 episodes of both *Gary & Mike* and *Undergrads*. Kathryn Mitchell, Comedy Central's senior VP of programming, said that upon viewing the ratings of the initial order the network may opt to order new installments of the four series. Like many of the execs

that I spoke with Thompson said viewers come to cable looking for an alternative to the networks and that cable has the opportunity to take more risks.

In regard to risks, she said that animated programs present a major cost risk, especially for a full season, 26-episode run. Another type of risk can



Staying power: *South Park* still garners high ratings for Comedy Central. © Comedy Partners, Inc. All rights reserved.

be with edgier content and she feels that American audiences have grown to except animation as adult entertainment. After over a decade of *The Simpsons*, Mitchell feels that the stigma of cel animation being only for kids is fading away. She also pointed out CG animation in theaters and video games as another area where animation is making inroads with older audiences. However, she said that bigger risks can also yield bigger disasters when the projects are not right, like in the case of the theatrical failure of *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*.



Showtime went to the Web to get *WhirlGirl* (left) and *Queer Duck*. *WhirlGirl*, courtesy of Visionary Media, and *Queer Duck* © 2000 Mishmash Media/Icebox, Inc.

The next big risk for Comedy Central comes in the form of their recently optioned toon series based on the life of Hollywood's playboy producer Robert Evans. The laugh channel beat out TNN in a heated bidding war for the rights after Evans brought execs from various networks to his house to show them what they would be getting. And with an English butler, a young blonde girlfriend and heavy metal band Guns-N-Roses' Slash wandering the grounds everyone was intrigued. Lauren Corrao, Comedy Central's senior VP of development and original programming, was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, saying, "The girlfriend did put it over the top. We have several people there, all of whom said it was the highlight of their career." However, Evans didn't get everything he wanted because the network still won't let him call the show, *Pussy Power*. So with what looks like an animated version of *The Anna Nicole Show* on their hands, Comedy Central is definitely showing that toons for adults is a viable part of their business plan.

### SHOWING ANIMATION

When it comes to resurrecting animation that was on life support, Showtime went to a venue that is one big iron lung these days — the Internet. The pay station's Website — Sho.com — has always been an advocate for toons on the Web, airing the first regular-broadcast weekly Web series, *Whirlgirl*. Peter Keramidas, senior VP of programming and new media content, said the network was looking for short subjects to lead-in or follow-up their original series. During the search Showtime's executive VP of original programming, Gary Levine, showed Keramidas some

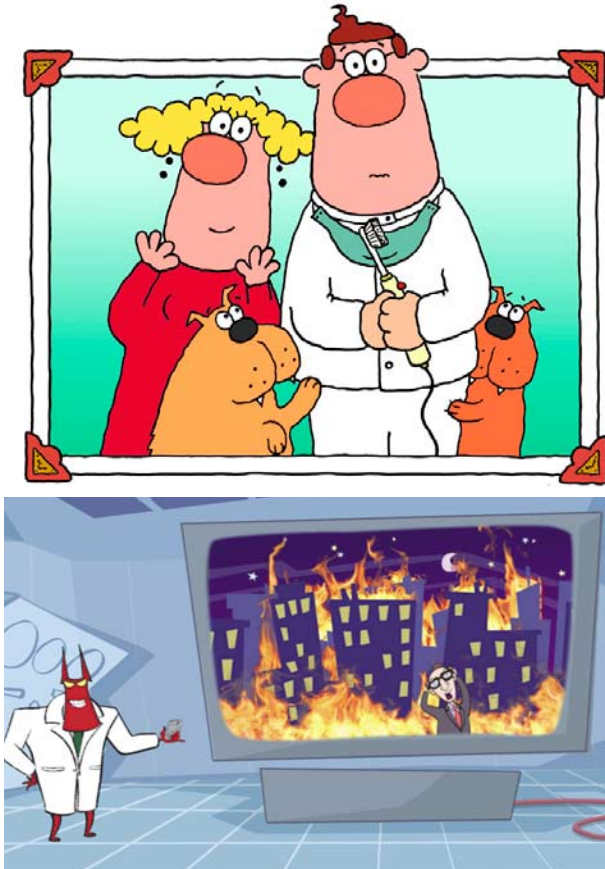
Webisodes of *Queer Duck*, a Web series which aired on Icebox where Levine previously served as president. Keramidas said after 9 years in the industry hearing over 75 script ideas a week he has come to the point where "he's heard it all," however *Queer Duck* struck him as something original and complimented Showtime's live-action series *Queer as Folk* perfectly. At first, Showtime only aired *Duck's* previously produced installments, however the popularity of the shorts spurred Showtime to produce new episodes of their own.

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### THE PAY STATION'S WEBSITE — SHO.COM — HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN ADVOCATE FOR TOONS ON THE WEB...

Keramidas said out right that the stigma of animation as only for kids is dead, also pointing out the success of *The Simpsons* as proof. He said while animation provides a unique hook to attract an audience, viewers these days are more discerning, especially cable viewers who are searching out alternative programming. Keramidas stated that Showtime's goal with all their original series is to find programming that is distinct enough for premium television and presents stories that others cannot tell. When looking for animation, Showtime has no mandate just the desire to find good stories and good animation. The cable network has gone across the Atlantic twice to bring the U.S. unique programming in the form of *Bob and Margaret* and *Aagh! It's the Mr. Hell Show!* Moreover, the network is also exploiting its Internet ties with programming obtained through their online festival alt.sho.com.





Programming from across the Pond: *Bob and Margaret* (top), courtesy of Comedy Central, and *Aaagh! It's the Mr. Hell Show!* © 2001 Peafur Productions/Sextant Entertainment.

### MAKING A STRONG STAND

Last but not least is the new TNN, which made the big announcement a few months back that they were launching a primetime animation block featuring a new *Ren and Stimpy*. I asked Peilin Chou, head of TNN development, why the cable channel made such a commitment to toons and she said they just fit with their target audience of 25 to 34 year olds. She said the demographic grew up on a diet of animation and don't think of animated programming any differently than live-action programming. The Gen-X demographic is searching out extreme entertainment and animation can get away with even more extreme subjects than live-action can. Chou said they wanted to make a statement and the animated programming they have committed to has the same edgy comedic sensibility that is compatible with the network's other programming.

TNN will roll out their toons next spring including *Gary the Rat*, based on the Internet series of the same name, and *Stripperella*, a superhero show from comic book legend Stan Lee. Chou explained the new *Ren and Stimpy* is not for kids this time around and said she doesn't feel creator John K has any resentment over being kicked off the original series, which aired

on sister-channel Nickelodeon. Gary provides a bit of star power to the line-up with Kelsey Grammar on as the creator and voice of the title character. Chou said that Grammar always saw the series as a television project, but felt the Internet was a great place to develop it. In regards to *Stripperella*, Chou said it's a



A *Ren and Stimpy* redo is in the future for TNN. © Viacom International, Inc. All rights reserved.

classic Stan Lee comic book tale in the same vein as the *Austin Powers* films. Plus, it provides the network with the star-draw of Pamela Anderson, who will lend her voice to the title character. Chou said the network is very excited about the block as a major brand-defining venture. With 10 other animated programs in development, the network has a lot to work with.

So it seems that if adult animation is fading from the traditional networks, cable is picking up the banner for a younger audience who only knows an age with *The Simpsons* and is looking for something a bit edgier. With more and more animation saturating the mainstream, by the time Gen-Xers are collecting social security the Disney-fied stigma on animation may be a distant memory. Crofford was right the business is cyclical, however each time around the circle just gets a bit larger and only time will tell how big it can get. ■

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**RICK DEMOTT** currently works for sound production house BadaBing BadaBoom Productions and animation company Perky Pickle Studios. In his free time, he works as a freelance writer and a regular contributor to the humor Website, *PorkPony.com*.

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BELGIUM ANIMATION

# Panique au village: Belgium's *Absurd* Best



The visual simplicity of *Panique au village* is deceptive. The series becomes more sophisticated as it evolves. © La Parti Productions.

**E**

ARLY MORNING. COWBOY, INDIAN, HORSE, FARMER, ROBIN AND Constable are ready for new adventures. Imagine lots of little plastic figurines just like the ones we all used to play with as kids. Imagine two animators using them in a knowingly child-like way to tell us about these crazy adventures.

## A PICTURE OF INSANITY

*Panique au village*, a Belgian TV series, set for broadcast on Canal+ France at the end of the year and in Belgium shortly afterwards, will provide a welcome and humorous shot in the arm to the usually "well-behaved" world of model animation. It's being made and is set in Brussels, in a stop-motion animation studio, Studio Pic Pic André, located in an old, middle-class style house, near the gare du Nord with a small team of a dozen or so people working on three different sets. The pressure is on, since the series of 20 x 5 minute episodes must be completed for air at the beginning of 2003.

However, the rapid work pace isn't down to deadlines, it's integral to the animation style of Vincent Patar and Stéphane Aubier, co-creators and chief animators on the project. How do you animate ready-made characters, picked up in flea-markets and for whom there are only two or three key poses? The way Patar and Aubier animate looks like kids moving their little toy soldiers around. But they also have a few tricks up their sleeve, sometimes inventing poses

HOW DO YOU ANIMATE READY-MADE CHARACTERS, PICKED UP IN FLEA-MARKETS AND FOR WHOM THERE ARE ONLY TWO OR THREE KEY POSES?





Stéphane Aubier (left) and Vincent Patar, co-creators and chief animators of *Panique au village*, started the project by purchasing toys from a flea market. © Philippe Moins.

THEY OWED MORE TO CHUCK JONES AND TEX AVERY THAN RAOUL SERVAIS, BUT STILL HAD THAT TYPICALLY BELGIAN YET HARD-TO-PIN-DOWN SENSE OF THE ABSURD.



The fun and playful set is reminiscent of toy trains and school handicrafts class. © Philippe Moins.

which don't exist, changing their characters' physique. For the audience, this unconcealed DIY approach adds to the viewing pleasure, although the cavalcade of absurd gags and crazy storylines prevent us from being overly distracted by the whys and wherefores. The set design owes something to that of electric train sets but also to the school handicrafts class, all in a very playful style. But make no mistake, as the series progresses, it gets more sophisticated, whilst

retaining this apparent ingenuity which fits the style of the characters; they are also enhanced by fine lighting, not to make them look better or cuter, but because to make the series work the world it creates must be coherent and believable. There's little in the way of dialogue, apart from the odd intervention from the creators themselves, and from some of their long-term colleagues: Bruce Ellison, Fred Jannin, Bouli, Christian Hecq and Benoît Poelvoorde (whose credits include *C'est arrivé près de chez vous*, *Le Boulet*, *Le vélo de Ghislain Lambert* and others).

Finally, the series is scored by Bernard Plouvier, who has composed the music for many of Patar and Aubier's films; the title sequence varies slightly from one episode to another, with the French DJ Chazam playing variations on the initial theme tune to match.

### JOURNEY INTO "3D"

Although their previous films were drawn animations, they also worked in much the same way: the three short films in the "Pic Pic André Shoow" (sic) were really delirious cartoons. They owed more to Chuck Jones and Tex Avery than [Raoul Servais](#), but still had that typically Belgian yet hard-to-pin-down sense of the absurd.

With their move into "3D," Stéphane Aubier and Vincent Patar have taken a laudable initiative to break new ground in terms of the imaginative universe they had already established; one which until now seemed inherently that of a closed 2D world. Anyone who thought that these two were irrevocably tied to the drawn cartoon will be astonished. Returning, almost by chance, to an early student work — they both



A little Chuck Jones and Tex Avery, mixed with some Belgian absurdity, make *Panique au village* fresh and inventive. © La Parti Productions.

studied at [La Cambre](#) some ten or so years ago — which came across more as a game than a finished film, they first made a pilot called *Panique à la cuisine*. This generated a lot of enthusiasm, to the extent that producers Vincent Tavier and Philippe Kauffmann (La Parti) convinced the Communauté française de Belgique and Promimage to finance the project: 20 X 5 minutes, a relatively unusual format,

THE SET DESIGN OWES SOMETHING TO THAT OF ELECTRIC TRAIN SETS BUT ALSO TO THE SCHOOL HANDICRAFTS CLASS, ALL IN A VERY PLAYFUL STYLE.

but one, which was apparently what Canal+ France, who pre-bought the series, wanted.

Made for 900,000 Euros over 14 months by 9 people including the two creators, this deceptively simple series required some new thinking, mainly due to the technical demands of filming digitally, a relatively new technique; digital cameras were used for the shoot, and then the footage was reworked using After Effects. ■

**PHILIPPE MOINS** is a writer and teacher, and also the co-director of *Anima 2003*.

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

## Online Highlights

Every online (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 highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

### FRESH FROM THE FESTIVALS: NOVEMBER 2002'S FILM REVIEWS

Maureen Furniss reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: [Hessi James](#) by Johannes Weiland, Tomek Baninski's [Katedra](#), [The Lark](#) by Gil Kenan, [Passing Moments](#) by Don Phillips and Slava Ushakov's [Orange](#). Go online and view the QuickTime clips.

**AW**  
ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE



ANIMATION MUSIC

# Creating Successful Music for Animation

COMPOSERS AND DIRECTORS ALIKE NEED TO BE AWARE OF WARNING SIGNS THAT INDICATE THE MUSICAL SCORE IS OFF.

— DENIS M. HANNIGAN



Denis M. Hannigan suggests that composers ask the producers and directors very direct questions about their musical likes and dislikes before composing. Photo credit: Teri Hannigan.

**F**HANCES ARE THAT WHEN SOMETHING MOVES YOU by either making you laugh or cry while watching a movie or TV show, a musical score accompanies the scene. Music is a fundamental device that filmmakers use to develop a mood, set up a character and move a scene along. Music for animation has its own set of requirements, so we asked four successful animation composers to give us a behind-the-scenes peek at how they work. They talked with *Animation World Magazine* about their working relationship with producers, directors and creators, how they approach their work and what they think about when writing a score.

## DENIS M. HANNIGAN, HOOLIGAN MUSIC

*Composer for Rugrats, Recess, CatDog, Beakman's World, Adventure in Wonderland and the 2002 ASCAP Award Winner for Most Performed Underscore.*

Live-action projects have the "advantage" of showing the actors with all of their complex facial and physical expressions. With animation, the actors have only their voices to express what is going on. Humor, action and drama are communicated more through the music, and generally, there is more underscore in an animated series or feature film than there is in a live-action project. Oftentimes the music has to follow the animation closely, hitting every little movement. It takes experience and training to figure out how to score a scene quickly and effectively. Also the composer should have an understanding of a variety of musical styles and the history of animation music in order to handle the tone and humor of whatever the creators ask of him/her.

Being able to handle technical issues and deadlines is another consideration for animation composers. These issues could include short deadlines, time code problems and which delivery mediums are required, such as ProTools sessions, tape, emailing audio files, etc. I've had simultaneous projects, all with different requirements. Experience working with live players is very important too, if the producer/director wants the feel of live musicians. This entails printing sheet music and additional recording sessions and time.

A director searching for a composer will first look at how well the music complements the animation in the composer's sample reel. An excellent sense of timing should be evident — the music should move the action forward, not slow it down. Since story and dialogue are top priority, music should support and enhance, rather than overpower these essential elements. Versatility, writing for live players, original sound palettes are important, but is the music doing what it's supposed to?

When talking to a director or creator about a new project, a composer needs to ask some crucial questions: What musical direction are they looking for? Do they have any examples? What's the overall concept of the project and who is the audience? Are there songs? Do they want a unique, original sound palette or one from a specific genre like orchestral, rock, etc.? For example, on the *CatDog* series, I created a quirky sound palette that included dobro and bass harmonica. On *Recess* I use a more traditional orchestral approach that helps communicate the emotion the producers want and works around dialog well.

Another important question to find out is how much music the director envisions in the project. This can range anywhere from wall-to-wall music to a minimal approach. The type of instruments and their pitch range are also a consideration when there's a lot of dialogue.

Composers and directors alike need to be aware of warning signs that indicate the musical score is off. One danger signal is when the animation doesn't seem to move forward well or the timing/pacing is off. Or the music draws too much attention to itself and the story/action pales by comparison. Sometimes the musical style seems to conflict rather than enhance or contrast with the animation. When music is at its best, you don't think about it while you're watching it — unless it's a scene or project in which the music is being featured.

### DON GRADY

*Emmy-nominated composer for The New Adventures of Jonny Quest (Cartoon Network), Magic English (a Disney series scheduled for release in early '03), the just released two disc set of Beauty And The Beast — The DVD (56 minutes of original music for featurettes and game animation), Nickelodeon's Globehunters, Walt Disney's Favorite Christmas Stories and music for numerous Disney game animation DVD titles including Emperor's New Groove, Pocahontas and Peter Pan. Also, you might recognize Don as Robbie Douglas from My Three Sons, one of the longest running series in television history.*

Basically, there are five different types of music that fit any given project. There might be a composer that does one of these five better than others, some do



**Don Grady, conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, feels composers should think of their target audience as they begin to write. Photo courtesy of London Symphony Orchestra.**

two or three of them, and other composers can get the whole thing. It depends on the composer's range. The five types are orchestra, production [sound design](#), contemporary/groove-orientated music, geographical, or time/place kind of music or songs.

To me, those five areas generally cover the kinds of music required on any given project. Having said all that, a lot of producers/directors at first don't really know what they want. I don't mean this as a slam, but they're not really sure. So they rely on a composer and his instincts to come up with stuff.

The animation film directors/creators/executive producers need to think about what music would serve the project best. That's the first consideration.

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**"SOMETIMES THE COMPOSER NEEDS TO USE HIS BEST JUDGMENT TO COUNTER THE MESSAGES HE'S GETTING."**  
— DON GRADY

The second consideration is what are their personal leanings? A lot of times the director/producer already has a personal opinion of what serves the project best, but that doesn't always serve the film best. Unfortunately, I once worked with a director who just loved drums, and I was doing drums for him, but at the end of the project, the company realized there was too many drums. Sometimes the composer needs to use his best judgment to counter the messages he's getting.

Before starting a new project, a composer needs to ask who the audience is; what is the age and gender? Who are we appealing to? I sometimes have a problem when I do stuff for Disney in the 8-13 age range. The Book of Pooh and Dumbo come to mind. There is a difference as to what the producer thinks a kid likes and what I, as a composer, think. I have two kids here, 12 and 8, so I have a test audience built in.





Don Grady found great success as an actor on the TV show *My Three Sons*. He played Robbie Douglas (second from right). © ABC.

They may be a little more educated musically than the average kid because they are around it all the time, but I keep coming back to the same kind of thing myself — which is that one of the composer's jobs is to encourage the producer to mix the content up. A lot of composers will give in to the demands of the director, and we do serve the director's vision. That's really the first principle we serve. Yet we're also there to try to enhance the project any way we can, so I always try to bring it up a level, especially with small kids. A lot of producers think you've got to have Barney music and that's just not true. When it comes to little kids, even from the womb, I just believe you can start introducing them to a little more interesting music.

With regards to the relationship that happens between a composer and a producer/director, each producer/director is different, so you start writing for them. I was working for a director who I've worked with on 3 other films, and every time I went anywhere from about the C in the treble clef above, she would complain about it. "Yeah I really don't like that harp there, and the strings, they seem too high there." So by the time I was into the third film, everything was low and dark; she just didn't agree with any kind of harp, plucking or piano. I happened to go to a party once, and she was there, and I overheard her say to somebody that she had had an incident when she was a kid. Her little brother shot a cap-gun in her ear, and ever since then, she has had this problem with this ear. Certain sounds buzz that ear and bother her. I

practically dropped my drink. I grabbed her and said, "You never told me this!" She said, "Well what does that have to do with anything?" And I said, "You know the high harp and the piano and the stuff above, that has everything to do with this." It was like BINGO. Now, there's a good reason to get out of the studio once in awhile and go to a party. Sometimes it's stuff that comes out of left field like that. It doesn't hurt the composer to ask the director or producer, "Is there anything in music that really bothers you? Do you hate a clarinet for some reason?" But basically, you know you're the wrong composer on a project if you're not on the same wavelength by the third pass.



Jody Gray feels it's important for a composer to find a chemistry with the director or producer when starting a new project. Photo credit: Bianca Black.

## JODY GRAY

Weekly composer for [Courage the Cowardly Dog](http://www.looneytunes.com), all online Looney Tunes shorts ([www.looneytunes.com](http://www.looneytunes.com)), Cartoon Network's animated special *Private Eye Princess* (premiering November 29) and *Stellaluna* (spring 2003 release on Scholastic Entertainment DVD/Video).

Chemistry, an overall sensibility and a shared comic or dramatic sense are enormously important traits for a composer and director to share. A director's ability to express him or herself in musical terms is a big plus, as is a composer's ability to "read" the director. And a big love of the fluid, manic magic that is animation is imperative.

When a producer or director of a project considers a composer, he will first decide if that composer's music moves him. Be aware that a composer's reel is made up of what he or she has already done, often reflecting the style, taste and input of another director or producer. It shows what you did -- not always what you're capable of doing. The reel may open a door but I find that scoring a minute or two of picture for a new director is extremely helpful. Kinda puts you all on the same page quickly and gets an immediate creative dialogue going.

When a composer starts a new project, he should get the director/creator/ producer to talk in depth about the project. Ask what kind of music they envision for the project, then sit back and be the most astute of listeners!



James L. Venable warns that a composer should make sure a scene works better with music than without. Photo credit: Sophia Venable.

### JAMES L. VENABLE

Film composer for [The Powerpuff Girls Movie](#), weekly composer for *Samurai Jack* and *The Powerpuff Girls* TV series for the Cartoon Network, *Clerks the Cartoon*, and the upcoming fall MTV cartoon series, *3 South*.

I want the directors that I work with to know that they have a composer who will listen to them and can handle anything. I also strive to be a composer who will help the director realize his or her vision and is open to changes. I would say when selecting a composer, keep an open mind, try new people! Also, be open to hearing the many sides of a composer's music. Composers can wear many musical hats; this is a good thing, something that animation often demands, so meet with them or at least talk with them to get to know what they are comfortable with musically. I was very fortunate to have found this open mindedness in Kevin Smith and Scott Mosier, who hired me to score *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back* after we worked together on *Clerks the Cartoon*. I wouldn't have gotten *Clerks the Cartoon* if it wasn't for former Disney music exec. Bambi Moe taking the time to listen to the demo of a new guy with few credits. If Craig McCracken and Genndy [Tartakovsky] weren't open minded, I wouldn't have become the *Powerpuff* and *Samurai Jack* composer. So, needless to say, I am a big fan of open mindedness in directors/creators/executive producers.

At the beginning of a project, the executive producers/creators/directors should have a creative conversation with the composer and ask him or her to put together a reel that is more specific to the project that they are all working on. If you have a scene,

perhaps you can arrange to have the composer score it. This is a low pressure, inexpensive way to actually work together. A "general reel" can be a good way to hear what a composer is most proud of, but I find "specific" demos to be more effective. I think those in charge of looking for composers need to listen for music that moves them on an emotional level.



Venable gives credit to Craig McCracken and Genndy Tartakovsky for being open-minded when it came to giving him the job to score *The Powerpuff Girls* TV show. © Cartoon Network.

I like to find out what kinds of music the directors/creators/producers really dig on. I then try to see if that kind of music will work for the project. I also think it is good to know if there are any styles of music that the directors/creators/producers don't like. I recommend to directors/creators/producers to remember that they hired a musical expert, so be sure to listen to what the composer has to offer; it might be something better than you even considered.

I believe music can have many roles, it can add to the drama and emotion, glue things together, help things flow, etc. The key is to figure out what one wants from the music and examine if the score is meeting that need. One thing is for sure, if the scene played better before the music was put in, that is a danger sign. It might mean that the music is inappropriate or that music is not necessary. Communicate your concerns, because a good film composer will bend over backwards to service your film and make you, as the director/creator/producer happy with the music. ■

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**DARLENE CHAN** is managing editor of Animation World Magazine. After receiving a bachelor's degree from UCLA, Darlene happened into the motion picture business and stayed for 14 years. She served as a production executive for Paramount Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, Davis Entertainment and Motown. She produced *Grumpy Old Men* [1993] for Warner Bros. In 2000, she joined Animation World Magazine.

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# Getting *Into* Gaming

Travis Kotzebue's career path started with a love for comics and cartooning. Now, he's an animator/illustrator for *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus*. All *Sly Cooper* images © 2002 Sony Computer Entertainment America, Inc. Developed by Sucker Punch Productions LLC.



WITH THE GAMING MARKET CONTINUING TO RISE AND TECHNOLOGY enabling even greater productions, I'm here to say it again, video and multi-platform gaming is where it's at. We asked the animators of *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus* and *The Mark of Kri* to give us an idea of what they're up to and how they got to where they are.

## TRAVIS KOTZEBUE

2D animator/illustrator of *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus* for Sucker Punch

"I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD WORK IN VIDEO GAMES BECAUSE I AM TOO COMPUTER-ILLITERATE."

— TRAVIS KOTZEBUE

Originally I was into comics, cartooning and illustration. In art school I took one animation class, Intro to Animation, and that later led to my first job, doing Flash animation for Disney Online. That was where I was really able to study a lot of great source material from the feature department at Disney. I kept doing comics and animation for myself, as well as a few other companies, then went on to Sucker Punch.

After a few years of working with more kid-oriented stuff, I found myself working on some freelance illustration here and there, sharing a work studio with a couple of the other artists from Sucker Punch. As

production on the game really sped up, it became apparent that another solid traditional animator, a character-minded, pencil-to-paper type guy, would be useful with the game being so heavy on the traditional art/animation look. So, they were nice enough to think of me, and I have been doing animation studies, character designs and environment concepts ever since.



Even though he considered himself computer-illiterate, Travis Kotzebue found that his pencil and paper skills gave him an advantage in landing a job.

I never thought I would work in video games because I am too computer-illiterate. It was just coincidence that they wanted another person with my skills, and it seemed cool to me, so I guess I fell into it. I always liked playing games since I was a kid, but I wouldn't call myself a hardcore gamer. I am mostly into the art side of games. I dig things like the Oddworld games; games which are really lushly illustrated and rendered.

In my own experience, working in games is a kick, because with *Sucker Punch*, I just draw out a bunch of stuff — some cool, some goofy, some god awful. Then I work through the drawings with the 3D animators, who are the real killers. It's awesome collaborating with those guys, to see key frame sketches and character studies turned around into lush animated characters and movements. They have to deal with all the technical headaches, and they come through with all the beautiful stuff.

Working on *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus*, for me, the whole thing was just being a fan and a follower of the great traditional animators. I always loved the stuff coming from the big American studios,

everything from the old Hanna-Barbera stuff, the Chuck Jones, Warner Bros. cartoons, the funkier design styles of smaller pieces like *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom*, and, of course, the full-motion character-driven features. Then, there's animation's obvious tie with comics. My favorite comics guys are those guys whose panels capture one crucial moment in time, one action — where the pose they've drawn looks like it could be the one animation keyframe drawn to really express the movement or mood. That's what I try to express in my animations and motion studies — the maximum amount of mood of movement, and trying my best to deliver the funniest or the coolest drawings I can.



The slowdown in the animation industry motivated Erik Medina to consider work in the gaming business. Now he's lead animator for *The Mark of Kri*. All *The Mark of Kri* images © 2002 Sony Computer Entertainment America, Inc.

## ERIK MEDINA

Lead animator of *The Mark of Kri* for Sony Computer Entertainment America (SCEA)

I originally went to school for traditional animation, and my only goal was to become a feature film animator. I always loved to draw, and spent all of my time at life drawing workshops, zoos, and going to places where people congregated, so I could observe and draw them in their many different emotional and physical states. After about 3 years I started doing a lot of freelance work, and then some commercial work to make ends meet, but I was still only getting small bites from the "big" studios. At that time there was an unfortunate wave of layoffs in the animation industry that pushed me to entertain an invitation to my friends' work where he made video games for PlayStation. After visiting the studio I realized the





Erik Medina instantly recognized the similarities between film animation and video games when he first visited SCEA's studio in San Diego. Here's a screenshot from *The Mark of Kri*.

similarities between video games and feature film animation, and realized the potential that the industry was showing; and so chose to accept the offer to work here at SCEA.

**"I FIRST STARTED PLAYING GAMES AS SOON AS I COULD RIDE MY BIKE TO THE CLOSEST BOWLING ALLEY..."**

**— ERIK MEDINA**

I first started playing games as soon as I could ride my bike to the closest bowling alley, and played games there like *Phoenix* and *Space Invaders*. I continued to play arcade games for years, pretty serious at times (I dominate at *MK2*), but I never put video games and film animation together in the same category. Again, I never thought that these industries could be related until I visited my friend at the SCEA San Diego studio. After seeing how games were made I recognized the similarities between entertaining people with film and entertaining them with an interactive medium, and I was hooked.

This industry could be the next frontier of animation. Technology has only recently (the past 5

years) become able to truly take advantage of animation as an art form and animation frame restrictions are now less inhibiting, allowing us [animators] to really get into what we do best. This is an industry that I strongly encourage all animators to explore.

#### **SUZANNE KAUFMAN**

*Suzanne Kaufman has been with Sucker Punch Productions for almost two and a half years and is responsible for animating and modeling characters. In addition, she models environments. Her official title is "senior art monkey." (No joke!) In Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus, Suzanne created the enemies in the game's first two worlds. Prior to Sucker Punch, Suzanne worked at Microsoft, where she assisted with Combat Flight Sim I and II. Before that, she did special effects for Fox and Universal.*

After college, I interned for Dynamic Realities, a company creating special effects plug-ins for Lightwave 3d. After the internship, I decided to move to Los Angeles to get into film. On the drive cross-country, my car nearly died in Albuquerque. While stranded in Albuquerque, I took a tour of a studio



"I ORIGINALLY STARTED OUT LIKE MOST KIDS BORN IN THE '70S, WANTING TO WORK ON STAR WARS AND DOING SPECIAL EFFECTS."

— SUZANNE KAUFMAN



Suzanne Kaufman of Sucker Punch finds inspiration in classic animation. She created the enemies in *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus*.

called Free Range Digital. It was run by Brad Carvey, inventor of the video toaster and brother of the comedian Dana Carvey. The tour turned into an interview, and by that evening I was offered my first job in animation. I spent the next two years doing animation for Discovery Channel, Universal and Fox. It was a great place to learn. Most of my game experience was gained at Boss Games Studio, Microsoft and now at Sucker Punch.

I originally started out like most kids born in the '70s, wanting to work on *Star Wars* and doing special effects. I was probably seven or eight years-old when I first got hooked on *Pong*. When I was doing effects for television, the director made most of the creative decisions. During the effects work, I freelanced at night for a game company out of New York. They gave me complete creative freedom and that really sparked my interest in animating for games as a career. When I moved up to Seattle for the lifestyle, I wanted to work in a more creative environment and games seemed

like a great choice.

I find a lot inspiration from traditional animation. I am a huge fan of the classic Looney Tunes cartoons and new shows like *Mucha Lucha!* and *Samurai Jack*. I spend a lot of time at work playing our game, and others, for inspiration as well. At home, I try not to play too much, but I still do. I think my other hobbies such as photography, traditional animation, illustration, climbing and reading keep me fresh with new ideas. I love what I do. It is a great time to be doing game animation. It is moving in a fantastic direction. ■

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**JOAN KIM** is the general manager of Animation World Network. Previously as a post-production coordinator at THX she oversaw the lab print quality assurance program for feature releases. She received her B.A. in English Literature from UCLA and continues to pursue an education in computer graphics there.

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# At War No More

THE TIME WHEN AMERICAN ANIMATION  
WENT TO WAR IS OVER...

*"La guerre, c'est jolie!"*

-Anonymous French soldier, WWI

**T**HE DASHING *POILU* WHO MADE THE ABOVE statement may not have lived to prove it; he most likely discovered that war was not a party somewhere on the bloody banks of the Marne. Even for the victors, war is rarely a joyous romp, nor does victory come without a dear cost. The exceptions, of course, were America's animated combatants, who had a rip-roaring time thwarting the foe at no risk of death or disfigurement. Not only was war a right jolly time for them, victory was guaranteed. Yet, after the end of the Second World War, the toons laid down their arms. The surrender of Japan in 1945 marked the final time that cartoon characters sallied out to support the troops, despite the fact that the United States participated in several wars thereafter. This month's column examines why Hollywood's animated guns fell silent.

As I was working on the initial drafts for this column, the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis was being observed. Wednesday, October 24, 1962, was an unseasonably cold and cloudy day that smelled of wet leaves and fear. I remember sitting in my first-grade class in the William Bradford School, Dorchester, Massachusetts. As twenty other young children and I watched, faces filled with dismay and shock, our teacher (I no longer recall her name) abruptly began to cry and could not stop. Adults rarely did this; teachers, never. We looked helplessly across our desks at each other, none of us knowing quite what to do. A couple of the girls began to cry as well. Another teacher named Mrs. Hill was passing by our



Bob Clampett's *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs* could be the greatest wartime short of all time. This sketch is drawn by the great animator Rod Scribner. Courtesy of Bob Clampett Collection.

classroom and noticed what was happening. Mrs. Hill walked up to our teacher's desk, gently put her arm around the stricken woman, and whispered to her. Our teacher mumbled something, sobbed sharply, and shook her head. Mrs. Hill helped her to her feet and walked her from the room, talking to her in a low, soothing voice. Although no teacher was now in the room, no child uttered a sound; so it remained until Mrs. Hill came back a few minutes later. *Your teacher isn't feeling well, we were told. You may take your pencils and crayons and draw quietly.* Shortly after that, the assistant principal came in to cover the class. Our teacher, you see, had been listening to the radio before coming to school that day. If a certain ship crossed a certain line at a certain time, the world might end. Our teacher's nerves gave out first.

That wasn't the way school — or life — was supposed to go. I went home badly shaken and did what I thought would help: turned on the TV and waited for the afternoon cartoons. I wanted my ink-and-paint heroes to face down the evil Reds; I had seen them in action against Hitler and Tojo and wished that my celluloid heroes could thrash the Bolsheviks as well. I wanted revenge for my teacher and for my fearful classmates, but most of all I wanted my beloved cartoons to give me some reassurance and make everything better. (*If Bugs Bunny is with us, who can stand against us?*) However, there was little comfort to be found. Popeye's can of spinach, which had sunk more Japanese ships than the Seventh Fleet, was empty when it came to the Russians.



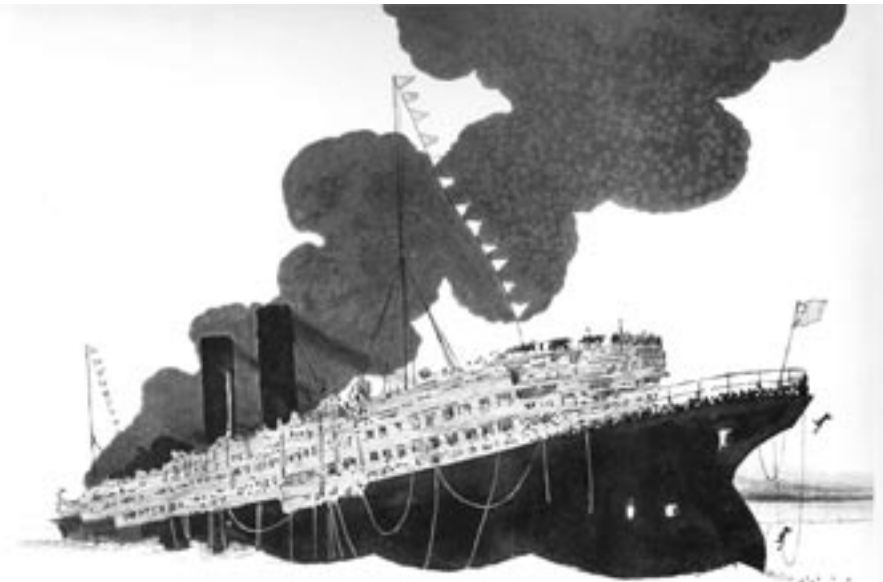
THIS IS SOMEWHAT OF A PUZZLE, SINCE ANIMATED CHARACTERS HAD BEEN FIGHTING LIKE FURIES SINCE WWI.

Superman had defeated both Germans and Japoteurs alike but where was he now? Bugs and Daffy, twin nemeses of the Nazis, left Mr. Krushchev unmolested. The toons were shortly replaced that day by Conelrad alerts — *this is a test, this is only a test* — and the

uniform and some of the resulting shorts were so memorable that they transcended their times. Films such as *Der Fuherer's Face* and *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* were miniature depictions of a nation's contemptuous attitude toward its deadliest foes. Perhaps the greatest wartime short of all was Bob Clampett's *Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs*, in which America's relentless energy and implacable will to victory were translated through the medium of black jazz and street culture. Beneath the now repellent stereotypes, *Coal Black* was the animated equivalent of a B29 fueled by pure adrenaline and laden with the bombs of liberty's righteousness. Nothing like *Coal Black* has ever been produced again. Why is that?

One reason is certainly the events that ended "The Good War." The old modes of armed international conflict were forever buried in the radioactive rubble of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. From then on, the possibility that the next war would be the last moved out of the realm of science fiction and into our waking nightmares. Popeye might be able to stop a tank, or Daffy Duck a Nazi goat, but nothing could survive a rain of missiles, any one of which could incinerate hundreds of thousands of people in one swift nuclear flash. The toons were as helpless as we were; just as unprepared to fight such a war, and certainly just as unable to envision the world that would be left following such a conflict. Were anyone still alive to animate Bugs Bunny in the face of such a holocaust, they could only depict that trickster in the midst of a blasted landscape, staring about in shock while radiation seared raw, gaping holes in his pelt. It is difficult to raise up a fighting spirit when a war is in no way winnable, or for that matter, survivable.

Then of course, there was the changing nature of how wars were fought. The Cold War was a shadowy affair, a dark, swirling dance across the face of the globe between two contentious ideologies who dared not pull the nuclear trigger on each other. America and the Soviet Union snarled and swiped at each other in Berlin and Havana, but primarily fought their struggles through third world proxies in obscure locations. Wars were never formally declared, nor could they be carried to the logical conclusion of battering an enemy to the point of surrender. To make the game more confusing, the major combatants indiscriminately tossed arms and treasure to any unsavory dictator or strongman who batted his eyes seductively enough. Our friends were often as despicable as our foes, with nary a Winston Churchill

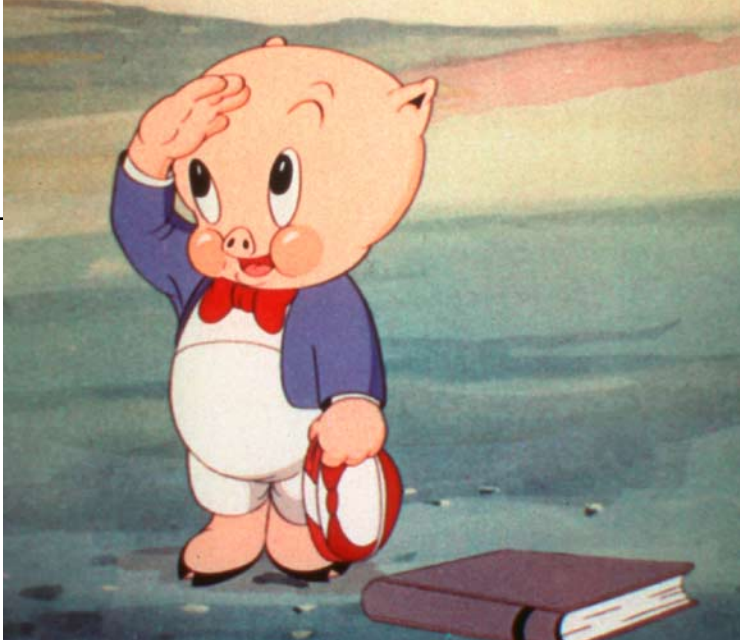


Winsor McCay made the propaganda film *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, to stir up a nation's emotions against Germany.

shadows of the missiles grew deeper. Bugs, Daffy, Superman, Popeye, my teachers and classmates, the whole world and I were going to go down together in a blistering nuclear fireball.

To my great relief, it never happened. Today, little remains of the geopolitical scene that existed in October of 1962, but one thing did remain constant: American animation never went to war again. This is somewhat of a puzzle, since animated characters had been fighting like furies since WWI. Animation was just a few years old when Mutt and Jeff starred in such films as *Hunting the U-boats*, *At the Front* and *The Kaiser's New Dentist*. Colonel Heeza Liar was no less active against the Hun, and Winsor McCay made one of the most stunning propaganda films of all time, *The Sinking of the Lusitania*. This indictment of perfidy under German arms demonstrated the power of animation to inflame a nation's fighting spirit.

The wartime cartoons of WWII are well known to all readers of this column, although they are typically examined for their racist content rather than as vehicles for propaganda or boosts to home front morale. Nearly every Hollywood studio put toons in



**Porky Pig in Old Glory played to the delight of rock concert audiences during the Vietnam War. LOONEY TUNES characters, names and all related indicia are trademarks of and © Warner Bros. (s02)**

amongst them. Thus was the state of the world at the time of the Korean War.

America's first armed conflict following WWII was never formally declared, nor was it settled by a signed treaty; it was an exercise in containment policy ostensibly aimed at halting Communist expansion, and it could have ended much worse for American forces than it actually did. This was a hard war to sell to the public, in a place far less identifiable to most Americans than Germany, Italy or Japan. This new style of war was incomprehensible: America was never threatened directly, nor was there any danger of Kim Il Sung dictating peace terms to the White House. Even should North Korea be defeated, nothing would be settled save bragging rights; the might and main of both Communist Russia and China would remain untouched, guaranteeing that a new fire would simply flare up elsewhere. The United States could try to head off such trouble in advance by arranging for a leftist leader to be "deposed" in favor of a more tractable one. In such a dreary, duplicitous struggle neither Bugs, Daffy, Popeye nor Donald had any place, since a national sense of purpose, righteousness and *élan* had no place either. Today the Korean conflict is euphemistically called "the forgotten war," and no one forgot it more thoroughly than Hollywood's animation studios.

### THIS NEW STYLE OF WAR WAS INCOMPREHENSIBLE...

The Vietnam War was also ignored by our ink-and-paint warriors for the same reasons described above, but that is far from the whole story. Early returns from Vietnam suggested that the war was not winnable without massive American commitment. This commitment was made regardless of the wishes of the American people, who were fed carefully concocted lies about the progress of a war that escalated into a military nightmare. Combat in Vietnam was confused and chaotic, with no clear distinction between enemy and ally. The leader of our South Vietnamese client was Ngo Dinh Diem, a figure so corrupt that our government authorized a fatal coup against him. The discovery of American atrocities, including the revelation of the massacre at My Lai, proved our own soldiers to be capable of acts previously ascribed only to our most barbaric enemies. As the war finally spiraled into a hallucinatory orgy of waste and destruction with no evident result, much of the nation rose against it, tearing America apart along racial and generational lines.

Our beloved cartoons could not fight in such a war, despite the many examples of heroism and valor by our forces in Vietnam. The same cartoon character that took up arms would probably have no idea whom he was fighting or even why. He might be depicted burning down innocent villages in a "Zippo raid," shooting up heroin in a fetid jungle hooch, or fragging his own commanding officer. Audiences back home would likely boo his every appearance on the screen, which would be problematic enough in the first place; by the Vietnam era it had become distasteful to depict racial stereotypes of any sort, and vicious caricatures of Asians may have been more likely to draw sympathy for the enemy instead. As John Wayne was to discover, no motion picture star (animated or otherwise) could have played cheerleader for a war that had grown so violently unpopular.



Only two cartoons are generally associated with the Vietnam War, and both serve as examples of the bitter cynicism that characterized the times. *Old Glory* was a 1939 Warner Bros. cartoon directed by Chuck Jones in which the spirit of Uncle Sam instructs Porky Pig as to the importance of the Pledge of Allegiance. The film was often shown before rock concerts in West Coast venues such as the Fillmore during the late Sixties; audiences would hoot derisively at the film's ending, delighted at the sight of a pig saluting the American flag. The other film was an underground short called *Mickey Mouse in Vietnam*. Some rumors (probably apocryphal) attribute this film to several antiwar Disney animators who allegedly made it in secret. Mickey Mouse, meant to symbolize innocent youth, is drafted, put through rigorous boot camp, and sent to Vietnam. He is shot dead almost immediately upon arrival.

### I WANTED MY INK-AND-PAINT HEROES TO FACE DOWN THE EVIL REDS...

Wartime animation died in Vietnam along with Mickey. After the duplicity and horror of Vietnam, Americans had lost their taste for war and no longer seemed to accept many justifications for it. They could hardly be blamed. In a country that found military propaganda tiresome and hard to swallow after Johnson and Nixon, not everyone believed that the Persian Gulf war was a noble foray to liberate the oppressed. Our opponent, the detestable Saddam Hussein, was actually "on our side" at one point in the past. To the puzzlement of all but the cynics, he remained fully in power after defeat. Again, political correctness forbade the enemy from being savagely stereotyped. With all this considered, what sort of propaganda could Bugs Bunny (or, by then, the Tiny Toons) successfully disseminate? The only shot Hussein took from animation was fired by Matt Stone and Trey Parker in *South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut*, and that came eight years after the war had ended.

Even following September 11, 2001, the response was less than enthusiastic from our animated heroes despite the fact that no external enemy had inflicted so many civilian casualties since the British torched Washington, D.C. No Powerpuff Girl, Justice League member, or inhabitant of Bikini Bottom ever throttled



*South Park: Bigger, Longer, and Uncut* took a rare politically incorrect stand when it lampooned Saddam Hussein. © Comedy Partners, Inc. All rights reserved.

Osama Bin Laden and his minions for their perfidious deeds, and none are ever likely to. Depicting our extremist enemies in order to have Kim Possible cut them down would be offensive to...but why go on? We responded to the attack with far more sadness and solemnity than rage; our vengeance limited to blasting caves on the other side of the world and attempting to run down scattered Al Qaeda members like so many cockroaches. Americans mourned, put flags in their windows and entered one wearisome global war requiring eternal vigilance. As we prepare to thrash the hummus out of Iraq, we do so knowing that most of the world does not agree, and we ask our leaders for proof that this is a sound decision. This is not the mood in which a nation prepares for war, so why expect patriotic exhortations from our cartoons? The time when American animation went to war is over; if only the same could be said for war itself. ■

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**MARTIN "DR. TOON" GOODMAN** is a longtime student and fan of animation. He lives in Anderson, Indiana.

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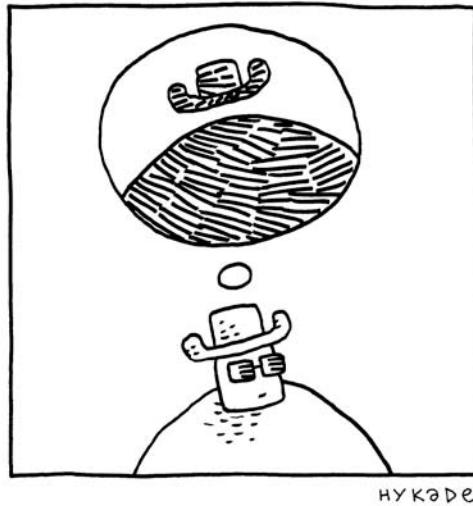
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ANIMATION PIMP

## Can't Escape You

### The Pimp on Facing Alcoholism

*Insignificant and occasionally interesting contributions to the cognition of reality...*

Illustration by Andreas Hykade.  
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

**S**

O SUCH IS LIFE THAT IT WRITES ITSELF  
Trying to right itself  
But there's nothing wrong with it  
There's nothing wrong

*"Christian Animation Torch Carriers"*  
by Robert Pollard of Guided by Voices

It's a lovely irony. I stopped drinking in February 2001, yet since then I've received more reader comments suggesting that I must be intoxicated while I write this stuff (and, of course, only a month ago did I notice that little subtitle "Drunken ramblings from the North" under the Pimp heading) than ever before.

#### ANYWAY IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, YOU'RE A RECOVERING ALCOHOLIC...

##### QUITTING

Anyway if you're like me, you're a recovering alcoholic; one who did not follow the AA route. I went a few times over the years (from 18-34) and each time I found it depressing as hell. Sobriety, for me, should be a celebration of sorts (sometimes), and the last thing I want to do is hang out in a gymnasium with a bunch of somber, chain smoking, coffee guzzling people as they take turns reciting horror stories from their drinking years before holding hands and thanking God. I always left feeling thoroughly depressed and even sort of freakish, like an outcast from society. I didn't want to feel that way. Drinking already gave me that feeling. Drinking already made me feel like physical and mental excrement most days. Being sober was supposed to be a good thing, a happy occasion. Anyway I stubbornly refused (and still refuse) to attend AA. It works for

some people. Great. Groovy. Dandy. But hey...I got myself into this mess (although there are some who argue that it is an illness or a disease) and I'm sure as hell not gonna sit on my ass and let God or some other higher power take the responsibility of sorting my own shit out for me.

I won't go into what motivated me to quit. Let's just say it was an incredibly sappy nostalgic moment. Real cheese quality. It was anti-climactic really...even a mysterious broken ankle the year before failed to prevent me from returning to the cause. After I quit, I went to a few more AA meetings but then decided to find a counselor to help me one on one; someone who could give me tangible tools to deal with going to a festival, for example, (where I had really become a brilliant drinker), and not drinking. Those weekly one-hour meetings did the trick. I didn't buy into all the spiel I was given, but I got what I needed to get through my days and nights without booze. Granted...the first festival (in Finland of all places!) was a nightmare. I was moody, depressed and lost. I didn't miss the booze...but I found that now I had added almost 12 hours to my day...and I didn't know how to fill them. I also realized that festivals had become little more than sitting around bars to talk, eat, and mostly to drink, between screenings (when I actually made it to a screening). Anyway...Finland was hell. I remember



## I TRIED TO BRING MY FESTIVAL DRINKING FOUNTAIN HOME. NOT A GOOD MOVE.

screaming at my travel agent on a payphone in Turku begging for him to find me a flight home. I remember that during a panel on festival organization, I spoke from a horizontal position atop a bunch of metal chairs. I was also rude to the Quay Brothers, but that's okay, I would be today too.

### DEPICTIONS OF HELL

What really helped me through the whole process were, first of all, a few animator friends who were recovering themselves, but mostly I found therapy by just writing about it (I wrote articles on Paul Fierlinger, actor Sterling Hayden and am currently writing a book on an old hockey player, Doug Harvey — all alcoholics). I also found some form of comfort (or an illusion of it) in a variety of songs, books, movies, plays, poems, etc... I rented *Drunks* (some Richard Lewis film), *The Lost Weekend* (an amazing depiction by Billy Wilder), a Canadian film *The Woman Who Drinks*, and *Pollock* (which by the way is an amazing alcoholic film — it's almost like that film was made for alcoholics...a little series of secrets that only us freaks would dig). I read Charles Jackson's *The Lost Weekend*, *Long Day's Journey into the Night*, every Nick Tosches word, and even found obscure titles like this 1940s German book called *The Drinker*. And best of all there are songs...so many to choose from...but my favorites: *Drunk Again* (Willie Nelson), *However Much I Booze* (The Who), *Angel Eyes* (Frank Sinatra), *Hey Brother Pour The Wine* (Dean Martin), *Blood Shot Eyes* (Wynonie Harris), almost any drink song by George Jones, *Bowlegged Drunk Again* (Lonnie Johnson), and two alcoholic masterpieces: *Now To War* by Guided by Voices and *I Can't Escape You* by Hank Williams. Seeking out alcohol stories became my therapy and yes...of course...another addiction.

While I was in Finland last May (2001), I had organized a screening of films about hell. Initially it was just gonna be one of those cartoony horn rimmed demon hells, but then I thought it might be interesting to do a screening of animations that dealt with the personal hells of the creator (films about desire, war, stress, and alcoholism). Along the way I found, not a lot, but a strong body of films related to alcoholism.

That there is a strong connection between alcoholism and animation (and art in general) is not really a surprise. There is a long list of bottle friendly animators (from Tom Oreb, Pat Sullivan to Norman McLaren to [Ryan Larkin](#) and John Callahan — although everyone tries to deny McLaren's problems as if it's a friggin pestilence — further contributing to

that prevalent societal belief that alcoholism is a character flaw or some sort of immoral activity — which, my friends, is utter bullshit). And hey it makes sense...artists, any good ones, are obsessive, compulsive, self-centered and quite often anti-social (especially without a substance) people. Hell...William Faulkner wrote his best (and worst!) work while tight...academics spout on about his stream-of-consciousness or symbolic style...but they were just beautiful, often, incoherent ramblings of a drunk (prolly not unlike Pollack's so-called *Abstract Expressionism*). Animation, in particular, is an intense art that often involves a lot of isolation, patience and concentration. Why do you think there are so many parties at animation festivals?

### ANIMATED TALES OF BOOZE

Okay...sorry...I'm digressing again (see...ya don't have to be drunk to ramble)...while I was digging through all these personal hell films (which really was just an excuse for me to confront my own addiction), I found a handful of interesting animation films about alcoholism: *And Then I'll Stop* by [Paul Fierlinger](#) (1990), *I Think I Was An Alcoholic* by John Callahan (1993), *One Way Street* by Bernard Longpré (1980), Michèle Cournoyer's *The Hat* (1999) and, strangely enough, I even found a listing of two Estonian animation puppet films about alcoholism. Both *Seven Devils* (1985) and *A Tale about His Majesty* (1974) are directed by Heino Pars — one of the grandpas of Estonian animation.

Now Michèle Cournoyer's *The Hat* (*La Chapeau*) is not directly about alcoholism, but sexual abuse. As a stripper dances, she recalls an encounter with a faceless man with a hat. We see that this man has perhaps abused this woman as a young girl. And yet, and this is what makes the film so bloody courageous, there is a suggestion that this girl-woman desires the sex as well, as if she is addicted to it. She knows it's not good and yet she wants more of it. In a sense, sex abuse is just a beard here so that Cournoyer can get to the crux of the matter — a woman addicted to something that gives her pleasure and simultaneously destroys her.

When we screened *One Way Street* (*Les Naufragés du Quartier*) during the opening of the Ottawa '02 festival, I was immediately struck by how much *The Hat* (*La Chapeau*) had been influenced by the thick line metamorphosis style that occurs throughout this story (especially when the daughter becomes a stripper) about the destruction of a family through

alcoholism. *One Way Street* is an absolutely stark and unforgiving film that deals with alcoholism as both an environmental and hereditary sickness. The father drinks to forget his lousy job. His daughter drinks to forget her lousy childhood.

I haven't seen *Seven Devils*, but apparently Heino Pars was simply looking for a subject matter and learned about a man in treatment for alcoholism at a neurology hospital in Tartu, Estonia. The man was apparently having visions of devils and wanted to get rid of them through treatment. Pars, obviously not an alcoholic, fails to see that these devils are common traits of delirium tremors, which an alcoholic often suffers during the few sober moments between drinking bouts.

## I'M SURE AS HELL NOT GONNA SIT ON MY ASS AND LET GOD OR SOME OTHER HIGHER POWER TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SORTING MY OWN SHIT OUT FOR ME.

Before he made *Seven Devils*, Pars made another alcohol tale called *A Tale About His Majesty* (Priit Pärn even worked on it). The story takes place inside the body of an alcoholic where a team of workers (à la the "What Happens During Ejaculation" scene in Woody Allen's *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex*) attempts to deal with the man's generous helping of booze while out on the town with a lady. This heavily moralistic tale traces the decline of the man as he continues to consume heavy amounts of alcohol. It's one of those good scare films for teenagers, but probably not enough to convince a veteran guzzler.

What can I say about the stick figure film *I Think I Was An Alcoholic*? It's one of the funniest films I've seen about an alcoholic becoming a quadriplegic.

Next to Callahan's film, Paul Fierlinger's *And Then I'll Stop*, is probably the most known of alcohol related animation films. Using the interviews with rehab patients, each story takes us through the habits, downfall and subsequent acknowledgment and recovery of each addict. Fierlinger gives each voice their own drawing style ranging from dark, grey sketches to Steinberg influenced geometric drawings. Accompanying the story is a haunting, minimalist track. The power of the film lies with the combination of Fierlinger's strong graphics, the soundtrack and the frank, unsentimental stories of these real people. There is not a drop of sentimentality in this film. The

films' biggest twist comes at the end when we are introduced to a new character, Paul. It turns out that during the making of the film Fierlinger himself quit drinking.

## A NEW, STRANGE ROAD

I guess it's like what I said about [death](#). It ain't goin' anywhere so why try to ignore it. Just accept it as part of life. I know some milquetoast ex-boozers who won't go near bars or can't stand to be around other people drinking. That doesn't bother me at all. Alcohol is ubiquitous, I can't run from it so instead I just try to face it head on and embrace the tales of those who've been drunk by it.

Sobriety is a strange road...but I must say...it's been pretty dandy overall. I've lost weight, I don't wake up with a stinging headache...those late afternoon drink cravings are behind me...I don't get thrown out of bars anymore...I don't jump sound men at concerts because the band sucks. I don't puke. I don't stick my tongue down stranger's throats...I don't have blackouts...I don't do as many stupid things anymore...and it's a great feeling to say, "I'll meet you at 9 a.m.," and actually be there. Hell...it's a great fucking feeling just to wake up in the morning.

But ya know I also don't want to transform into some self-righteous, all hail the big book, recovery salesman. I had a lot of good times with alcohol, especially at festivals. Problem was that I tried to bring my festival drinking fountain home. Not a good move. And I admit I found it really hard to socialize in [Ottawa](#) this year. Alcohol can be a great social tool and there's no better example than when you go to a festival. It loosens up inhibitions and helps people step outside themselves for a few hours so they can better engage in some chitchat with others. I think that's a damn fine thing. I have a lot of good drinking memories...but the problem is that I also have too many memories I don't recall. Too many nights where you keep drinking and drinking until you've gone from stepping outside yourself to losing yourself altogether. Too many nights of not giving a shit what I was drinking as long as it got me where I needed to go. And on many times, I drank into blackness. There is nothing more frightening than a blackout, until the next one.

During Ottawa '02 there were a few encounters with people who said they liked the [Pimp columns](#) (yeah...a few slobber jockeys cornered AWN publisher, Dan Sarto and demanded to know how he could justify printing such "hateful and racist" material as the Pimp. Strangely these crusading backboned bastions

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**HEY, A RAGING, BLOATED, LECHEROUS, BOMBASTIC, PUKE-STAINED DRUNK AIN'T EXACTLY A RARE BIRD.**

of morality didn't mention their objections to me the entire week.), but the sweetest, most chillaxin' words emanated from those mouths that expressed surprise at how different I seemed from the Pimp they envisioned (hey...don't feel bad...even some of my friends now think I wanna talk about [Greeks](#), [titties](#), [Kant](#), and [Jimmy Neutron](#) too). That be snug on the ears mon chums...(and PART of the reason why you see this new Pimp logo). Naturally there is a large chunk of me in the Pimp. How could there not be? But it's just one snot from the mucus, one shake from the spurt stick. That being said...before I quit drinking I was certainly closer to the Pimp's temperament. As some of 'you' know, one of the biggest worries alcoholics have is that we'll become a mediocre

herbal tea drinking Enya lovin' slug; all that hipness and superior intelligence we firmly possessed as alcoholics will follow the Canadian Club down the drain. But hey, a raging, bloated, lecherous, bombastic, puke-stained drunk ain't exactly a rare bird. And whatever unvarnished ire I inherited before has simply become more polished (or at least gets read twice now before being sent to the editor). Beyond that, nothing's changed, I still use writing as a vehicle to try and sort through all the confusion, ugliness, ignorance, anger, beauty and horniness, that feeds this Stuff within which you and me, being we, piss, shit and breathe. ■

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**CHRIS ROBINSON** *is but a man. His hobbies include squirrel taunting, goat thumping, meat dancing and elderly peeping. You can find the results at <http://asifa.net/robinson>*

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## AWN'S ONLINECHAT IS NOW LIVE!

AWN is pleased to announce that our online chat room is open! So, drop in, start a discussion and get to know your animation comrades around the world. Be sure to check in regularly for an opportunity to chat with noted animators and industry professionals scheduled to appear.

 <http://www.awn.com/vchat>





# The Mighty Principles of Animation

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

**T**ECHNICALLY, THE PRODUCTION METHOD OF FILM animation remained basically unchanged since Raoul Barre invented the peg hole, and pegs to fit into them, and [John Bray](#) invented cels. That was in 1914, ten years before I was born. More or less the same methods were used for nearly 80 years, until the advent of computer animation, scanning, coloring and compositing. We were still producing our little animation movies on Bray's cellulose-acetate sheets until just a few years ago — and we're still using Raoul Barre's peg holes today when we're doing drawn animation.

The animation principles we work with today were developed and perfected in one incredibly explosive decade. The great advances in animation were made and codified within the 10 years between 1930 and 1940 at the Walt Disney Studios on Hyperion Boulevard in Hollywood. Whatever we may think of the artistic taste of Disney, we cannot discount the incredible advances of animation technique that evolved during this golden decade in his studio, hardly surpassed to this day. That single decade brought animation from the crude Steamboat Willie to the highly polished [Fantasia](#)! How much better is animation today?

Every animated film made today uses those same basic principles developed at the Walt Disney studios during the 1930s. They still apply, no matter which technology is used. They may be difficult for you to understand completely, without fuller explanation or demonstration, but perhaps they will give you something to think about. They were all printed in [Frank Thomas' and Ollie Johnston's](#) landmark book, *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation*.

*The 12 Principles of Character Animation, as developed at the Disney studio:*

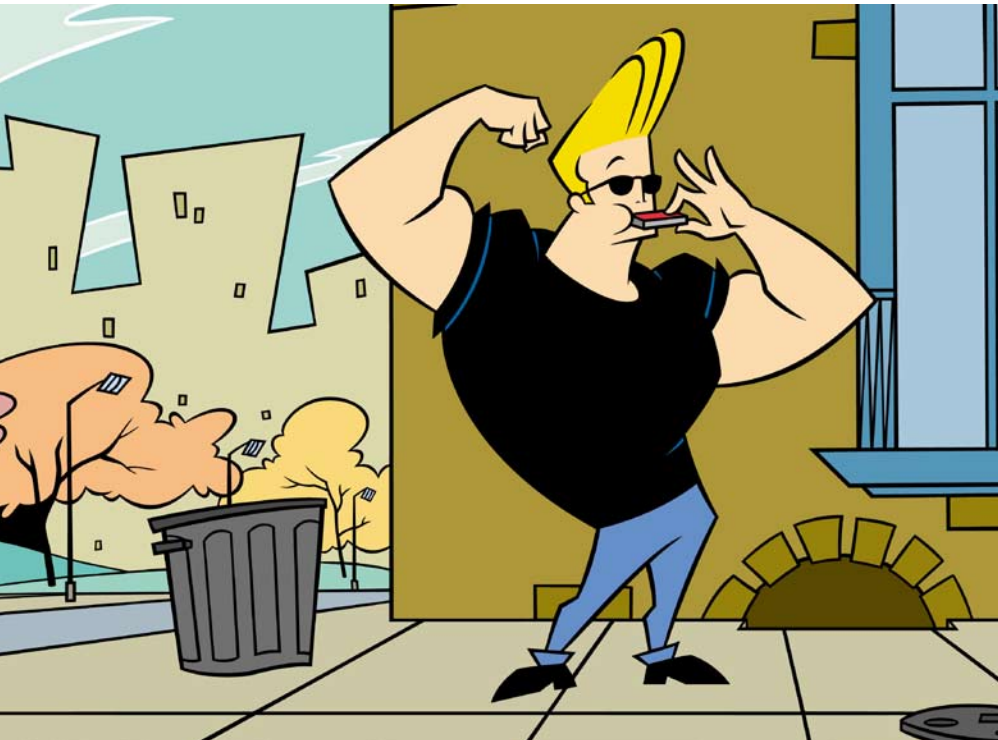
1. Squash and Stretch. (Shape distortion to accentuate movement.)
  2. Anticipation. (A reverse movement to accent a forward movement.)
  3. Staging. (The camera viewpoint to best show the action.)
  4. Straight-ahead vs. Pose-to-pose action. (Two basic procedures.)
  5. Follow-through and Overlapping action. (Nothing stops abruptly!)
  6. Slow-in and Slow-out. (Smoothing starts and stops by spacing.)
  7. Arcs. (Planning the path of actions.)
  8. Secondary actions. (A head might wag while the legs walk!)
  9. **Timing**. (Time relations within actions for the illusion of life!)
  10. Exaggeration. (Caricature of actions and timing.)
  11. Solid drawing. (Learn good drawing to be a good animator!)
  12. Appeal. (If our characters are not appealing, then all is lost!)
- If I may quibble, I would add:
13. Mass and Weight. (And preserve volume!)
  14. Character acting. (Thinking of the character as a real actor.)

It's not my purpose to explain or illustrate these principles here, that's all in Frank and Ollie's book. I only want to make the point that though we have an art here, we also have a craft, and that there are basic laws and principles that guide us, just as we have the laws of gravity and motion. Within these laws, there is room for infinite variation and invention. That's where the creativity comes in. Those rules apply mainly to character animation. Graphics animation is unlimited; in that area virtually anything goes, though it doesn't hurt to keep the principles of arcs and timing in mind! ■

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**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, "Bratři v Triku."

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Is Johnny Bravo a chicken? The gap between expectation and the surprise result can make you laugh. © Cartoon Network.

ANIMATION WRITING

# Animation Comedy and Gag Writing

COMEDY IS A CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO INCOMPATIBLE FRAMES OF REFERENCE LINKED IN AN UNEXPECTED AND SUDDEN WAY.

## WHAT'S FUNNY?

W

HY DOES JOHNNY BRAVO REFUSE TO CROSS THE ROAD?...BECAUSE he's no chicken!

What makes you laugh? Or more importantly what makes your audience laugh? Humor varies from culture to culture and from age to age. In comedy we set up a situation, increase the tension, and suddenly we're stopped cold by something unexpected. Emotion gushes out, tension is relieved and exploded in laughter. Or at least that's the way it's supposed to work! And it will if you set up the gag right. Comedy is a contrast between two incompatible frames of reference linked in an unexpected and sudden way. You lead the audience down the garden path (the set up), and then zap! Surprise is all-important. Generally, the bigger the surprise, the bigger the belly laugh. Two classic baby jokes: peek-a-boo and the jack-in-the-box. There's the build up, the expectation, then the pop or shock. A running gag is a little different, as it gets funnier with each repetition. Often there's a twist as the gag repeats. Think of *The Roadrunner*, one long running gag. Some forms of comedy, such as satire, don't rely on a single effect, but a series of minor explosions or a continuous state of mild amusement. Experts believe that all comedy contains an impulse of aggression or fear. It's these emotions that are released when we laugh. Repression can contribute to a bigger laugh. Repression is the reason that gross-out and potty humor get belly laughs. In all comedy

## ANIMATION COMEDY IS ABOVE ALL, VISUAL WITH PLENTY OF SIGHT GAGS.



Mistaken identity is used as a comedy device in *The Emperor's New Groove*. © Walt Disney Pictures. All rights reserved.

the energy of the comedy is important. Whether a situation is tragic or funny depends upon the audience's attitude, whether that attitude is dominated by pity or malice. Who is slipping on the ice? Is it the little old lady or the school bully?

### ANIMATION COMEDY

Animation comedy is above all, visual with plenty of sight gags. It uses motion and misuses the laws of physics. The comedy is exaggerated and often illogical. Dialogue may be "smart" with comebacks, put-downs, puns, rhymes or alliteration. Titles are funny.

### COMEDY OUT OF A CHARACTER'S PERSONALITY

Some of the funniest comedy develops out of a character's personality. What makes that character naturally funny? Use a character's attitude, mannerisms and dialogue to increase the comedy. Reactions can often be funnier than the gag that has gone before. Use characters as different from each other as possible so that these conflicting personalities can bounce off of each other in a funny way.

### WRITING A FUNNY SCRIPT

Where does the humor of this series come from? Is it belly laughs, giggles, or smiles? Is there visual humor or funny, smart dialogue? Be consistent to the kind and amount of humor of that show. What's funny

about the star's personality? Combine people, places and props, juxtaposing one idea with a totally different one (a meek man and an office cooler in the middle of the desert). Place the unexpected in a surprising context. Place incongruous words or things in juxtaposition to create surprising

relationships. Come up with something fresh, or at least put a twist onto a classic idea. Try creating an episode around a fish-out-of-water situation or an unresolved predicament (like a lie or a secret). Often there's an inciting incident that rocks the boat. The star may make a plan, but it turns into a textbook case of Murphy's Law, and everything that can go wrong does. Complicate the predicament your star finds himself in by adding additional layers of problems. Escalate the trouble so that he digs himself in deeper and deeper. Be sure you have plenty of props available, as these are needed for the gags. Misuse your props. Make up your own wild gadgets. Set up your gags (build them), milk them, top them. Comedy is often done in a rhythm of three...dum, dum, de-dum! Sometimes you can set up now and pay off later with a punch line. If something isn't funny enough, try adding c's and k's to the dialogue. These sounds are funnier! Use timing, tension, hints (letting your audience bring a little to the whole and bridging the gap). Use simplification and selection. Give the audience A, B, C and F, G. The audience should have to supply D and E. You don't want to write, "Your baby brother eats like a pig!" You want to say, "Your baby brother is coming to lunch. Should I get out the trough?" Don't tip off the surprise, the punch line, but save it for the end. Scenes usually go out on a laugh line, a stinger or a button. End your script with a twist!





*Shrek* used many pop-culture references to build comedy effectively. Courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures.

### COMEDY DEVICES

Here are a few comedy devices that you can use in writing gags: Impersonation/Disguise (a character in costume or drag), Role Reversal and Anthropomorphism (two forms of reference and you oscillate between them), Pretense and Exposure (hypocrisy, *The Emperor's New Clothes*), Pull Back and Reveal (the basic gag element is at first hidden from the audience), Hidden Element (the basic gag element is hidden from one of the characters), Misunderstanding, Turnabout (things are the opposite of what we expect), Understatement (A huge crowd is watching the takeoff of the first flight to leave our solar system. The spaceship rockets toward the sky, then explodes like a firecracker. Cool Surfer Dude: "Looks like a dud, dude."), Manners and Customs (the juxtaposition of references from two different occupations, ethnic customs), the Smart Joke (upscale, "In Beverly Hills the emergency number is unlisted."), the Dumb Joke (blonde jokes, women driver jokes), Kid's Mistakes (not always funny to kids, *Bill Cosby's Kids Say the Darndest Things*), True Stories (usually these are a real belly laugh), The Excuse, Death (hard to make funny, but it can be done!), False Logic ("How do you get milk from a kernel of corn?" "You use a low stool!"), Malapropism (the wrong word, Dr. Seuss' holiday dinner of "roast beast"), Insult, Pop-Culture References (*Shrek*), Metamorphosis, Shell Game (people, props, animals shuffle, hide and pop up where they're least expected), and Funny Chase.

# IT'S OK TO BE SILLY! HAVE FUN!

## WHY DOES JOHNNY BRAVO REFUSE TO CROSS THE ROAD?

A Spec Script By Jean Ann Wright (with apologies to...)

FADE IN:

ANGLE ON CITY STREET

Johnny Bravo swaggers to the corner curb. He looks to the right. He looks to the left. He saunters off the curb. A huge truck whooshes by, HORN BLARING. Johnny is spun around in the truck's wake. Stars circle Johnny's head. He staggers back to the safety of the sidewalk.

CLOSER ON JOHNNY

As he juts out his chin.

JOHNNY

I'm no sucker...and I'm not licked yet!

Johnny looks to the right, looks to the left, and looks to the right again.

WIDER

As Johnny steps cautiously off the curb.

JOHNNY'S POV

As a motorcycle zooms directly at him.

WIDER ON THE STREET

As Johnny does a two-step to dodge the cycle. The cycle hits a center divider instead and goes airborne, scooping up a street banner and landing with a CRASH on top of Johnny.

CLOSE ON JOHNNY

As he pokes his head out from underneath the cycle and carefully smooths out his hair.

JOHNNY

Oh, Mama!

The banner glides down and plops on his head.

ANGLE ON JOHNNY

As he limps to a crosswalk. Johnny slowly reads the sign at the curb.

JOHNNY

"School crossing!" Can't get much safer than that!

WIDER

As Johnny steps off the curb looking intently to the right. From the left an old-fashioned, one-room school, high atop a moving truck, enters the shot and slowly fills the screen. The screen shakes. CRUNCHING NOISES.

JOHNNY (V.O.)

School crossing! Oh, man!

FADE OUT ■

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**JEAN ANN WRIGHT** has been teaching animation writing and development since 1996 and currently teaches for [Women In Animation](#) and The Animation Academy. Recently, she started her own consulting business. She's sold her writing to DIC, Filmation and Hanna-Barbera. She enjoys serving on the Los Angeles board of Women In Animation and judging for the Emmys and the Annies.

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# A Thank You Note

CAREER COACH

TAKE A MOMENT AND REFLECT ON HOW YOU'VE BEEN HELPED AND BETTER YET, THINK ABOUT HOW YOU MIGHT HELP SOMEONE ELSE.



IN THE UNITED STATES, NOVEMBER IS THE TIME WE CELEBRATE Thanksgiving, a tradition started when the colonists shared a feast with the Indians to thank them for their help. The Indians helped the colonists survive the first year in America by showing them how to plant corn and sharing tips on how to find and hunt other food.

## GIVE THANKS...

November is a great time to thank all those who have helped you during the last year or previously. Remember those who have encouraged you, inspired you, or taught you something and helped you both to survive and thrive. Thank those who goaded you into action or supported your dreams. Make it a goal to give something back in the coming year. Help someone else who might need a little encouragement, give some assistance to someone who needs some help, lend an ear to listen, and some brains to solve a problem.

Giving thanks is a good idea at any time. I want to give thanks to Animation World Network for giving me the opportunity to write this column every month and to the readers who respond with feedback, questions and ideas for more columns. I also want to thank all those who have helped me — clients, teachers, colleagues, teammates, family and friends. I want to thank those who volunteer in various organizations like ASIFA, Women in Animation, SIGGRAPH and others who devote their time and energy to promoting animation and sharing their love for animation and experiences with others. These people are an invaluable resource and wealth of information as well as support.

## ...AND BE THANKFUL

We should be thankful that animation has become ever more popular and omnipresent. Animation can be found in video games, music videos and museums; on motion picture screens, television sets



and wireless devices. Animators are found working all over the world and as often in tiny studios in small towns as in huge studios in large cities. Interest in animation continues to grow and there are many Websites devoted to the dissemination of information on various aspects of animation. It's easier than ever to learn about animation — from teachers, mentors, Websites and books.

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

This is a good time for employers to thank their staff for a job well done. Even those who show their appreciation often throughout the year, should do it at this time as well. Remember to thank those who have helped and supported you at this time of year, especially customers or clients or employers who

have given you work. If you are an employee, thank your boss and employer for your job and giving you the opportunity to work at something you love.

I am grateful to those who have made it possible and continue to make it possible for us to pursue our dreams. I want to thank those who gave us freedom. I want to thank those who work for peace.

Giving thanks is something to do regularly all year long. A little appreciation is greatly appreciated. The holidays are a busy time for everyone but it's important to take a moment and reflect on how you've been helped and better yet, think about how you might help someone else. ■

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**PAMELA THOMPSON** was a pilgrim in animation, has worked for many turkeys, and is thankful she has her own recruiting and career coaching business now.

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**p.s. DONT FORGET TO DUCK!**



# New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

ANIME REVIEWS

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.



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**Carried by the Wind: Tsukikage Ran. V.1, A Tale of Two Travelers. V.2, Shocking Secrets! V.3, Big Trouble in Little Nippon. V.4, Way of the Samurai.**

TV series (13 episodes), 2000. Director/Script: Akitaro Daichi. V.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes, V.2-V.4, 3 episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

*Tsukikage Ran* is basically a follow-up to director/writer Daichi's 1999 comedic drama *Jubei-chan, the Ninja Girl*, in the same length (13 episodes) and from the same studio (Madhouse). But where *Jubei-chan* was a semi-historical fantasy about a modern high school whose students and teachers are possessed by the spirits of 17th century samurai and ninja and forced to fulfill an ancient feud, *Ran* (broadcast January 26 - April 19, 2000) features laid-back, whimsical "realistic" historical action; specifically pastiches of traditional samurai movies. The closest American parallels are the TV Western comedies *The Wild, Wild West* and *Maverick*; the one a fantasy tossing anachronistic sci-fi secret agent gimmicks into the 19th century setting, the other a series of light Western adventures which parodied the popular movies and TV series of the genre.



*Ran* takes place during Japan's Edo period (1600-1868), the setting of almost a century's worth of Jidaigeki (what the West calls "samurai drama") movies and TV series. The protagonists are the stereotypical taciturn wandering samurai and his buffoonish comedy-relief companion — except that these happen to be women. Ran is soft-voiced but not soft-spoken, with the standoffish egocentric "stay out of my way and I won't bother you" attitude; except that whenever she sees an injustice, she is inevitably drawn into supporting the weak victim. Her loudmouthed, unwanted tagalong companion is the self-styled "Lady Meow of the Iron Cat Fist," a teenaged martial artist. It is hard to tell whether Meow is actually good, or whether she can get the first blows in because her opponents are so stunned at seeing a female martial artist.

The pastiche of mid-20th century samurai movies is carried out in detail, with a pseudo-Edo period theme song and credits handwritten in old-fashioned vertical characters. Ran (Orchid) lives by a "fate will provide" philosophy, letting herself be "carried by the wind" down whichever road looks most interesting. Each village or castle town they come to provides an adventure that is one of the standard plots: the village being torn apart in a turf war between two rival gangs; protecting an abandoned baby who turns out to be a lord's heir that a rival wants to get rid of; the greedy magistrate who is taxing the people for a massive public works project while keeping most of the money for himself. Ran and Meow meet in the first episode; otherwise there is no continuity. Each episode is self-contained. Many of the supporting cast in each episode are drawn very similarly, like the stock actors who appeared in the samurai movies. It will help if the viewer has seen actual samurai movies, at least the classics like *Yojimbo* and *The Seven Samurai*, but *Ran* is easily enjoyable without any familiarity. Each DVD contains extensive "liner notes" succinctly explaining the historical and cultural background of each episode. *Ran* is an animated equivalent of the American TV Westerns of the 1960s and '70s, and can serve as a pleasant superficial primer to Japanese history of the Tokugawa Shogunate period.



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TV TOKYO.

**Dai-Guard: Terrestrial Defense Corp. V.1, Hostile Takeover. V.2, To Serve and Defend But Not to Spend. V.3, Checks and Balances of Terror. V.4, Red Tape and Proud Hearts. V.5, In the Red. V.6, The Bottom Line.**

TV series (26 episodes), 1999-2000. Director: Seiji Mizushima. V.1 & V.6, 5 episodes/125 minutes, V.2-V.5, 4 episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

Earth is attacked by dimensional monsters and must be defended by fighters in a "giant robot" battle suit so large it takes three pilots to operate it — but the real menace is not the monsters but interservice rivalry and corporate politics. In 2018 monsters called "heterodynes" destroy much of Japan. The Army builds a giant battle suit to combat them, but the heterodynes suddenly disappear. By 12 years later they are almost forgotten. The Army has sold Dai-Guard to 21st Century Security Corporation, which uses it for publicity. Suddenly the heterodynes reappear, and 21st Century's Public Relations Division's three pilots have to master its military capabilities quickly. Agaki, an anime fan, is thrilled to become a giant robot pilot for real; Izumi, whose father was killed in the first heterodyne attack, wants revenge; Aoyama, who never expected to have to fight, wants to transfer out as soon as the company can find a replacement.

The three soon realize that the safety of the Japanese people is more important than their personal motives. But they must go into action in defiance of executive orders against exposing the company to damage liability and the expense of operating a giant robot. Management loves the favorable publicity that Dai-Guard brings, and dare not publicly repudiate Agaki's TV statement that public safety is more important than profits, so it allows the trio to go into action; but dangerously undercuts Dai-Guard's effectiveness with budget cuts. Some managers would like to get Dai-Guard transferred from Public Relations to a new division that would be their own fiefdom. The Army wants Dai-Guard back, considering it a matter of honor that the military rather than civilians defeat the alien menace.



When the company will not sell Dai-Guard, the Army tries such means as governmental confiscation and building a rival battle suit from the original blueprints. The Army does manage to get Commander Shirota assigned to Public Relations as a technical advisor. While Shirota appears at first as a Trojan Horse martinet, he is gradually revealed as trying to instill some much-needed military professionalism in Public Relations' "conglomeration of amateurs."

*Dai-Guard* is a rousingly exciting boys' adventure focusing on the human aspects that are usually ignored in TV cartoons about heroes in giant robots fighting monsters. It's not just sci-fi battle action, but the hours of filling out debriefing reports afterwards; the worrying about the effectiveness of parts made by the lowest-bidding contractor; the suspicion that the superiors sending you into action are more concerned with their military glory than your safety or the safety of civilians in the battle zone. The smooth animation by the XEBEC studio, originally broadcast from October 5, 1999 through March 28, 2000 on the TV Tokyo channel, features complex mechanical designs which imply that the Dai-Guard action figure must have been in the \$75 to \$100 range.

### FLCL. V.1-V.3.

OAV series (6 episodes), 2000. Director: Kazuya Tsurumaki. V.1-V.3, 2 episodes/60 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.95. Distributor: Synch-Point/Anime Gamers USA.

FLCL is pronounced "fooly cooly." "What does it mean?" asks Naota's father accusingly in the first episode. "How should I know?" is Naota's blushing reply. This is a burning question throughout the series, which anime fans have joined in debating. The answer seems like analyzing what a Rorschach Test blot "really" means. (Like Mel Brooks in *The Critic*, the general assumption is that it means something very raunchy.) FLCL, six half-hour episodes released direct-to-video bimonthly between April 26, 2000 and



# FLCL<sup>®</sup>

Ready steady go! FLCL the digital animation by GAINAX

© GAINAX / KGI co-produced in N. America by Synch-Point, a division of Anime Gamers USA, Inc. and Production I.G LLC.

February 21, 2001, is a co-production of [Production I.G](#) and Gainax, the studios that made [Ghost in the Shell](#), [Blood: The Last Vampire](#) (I.G) and [Evangelion](#) (Gainax), with the addition of scripter Yoji Enokido, best known as one of the lead writers for [Revolutionary Girl Utena](#). These are all titles famous for their "what the hell is going on?!" complexity and abstract "it means whatever you want it to mean" ending. So anime fans in Japan knew that they were getting into a head trip when they started *FLCL*, and they loved it. Now it's America's turn. Oh, one episode contains a pastiche of *South Park*. That should tell you something, too.

There is plenty of crazy humor, from surrealistic to gross-out, laid over a plot frame that is melancholy and somber. Naota Nandaba, a shy 12-year-old sixth grader, has to put up with Mamimi Samejima, a 17-year-old who was his older brother's girlfriend before he left Japan. Mamimi is clearly retarded. She has dropped out of high school because of being bullied for her backwardness, and hangs around Naota because she got used to him as a "little brother." She feels comfortable with him because of his physical age. At the same time she is emotionally confused by her adolescence, trying to act grown-up by smoking and beginning to grope Naota because it feels good. Naota is highly embarrassed but feels a responsibility to his brother to try to keep Mamimi out of trouble. Into their life rides Haruko, a manic girl on a Vespa scooter who immediately clobbers Naota with an electric guitar. She claims to be a Galaxy Patrol officer space alien, and enough weird things begin happening to make her claim plausible. Naota starts to grow horns, and a giant robot with a TV-monitor head pops out of his own head. It is hard for the "what does it mean?" analysts to avoid interpreting this as a metaphor for the onset of Naoto's adolescence; a time when a person's body begins to change in grotesque and embarrassing ways. And this is just part of the first episode.

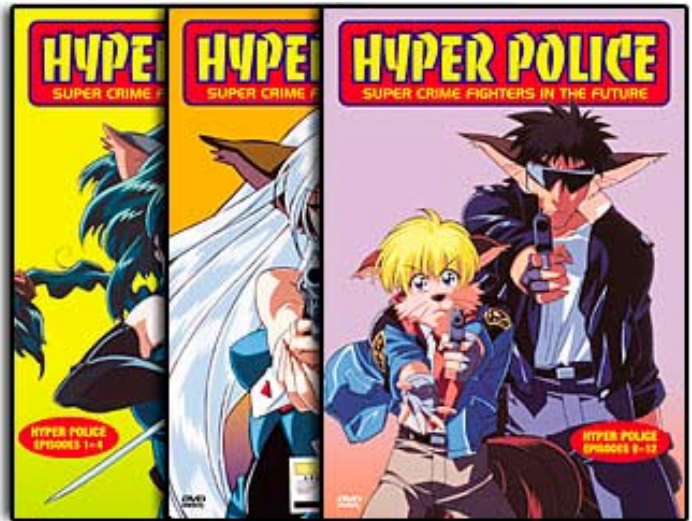
The two half-hour episodes are repeated on the DVD with a complete director's cut version. Tsurumaki explains the anime and manga ingroup references in the series, and such tricks as how he assigned scenes to different key animators so that their individual styles would make the animation subtly different without changing the art design. This is besides plenty of scenes with deliberate art design changes. At one point the animation stops and the scene is related by flash-forward focusing upon a series of cartoon-art panels; this scene is also published as a 12-page mini-comic book within a 24-page booklet that comes with the DVD. FLCL means highly imaginative weirdness that is meant to be confusing in a cool way.

### **Hyper Police. V.1 - V. 6.**

TV series (25 episodes), 1997. General Director: Takahiro Omori. V.1-V.5, 4 episodes/100 minutes; V.6, 5 episodes/125 minutes. Price & format: VHS English \$14.98/DVD bilingual \$19.99. Distributor: Image Entertainment.

*Hyper Police* was little noticed when it first appeared on Japanese TV (April 3 — September 25, 1997) because of its 1:15 a.m. time-slot, but it has since won a following on video due to its high quality. It is a bizarre but appealing combination of exotic fantasy and a buddy-cop TV series. While this mixture as one-shot parody can be traced back to Stan

Freberg's 1953 "St. George and the Dragonet" spoof of *Dragnet*, an ongoing series built around supernatural cops (werewolves make good police because, unless they're shot with silver bullets, they heal almost instantly) is very rare.



© 2002 Image Entertainment.

Few of the plots are procedural mysteries. Instead the series is a soap opera about the fortunes of a private police company in a semi-destroyed futuristic Tokyo inhabited by a mixture of humans, demons, funny animals, monsters, gods, and you name it. The background is never fully explained, partly because the TV series is an adaptation of a manga serial by MEE (Minoru Tachikawa) that started in 1993 and is still going, but apparently there was some cataclysm 22 years earlier that reestablished magic on Earth. Cryptic one-liners like, "Ever since the Earth's axis shifted, there's no difference between summer and winter anymore," are dropped into the dialogue every so often. There is obvious racial (species?) prejudice between the pure humans and the others, and a lot of crossbreeding. ("Cat monster" teen protagonist Natsuki Sasahara's father was human; her mother was 2/3rds cat.) Crime has become so severe that the law now permits private police companies to supplement the government police. These operate on a pay-as-you-go system; the one that Natsuki works for specializes in capturing criminals for government rewards, which makes it a cross between a police force and a bounty-hunter corporation. It is a very marginal business; at one point it goes bankrupt and the staff have to get separate jobs until it can refinance and open up again. (There is a hilarious sequence of Natsuki as a waitress at a pastiche of a well-known American fast-food restaurant chain.) The mixture of magic and routine police procedure is generally clever (what are the





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legal aspects of using enchanted silver dum-dum bullets?). Many of the supernatural references are based on Oriental mythology (Sakura, Natsuki's partner, is a nine-tailed fox with only eight tails, trying to earn her ninth). The post-midnight time-slot permitted some risqué humor (another main character, the werewolf Batanen, usually has a porno magazine in his desk), although nothing stronger than in American TV animation like *Beavis and Butt-head*.

*Hyper Police* has many plusses, including smooth animation by Studio Pierrot, attractive character designs by popular anime artist Keiji Goto, catchy music by Kenji Kawai, clever dialogue by Sukehiro Tomita & Shigeru Yanagawa, and great Japanese voice acting, especially the voices for naive Natsuki and sultry Sakura. But it really succeeds because of the warm personal relationships among its charismatic cast: hyper-eager newbie Natsuki, cynical Sakura, big-brotherly Batanen, harried chief Mudagami, sympathetic young Mr. & Mrs. Tachibana who run the coffee shop next door, and others. There is action, humor, pathos and social commentary. Two complaints: (1) there is a phony buildup to what looks like a new Earth-shattering climax in the last couple of episodes which wimps out. The overall plot features "slice of life" action (despite the fantasy setting), and like most realistic fiction the story finally ends without any real resolution; just the implication that life will go on as it has been. (2) Image's release does not bother to translate the credits, and the DVD has no extras at all.

**Orphen. V.1, Spell of the Dragon. V.2, Super-Natural Powers. V.3, Ruins & Relics. V.4, Mystere. V.5, The Soul Stealers. V.6, The Third Talisman.**

TV series [24 episodes], 1998-1999. Executive Director: Hiroshi Watanabe. V.1-V.3, 3 episodes/75 minutes; V.4-V.6, 5 episodes/125 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

Role playing game-type heroic fantasy has been popular in Japan since the 1980s. *Majutsushi Orphen* (literally *Wizard Orphen*, but "Englished" in the Japanese titles as *Sorcerous Stabber Orphen*) began as a series of humorous serialized novels by Yoshinobu Akita in the gamers' magazines *Monthly Dragon Magazine* and *Monthly Dragon Junior*.

The TV serial [24 episodes, Fridays from October 3, 1998 through March 27, 1999] reportedly surprised the novels' fans who expected the anime to be equally slapstick. It does begin that way, but this turns out to be in the tradition of many anime serials, which start light-heartedly but gradually evolve into suspenseful dramas. The continent of Kielsalhima is a stereotypical fantasy world of Medieval European castles, dragons and wizards, with humorous anachronisms designed to appeal to modern teens such as snack shops that serve ice cream parfaits instead of taverns with alcohol. Orphen is a handsome boy about 18 who has been loafing around a quiet village for the past year. He claims to be a former student of the Tower of Fangs wizards' academy, but he lacked ambition and dropped out. Two younger adolescents, Majic and Cleao, are the viewer's P.O.V. surrogates. They



discover that Orphen has actually been watching a house whose owner unknowingly has a magic sword. Orphen expects a fearsome dragon to show up to steal it. When the dragon does appear, Orphen tries to capture it magically rather than kill it. He is interrupted by two former comrades from the Tower of Fangs who do try to kill it, and the dragon escapes in the confusion. Orphen begins a quest to find the dragon, with Majic and Cleao as tagalongs. It is not until episode #7 that they begin to learn Orphen's past. He was raised by the wizards from childhood. He idolized an older student, Azalie, as his "big sister" mentor. Five years earlier, Azalie tried to master the power of the sword but it turned her into the dragon. The wizards decide that she has become a menace and must be killed, but Orphen is sure that he can restore her if he can just capture and hold her for long enough. He hotheadily rebels and leaves the Tower to find Azalie on his own before the wizard trying to kill Azalie can do so. What at first seemed to Majic and Cleao like a fun-filled vacation tour across scenic Kielsalhima turns grim. The wizard assigned to destroy Azalie, Childman, was Orphen's best friend. It is not clear whether Childman is callous or realistic;

has Azalie become a mindless monster that must be killed for humanity's good? Must Azalie be killed to save Orphen, who left the Tower before his magic training was completed and may not be skillful enough to defeat her? Is Childman secretly trying to save Azalie without openly defying the senior wizards as Orphen did? A complication is Flameheart, Childman's rival among the younger wizards who intends that neither Childman nor Orphen shall return alive. The animation by J.C. Staff is stiff, due to an art design too detailed to animate smoothly on a TV budget, but the story is compelling enough to hold the audience — indeed, the silly humorous sequences become an annoying distraction. ■

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**FRED PATTEN** has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s. He wrote the liner notes for Rhino Entertainment's *The Best of Anime music CD* (1998), and was a contributor to *The World Encyclopedia of Cartoons*, 2nd Edition, ed. by Maurice Horn (1999) and [Animation in Asia and the Pacific](#), ed. by John A. Lent (2001).

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FILM REVIEWS

# Fresh from the Festivals: November 2002's Film Reviews

WITHIN THE WORLD OF ANIMATION, MOST EXPERIMENTATION OCCURS within short format productions, whether they are 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:

**Hessi James** (*Cockney James*, Germany, 2002). 6 min. Dir: Johannes Weiland (Germany). Script and Voice: Badesalz. Producer: Martin Burkert. Score: Thomas Mehlhorn. Produced at Filmakademi Baden-Wuerttemberg. Web: <http://www.hessi-themovie.de>.

**Katedra** (*The Cathedral*, Poland, 2002). 6 min. Dir: Tomek Baninski (Poland). Story: Jacek Dukaj. Prod: Jarek Sawko and Piotr Sikora. Music: Adam Rosiak. Produced at Platige Image. Contact: Piotr Sikora. Tel: +48 60 134 30 09. Or contact: Platige Image, Pilicka 58, 02-613, Poland. Tel/Fax: +48 22 844 64 74. Email: [info@platige.com](mailto:info@platige.com). Web: <http://www.platige.com/katedra>.

**The Lark** (USA, 2002). 10 min. Dir: Gil Kenan (USA). Music composition and orchestration: Douglas Pipes. Produced at the University of California, Los Angeles. Contact: Gil Kenan. E-mail: [gkenan@attbi.com](mailto:gkenan@attbi.com).

**Passing Moments** (USA, 2002). 2.5 min. Dir: Don Phillips (USA). Produced at the Ringling School of Art and Design. Music: Pat Osborne. Contact: Don Phillips, Jr., 1914 Shadowood Court, Spartanburg, SC 29301 USA. Tel: +01 941 266 6983. E-mail: [dphillips@ringling.edu](mailto:dphillips@ringling.edu). Web: [www.rsad.edu/~dphillip](http://www.rsad.edu/~dphillip).

**Orange** (USA, 2002). 11 min. Dir: Slava Ushakov (Russia). Prod: Mikhail Shindel. Produced at Kinofilm. Contact: Kinofilm and Slava Ushakov, 10980 Ohio Ave. #202, Los Angeles, CA 90024 USA. Tel: +01 310 444 9367. E-mail: [slavaushy@cs.com](mailto:slavaushy@cs.com). Web: <http://www.slavaushakov.com>.



*Hessi James* features bug action set in the desert.  
© 2000 Ascaland Animations.

### HESSI JAMES

Two major influences have shaped the 6-minute *Hessi James*, a student project directed by Johannes Weiland at Filmakademi Baden-Wuerttemberg. Most significant is the German comedy duo Badesalz, which have been performing since the mid-1980s and have recorded CDs, videos and a feature film based upon their work. Weiland's film is an adaptation of one of their most famous sketches, originally recorded in 1993, the story of a small Cockney bug who overpowers all he meets with his unceasing chatter. Set in a desert town, the film attempts to recreate the atmosphere of Oliver Stone's film, *U-Turn*, employing Maya to create the dusty gas station where the action takes place. The textures employed in the work were painted onto paper.

Harmonica music sets the scene as the action opens on two bugs lingering in the filling station. One, the owner, warns the other, a tough roach who goes by the name John G. G. Tucker, that he should not provoke the puny bug who madly drives up to a pump, careening across the open desert landscape. Action is captured in what might be called an 'MTV style,' with 'hand held' looking zooms and blurs. Not heeding the advice, Tucker meets his destiny when his eardrums explode from the non-stop, unintelligible banter spewing forth from the chatty, strongly-accented little insect. Dialogue, originally in German, has been dubbed into English.

Before he entered the Filmakademie in 1998, Weiland worked at the Städtische Bühnen Freiburg as

assistant stage designer and assistant director. He also worked on several animation-related projects with production companies on a freelance basis. One year in the making, *Hessi James* was released on 35mm film. It has won several awards at festivals, as well as a Student Academy Award nomination (from the USA).



The director's architectural background is highlighted in *Katedra*.  
© 2002 Platige Image.

### THE CATHEDRAL

*Katedra (The Cathedral)*, a computer animated film by Polish director Tomek Baginski, made a name for itself when it won the award for Best Animated Short at SIGGRAPH in 2002. Also an adaptation, the film is based on an 80-page story by Jacek Dukaj. However, other influences, such as the architecture of Antonio Gaudi, the paintings of Zdzislaw Bekinski, and the animated works of Mamoru Oshi, such as *GITS* and *Blood*, are also apparent in the work.

The narrative element of this work is relatively minimal: a man makes a pilgrimage to a cathedral that rests on the edge of an abyss, where he undergoes a transformation of sorts. Dense in atmosphere and lacking dialogue, the six minute work is both dramatic and contemplative. A fiery ball in the background, filling the sky, and stone-like faces that stir within the cathedral walls are visually interesting elements that complement the quietness of the central character. Covered in shadow, this figure drifts slightly between a realistic representation and one that is highly stylized. The director felt his strengths were not in character animation, so he devoted more attention to the environments. This seems to be a natural decision



for Baginski, who studied architecture for three years before becoming a modeler and animator at Platige Image, where he has worked for four years.

Baginski worked with the story's author, Jacek Dukaj, over a year and a half period to create a screenplay for the short film. He then received the support of his employers at Platige Image, in the form of both funding and equipment, to create the film. He worked on it full-time for 15 months, though in total it took over two and a half years to complete. Though motion-capture sequences were created, in the end the director said the post-production work on this material was too time consuming and this footage was used only in a small number of distance shots. Images throughout the rest of the film were keyframed, using 3dsMax4 for modeling, animation and rendering. Other applications used include Photoshop for painting; Adobe After Effects for compositing; and Softimage DS for editing.

### THE LARK

"Two days of live-action photography, one year of animation." This is how director Gil Kenan describes the production of his graduate thesis film, *The Lark*. That kind of makes you wonder what the attraction of the animation process would be...but then you see the finished film and know it was worth it.

*The Lark* tells the story of a domineering, abusive man and the woman he has pushed to the brink with verbal and physical assaults. The cycle is broken one day when a bird appears in the window and is taken in by the woman. Eventually the bird grows, quite literally, to fulfill a role as the woman's protector... or so it seems. The ending is happy in a very dark kind of way.

What is interesting about this film, beyond the story itself, is the range of techniques employed in it, as well as its visual style. The woman and man are live performers who were filmed in real-time on a black stage for masking purposes and then pixilated through the use of After Effects (also used for lighting). The bird was created as a stop-motion puppet. The space in which these characters appear is 2-dimensional and stylized; the walls are literally cut in half to reveal interior and exterior space within a shot. The entire work is created in black and white, lending a kind of nostalgic feeling to the suburban setting.

The result is a film that is interesting in terms of its story, its look and its technical achievement — elements that integrate well within such an offbeat tale. Sound, too, is employed effectively with music composed and orchestrated by Douglas Pipes. Kenan received his MFA in Animation from the [University of California, Los Angeles](#) in spring 2002.



*The Lark* becomes an abused woman's protector. © 2002 Gil Kenan.



Romance comes to strangers on a train in *Passing Moments*. © 2002 Don Phillips, Jr.,

### PASSING MOMENTS

From [Ringling School of Art and Design](#) comes *Passing Moments*, a senior thesis by director Don Phillips. Set in the 1930s, the film employs Art Deco design around male and female characters who meet suddenly on a train and are mutually attracted though there are barriers that stand between them. The film is a short study in character animation, influenced by the work of the PDI and Pixar studios, with no dialogue. Story details are suggested through subtle movement and facial expression, as well as images representing

the internal thoughts of the male character. Unfortunately, these thoughts occupy so much of his time that he misses the opportunity to express his feelings to the woman of his dreams.

Phillips employed a range of applications in creating his film, including Alias|Wavefront Maya 4.0, Deep Paint 3D and Nothing Real Shake 2.4. Although the characters and most of the environments were 3D, Photoshop was used to create some 2D elements that were composited into the film.

The director came to the work with a range of professional experience, including an internship at LucasArts Entertainment, where he worked on character animation for a video game. He also interned at Animink, Inc., where he created traditional animation and did cleanup for commercials. Passing Moments has been well received, winning a Student Academy Award and appearing within SIGGRAPH's Electronic Theater, both in 2002.

## ORANGE

*Orange* tells the somewhat loosely structured story of a man who goes through a series of actions within a small town. The man, a sailor, appears to be attracted to a woman who sells oranges there. When he comes into port he buys fruit from her and she gazes wistfully at him, seemingly intoxicated by the lingering smoke of his cigarette. While he is in port, he engages in a chess game with a man there. Though he loses at first, on his next attempt he literally 'takes home the bank,' which appears to result in his winning the young woman's love as well. During these adventures, he is followed by a small mouse.

The visual style of the piece and the music work together to complement the storytelling, which is lively and unpredictable. Told without dialogue, the film is interesting to watch, in part because one never quite knows where the story is going. The director has created funny asides that are worked into the background or cut into the story as quick cutaways. For example, there is a huge fish that quickly snaps up things as they fall into the water and a beached whale that onlookers try to push back into the water.



*Orange* follows a sailor's experiences in a small town.  
© 2002 Kinofilm.

Unfortunately, there are also elements which are less compelling to watch, which is unfortunate. In order to build his chess board, the sailor ventures to Africa and comes across some tribal members who lead him on a trek to hunt a rhinoceros for its tusk. I find this material, which is somewhat stereotypical and involves poaching, to be a major distraction in an otherwise well-made film. On the other hand, the action that the tribal members undertake in guiding him through the terrain is well developed; one by one, they succumb to dangers along the way in a sequence that is well-timed and humorous.

Ushakov worked for the Pilot and Nils studios in Moscow before moving to America and beginning work for Kinofilm in Los Angeles. *Orange* was created as a personal project at the studio, with funding from Kinofilm. It was made using cel animation and 35mm film.■

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**MAUREEN FURNISS, PH.D.** is founding editor of *Animation Journal* and author of [Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics](#) (1998). She teaches in the Department of Film and Digital Media at Savannah College of Art and Design, in Georgia, and is currently writing a book related to animation production.

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BOOK REVIEW

# Kim Deitch's Boulevard of Broken Dreams

“RITE WHAT YOU KNOW” ISN’T JUST A LITERARY defense mechanism designed to keep over-ambitious shut-ins from clogging the slush pile with anemic historical epics. It is also, applied correctly, a kind of mental discipline, which allows you to dig through your routine for its particular cache of gold. What Kim Deitch knows — his own pile of gold — is what goes on behind the curtain of cartoon celluloid — at the drawing board and in the sound studio — though he remains coy about what actually transpired at the company Christmas party, when the boss’ wife fell out the window, down to her death.

Kim is the son of [Gene Deitch](#), a director with a distinguished pedigree in animation, working his way up the ladder at UPA and then moving on to become Creative Director at Terrytoons. During Gene’s stint at Terrytoons, while Kim was still a kid, Kim got to visit the studios, and meet the inmates. Years later, when Kim was producing his own art as part of the initial wave of “underground cartoonists” in the ‘60s, he realized he had gathered, through his childhood curiosity, a wealth of source material.

While the underground comics are generally remembered for their psychedelic visual textures — eye-bending pop colors, paisley kaleidoscope mandalas, hand-lettered titles drifting distorted across the page like curlicues of reefer smoke — there was often a streak of nostalgia running through them. This usually took the form of homages to (or desecrations of) earlier comic strip characters. Deitch’s brand of nostalgia stood out for being drawn from the cartoons of the ‘20s; the rubbery characters look like seedier versions of the black-and-white figures who flickered out of the studios of Disney, Paul Terry and the Fleischer brothers.

The broad outline of Kim’s new graphic novel, *The Boulevard of Broken Dreams*, follows the ups and downs of a Fleischer-like cartoon studio named Fontaine Fables, bursting with creative energy at the birth of animation, then slowly atrophying under the growing shadow of the Disney Studio. Deitch has drawn a comic book à clef, where historical figures and events make funhouse-mirror cameos. Winsor McCay and his vaudeville cartoon stage shows, the Disney Studio strike, Oskar Fischinger, the neutering of Betty Boop, and Kim’s own father — among other recognizable people and places — all leave shadow-impressions of varying density across the pages.

The changes in the artform of animation, and the shifting fate of Fontaine Fables, are given physical form in the mutations of the Fontaine Fables mascot, “Waldo the Cat.” Waldo begins his “life” as an imaginary friend to young Ted Mishkin, a troubled child who finds refuge from his life’s difficulties with his invisible feline companion (invisible to other people at least — Ted first draws Waldo as a way of making him visible to his more well-adjusted brother, Al). Thanks to Al, Ted later gets a job at Fontaine Fables, and Waldo makes his jump to the silver screen. In the early Fontaine Fables cartoons, Waldo retains the edges of the id, but as the studio falls on tougher times, Waldo slums as a dim sidekick to a superhero rat in a comic book, and then finally becomes a waxy, flower-toting cherub as Fontaine Fables tries to ape the ascendant Disney style. By the end of the book, Waldo has actually achieved three-dimensional, physical form — as a lump of merchandisable plastic, hawked in toy stores. The original spirit of Waldo watches over all of this, aghast, a profane ghost who appears to Ted, and others in the Fontaine Fables orbit, when their grasp of mundane reality is sufficiently eroded.



## THE BROAD OUTLINE OF KIM'S NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL FOLLOWS THE UPS AND DOWNS OF A FLEISCHER-LIKE CARTOON STUDIO NAMED FONTAINE FABLES...

It's the struggle between art and kitsch that gives *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* its motivating force. It gets its sense of play from a series of visual sleights-of-hand. Deitch delights in the recursive playground he's created — the fact that he's drawing a comic strip about a group of cartoonists allows him to constantly warp the line between the figurative and the figment. A psychotic break of Ted Mishkin's, where cartoon heads burst into the comics panels like meteors or flashes of light dazzling the eyes, until the whole pictorial space has been transformed into a cartoon copy of what's "actually" happening, is a thrilling sequence.

In another dizzying passage, Deitch shows us the production of one of Fontaine Fables' cartoons: a self-parodying cartoon, set in an animation studio called "Fable Toons." We see the Fontaine Fables orchestra recording the soundtrack for a scene where the "Fable Toons" orchestra is recording a soundtrack: the trombone of a Fontaine Fables musician overlaps the screen where an anthropomorphized camera squiggles out an optical track on a strip of film. Further on in the cartoon, we see an animator at "Fable Toons" falling asleep at his drawing board, where Waldo lies frozen on an animation cel, hung on the peg bar. Then Waldo comes to life, jumping off the

cel and onto the animator's drawing table — so Waldo has just made the leap from being an animated picture of an animated picture, taking life inside an animated cartoon — which exists one step away from the "reality" of Fontaine Fables — itself a drawing that came from Kim Deitch's hands. Of course, rather than getting lost in this representational labyrinth, it's far easier to accept the drawing of Waldo jumping off the cel as alive. It's not, finally, a drawing of a drawing of an animated character that is jumping off the page — it's Waldo. And that's the point of Deitch's fascination with Waldo; with the weird totemic power a drawing can have, to take up a life of its own. That's the charm of drawing a fictional character — and also, when the id is off its leash, the terror of it. ■

*The Boulevard of Broken Dreams* by Kim Deitch with Simon Deitch. New York, New York: Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 2002. 192 pages. ISBN 0-375-42191-2 (hardback US\$21)

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# Comic Wars: BOOK REVIEW How Two Tycoons Battled Over the Marvel Comics Empire – And Both Lost

RAVIV MAKES AN EXCITING, SOMETIMES FUNNY, SOMETIMES TRAGIC, STORY OF ALL THESE SHENANIGANS.

HERE'S SOMETHING AUTHOR DAN RAVIV HAS IN COMMON WITH Ronald Perelman, Carl Icahn and Ike Perlmutter: none of them are comics fans.

According to *Comic Wars: How Two Tycoons Battled Over the Marvel Comics Empire — And Both Lost*, Perelman, Icahn and Perlmutter had never even read a comic book. As for Raviv, a prize winning and best-selling non-fiction author and journalist, while he may have read them, he clearly is not of the geek mentality. He's a journalist with a flair for dramatizing historical situations, and has never before written a book about business or media.

Raviv's lack of fanboy obsession with the characters in the comics enables him to bring a relatively objective point of view to the financial and interpersonal dealings that went on in the infamous tug of war between Icahn and Perelman for control of Marvel, a war which ultimately made it a matter of survival for Perlmutter and partner [Avi Arad](#) to try — and succeed — in taking over the troubled company.

## MONEY TALKS

The downside of the non-fanboy point-of-view is that Raviv's story is told mostly from the business and financial angles. Much mention is made of Arad's love of the characters, and certainly [Stan Lee](#) is given his rightful due for the work he did over the decades in creating and nurturing the characters and the company. A few key artists — Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, John Romita — are mentioned once or twice. Artist Herb Trimpe is quoted, and former editor-in-chief Bob Harras gets a mention or two. But for the most part, the writers, artists and editors are portrayed as virtually interchangeable, as just manufacturers of the "product" that is comics. For just one example, considering that he was a very active editor-in-chief for much of the Perelman period, it's notable that Tom DeFalco isn't mentioned even once. Also, Raviv's take on content-related matters is shaped by what he's read in the public record, as are his impressions of the fan community.

While the [Marvel characters](#) — [Spider-Man](#), the Hulk, [the X-Men](#) — are colorful and exotic, and the Tycoons of the title are certainly men of oversized personalities, much of their battle went on in courtrooms where the combatants were lawyers whose weapons were facts — or at least, data — and convoluted legal arguments that can, and do, make one's eyes glaze over. If you can get past the idea that you have to understand every twist and turn of the legalistic elements, then this is an enjoyable book.

Raviv points out that "for Ronald Perelman, Marvel became a platform for selling junk bonds. Apparently he did not appreciate that he was the custodian of a distinctive piece of American culture." A junk bond is a high-risk investment. This was what all Marvel's business decisions in the late 1980s to mid-1990s were based on. Perelman's inclination was to pay whatever price was asked for something he wanted, especially if he thought he could convert it to junk bond money. This was an important part of the deal he made to buy a large non-majority share of Perlmutter and Arad's Toy Biz toy company, the major licensee of Marvel action figures. Perelman needed the toy company in order to shore up lagging profits at his over-leveraged Marvel, and Toy Biz got a "perpetual no-fee license to design, market and distribute action figures, other toys and games based

on all the Marvel characters." (And if you found the preceding a tad confusing — don't worry about it. Oh, unless you owned Marvel stock.)

In any event, the Perelman organization's machinations left the company vulnerable to corporate raider Icahn to try to come in and take over. Perelman wouldn't let go without a fight. Both billionaires got their egos caught up in what was actually a pretty small change company for them, and Toy Biz was in danger of becoming a casualty of this battle of the titans. As one frustrated major investor in the companies wrote: "Egos have destroyed the market price of all the securities in this case. First it was Ronnie Perelman, then the Icahn-Fortgang-Perlmutter Mid-East peace talks with a new deal every other month, I have been in too many bankruptcy cases where professional pride got in the way of making a deal fair to all. The professionals still get their fees and go on to the next case."

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## AS SOMEONE WHO WAS WORKING AT MARVEL... I FOUND IT FASCINATING TO READ...

Indeed, in *Comic Wars*, Perelman and Icahn act like comics speculators, each wanting to hold onto this mint condition collectible — Marvel Comics itself — and determined that, if he can't have it, the other guy sure won't get it, either.

## REAL WORLD REPERCUSSIONS

As someone who was working at Marvel (I was running the *Spider-Man* editorial line) while all this was going on, and who resigned partly in response to many of the strange decisions that were handed down from higher, non-editorial corporate levels, I found it fascinating to read about what was causing many of the strange dicta that were handed down to us. While many of the Perelman organization's moves did indeed bring profit to the company and its employees, they were, even more than we then realized, short-term strategies designed to increase junk bond profits. When these deals and moves went sour, it gave Icahn, who had bought many of those junk bonds, a chance to move in. Part of his moving in was to squeeze Toy Biz out. The banks that were owed the debt Perelman had run up became the pivotal players. By convincing them to align with Toy Biz, Perlmutter



and Arad became the owners of Marvel, which they remain to this day. Perelman didn't do too badly, either. Depending on how you calculate it, he made somewhere between \$50 and \$500 million dollars from his ownership of Marvel. The lawyers for the various parties made \$30 million. Icahn? He came away with some stock in the newly merged Marvel/Toy Biz (now called Marvel Enterprises), but probably actually lost money in the deal. There's one scary footnote, though. According to Raviv, in July, 1998, "Icahn signed a 'standstill agreement,' promising for five years not to try to take over — or take any action against — Toy Biz or the new Marvel." That was over four years ago. One has to wonder if Carl has the date circled on his 2003 calendar.

Raviv makes an exciting, sometimes funny, sometimes tragic, story of all these shenanigans. At a certain point, unless you're really well versed in finance, you're going to lose track of a lot of the details. I'd recommend just reading these passages for as much meaning as you can and moving on. Raviv

recaps often enough what's going on and its ultimate meaning so that you can follow the story.

**Comic Wars: How Two Tycoons Battled Over the Marvel Comics Empire — And Both Lost** by Dan Raviv. New York, New York: Broadway Books, 2002. 306 pages. ISBN: 0-7697-0830-9 (US\$24.95) ■

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**DAN FINGEROTH** was a writer and editor at Marvel Comics for 18 years. He ran the Spider-Man line during its highest sales years of all time. He went on to be editor-in-chief of Virtual Comics and head of development for Visionary Media. Currently, he's writing graphic novels for Platinum Studios, packaging Danny Finger's Write Now Magazine for TwoMorrows Publishing and is writing Superman on the Couch: What Super Heroes Really Tell Us About Ourselves and Our Society for Continuum Publishing. Danny and his wife Varda just had twin boys, Ethan and Jacob. The twins are fine. The parents are proud. And sleep-deprived.

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