

AWW

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

June 2003 • Volume 8 Issue 03 • awn.com

Indie Animation

Disney • PIXAR
**FINDING
NEMO**

**Plus: My Little World
Dr. William Moritz
Debra Solomon
Fupduck Ideas
Bulgarian Animation
and more...**

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BY FRED PATTEN



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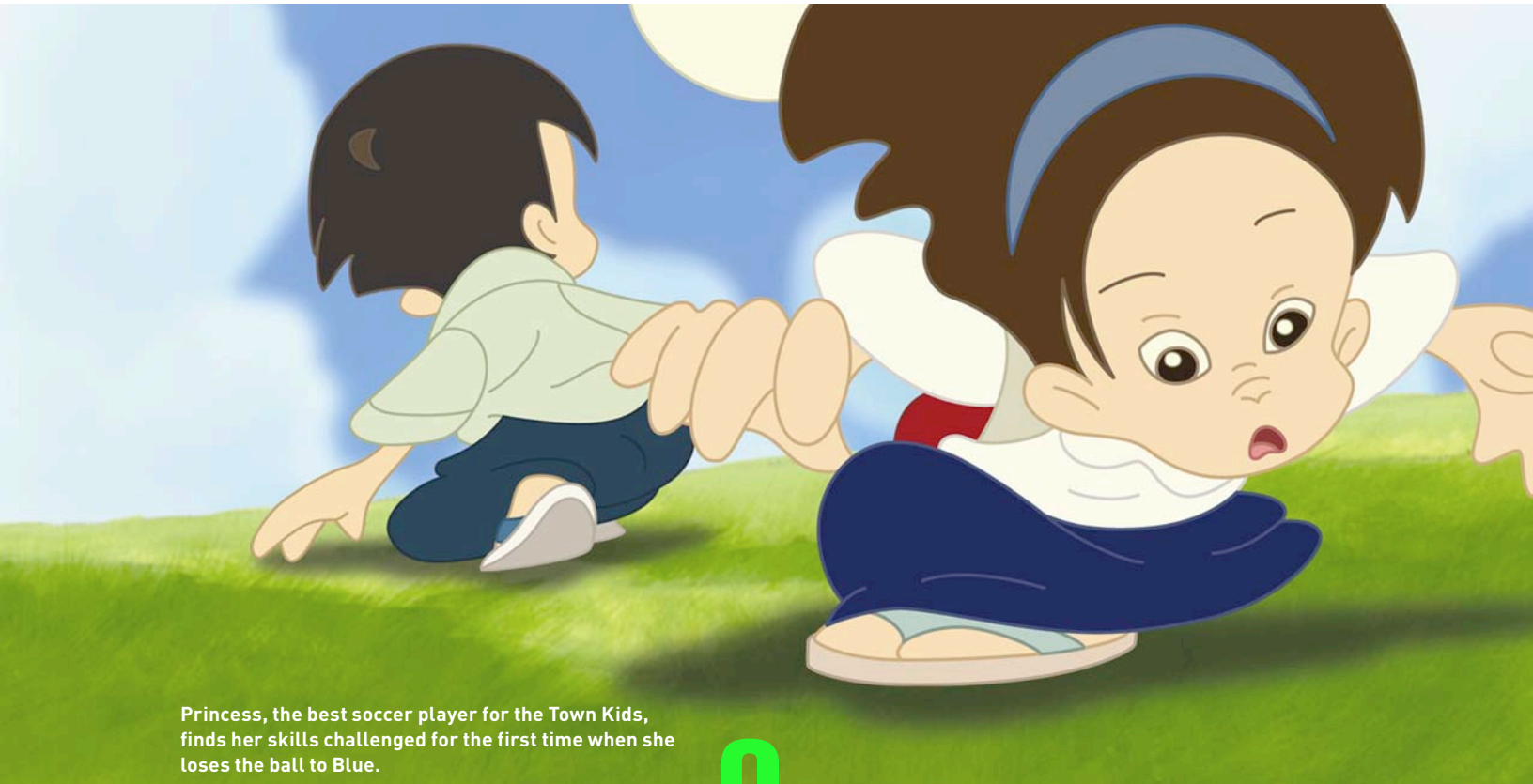
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LITTLE PERSONAL

Mike Nguyen's *Little World* by Rick DeMott



Princess, the best soccer player for the Town Kids, finds her skills challenged for the first time when she loses the ball to Blue.



After surviving the brain drain of the big studios, animator Mike Ngyuen set out to make a short, personal film which grew into a feature. All images © 2003 July Films, Inc.

ANIMATOR MIKE NGUYEN HAS TRAVERSED A TOUR OF DUTY at almost all of the major animation studios in the U.S. He's seen firsthand how wasteful overhead, enormous development costs and the conveyor belt technique have drained the life out of animated features for the artists who draw them. After finishing up work on the turbulent ride to finish *Osmosis Jones* at Warner Bros., Nguyen set out to make a personal short film of his own. Now, three years later, that short has grown into a nearly completed feature entitled *My Little World*.

Getting to this point took Nguyen a decade, starting with a degree in Character Animation from *CalArts*. He lists early Disney and animation legend Richard Williams as some of his major influences. In 1989, he started his professional feature animation career as an effects assistant animator on Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. After working on Disney's *The Rescuers Down Under*, he served as an animator on the Oscar-nominated classic *Beauty and the Beast*.



This concept art painting by Mike Nguyen was done in the early stages of development and captures the carefree feeling of *My Little World*.

He next went over to Hanna-Barbera to work on *Once Upon a Forest*, then moved over to Turner Feature Animation for *The Pagemaster* and *Cats Don't Dance*. After contributing to *Space Jam*, he became lead animator on *Quest for Camelot* and finally assumed the role as supervising animator on *The Iron Giant*. In the meantime, Nguyen began teaching Character Animation at his alma mater. In 1999, he took freelance jobs on Disney's *The Tigger Movie* and DreamWorks' *The Road to El Dorado*.

In 2000, Nguyen decided to make a film based around the dance-like motion of soccer. He felt inspired by his childhood love of the game and the announcement that the 2002 World Cup Soccer Championships would be held for the first time in Asia, split between Korea and Japan. Wondering if the film could be part of the festivities, Nguyen contacted his acquaintances in Korea, who told him that there wasn't much theatrical interest in a 20-minute film. As the story started to develop in his mind, Nguyen discovered a much longer tale germinating about friendship and the charting of life's simple pleasures. Before too long, this idea was strong enough to secure funding for a feature from Korean producer Anhee Choi. Hence, Nguyen formed July Films to produce his personal opus.

The film follows youngster Blue as he is consumed by sadness and sent to live with his aunt for the summer. Through his encounters with the local children and the bonds forged by their mutual love of soccer, he learns to open up his heart. The film is completely hand-drawn 2D animation. Computers were only used to scan the images for ink-and-paint, using [USAnimation software](#). The look and feel of the characters and

environment is a cross between [Hayao Miyazaki](#) and the painterly feel of early Walt Disney features. However, the characters do have an innocent originality with their Barney Rubble eyes and frantically flowing movement that is completely fresh.

Nguyen has seven animators working on the project and admits that for all involved, it's more about the project than the money. Everyone on the staff must, from time to time, take freelance work to supplement his time working on *My Little World*. Instead of assigned to particular characters, the animators are given sequences to work on. One thing Nguyen points out as a problem at the studios is that individual animator's artistic wishes or experiments have a hard time scaling the chain of command. Inspiration often comes while one is working on an assigned piece, or comes regarding a character or segment someone else is working on, but the animator's pencil is usually locked into what has been approved, with no room to alter it with an improvement or new direction. With the same nit group at July Films, the animators are free to experiment, allowing the animation to grow in a more organic way. Nguyen says there's a script for the film but it's used more for investor purposes than anything else.

July Films is seeking seed money to finish clean-up and post-production on the film. All the rights for the film are still available. With the sharp drop of support for 2D productions, Nguyen hopes that his film will show that there is an art and passion to traditional animation that has been lacking in the major studio releases for years. He said, "This isn't about getting mansions for ourselves. We live only so long, and we only have so much time, so we want to leave something behind for future generations to enjoy. We move so fast and I want to remind people of the simple beauty of life like sunlight on your face on a cold day." ■

RICK DEMOTT is managing editor of Animation World Magazine. He most recently was the production coordinator for sound company BadaBing BadaBoom Productions and animation house Perky Pickle Studios. Previously, he served as associate editor for this very site.

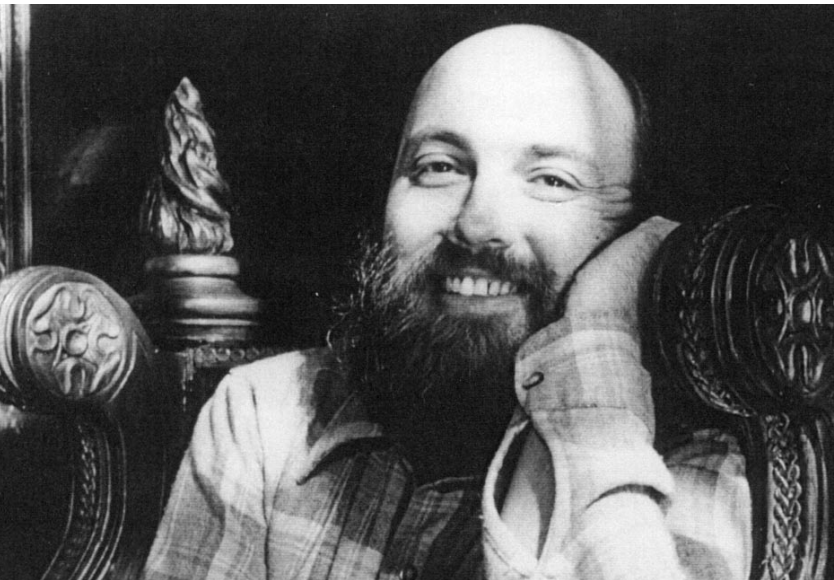
ANIMATION ACADEMICIAN

A Lifetime in Animation: The Glamorous Dr. William Moritz

by Cindy Keefer

"He gave a lot to culture without asking anything, just for free, just because it was worth it."

— Giannalberto Bendazzi



John Canemaker and Giannalberto Bendazzi both cite William Moritz as an important film historian and writer. All photos courtesy of William Moritz, unless otherwise noted.

FILM HISTORIAN, PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR DR. William Moritz has spent his lifetime in animation. Although his significant contributions are not easily summarized, as he would say, the external facts are simple enough.

Moritz is a world-renowned expert on animation, experimental film and visual music, and has authored more than 100 articles, chapters and program notes. His upcoming definitive biography of Oskar Fischinger is the culmination of more than 30 years' work with the Fischinger Estate. Moritz has curated dozens of film shows, preserved historical animation and amassed an impressive research collection, as well as lectured at film festivals, conferences and institutions worldwide. He's taught film and animation for almost 30 years, and is teaching at CalArts. He was past president of the Society for Animation Studies, and was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to visual music by the Royal Academy of the Netherlands in 1993.

"Bill Moritz is one of our greatest film historians and writers. His dedication to preserving the work and documenting the lives of film artists — such as Oskar Fischinger, James Whitney, Berthold Bartosch, Hans Fischerkoesen, among others — is an inspiration to his colleagues.... His clear, compassionate, factually-accurate writing has an added twinkle of sly humor that always make his essays a delight to read." (John Canemaker, 2003).

PRELUDE

Bill Moritz was born in 1941, and raised in desert towns of California and Arizona. His father Edward was well-read, fluent in several languages, loved opera, and

PART OF HIS TRAVELING PRESENTATION, "TOWARDS A VISUAL MUSIC," WAS PUBLISHED IN CANTRILLS FILMNOTES IN 1985, AND THIS THOROUGH HISTORY OF VISUAL MUSIC REMAINS UNSURPASSED.

had been a pianist in Germany. Edward had traveled throughout Europe, emigrating from Germany to Canada in 1929, then to the U.S. several years later. Bill listened to radio broadcasts of opera as a child, while studying his father's librettos in several languages. Bill and his father took the train to Los Angeles or Phoenix to see operas (Edward worked for the Santa Fe Railroad, so they could take the train for free). Bill also went to the movies often with his older brother. He remembers,

I saw a lot of animation in movie theatres, while growing up (there was no television then), like [Mickey Mouse](#), Donald Duck, Porky Pig, Woody Woodpecker cartoons, character animation made by studios. This was a vital part of everyday life. The big transformation for me was seeing interesting animation — the UPA cartoons in particular were really a completely different change. I saw things that were actually art, and not just cartoons.

In 1958, as a student at USC's School of Cinema, Bill recalls, "I saw my first Fischinger film, and it popped all my buttons!"

Moritz earned his Ph.D. at USC in Comparative Literature, with a minor in Cinema. He began teaching at Occidental College in 1965, and continued teaching film and humanities at institutions including Otis Art Institute, Pitzer College, American University Center (Calcutta, India), UCLA, [Art Center College of Design](#), and [CalArts](#). He also worked at the Creative Film Society distributing animation, and at radio station KPFK as a film and music critic. He promoted experimental film and animation through venues like Los Angeles Filmmaker's Cooperative, Theatre Vanguard and Los Angeles Film Oasis; and was a member of the Visual Music Alliance in the '80s. In his spare time, he toured giving poetry readings. Two of his plays were produced, and his numerous poems were published.

His own 34 films screened in one person shows at the Museums of Modern Art in Paris, Amsterdam, Stockholm and Tokyo, and also at Pacific Film Archive, Anthology Film Archives, LA Institute of Contemporary Art,



In the 1970s, Moritz developed his theory on visual music.

Academy of Fine Arts (The Hague), and [San Francisco Art Institute](#). His most recent film, *All My Lost Lovers*, was made with an AFI Independent Filmmakers Grant.

ACT I

Moritz began writing about animation in 1969. Also, in 1969, he began working with Oskar's widow Elfriede to identify, organize, and make safety negatives from Oskar's materials. Their decades of work are detailed in his soon to be published Fischinger biography. Moritz's first major critical biographical work on Fischinger was published in *Film Culture* in 1974. This decade also began his prolific writing on visual music.

Part of his traveling presentation, "Towards a Visual Music," was published in Cantrills Filmnotes in 1985, and this thorough history of visual music remains unsurpassed. The development of the tradition of "color organs" is traced in this presentation, culminating in its influence on contemporary abstract animation. Simplified, Moritz's visual music theories (expressed in numerous essays) encompass "the desire to create a moving abstract image as fluid and harmonic as auditory music," while incorporating Pythagoras and Aristotle's ideas of the correspondence between the musical tone scale and the rainbow spectrum scale, also defined as "music of the spheres."

A few of Moritz' published articles include: "Visual Music and Film-as-an-Art in California Before 1950," "United Productions of America, Reminiscing 30 Years Later," "The Surrealistic World of Max Fleischer," "Some Observations on Non-Objective and Non-Linear Animation," "Resistance and Subversion in Animated Films of the Nazi Era: The Case of Hans Fischerko-



Bill and Oskar's widow Elfriede share a light moment. Courtesy of The Fischinger Archive.

esen," "Jules Engel, Post-Modernist" and "Abstract Film and Color Music." For the Absolut Panushka website in the 1990s he authored 200 pages of "The History of Experimental Animation." He's published other pieces on Fischinger, Fleischer, Jordan Belson, the Whitneys, Bruce Conner, Harry Smith, Hy Hirsh, Mary Ellen Bute, Pat O'Neill, Stan Vanderbeek and other artists. His bibliography of published work is eight pages long.

ACT II

Moritz has done preservation work on many animated films, beginning with Fischinger, and continuing with films by Walther Ruttmann, Viking Eggeling, Hy Hirsh, Harry Smith and Sky David, among others. Recently he consulted with the Academy Film Archive on its restoration of the Fischinger films from the original nitrates. He curated many of these new prints for the *KINETICA 2* Fischinger Centennial traveling exhibition organized by The IotaCenter.

He's curated many other film shows starting from the 1970s, and most recently Iota's *KINETICA 4* program, the latest of its traveling film exhibitions (see www.kinetica.org/K4). Some of his notable programs include his 3D show, and a variety of visual music shows presented worldwide.

Throughout his career, Moritz amassed an impressive research collection including hundreds of books, journals, program notes, articles, photographs, films and videotapes. Since 1998, the collection has been housed by The IotaCenter in Los Angeles, a non-profit organization devoted to the preservation, research and promotion of abstract and experimental animation and

visual music (www.iotacenter.org).

In 1987, Moritz began teaching at CalArts where his courses today include "History of Experimental Animation," "History of Animation" and "History of Experimental Film." At USC, he's an adjunct professor, co-teaching "The History of Animation" with professor Christine Panushka.

For this article, Bill compiled his Top 10 'Desert Island' Animated Films. In his inimitable style, he cannot be constrained to just 10.

1. Oskar Fischinger – *Study No. 6* and *Motion Painting No. 1*
2. Jordan Belson – *Chakra* and *Light*
3. James Whitney – *Yantra* and *Lapis*
4. Anthony Gross – *Joie de Vivre* and *Foxhunt*
5. [Hans Fischerkoesen](#) – *Weatherbeaten Melody* and *The Snowman*
6. Paul Grimault – *Little Soldier* and *King and Mr. Bird*
7. [Barry Purves](#) – *Screenplay*
8. Leif Marcussen – *Public Opinion* and *Tonespor*
9. [Frédéric Back](#) – *Crac!*
10. Yuri Norstein – *Tale of Tales*
11. [Priit Pärn](#) – *Picnic*
12. [Jules Engel](#) – *Gerald McBoing-Boing*, *Wet Paint*, *Coaraze*, *Villa Rospigliosi*

"And I have decided to move to that desert island and just watch these films forever!" he exclaims. Other films he'd take, which didn't make the "official" list, include Bartosch's *L'Idée*; [Night on Bald Mountain](#) (Alexandre Alexeieff and Claire Parker), Lotte Reiniger's [The](#)

[Adventures of Prince Achmed](#), [Looking for Mother](#) (Te Wei and Qian Jajun), Robert Darroll's films and several [Betty Boop](#) cartoons. And if there's room, the complete works of several of the above, including Fischinger — on film or DVD please.

ACT III

Beyond his many accomplishments, the internal facts of his life are another matter. His spiritual interests include Buddhism, and James Whitney's and Jordan Belson's beliefs have influenced him. He's well-read, fluent in French, German, Spanish, Greek, Latin, Czech and Italian, with some Russian. He's an avid viewer of The History Channel, and still attends opera. And he continues working with the Fischinger legacy today.

First, I want to stress that Bill is a wonderful human being: honest, generous, true to his friends. Second, he's an extremely intelligent, cultivated and open-minded film critic and historian. Third, he gave a lot to culture without asking anything, just for free, just because it was worth it. Bill taught me all I know about some great filmmakers. Not only Oskar Fischinger (which is obvious) but also James Whitney (an underestimated genius), John Whitney, Hy Hirsh, Pat O'Neill. And he also taught me a lot about UPA.

— Giannalberto Bendazzi, 2003

He now lives in Hollywood with his cats, and remains the glamorous Bill Moritz.

For more about the films above, Dr. Moritz's work and Fischinger, please visit www.iotacenter.org, and www.oskarfischinger.org. Be sure to check out the many articles [Bill Moritz](#) has written for *Animation World Magazine* over the past years. ■

CINDY KEEFER is director of the *iotaCenter*, and has worked with Moritz and his collection since 1997. At *iota*, her recent projects include the preservation and exhibition of films by John and James Whitney, Jordan Belson, Hy Hirsh, Jules Engel and Pat O'Neill. She is a member of ASIFA and AMIA.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an e-mail to 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. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

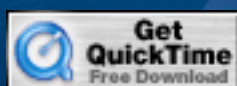
FRESH FROM THE FESTIVALS: JUNE 2003'S FILM REVIEWS

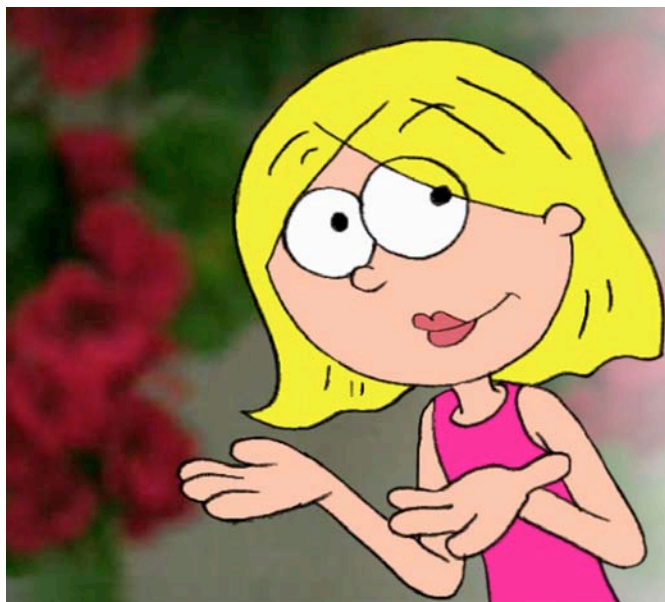
Jon Hofferma reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: [Aunt Luisa](#) by Tim Miller and Paul Taylor, [Ca-poeira](#) by Lewis Campbell, [From Darkness](#) directed by Nora Twomey, [Harvey Krumpet](#) by Adam Elliot and [Little Red Plane](#) directed by Joey Jones and Wira Winata.

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND SIX — ANIMATION IN A DIFFERENT KEY

In this final installment of articles exploring animation as commercial entertainment and as an art form, Jean Detheux heralds a group of animators who listened to their own music and delivered it up on the animated screen.

View the QuickTime clips online!





INDEPENDENT WOMAN

From *Matisse* to *McGuire*: An Interview with Debra Solomon

by Chris J. Robinson

HER FILMS, *MRS. MATISSE* AND *EVERYBODY'S PREGNANT*, RESPECTIVELY, TURNED THE TOPICS OF ADULTERY AND INFERTILITY INTO LIGHT-HEARTED COMEDY, AND WERE ACCEPTED AND ACCLAIMED BY FILM FESTIVALS AROUND THE WORLD.

Debra Solomon made the transition from independent filmmaker to mainstream success with *Lizzie McGuire*. All *Lizzie McGuire* images courtesy of Disney, except where noted.



SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA PAY THE BILLS. WELL, ACTUALLY, you've ALWAYS gotta pay the bills. Most of the time that necessitates leaving behind your unprofitable passions to slug away at a mindless job for the benefit of everyone but you and me. But if you're lucky, you sometimes manage to find a way to do what you want and make money doing it. Take New York animator and illustrator, Debra Solomon. After working as a successful illustrator, she gave it up to make her own, personal animation films. She was a hit from the start. Her films, *Mrs. Matisse* and *Everybody's Pregnant*, respectively, turned the topics of adultery and infertility into light-hearted comedy, and were accepted and acclaimed by film festivals around the world.

This was all fine and dandy, but as most independent animators know, fame is rarely stalked by fortune. In fact, most of the time fame leaves you broke. To resuscitate the family bank account, Solomon turned her attention to television animation. After making a pilot (*Nikki*) and *The Private Eye Princess* special, both for Cartoon Network, she landed a job with a new live-action Disney Channel show called *Lizzie McGuire*. The show follows the life of a teenage girl, Lizzie McGuire, who is confronted with an assortment of real life issues (e.g., self-respect, buying your first bra, loyalty etc.) facing pre-adults.



Solomon used a lot of character elements she developed for the title character of *Nikki* (left) to make *Lizzie McGuire*. A fun moment from *The Private Eye Princess* (below), a Cartoon Network special by Debra Solomon. All images from *Nikki* and *The Private Eye Princess* courtesy of Cartoon Network.



Before you know it, *Lizzie McGuire* is the hottest thing in teen culture, and millions are seeing the short animated Lizzie monologues that Solomon has created for each episode. To top things off, the show was recently turned into the very successful *Lizzie McGuire Movie*.

But as my old pal, Robert Pollard said, "As we go up, we go down." Just as *Lizzie McGuire* hit the top of the pops, the TV show was cancelled and talks of a second *Lizzie* movie, along with a possible ABC pick-up, were put on hold when a May 23, 2003 *Los Angeles Times* article announced that actress Hilary Duff (who plays Lizzie) and Disney had divorced.

Chris Robinson recently spoke with Debra Solomon about her experience working on *Lizzie McGuire*, what it meant for an independent animator, and where she goes from here.

Chris Robinson: *How did you land, what is, for an indie animator, a pretty sweet gig?*

Debra Solomon: I had worked on a pilot called *Nikki* for Cartoon Network. It didn't end up going forward, but in that business equation I picked up a manager (Tracy Kramer). Tracy was a big fan of my work and he sent my reel to Adam Bonnett at the Disney Channel. Adam actually came to my house in New York and I showed him my films. We sat and talked, and a few months later, he started working with Stan Rogow (*Lizzie* producer). They both loved *Nikki* and we starting work on *Lizzie McGuire*. *Nikki* was about an 11- or 12-year-old girl coming into her own and experiencing all the stuff Lizzie did. It was

sort of my version of Lizzie. They really liked the emotionality of what I did with *Nikki*....

CR: *...And you ended up fusing Nikki and Lizzie together in a sense.*

DS: Right. Stan came to me. He said that they were looking for a talking head in the corner of the screen. I didn't want to do that. I didn't think that that was what animation was about. It was so much more inventive. And he just said, "Ok, give me full-bore Debby." And he let me do whatever I wanted.

CR: *How different was your Nikki from the animated Lizzie?*

DS: First of all they gave me Hilary Duff's audition tape. Hilary Duff was incredibly beautiful, a little lightbulb. I hadn't imagined Nikki to be quite so wonderful looking. She was about to bloom whereas Hilary was quite magnificent at 12. Hilary was also quite hip. She had a sense of style. Nikki had cargo pants and had a big nose. And people even wondered if it was a girl or a boy. With Hilary there was no doubting. She wore very cropped shirts with trim pants and high flip-flops. She was more a teen girl sensation. As I started working on it I realized that Hilary was the girl that little girls would like to identify with. They said to me that they didn't want a caricature of Hilary but something that captured her essence. I literally took an outfit — she had about six outfit changes during the audition — and used a muscle tee, little jeans

and these high flip-flops. I designed the character to be the essence of whom I thought this little girl was.

CR: *Now when do you become involved with each episode? Do they shoot an entire episode and then ask you come in and do a segment wherever it fits best?*

DS: What happened in the initial pilot [which Solomon directed] was that they essentially turned me loose. I gave Stan hundreds of sketches. We agreed on one and then it just went forward and he let me do whatever I wanted, no matter how nutty. In the pilot, we had her head explode and buried her in mother's words. I tried to make it like I was turning Hillary inside out.

CR: *Were you writing the dialogue for these segments?*

DS: Initially the writers not only wrote the lines for the animation character, but they also wrote what she should be doing. And in the way that people have a tendency to do when they're writing for animation but not familiar with it they would have her saying and doing the same thing so it aged it down quite a bit. In the most cooperative, friendly way, I would write in my notes column that this isn't a great idea to have her saying and doing the same thing; it's going to seem like *Sesame Street*. After a few shows they pretty much stopped writing what they wanted to have the animated character do because they realized that they were getting more of the element of surprise when they left it up to the animation people.

CR: *Was there a set number of segments you do per episode?*

DS: Because they had such a tiny budget for animation we had two-minutes of animation per show. In the movie, we followed the same sort of breakdown [six-minutes].

CR: *How much time did you spend creating each two-minute segment?*

DS: The troubling thing for Tapehouse [the animation producers of *Lizzie*] is that the two minutes really took the same length of time as most shows do because it was spread out over time in the production of the live-



Hilary Duff's hip and stylish personality made a big impression on how Solomon approached the animated Lizzie character. Here she practices singing in the feature film. © Buena Vista Pictures Distribution. All rights reserved. Photo Credit: Rob McEwan.

action show. They had to keep the same number of crew people even though they were making less per episode. It really wasn't that much of a savings in time. But, generally, I would get the script in and we would have up to a week. I had three days to work on ideas for the script and then it would go to the board artist [Richard Codor].

CR: *How did you come to work with Tapehouse?*

DS: Yes, originally Stan Rogow came to me to produce the animation but when they first wanted to do the show, they were talking about rotoscoping and all sorts of expensive things, and I figured it would be best to bring the production to Tapehouse.

CR: *How many animation people were you working with?*

DS: There were about 18 people.

CR: *How did you find working at this faster pace? How did it compare to doing your own films?*

DS: I went into animation to work with other people. Little did I know that when I worked on my own films I would rarely leave my house for weeks on end. I had worked as an illustrator and cartoonist for about 12 years before animation. I had major cabin fever so this was the fruition of what I had wanted, which was to work with really talented artists. The pace seemed fine

I SPED READ THE OPENING PART AND I CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF HAVING AN ANIMATED LIZZIE INTRODUCING THE CREDITS.

because there were always other people to consult about all of the stuff that you rip your hair out over alone when you're making your own film. It's really wonderful with other people and I really found that working with the people at Tapehouse was everything I wanted.

CR: *And you're also creating some jobs along the way...*



Money earned on projects like *The Private Eye Princess* allow Solomon to work on personal short work.

DS: Oh yeah, and as the show progressed it I think everyone really loved working together on it. Tony Kluck was the timing director and worked on layouts. Richard Codor was the storyboard artist. Luciano DiGeronimo did the compositing and special effects, and Dave Lipson was the executive producer. Kevin Mercado was the producer.

CR: *Do you want to thank your parents too (laughing)?*

DS: No, no (laughing). It would just be really bad if I left somebody out of that core group of people.

CR: *Did the process change for the Lizzie McGuire movie?*

DS: We had six-minutes for the feature (including the titles). It was basically the same process but it was

harder. When you're working on the series, it gets to be like a well-oiled machine. They know what you need. The live-action directors know the shots you need. So it was harder, because all of a sudden the crew was in Italy shooting and there was not a final script yet and they shot all these backplates. Then, many lines changed enormously, so we had to make it work. But that has always been my sort of m.o. no matter what I've been doing during my career: make it work. You get a story to illustrate that isn't funny then you have to find a way to make it funny. That's also the haiku of my animation: making stuff work and getting at the essence of a line or a feeling.

CR: *Tell me a bit about the animated credit sequence.*

DS: That came about early during one of the very first conference calls. There were about a dozen people including the producer, director and some Disney executives. They didn't know how to start the movie. I had just gotten the script a few hours before. I sped read the opening part and I came up with the idea of having an animated Lizzie introducing the credits. It worked out well because it interwove the animation into the movie right from the start.

CR: *Was it a challenge to work with the live-action background?*

DS: Initially it was. But after getting the pictures of the set, I just traced off the ground line and, for me, from that point on, it was just a matter of a ground line, where the character sat in the background and what her size relationship was supposed to be. It was pretty easy.

CR: *It's almost taking you back to illustration...*

DS: In a way that's very true.

CR: *What's up for you next, especially now that Hillary and Disney have apparently broken up?*

DS: We had hoped that the series might go to ABC, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen. I was asked to do a thing for Nick Jr., which didn't work out, but that did get me back into work mode. I've got a little indepen-

dent thing that I've started working on and I've got a few people interested in me in working on projects — none of which are solid enough to start talking about.

CR: *It seems to me that the real positive thing from an independent perspective, aside from the money, is that you've been able to keep your own style in Lizzie and in doing so, find a much larger audience. That's a nice ad for your work. In theory, that must help enormously.*

DS: That was incredibly exciting for me that the character looks like my work. The other thing that was that very exciting was that it kept the essence of my work. My films are about feelings; anger at a cheating husband (*Mrs. Matisse*), sadness and frustration and loss (*Everybody's Pregnant*), and embarrassment, confusion and the mixed bag of emotions that engulf a teen every moment of the day are there in *Lizzie McGuire*.



The recent parting between Duff and Disney means the end of *Lizzie McGuire*. Courtesy of Disney.

CR: *After working with all these people don't you just want to go back into hibernation?*

DS: Actually, I do. I remember those long holiday weekends when I didn't have to do anything but listen to NPR and draw. There's always that part that wants to go backwards. After working on *Private Eye Princess* [Cartoon

Network], I used some of the money to buy a computer and an ink-and-paint system so that I could completely do short films in my studio from start to finish and just output to film or video. I bought Animo because it's a very user-friendly system and my intention is to eventually learn that and be able to continue to do shorts.

CR: *You don't really think that doing shorts is a step backwards do you?*

DS: No, I don't but I guess the thing is that after doing my own shorts I'd depleted my savings. I spent about \$80,000 on my films. I'm happy that I did that, but part of my desire to get a series was to help my husband do what he did for me, which was to be the artist. I wanted to really shore up the family's finances and it's hard to do that when you're making indie films. I realize that there are people out there making money from their independent films, but part of my problem is that I'm incredibly unorganized in creating that well-oiled machine that creates the films and gets them out there. I just saw them as my art and I once I made them, I wanted them to get into festivals but...

CR: *...well even that step is a full-time job. Filling out forms, making prints and videos and all that mundane stuff is a whole new job and one that can't be particularly inspiring after you've just made a film...*

DS: Right... and I had a distributor (Italtoons) and they were really wonderful. When I did *Mrs. Matisse* it was like going to heaven. Working as an illustrator, I never felt that I was going where I wanted to go. It wasn't really ever your work. I worked on *Mrs. Matisse* for two years, and when it got into the New York Film Festival I thought I'd died and went to heaven. I finally felt like I had some talent. I'd earned a living as an illustrator but I just felt that it wasn't enough. I wanted to sing and go on stage and animation allowed me to do that.

This is an expensive world to live in. Emily Hubley and Bill Plympton are the essence of the independent spirit, but I guess everyone follows their own river and you follow it where it takes you. Right now I got steered into *Lizzie* and it was a rewarding experience. It helped me meet a lot of great people at Disney like Adam Bonnett who became this really big supporter of my work. It was a wonderful experience and I'm sad that it may be over.

CR: *But you've opened all these corporate doors now.*

DS: Right... and I'm happy about that.

CR: *Would you like to do your own series or an independent film next?*

DS: I would like to do both because they're very different rewards involved with both of them. One is the joy of collaboration and, secondly, the independent film is the deepening and strengthening of your voice. Unfortunately, or fortunately for me, I'm going to be straddling both those worlds for the rest of my career.

CR: *That's the reality for any independent animator today.*

DS: Right because you really have to nurture your own voice with your own work and it's very hard to leap back and forth between the two.

CR: *But you can "Make it work."*

DS: And that's what I'm going to try and do. ■

CHRIS J. ROBINSON is the artistic director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival and the Ottawa International Student Animation Festival. He is also the editor of the semi-annual ASIFA Magazine. Robinson has curated film programs and served on festival juries throughout the world. He writes a monthly column (*The Animation Pimp*) for Animation World Network and has written for Salon.com, Cinemascope, Take One, 12gauge, City Pages and others. Robinson contributed a chapter on English-Canadian animation to the book, *North of Everything: English-Canadian Cinema Since 1980*. His book *Between Genius and Utter Illiteracy: A Story of Estonian Animation* was published in May. He is currently at work on a strange book about childhood, alcoholism and an ex-hockey player tentatively called *The Boy Who Never Grew Up*.



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Dave's heart and soul were wrapped up in the dream of producing *SoSophie*. © 2003 channelzero entertainment, LLC. All rights reserved.



Being an Independent Creator and Other Fupduck Ideas – Part I

by Dave Warren



Dave Warren (left) of channelzero put his career and house on the line to finance the making of *SoSophie*. Dave got his foot in the door with Ralph Bakshi's *Spicy City* and found his calling. Dave Warren photo credit: Frank Longford, Studio2 Productions, Santa Ana, California. *Spicy City* image © 1997 Home Box Office.

WAS "STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON" BLASTED FROM the speakers of the Mitsubishi as I rounded the on-ramp onto the 710 Freeway, making my final drive home from the city of the same name. Today I was happily leaving behind my job as art director for a garment company in this roach-infested, locked behind security bars sweat shop in the gang capital of the world for a new job, a new career, in animation. After two years of studying nights and putting together a portfolio, I was hired as a character designer at the now defunct HBO Animation studio in Century City working on Ralph Bakshi's *Spicy City*.

The studio was an amazing little family of artists in this boutique environment where creative input was encouraged and nurtured. HBO was new to animation and was looking at a lot of ideas. Everyone from the production assistants to the producers had an idea for a show that he or she was working on. It was impossible not to get caught up in this swell of creativity. I was hooked. I wanted to sell a show too. Being brand new to the business, I was naïve and thought this was the norm for the animation business, so I went home every night (usually after an ex-

I'M THIS KID FROM A POOR LITTLE PODUNK TOWN IN CONNECTICUT, AND HERE I AM, WORKING AT WARNER BROS. ON A STEVEN SPIELBERG CARTOON.

tended happy hour with my fellow artists) doing the Snoopy dance because I was so in love with my job and the dream of seeing my own vision on the air.

About the time production was wrapping up, reality stepped in. It was my birthday and I had just returned from lunch with a big group from the studio. I got called upstairs to the producer's office. My present from the producer was to lay me off. My work there was done and my style didn't fit the only other in-house production, *Spawn*. Just like that it was over.

Luckily one of the artists at HBO had a good relationship with a producer at Warner Bros. who just so happened to be looking for a character designer for the series *Pinky and The Brain*. As quickly as one experience ended another began. I remember telling [Eric Radomski](#), supervising director at HBO the news. He said, "You're in the animation business now." I didn't know what he meant at the time. I do now.

Warner Bros. was a completely different environment than HBO. It was a big machine. This giant gray



Eric Radomski (left) warned Dave early on that changing jobs constantly is a way of life in animation. Rob Davies (right) joined Dave in creating *Camp Whatever* for The WB network. Eric Radomski photo courtesy of Film Roman. Rob Davies photo © Atomic Cartoons.

sea of cubicles full of artists, assistants, writers and all the other people it takes to put a show on television. Often times, it was a lot of work and there were real deadlines to be met. Although the plush environment of HBO and its generous production schedule was gone, I was still having a great time. I'm this kid from a poor little Podunk town in Connecticut, and here I am, working at Warner Bros. on a Steven Spielberg cartoon.

This was like a dream. I grew up watching [Bugs Bunny](#) and learned to draw by tracing him from my

coloring books. I was honored to be part of that legacy and still am. These were fun times. I was working on an incredible show, surrounded by amazing talent and made a lot of great friends. What happened though was I got caught up in my life at Warner Bros. and without realizing it, stopped thinking about creating and selling my own ideas. Opportunity and a reminder of my dream arose when, after many an episode, *Pinky and the Brain* finally came to an end and Warner Bros. started laying off the staff.

So much of this business is built on relationships and this was the case when I was called into the associate producer's one day expecting to be given a lay off notice (just like HBO years before, only today wasn't my birthday) when to my surprise she asked me if I would be interested in helping develop an idea for an animated series created by Jamie Kellner, who was then head of The WB. She did this as a friend who believed in me, in my passion for what I did and as a last ditch effort to help me avoid having to go out and find another job. What she ended up giving me was a glimpse at a future, one I would become determined to make my own.

Of course I said yes and jumped on the elevator upstairs to the executive offices to meet the person in charge and find out what I was supposed to do. As it turned out, all they had was an idea and a script. It didn't even have a name. They wanted me to develop the look of the show, the characters and put together a presentation or pitch to be presented to Jamie Kellner and the other Warner execs. Realizing the amount of work to be done and the time given, I asked for assistance and was allowed to assemble a small crew to help me complete my goal. I quickly put together a team of friends and artists from *Pinky and The Brain* facing a similar fate to mine.

Animation is a team sport, requiring the talent of many people in order to be successful. I wanted to make this show happen and impress Warner Bros. In order to do so, I needed an extremely talented team, who could not only help me come up with something brilliant, but also get the work done. Most importantly, I needed a team to buy into this idea of creating this show from scratch, and actually believe that it's possible that we could be successful and end up with our creation on the air. I was fortunate to have my good friends [Rob Davies](#), Diane Kredensor, Ralph Sosa, Sandra Frame and a few others join me on this quest. Without the talent, teamwork and support of these

WHEN *DILBERT* WRAPPED UP AFTER ONE SEASON, I FELT BURNT OUT AND WAS DREADING THE PROSPECT OF LOOKING FOR YET ANOTHER JOB.

people, none of this would have been possible. There is no way I could have done it alone. That was true then and still holds true today.

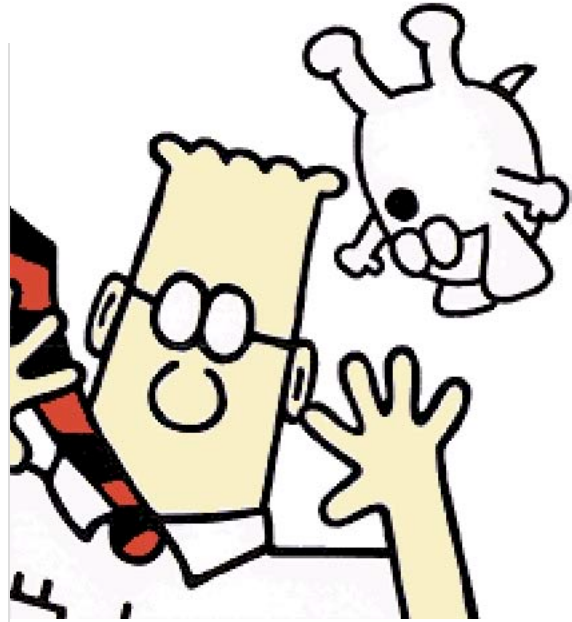
So here we were, this group of unknown artists like the little train going "I think I can, I think I can" creating this show which ended up eventually being called *Camp Whatever*. All the while, developing the concept with little or no direction, knowing we are going up against other shows in development vying for the same timeslot. These other shows were from well-established writers, producers or celebrities. We were up against concepts like *Duck Dodgers* and *Jackie Chan*. I found the added pressure and the challenge of being the underdogs going up against the big guys to be a rush like I never felt before. It was at this moment in my career when the light went on.

I always enjoyed working in animation and felt it a privileged job, but this was different. I felt at home in this environment of creativity and commerce. I thrived on both developing concepts and pitching them to the executives. I always loved coming up with show ideas, but I found out I equally enjoyed the process of selling them. I began to see my strengths and develop confidence in myself. My ideas seemed to be as valid and as good, if not better than the next person's, even if they were better known and more established than myself. I was doing a pretty good job at organizing and motivating a team of my peers, and was becoming more and more comfortable sitting in a pitch selling my ideas to the powers that be.

The enthusiasm for what we were doing became infectious and soon we were asked to develop other show ideas for some of the writers at Warner Bros., eventually even being allowed to develop and present our own concepts. It was at this time that my show *SoSophie* was born. I had this idea for a female version of *Speed Racer* and decided now was the time to execute that idea.

Well the little train called *Camp Whatever* never did reach its final destination of getting on the air, nor did any of our other concepts, including *SoSophie*, but it was a fun ride. We rose from obscurity and made it to the final four shows in contention for a Saturday morning slot on The WB. This was from a field of dozens before finally losing out to a take-off of Disney's *Recess* called *Detention*. Even though we didn't get picked up, we accomplished quite a lot and the seeds were sewn for what would become my future.

We were all laid off. Rob Davies went to Canada to



After the failure of *Camp Whatever*, David did work-for-hire on *Dilbert*. © United Feature Syndicate.

start *Atomic Cartoons*, obviously bitten by the same bug as me. Diane Kredensor went to Nickelodeon, developed a children's book. Ralph Sosa and I went over to Sony to work on *Dilbert*. This was a humbling time for me, going from this amazing experience at Warner's back into a dirty ol' dusty cubicle again. I never recovered. I spent my days at *Dilbert* doing my job, just getting the work done, and my free time on continually developing *SoSophie* with Ralph. My heart was no longer in it, and I longed for the days of development at Warner's. Unfortunately those types of jobs just aren't that easy to come by.

When *Dilbert* wrapped up after one season, I felt burnt out and was dreading the prospect of looking for yet another job. At this time in the business quite a few artists were out of work and employment was hard to come by, let alone finding a good show to work on. With limited prospects and little desire, I realized I was at a crossroads. I had to either go for it and get out there and sell my own ideas, or try to increase my skill set to make me more employable. I was a character designer and those jobs became far and few to come by. Storyboard artists were always in demand. Maybe I could learn to board and rise through the ranks that way. Storyboard, then direct. Maybe I would just get out of the business all together.

I decided I wasn't getting any younger, and if I was going to go out there and chase this dream of having my

own show on television, then I had better set about doing so soon. My wife, who is either the most incredible human being I have ever known, or a complete, raving mad woman agreed with me and offered her emotional and financial support. I saved what I could, cashed in what little I had invested in stocks, refinanced my house and, shortly after being let go by Sony, started channel-zero out of my house along with my good friend of all these years and fellow artist, Ralph Sosa. I've been losing money ever since and have never been happier.

At the time, the Internet was just starting to happen and this program called "Flash" was all the buzz. It was a perfect environment for what I wanted to accomplish and this new software provided an economical way of achieving it. The challenge was that *SoSophie* was developed as a Saturday morning cartoon and the Internet was looking for more adult, harder edged content. This meant redeveloping the show to better suit the market. This also meant time and money, the latter of which was in short supply. Realizing we could go broke very soon, I had to quickly find ways of bringing money into the business and, at the same time, continue to develop *SoSophie*. We accomplished this by taking on projects for other people who were looking to do the same thing we were or just needed animation.

We did a brilliant short for Angus Oblong called *Baby Farm*, which never saw the light of day, spots for an office supply company, you name it. If it was animation work and there was money involved, we would do it. I funneled whatever money we could earn back into the business, using it to buy equipment or pay artists. Unfortunately, by the time we redeveloped *SoSophie*, animated a short, built and put it up on a Website, the dot-com revolution had come and gone bust. No one was paying for animation on the Web anymore. The days of insane amounts of money being thrown at mediocre ideas from the wired world were over. So now what do we do? Back to Plan A, back to television.

After another successful semester at the school of hard knocks, I had to figure out what to do with this show that so many had worked so hard on. I decided to develop a new pitch pack to go along with the redeveloped look and demographic of the show and go back and pitch it to the networks. This time as a primetime series.

While we were in the midst of getting the model pack and a pilot script together, I heard about a market coming up called [NATPE](#). I knew little about NATPE except that NATPE is a really stupid sounding acronym, and that television shows were sold there. This sounded like someplace I should be since I just so happened to possess a show for sale. I gathered up some fancy clothes, fueled up the Ford, grabbed the laptop, an as-

sortment of pitching paraphernalia, a bottle of water and headed off to the funny sounding TV market taking place out in Las Vegas.

After paying the monetary equivalent of a couple of month's lease on a nice SUV, I entered the convention still working out my plan in my head. Once inside, I discovered that there was an annual event called "Pitch-Me," where ordinary Joes like me could pitch their ideas to some TV execs and possibly win some sort of prize. It sounded like a good opportunity so I went for it. Beforehand there was a seminar on pitching followed by an audition-type pitch with the finals being held that evening. There were close to 500 people in that room, all with show ideas and suddenly I felt a little unsure of myself. Fortunately, for my confidence, that one-hour seminar featured some of the worst show ideas I had ever heard, so I walked upstairs to the audition feeling pretty good about myself and what I had to offer.

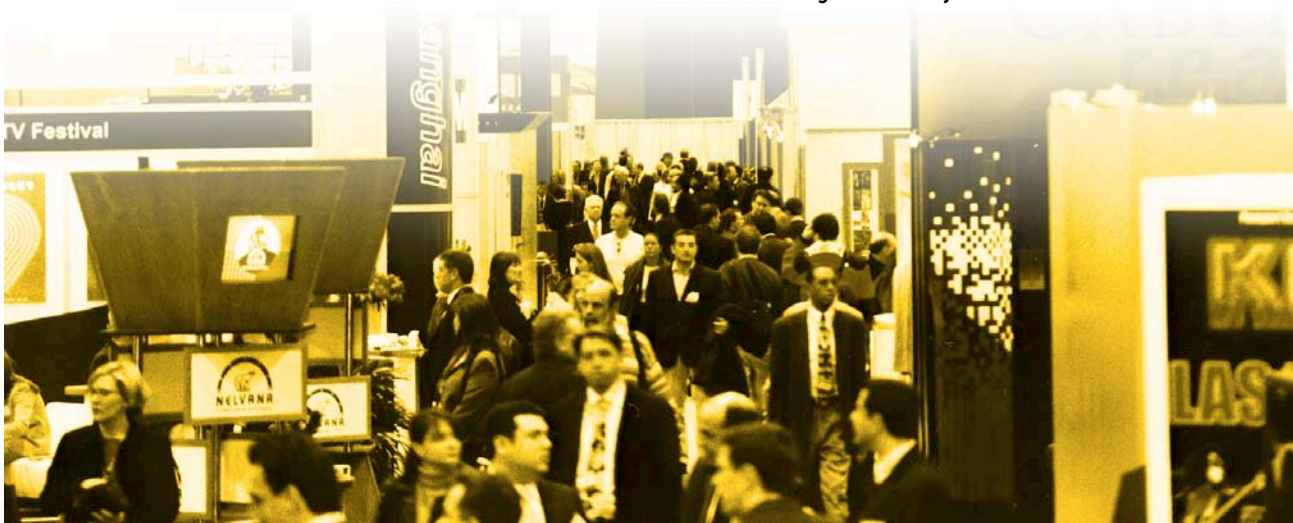
About half the people from the seminar showed up for the pre-screen audition, each one being handed a numbered ticket and ushered into a few big empty rooms sorely lacking enough chairs for all those waiting to come in. We were told our numbers would be called at random, and would be given 60-seconds to pitch our idea to the execs waiting like Oz behind the closed doors of the next room. Talk about a memorable experience. I spent an hour and a half waiting to be called with this strange, eclectic group of comedians, chefs, magicians and infomercial half-celebrities. Each one huddled in little groups, side by side, rehearsing their pitches over and over again while they waited for their turn at destiny. It was like the *Star Wars* bar of creators from planet NATPE.

Just when the sweat from my palms was beginning to saturate my ankles, my number was called and it was showtime. Oz was in reality three very normal looking studio guys being guarded by an assistant with a large stopwatch. On her command I began my pitch by whipping out my laptop and playing the short. While they watched the toon, I talked up the idea. A minute later they smiled, thanked me. I was escorted out another door and told to be at the show tonight to find out if I'm a finalist.

That evening I showed up with the rest of the cattle waiting for the slaughter only to be informed that you wouldn't know if you were a finalist or not until they called your name from the stage. The suspense continued to build and NATPE found a convenient way to put a couple of 100 asses in seats. There I sat, laptop in one hand, glass of bourbon in the other (this *is* Vegas) waiting for the big event to begin.

The best way to describe the "Pitch-Me" finals is a mix of *Survivor*, *The Weakest Link* and *The Gong Show*.

Dave somehow survived the horror of the "Pitch-Me" session at NATPE in Las Vegas. Courtesy of NATPE



The host was George Gray of the daytime version of *The Weakest Link* and the judges consisted of four entertainment industry execs. A development vp from a cable company, a publicist and two guys from a production company that specializes in self-promotion and games shows. Fifteen finalists were chosen one at a time and given 60 seconds to pitch their idea to the judges. Each judge had this obnoxious buzzer and if they didn't like your pitch, they buzzed you. They would then proceed to shred the idea in front of a huge audience and have a good chuckle about it. It was entertaining in that "you know this is wrong but I can't stop watching it reality TV, train wreck" sort of way, but not if you're the poor unfortunate bastard up on stage. On the other hand, if they liked you and your idea, you were given the full 60-seconds plus an additional minute of stage time for some Q&A with the esteemed panel of judges.

The closest I've come to soiling myself since my bachelor party was when I was called as contestant number 11. I nervously walked onstage, placed my laptop on the podium, asked if we could get a camera on it, began to play the short and pitched over it just like I did in the pre-screen.

The short had a couple of things going for it. First, it was built around a theme song for the show, which I wrote and my good friend Mike Ward, formerly of The Wallflowers set to music. The result was an incredibly catchy tune that stuck in your head. People always responded positively to the song and I knew that. Second, the short featured a scene where a sausage accidentally lands in the cleavage of one of our more voluptuous characters. It never failed in getting a reaction and this time was no different. The minute the sausage hit that girl's breasts the audience let out a howl and the judges looked like they had seen a ghost. The rest of my time

on stage was minor anarchy.

The judges never buzzed me, but immediately began to launch on me about who would ever buy such a thing, questioned my sanity, constructive criticism like that. At one point, I was asked what the show was about and I proceeded to explain how it's a comedy about a beautiful young, strong woman who dominates in a man's sport, yet is never appreciated for her skills, only objectified by her beauty. Before I finished, I was interrupted by the cable exec that blurted out..."Strong woman! You've got a sausage making his home in a girl's booby! Are you out of your mind?" It was all in good fun and was, hands down, the most entertaining portion of the evening. My two minutes of stage time lasted closer to five, everyone had a good laugh and I returned to my seat.

Within seconds of returning to my seat, someone from the press looking to verify information and ask a few questions tapped me on the shoulder. All kinds of strangers were shaking my hand and congratulating me, convinced I was going to win. It was all very exciting and, four contestants later, the moment of truth arrived. I didn't win the Grand Prize. That went to a Las Vegas Magician who had an idea for a show called *Real Magic*, with him as host traveling around the globe in search of "real" magic. It was a pretty good concept and the guy was a polished performer. I could understand the judges' choice. I did, however, finish fourth overall and first among animated properties. As terrifying as the whole experience was, I could have very easily blown the whole thing off and have spent my first day walking the convention floor. But I didn't, and now I was on this incredible emotional high.

To cap the evening, I did what any self-respecting creator would have done and partied the night away in

typical Vegas fashion with my new friends until the very wee hours of the next morning. I draw a lot of inspiration from music and the whole thing reminds me of a line from a Chili Peppers song... "It's better to regret something you did than something you didn't do." The "Pitch-Me" contest was something that I took a chance on. I was scared, I survived and now I had no regrets whatsoever.

The second day arrived too soon, and feeling the effects of too little sleep and too much fun, I made my way to the convention floor. I was approached by strangers with greetings like, "You're the guy with sausage in the boobies! Here's my card, I'm a distributor from the middle of nowhere. Call me." I even did an interview with the press, and they took my picture for their magazine. I returned to my hotel that night to catch my breath. After more than a year of creating *SoSophie* and trying to help the show find its voice, suddenly it happened. In a whirlwind 48-hour period *SoSophie* went from obscurity to a small blip on the radar screen. A major milestone had been achieved. Now I had to capitalize on this moment and take it to the next level.

In the next installment, I'll discuss the year that followed up to the present day. The markets, distributors, buyers, creating *The Fupduck Show*, the Carmen Electra factor and everything else on this wonderful, strange journey I'm on.

One last music-related tidbit before I go. I'm addicted to VH1's series *Driven*. One of my favorites is the Kid Rock one. At the end, his friend is being interviewed and he recalls asking Kid one day "You've got all this success and everything you could ask for. Did you ever dream it would be like this?" Kid Rock's response was "Everyday." I can relate to that. ■

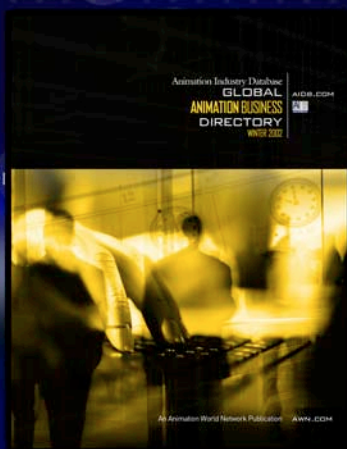
DAVE WARREN is a two-time Emmy award-winning animation artist of the television series Steven Spielberg presents *Pinky and the Brain*. Other animation credits include Steven Spielberg presents *Animaniacs* and the *Animaniacs* feature film *The Wishing Star*, *Ralph Bakshi's Spicy City*, *Scott Adam's Dilbert*, *Jamie Kellner's Camp Whatever* and *Angus Oblong's Baby Farm*. To learn more about Dave and his company, please visit www.channelzero.org.

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SOFIAN SCENE

Bulgarian Animation: A Short Review

by Maria Janeva



Radev's project, *The Junks*, is a television series aimed at the preteen audience. © Zlatin Radev Films



Multi-talented Zlatin Radev manages animation for Boyana Film Studios. He produces and directs his own animated films, plus he's a full-time professor of animation in Sofia, Bulgaria. Courtesy of Zlatin Radev.

IT'S A WINDY FALL MORNING IN SOFIA, THE CAPITAL CITY OF Bulgaria. Tiny raindrops are falling to the ground together with the yellow leaves. We are looking for a café that is open at this early hour. Finally, we find a place by the tramway-lined boulevard — the landmark of Sofia. The morning coffee comes steaming. My interlocutor and I start a conversation about Bulgarian animation.

His name is Zlatin Radev, 42, animation division manager of Boyana Film Studios, Bulgaria's biggest film studio. He is also an acclaimed animated film director and producer whose films, *Canfilm*, 1990, and *Shock*, 1996, were warmly accepted by the international public and generously awarded at numerous festivals around the world. Zlatin Radev is also a full-time animation professor at the National Academy of Theatre and Film Art in Sofia. Currently he is developing his 26x22 stop-motion series, an action-adventure-comedy about the life of... *The Junks*, targeted at children 8-12. Zlatin is preparing to shoot the pilot episode and looking for co-production partners.

Bulgarian animation enjoyed worldwide fame in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s with its strong short artistic films. Bulgarian animated shorts have received numerous prestigious international prizes such as the Palm D'Or



Canfilm, an early work of Radev's, received international acclaim, including an Academy Award® nomination for Best Student Film. © Boyana Films

in Cannes, the Grand Prix at Annecy and Academy Award nominations, among many.

Over the past five years production has shifted from strictly personal shorts to animation for large audiences. The studios have been opened to foreign partners and offered subcontracting services on international projects. At the same time, Bulgarian companies have been trying to develop and produce their own projects for shorts, series and feature films. Bulgarian animation companies have now started seeking international partners for their projects.

THE SCENE

There are several animation studios in Bulgaria. They are located mainly in Sofia. Boyana Films has the largest animation facility. The studio complex offers a full range of services for animation and live-action, as well as audio and video post-production facilities, plus a film lab. The company represents Kodak motion picture materials, ARRI lighting equipment and Panther cinema cranes in the region.

The animation division of Boyana Films has two departments: a 2D and stop-motion department. The 2D department is equipped with the newest Animo 4.1 system (becoming the first Bulgarian client of Cambridge Animation) and has a capacity of about 22-26 minutes per month for TV series layout and animation. With roughly 150 workstations at the studio, the goal is to reach the capacity of two 26-minute shows per month. To that end, there is a permanent training program at the studio with two training courses per year for animators, assistants and in-betweeners.

The courses are for about 50 people in each, lasting four and a half months.

In the past five years, the company has worked for international companies such as Nelvana, Duran, Valentine Production, Millimages, Ravensburger TV, and others, doing animation and layout services for the series *Anatole*, *Tom-Tom et Nana*, *Der Kleine Herr Jacob*, *Pirates VPA* and *Old Tom*. Last summer Boyana finished work on the German short series *Anshi & Karl Heinz* from Stiglmayr Film GmbH for the Bavarian Television in Munich, Germany. Boyana also worked on the animation for the trailer and pilot of the French action-adventure-fantasy 26x26 series *Brann*, produced by Cameo SA, France. The project was presented at Cartoon Forum.

Another big project at Boyana Films is performing all the services from layout to digital ink-and-paint for the expressionist horror movie *Jacob*, the first feature film for Milan-based Italian company, Cracktoons.

The stop-motion department opened with a small, but talented little team, says Zlatin. I can confirm this, having seen their spectacular stop-motion tests. Zlatin is very proud of the stop-motion work because, as he says, stop-motion is his first and probably only true animation love.

The stop-motion department has already done several commercials along with TV IDs and festival trailers, while preparing to work on a 26x10 French stop-motion series. The department uses DPS Animate software and other custom-made software for controlling the animation. It is working on developing a customized motion control system for the new Canon D60 digital still camera. The design and construction of puppets and sets are also done in the stop-motion department where artists create everything from the aluminum and steel puppet armatures, to the molding and casting of latex and silicon. The department has both digital video and 35mm Mitchell cameras.

In addition to subcontracting for foreign productions, Boyana Films offers services for Bulgarian short films. It acts as a producer or co-producer in most Bulgarian film productions, with more than 900 films to its credit. Boyana Films also has programs specifically designed to help students with their first filmmaking attempts.

WITH *PROMETHEUS* (1959), DINOV COMBINED TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN A NEW ANIMATION STRUCTURE AND INTRODUCED SYMBOLISM IN BULGARIAN ANIMATION.

There are also several other independent studios and production companies in addition to Boyana Film. Located in Sofia and in the second largest city, Plovdiv, these companies help round out the animation landscape in Bulgaria.

VISION FILM — Pilion Film, a German/Bulgarian company working mainly for German producers such as ZDF and Ravensburger TV. Its projects include *Always Those Parents*, *Planet*, *Hans Hazze Looks For a Treasure* and *The Small Mr. Jacob*.

NAGUAL — An independent company that provided animation services for *Les Enfants Du Toromiro* from France Animation, *Sniz & Fondue* for Nickelodeon, *Rashi*, a feature film for Disc-in Studio and *African Tales* for Animus Entertainment London.

ANRI KULEV Productions — Producing Bulgarian short films such as *The Straw Man*, *The Tenth Circle*, *Spaghetti*, *Worm*, *Baby In The School*, *Supofonia* and the series *The Rescue Bears* for BBC. It also has produced MTV trailers and student films.

HRANKOV Company — Works on German projects such as *Paradizo*, *Tim Tahler*, *Wuschel*, *Biber* and the pilots for *Lurhi* and *Bussi Bear*.

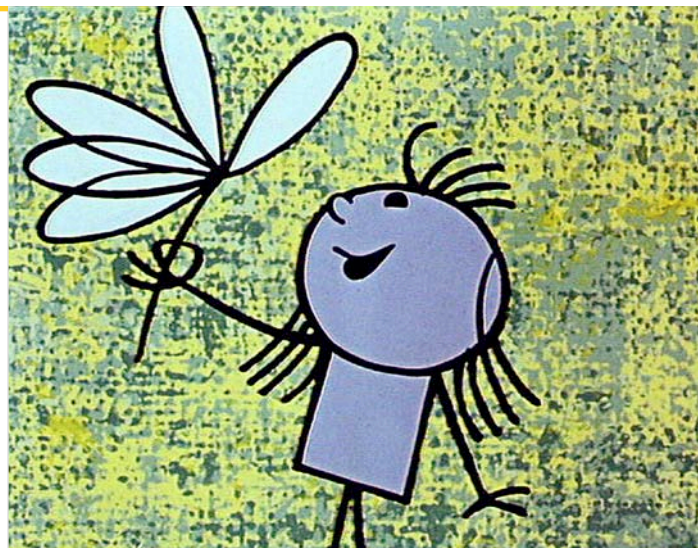
ANIMA FILM — A branch of French/Ukrainian Borisfen-Lutece, worked on projects such as *Zepi & Zinia*, *Pirates* and *Zoo Lane*.

SOKEROV STUDIO — Specializes in 3D CGI animation for commercials and VFX.

ZOGRAPHIC FILM — Specializes in post-production and 3D CGI animation.

ZLATIN RADEV FILM - Does animated and live-action commercials, TV IDs, trailers and SFX miniatures for feature films.

Last year, Boyana, Vision Film and Nagual founded the Bulgarian Animation Association. The purpose of the association is to join producers' efforts to provide high-quality animation services, and to develop and produce Bulgarian series and features.



Daisy, which was meant for adults, somehow won an award for best children's film. © Boyana Films

A FLASHBACK TO THE HISTORY OF BULGARIAN ANIMATION

The first attempts in Bulgarian animation were the Vassil Bakardjiev ads, commissioned by various companies and enterprises in the late 1920s. In 1932 the Ministry of Health ordered a film which contained a piece of animation. At the same time, Dimitar Todorov Jarava took to building a device that would show drawn figures in motion. The goal was to project moving drawings printed on paper tape. After the end of World War II, he bought a camera, lighting equipment, magnifying apparatus, constructed a shooting table and installed the equipment in his house, where he studied, frame by frame, the fine details of Walt Disney's films.

In 1945, a group of painters founded a society for trick film production. Using cutout animation, they made a two-minute film, *Sick*, for the election campaign. It was followed by the short, *The Little Thief*.

In 1948, an Animation Film Production Department was founded in Sofia. (It was 100% financed by the government. This is one, but not the only, reason why the Bulgarian animators never fully developed commercially orientated projects.) Having struggled with poor equipment and difficult self-made materials, the department received an Arriflex camera in 1950. Projects began to roll in.

The first Bulgarian puppet animation, *The Fearful Bomb*, by director Dimo Lingurski, was released in 1951. *Master Manol*, by the same author, and *Event in the Kindergarten* by Ognian Danailov followed. Next came *Orders of the Pike* by Stefan Topaldjikov (1953). The three films utilized the dramatic structure of the

typical feature film, and all aimed for maximum realism in depicting both characters and atmosphere.

Todor Dinov, called, "The Father of Bulgarian Animation," started his career with his first film *Marko the Hero* (1955). High professionalism and impressive animation met with a dramatic storytelling and wonderful action to render a memorable piece of art. (As head of the animation production department, he established the professional standards for producing animation. At that time, he was the only one who had received an animation education).

In the late 1950s, new artists came to the animation studio to work as animators, designers and directors. Animation production increased to seven films in 1957. Dinov focused on cartoons, while Topaldjikov was the leader in the puppet film arena. In 1958, he made *Invisible Mirko*, which became the first Bulgarian animation film to win an international prize — an honorary diploma at the XIII Festival in Edinburgh (1959) and the Grand Prize at the Melbourne Festival in 1963. With *Prometheus* (1959), Dinov combined tradition and innovation in a new animation structure and introduced symbolism in Bulgarian animation.



Dimitri Tomov and Pencho Bogdanov made *Jolly Fellows* in the 1970s. © Boyana Films

A NEW AGE

In the 1960s, Bulgarian animation was marked by changes both in thematic and genre aspects. From comedies and fairy tales, the focus shifted to human history and progress (*Prometheus*). In 1960, Zdenka Dojcheva and Radka Buchvarova started to make children's films (*The Small Waterfall* and *Snowman*) where the leading dramatic principle was given to the music. During the same year, Dinov made *Tale of the Pine Twig* with scriptwriter Valleri Petrov. Petrov's extraordinary talent added to the soft, lyrical animation art. The commonality in the three films produced

in 1960 was the discovery of an essential feature of animation motion — its musicality.

During this period the films of all directors were original experiments and discoveries. This became the blueprint of Bulgarian drawn and puppet animation, establishing the short as the standard format. The trademark of Bulgarian animation was the approach to characters as a quintessence of types, behaviors or ideas, distinctly projecting the author's position. The classical model of Bulgarian animation was impossible without the hints of caricature images. A classical example of the Bulgarian animated film of the 1960s is *Daisy*, by Dinov. Paradoxically, the film won a prize for best children's film, although it was meant for adults.

The 1960s were marked by the appearance of strong creative individuals. Donyo Donev made *Duet* (1961), co-directed with Dinov. Donev made his solo debut *Circus* (1962). His drawing was mild, his characters were extraordinary vital, ever hungry for motion and dynamism. From *Spring* (1966) on, his films were unmistakably recognizable by their highly individual imaging.

With his temperament and visual style of filmmaking, Stoian Dukov veered in a completely different direction. His animation character came from the rationalization of ideas. Stoian Dukov's originality was mostly visible in his children's films where his ornamental coloring became his signature.

In the second half of the 1960s, editing began to be used toward a new layer of semantic structuring. This added a new film element to Bulgarian animated film, exemplified in Ivan Andonov's *Esperanza*.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

The 1970s witnessed a new flow of authors who focused their attention on Bulgarian folklore. Examples are *Jolly Fellows* (Dimitri Tomov, Pencho Bogdanov), *The Three Fools* (the most popular cartoon series among the Bulgarians, it is considered a trademark of the Bulgarian animation), *The Intelligent Village* (Donev) and *The Lying Shepherd* (Stoian Dukov). The early 1970s were also rich in children's film productions such as *The Little Frogman*, *Petio — the Black Pirate* (Zdenka Dojcheva), *The Long Ears*, *A Bouquet of Stars*, *The Star* and *What to Become* (Radka Buchvarova). The inventions of this period, with their strong linearity, geometric forms of character and background, seemed to draw from illustration rather than from caricature. Dominating was the intellectual principle that affected the whole build-up of the miniature-proverb.

The mid-1970s saw the appearance of three new figures on the Bulgarian animation arena: Anri Kulev, Slav Bakalov and Nikolaj Todorov. They studied animation in Moscow, so they introduced a Russian influence



Three Fools (top left) was based on Bulgarian folklore. Donyo Donev's **The Intelligent Village** (top right) represents the Golden Years era of animation in Bulgaria. **Marriage** (bottom left), a collaboration between Slav Bakalov and Rumen Petkov, won the Palm d'Or at Cannes in 1984. **Crushed World** (bottom right) received the Grand Prix in Annecy in 1986. © Boyana Films

to the Bulgarian animation tradition. Since his first films (*Golgotha*, *Hypothesis*, *Kavalkada*) Anri Kulev has shown a particularly emotional manner and a complicated drawing style. His films are among the first in the Bulgarian cinema to show a painful reaction to the world.

The two original works of Nikolai Todorov, *Odyssey* and *Grandomania*, suggest that he treats the drawing line and its dynamics like a personal trajectory of thought and emotion. Todorov demonstrated a virtuous control over animation techniques. After these films, Todorov started working with Anri Kulev. Their talents blended so smoothly that one can hardly identify their individual contributions in *The Ship*, *Sunday*, *Bagpipe*, *Sympathy* and *A Day Like a Dandelion*.

The "materiality" of Slav Bakalov's cutout technique is far from the aggressive advancements of his colleagues. He also made drawn animation and documentary films. *Black and White*, *Model Nr*, *House of Dreams* were some of his first films, followed by many other superb works. He gained notoriety with his *Pastoral* (1980) and scripts for *Cuckoo* (1983) directed by Velislav Kazakov. *Marriage* (in collaboration with Rumen Petkov) won the Palm D'Or at the Cannes Festi-

val 1984. *Crushed World* (1986), directed by Boyko Kanev, script and design Slav Bakalov, received the Grand Prix in Annecy 1986. With great artistry and fantasy, Slav Bakalov mixes popular customs with eroticism. Metamorphosis, viewpoint changes, dynamic story telling, professional handling of the characteristics of the materials — these are the most common features of his animation.

Rumen Petkov debuted with *Formula 73*, followed by the series for *Sharo*, *The Two Frogs*, *Choko* and *Boko* and the first Bulgarian feature film, *The Planet of the Treasures*, etc. With *Marriage* (in collaboration with Slav Bakalov), he won the Palm D'Or at the Cannes Festival 1984. He works in Los Angeles, and has been a director on *Johnny Bravo*, done storyboards for *Real Monsters* and won the U.S. President's Award for *Think Earth*.

Pencho Kunchev studied animation in Bratislava. He directed the 12-part children series *The Baby*, a Bulgarian/Slovak co-production. Recently he finished his latest short, *The Blue Eyed Moon*, an erotic story based on "Bilitis's Songs" poem by Peter Luis, produced by Boyana Films.



Pencho Kunchev works both ends of the age spectrum. *The Baby* (top) is a 12-part children's TV series, while his latest work, *Blue Eyed Moon* (bottom), is an erotic short subject. © Boyana Films

THE NEW GENERATION

In the mid 1980s, the animators from the first classes of the animation department at the National Academy of Theatre and Film Arts in Sofia started to make their own mark. While still at the Academy, the students created a number of noteworthy shorts such as *Cuckoo* and *Libido* by Velislav Kazakov, *The Snow Zoo* and *Bao - Boom* by Latchezar Ivanov, *Sumatoha* by Ivan Tankushev, *Victory* by Venelin Petkov, *Paper Cranes* by Lubomir Hristov, *Indian Summer* by Alexander Zachariev, *Am-am Show* by Gospodin Nedelchev - Dido, *The General* and *Dugi-Dugi* by Vladimir Shishkov, *For Men Only* and *Ehh* by Zlatin Radev.

Zlatin Radev's graduation film, *Canfilm* (1990) was a strong political satire about life in a society of cans told with a brilliant use of the stop-motion technique. The dark and grotesque anti-utopia about totalitarian society won 20 international awards in two years. In 1991, it received an Academy Award nomination for a student film. It was broadcast and distributed all over Europe and the U.S., and enjoyed both festival and commercial success. *Canfilm* was followed by *Shock* (1996) – an ironic story about an animator and his drawn characters. It embodied an ingenious mix of stop-motion, paper cutouts, animation-on-paper and pixilation, all taken to the extreme. *Shock* received 11 awards and was broadcast on BBC, SAT 1, and the Canal + channels in France, Spain and Italy.

The students of The National Academy of Theatre and Film Art and the New Bulgarian University, both in Sofia, are the future hope of Bulgarian animation. There is a great variety in techniques, genres and vi-



Zlatin Radev appears in the 1996 film *Shock*, which garnered 11 awards and was seen on international television. © Zlatin Radev Films

sual styles. Expression moves from philosophical proverb to pure entertainment.

A number of films by young and recognized animators and students have been shown at Annecy. These include *Painter* by Vitko Boyanov – a charming miniature-proverb with a rapid rhythm and masterly animation; *Game Over* by Gospodin Nedeltchev and *Love Story* by Vlado Shishkov. Professional skills, creativity and fantasy also mark *The Room* and *The Dream of a Dog* by Borika Maleva, *Deliverance* by Roza Kolchagova, *A, B, C* by Dimitar Dimitrov; *Dissociacion*

and *The Attempt Counts* by Theodore Ushev, *Macho* by Sevina Ivanova and *Yellow* by Ivan Rusev. All of them suggest great potential.

A number of Bulgarian animation directors live and work in the United States and Canada. Latchezar Ivanov is a freelance layout and character design artist in Los Angeles, Velislav Kazakov works in Montreal for CINAR and CinéGroupe, Ivan Tankushev has been an animation supervisor for Nelvana. Lubomir Hristov has served as a creative director at Cinesite in L.A. The youngest, Bronislav Likomanov, is a director at Klasky Csupo.

After the political changes in the late 1980s the Bulgarian government started to limit financing, so the National Film Center was founded to partially support new films outside of the studio structure. Bulgarian animators lived wonderfully in the past on state subsidies and government money. Now they face the realities of a market economy, which affects all aspects of their personal and professional lives. They face funding problems as well as problems with finding new kinds of stories and ways to reach an au-

dience. The new computer technologies, the growing international animation market and the Internet all demand knowledge and skills that have to be constantly updated.

Contemporary Bulgarian animation shows professionalism, originality and determination, as well as a variety of styles, aesthetic concepts and techniques that reflect world trends, which, at the same time, promote the development of strong Bulgarian animation traditions.

Animation appears to be the most dynamic art in the Internet era, so its traditions in Bulgaria, along with the new generation of animators, are on their way to face the challenges of the new times. ■

MARIA JANEVA studied Bulgarian literature and linguistics at the Sofia University and has translated cinema-related articles and books. She has also assisted in animated and film productions. She does critical writing for the cinema and is published on the Internet.

FUTURA

SYD MEAD IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SOUGHT AFTER VISUAL FUTURISTS CREATING THE LOOK FOR MOVIES LIKE **BLADE RUNNER**, **TRON** AND **MISSION TO MARS**.



SYD'S MOST POPULAR BOOKS, **OBLAGON** AND **SENTURY** ALONG WITH LIMITED EDITIONS OF "THE 200TH RUNNING OF THE KENTUCKY DERBY" (LITHOGRAPH SIGNED AND NUMBERED) AND OTHER HARD TO FIND POSTERS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE [AWN STORE](http://www.awn.com/awnstore/)!

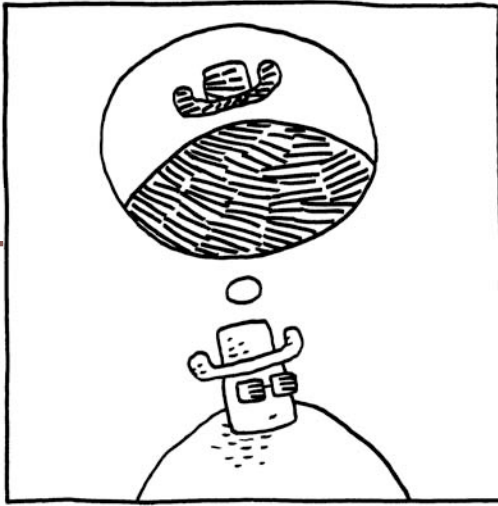


Illustration by [Andreas Hykade](#).
Courtesy of Chris J. Robinson.

ANIMATION PIMP

ChillaX

YOU CAN CALL IT ART AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE, BUT YOU'D BE WRONG. PROFIT COMES BEFORE ART. IT ALWAYS HAS. COMPUTER ANIMATION IS CHEAPER. LESS TIME, LESS PEOPLE, LESS MONEY.

by Chris J. Robinson

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

To sit around a bottle of rancid grape juice, speaking of delicate hints of black currant, oaken smoke, truffle or whatever other dainty nonsense with which nature is fancied to have enlaced its taste, is to be a cafone of the first order. For if there is the delicate hint of anything to be sensed in wine, it is likely that of pesticide and manure. How could so sophisticated a nose fail to detect the cow shit with which this most celebrated estate in Bordeaux fertilizes its vines?

— Nick Tosches, *The Last Opium Den*

I'VE BEEN GLANCING THROUGH SOME OF THE ANIMATION FORUMS, and if they're any reflection of the animation industry, then I'd say a lot of people are freaked out by the nostradamussed words of some noname Disney exec who'll be a fart down memory lane faster than you can pass the beans. Anyway, the Disney guy essentially told a bunch of Disney drones that computer animation was the wave of the future.

Yeah... that's it, that's all. But all through the world of animation forums — a wonderful social tool where people gather under false names to connect and communicate with other people who also use false names — there was horror, panic and anger. You'd think there'd be bigger worries... you know endangered animals, rainforests, orphaned war children, who will win *American Idol*, how that Jenna chick won *Survivor*. (Did they fix it because her moms has brain cancer?) I say, calm down people. Overreactions on all sides. First off, umm...it's a business. You can call it art as much as you like, but you'd be wrong. Profit comes before art. It always has. Computer animation is cheaper. Less time, less people, less money. Naturally this Stainton guy is a bottom-liner. On an ethical level, he's probably a twit, but in this context he's making an astute and very logical BUSINESS decision. And why is anyone surprised? Are you gonna tell me that you didn't see it

FIRST THERE WAS APPREHENSION ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY ITSELF, THEN THERE WAS ALL THIS FUSS ABOUT SOUND, THEN COLOR, THEN VIDEO, NOW DIGITAL.

coming? Well... gee kids... get ready... cause this is just the beginning of the end of what you think animation entails.

Animation as we know it will be dead by the end of the century anyway, absorbed by live-action features. It's already happening. *Twister*, *Spider-Man*, *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones*, *The Matrix*, and *X-Men* are all animation films. With mainstream animation dangerously obsessed with some slanted take on photorealism/naturalism, would it be all that surprising to see animation and live-action fused together? Actors will go after that, replaced by 3D characters and maybe down the road even 3D created voices. This is just the beginning folks.

It's nothing new though. I'm not a cheerleader of the history-as-progress line nor do I think that every technology that comes along necessarily improves our lives. But hey... that's the way some of us wish to approach the world. It's a philosophy that's not limited to animation, it's always been connected with art, and almost always motivated by money. Writing has gone from stone, bone, ivory and metal to Indian ink, quill pens (they lasted the longest of any writing instrument so far), fountain pens and ballpoint pens. Along the way, the typewriter arrived around 1866 followed by the word processor (good ol' wordstar) in the late 1970s. The tools have changed, but you'd be hard pressed to tell me that the changes in technology have led to a decrease in the quality of literature (it's just led to MORE bad writing perhaps).

My eyes roll when I hear, for example, a writer talking about how he misses those days of purity and wonder when he had his old Olympia typewriter. There was nothing sweeter than hearing his fingers tap a little Gene Krupa on the keys. One of the funnier examples is *Marv Newland*. I love Marv. He's funny, smart and GENUINE... but he's got this thing about not having e-mail YET he does type (on a typewriter?) on a paper and fax it to me. It always makes me laugh. He won't use the damn computer, but he'll use a fax machine!? The typewriter and fax, once feared modern tools, are, like the record player (or is that gramo-

phone?), rotary phone, and Atari, now just precious relics from a time gone by.

It's the same with cinema. Oh la la... le cinema... it is *magique*, *manifique*, *c'est si bon*. First there was apprehension about the technology itself, then there was all this fuss about sound, then color, then video, now digital. Oh the HORROR we will lose that special umm...what's the word?... oh yeah... NOTHING.

So do you really believe that animation will be any worse for wear if it dropped drawn animation altogether? Yeah... sure to a degree... we can haggle about the senses, the lack of touch, rhythm working with a computer... but even then you'll create a new rhythm. I don't have a problem finding a rhythm when I'm pounding on a laptop. But let's be real here kids... yes... *Bambi*, *Fantasia*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Pinocchio* were real pretty films... and so were *Iron Giant* and *Osmosis Jones*, but we were also forced to endure *Black Cauldron*, *Fox and the Hound*, *Spirit* and *Don Bluth*. Meanwhile, I think *PDI* and *Pixar*, among others, have done a pretty decent job. *Toy Story 2*, *Shrek*, *Monsters, Inc.*, *Antz* and *Finding Nemo* aren't the cream but they're as entertaining and visually interesting as any of those drawn classics. All of the aforementioned films were made to entertain and, for the most part, they do their job. Yes... something will change... but that's all... it'll just be different, not any better or any worse (and remember this is coming from a guy who generally loathes computer animation).

So hey kid, relax, I ain't worried. In fact, I'm pretty confident that computer animation will be able to maintain the same level of character, story and music quality that we've come to expect from feature and television animation. ■

CHRIS J. 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>

VISUAL MUSIC

Notes from the Underground Part Six — From Mary Ellen Bute to Pierre Hébert, Animation in a Different Key

I HOPE THESE WORKS AND MANY MORE LIKE THEM WILL BE INCREASINGLY MORE VISIBLE AT ANIMATION FESTIVALS AND ELSEWHERE.

by Jean Detheux

WE'RE NOW COMING TO THE END OF MY *NOTES from the Underground* series, a journey that started well over one year ago.

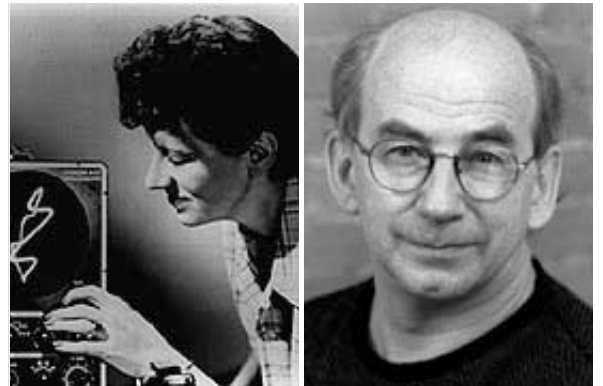
Since I am not a writer (far from it!), this journey has been full of surprises, making me realize once again how much I would rather do, than write/talk about doing. (In passing, I must thank my dear friend and "proofreader par excellence," Sharon Bourke, for all her generous and so very competent help. She has managed to transform my words into something almost readable, quite an accomplishment!)

Trying to summarize what these articles were/are about, I come up with the following incomplete ideas: while being a fabulous medium, loaded with potential, animation, for the most part, leaves me totally unmoved, and hungry for more, for something "other."

It is as if artists, whether they be animators or not, have distanced themselves from their own experience and entered a realm where everything is fabricated, forced, puffed up.

So much work done today boils down to technical "tricks," or technological prowess. So few of the works we see in animation today stem from one's inner core, and seldom find/manifest (as in "make visible") one's "little music."

I think it was Ortega y Gasset who said that we were going toward the dehumanization of art. (While he presented that as a "plus," I think that what we are now witnessing is a definite "minus.")



Mary Ellen Bute (left) and Pierre Hébert (right). Photo of Mary Ellen Bute courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/Film Stills Archive.

There are, however, some remarkable exceptions in artists who give birth to works loaded with meaning, works that help me get up in the morning, eager to get to work. If this may seem fairly insignificant, I will say that if to work is sometimes difficult, to keep on working is even more difficult. Anything that can support the motivation and will to work and to live is a gift, and that is exactly how I receive those works that move me; I receive them with gratitude. If I can easily think off the top of my head about many artists, painters, writers and musicians whose works fit in that "gift category," I can name only a few animators who would belong to it.

Granted, this must, in part, come from my ignorance of all that animation is, but it nevertheless is based on seeing what is readily available in the animation world, through the Web, *AWN* and a few animation festivals. I am utterly convinced that animation, for the most part, has fallen into a trap that makes it a very minor genre, a form of smart puppeteering that is trapped in linear storytelling, reduced to using a very poor and cliché-laden visual language, and falling most often very short of its fabulous potential.

If storytelling is to be a fundamental of animation (why not after all?), why can't it be of the same caliber as that found in the film works of a Fellini, Kieslowski, Almodóvar, Mnouchkine, Jeunet, the Gilliam of *Munchausen* and Eliseo Subiela? (Just to name a few of my faves.)

I repeat here that I have no problem with storytelling per se, I greatly deplore this invasion by the dumb, unilevel, linear pabulum we see almost everywhere, including in animation festivals (can you say "Flash?").

However, there is more to the potential of animation than storytelling, there is this "making time visible" (or at least, "the experience thereof"), a far more demanding and meaningful task.

Having become almost exclusively a mere commercial product that serves escapist cravings, animation, with its domineering "entertainment" bias, is stuck in a "merchandising" rut, and, by the same token, has mostly been shaped into a "language" that caters to the lowest common denominator, even to propaganda (see the very intriguing article [*Animated Propaganda During the Cold War*](#) by Karl F. Cohen).

I suspect that animation is still very much, in its "populist" mode, a form of propaganda, a way by which false values are presented as norms with which to shape/constitute the perception of reality following societal models. In this sense, those who contribute, knowingly or not, to the deception, carry a heavy responsibility.

Mind you, those who swallow those false values also share in that responsibility.

Approaching the making of an animation piece via the usual planning route (concept, storyboarding, etc.) is a sure way of making it stay within the established norms, a sure way of preventing it from exploring all that remains to be explored, all that still needs to be made visible (possibly an infinite task).

I also think that it is the dominating reliance on storytelling that has made animation so easily become a sub-genre. If we look at art history, we can see that a break from storytelling was needed in order to push the form of painting beyond the illustration aspect that dominated much of pre-20th century work.

Like most painting prior to the late 19th century "revolution," animation too has become a form that is closed, and not just closed, it is now likely unable to grow, stifling any attempt at "pushing the envelope."

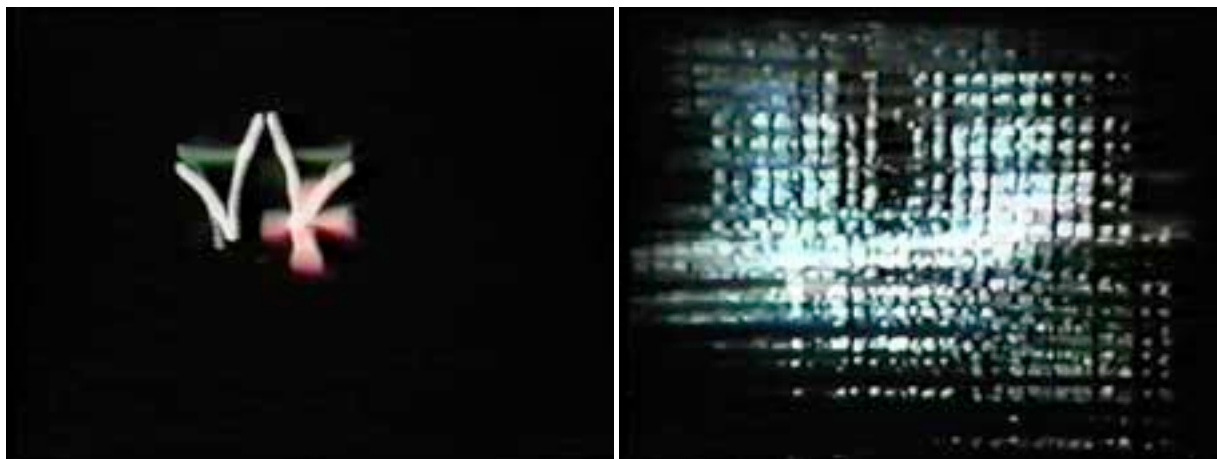
We are more and more bombarded with pronouncements about what animation "is," or "should be" and "cannot be," and by far, most of those declarations posit "story" as being the center of it all in animation. Not only that, but "knowing where one is heading, and how" seems to be a must, even if the better work one does always comes as a surprise, a "reward," a "gift," often experienced as a "mistake" at first! For the sake of very trite commercial priorities, we have allowed much of what animation has become to be limited to a manufacturing process, leading to a manufactured product.

The great, wide-open vistas that were confronting animators during the early days have almost vanished. The (dumb) "puppeteering" agenda has just about won the day. (Puppeteering can be other than "dumb" of course, as in, for example, the fabulous work of Ronnie Burkett.)

The form of animation, its language, has been locked into a pale mimicking of "reality," a pale duplicate of "live cinema," and/or a complete flip into "toon-land." In any case, much of animation, as it is practiced today, is a form that avoids the sincere exploring of our experience as it is lived, as it gives itself to us.

However, there are some people who have been and are making animation in ways that escape/avoid this sick catering to commerce, "fun" and "cynicism," preferring instead to explore "meaning," "joy" and "poetry," following their inner voice instead of speaking the language that others may expect them to speak. We will see some clips from such people, clips that barely do justice to the body of work for which those artistes are responsible, a series of clips that, I hope, will show glimpses of "animation in a different key."

What all the people I will talk about here have in common is this ability to play, to play "seriously," and to explore facets of the potential of animation that may not



Mood Contrasts [clip 1](#) and [clip 2](#) by Mary Ellen Bute. Courtesy of Cecile Starr.

have immediate (if any) commercial value, and, in some cases, as in Pierre Hébert's work, consciously do not want to be "marketable."

I will start with the work of one animator who helped me enter in earnest animation, as I understand it today, Mary Ellen Bute. She's a genuine pioneer, someone who managed to create and explore a form of animation that, to me, is of the highest order, and yet who is barely known today. Few people know her name, even fewer have ever seen samples of her films. Mary Ellen Bute avoided the trap of linear storytelling and simplistic character animation; she went for something much greater, much more demanding, much more elusive.

In that, her research was very much in tune with what painters of her time were also trying to accomplish. I am absolutely convinced that what she started exploring still has a great deal to offer, a great deal begging to be made visible. There's a good article on her by [William Moritz](#) here on *AWN* called [Seeing Sound](#), which is very much what her work was about.

The two short (20 seconds) clips I show here come from *Mood Contrasts*, a 1953 film which has moments of sheer visual poetry, already making visible much of what I hope more of us will be able to connect with. It is worth noting that as Mary Ellen Bute died in 1983, this is in fact the 20th anniversary of her departing (she was born in 1906).

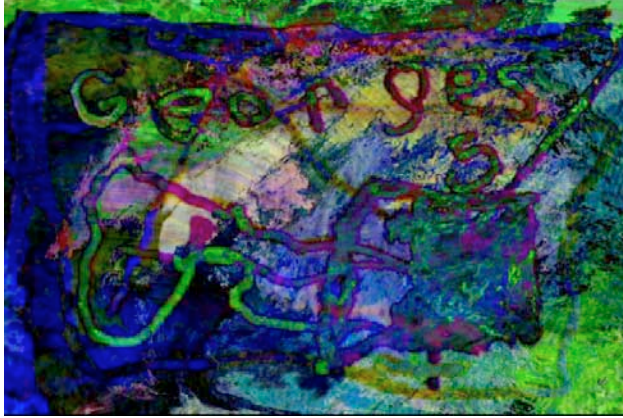
When I first saw her work during a retrospective at the [Ottawa International Animation Festival](#) in 1998, I had recently switched to digital tools from natural media (for health reasons), and was toying with the idea of starting to work in digital animation. That retrospective tipped the balance much more so than any other animated film I had seen till then. The works may seem a

bit rough at times (due to the tools she was forced to use — there were no personal computers in her day), but they contain the seeds (sometimes even more than that) of what I am convinced is "another animation," one that is to linear storytelling's character animation what, in painting, Cézanne, Giacometti and some of the abstract expressionists were to 19th century salon painting.

As a matter of fact, this comparison holds even more for me today, given the fact that "habitual animation" is the salon painting of our day, and that we are still very much in search of a form of animation that would be as relevant to us as were the many painting "movements" that liberated themselves from the limitations of salon painting and its underlying world view. I think that at the root of the control that "habitual animation" has on much of the current animation field lies a very severe confusion between art and entertainment. Art is (or at least can, or should, be) about the exploration, the unfolding, the "making visible" of all that we are. This is a search that accepts all that surfaces during the work, with no censoring, while "entertainment" is really a negation of, or a rest from, that search (the "Prozac" of my first article in this series).

I truly believe that animation has been turned into an overly specialized "skill," somewhat similar to trade groups complicating their otherwise fairly simple procedures in order to keep the market to themselves and the uninitiated out.

I am fortunate enough to have a gifted 5-year-old son, Georges, and together we have been exploring digital image and animation making. Here's one such animation we made together using 131 images he painted, all by himself, in Studio Artist. His sister, Yolande (14) made the music track.



Georges 1 Image by Georges Detheux; Animation by Georges and Jean Detheux; Music by Yolande Detheux.

It is a privilege to work/play with a 5-year-old; he shows me time after time after time that "expression is not at the end of knowledge," that it is available right here and now, regardless of age, knowledge and experience.

I had a similar experience with a group of 13- and 14-year-old kids I am working/playing with in a "digital art" class ("art numérique") I teach at a local elementary school (Ecole J.-L. Couroux in Carleton Place, Ontario). These kids, with absolutely no prior art training, are often creating gorgeous work. (When we built the present Website, we were limited mostly to still images at that time, but now have better tools for animation, and will have examples of that online shortly.)

Time and time again, their work shows me the truth in the motto of Jason Belec's NOITAMINANIMATION: "It's not rocket science."

Indeed, animation is not rocket science (or at least need not be). Just like drawing and painting (and so much more), it can stem from some very basic needs and abilities "in" us. If we are given, if we take the time to simply "play," one hopes aimlessly, we are bound to connect with "something."

That "something" is most likely what "it" is all about, and I have been pointing to it all through these articles. Whether we value this or not is a matter of personal decision. It should be very obvious by now where I stand on this issue. I have been talking about "inherent animation" here for more than a year.

Children know how to "play" this way. That is how they manage to learn so much, often in spite of school and adults who are so eager to teach them "how to." (My best regards go to Maria Montessori and John Holt's heritage.)

"Inherent animation" is to me a reality, though one that is constantly overlooked, even snuffed out, by the sickly need to conform and the power trip most animators are on these days.

A good friend, Sharon Katz, is an artist who, like me, comes to animation by way of painting and drawing. Sharon has two films doing the festival rounds, *Happy Birthday Hanna* and *Angel's Foot Cake*.

She's busy trying to find another way into storytelling in her animation, a way that will be more in tune with her experience as a painter. She is attempting to do something that I think is very complicated. In as much as she refuses to follow established paths, she's basically reinventing the wheel her way; something I wish more of us would do as well.

(In fact, Pierre Hébert posits that animation is actually reinventing the wheel of cinema with every frame.)

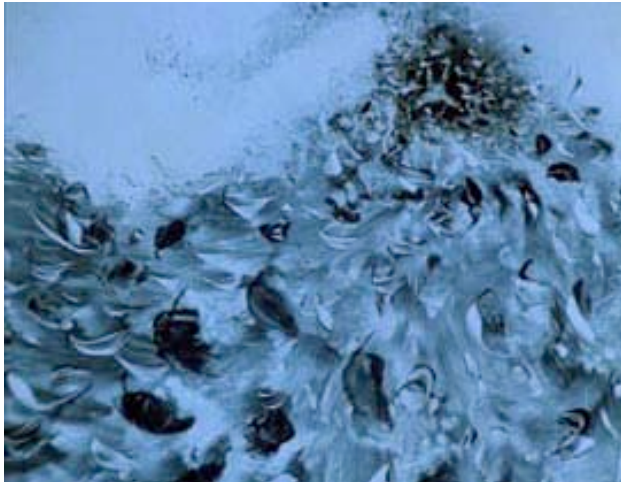
Here are a few samples of what Sharon has come up with so far:



Crow(top) and **Bird**(bottom) by Sharon Katz. © Sharon Katz

Now we take a brief look at a 10-second excerpt from Martine Chartrand's *Black Soul*.

With this beautiful animation, Martine won the Golden Bear award for best short film at the 2001 Berlin International Film Festival. This is a fascinating animation, I have seen it many times, and each time I am



Black Soul by Martine Chartrand. © 2001, National Film Board of Canada.

deeply moved by its ending. I have asked friends to view it too, and we seem to agree on its being a very powerful piece indeed. Martine paints on glass, and this allows for some terrific images. As each image, or just about, becomes "raw material" from which the next image is made, there is a deep continuity that sustains the whole movie. This working method makes Martine a natural for "going digital" and using Studio Artist too. *Black Soul* is to me one of the best examples available today of storytelling in an intelligent, visually literate and painterly way.

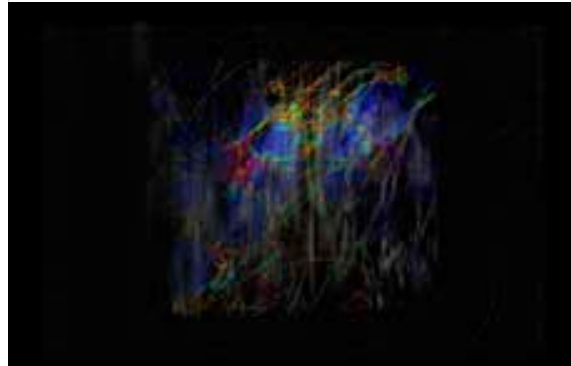
The next artist I want to talk about is Travis Wall, a friend who works and studies in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Travis is studying architecture, while being pulled toward drawing, painting and animation.

He took a workshop at Quickdraw with Richard Reeves that confirmed his interest in animation.

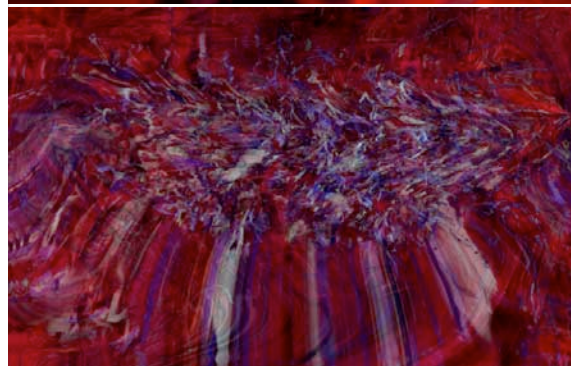
The clip we will see here is an example of what a younger generation (I'm 56, he's 20-something) can put up with in terms of fragmentation. It seems to me that his generation can easily function in the fragmented space it has taken me decades of hard work to be barely able to sustain. Clearly, he grew up with music videos, and it shows.

Next, we will take a brief look at the work of Tien Yang. Tien is a graduate of the Academy of Art College in San Francisco, and is now head of feature animation at the Nanyang Polytechnic in Singapore. He knows and teaches 3D animation, but he also has entered the wide-open world of "non-narrative" 2D animation.

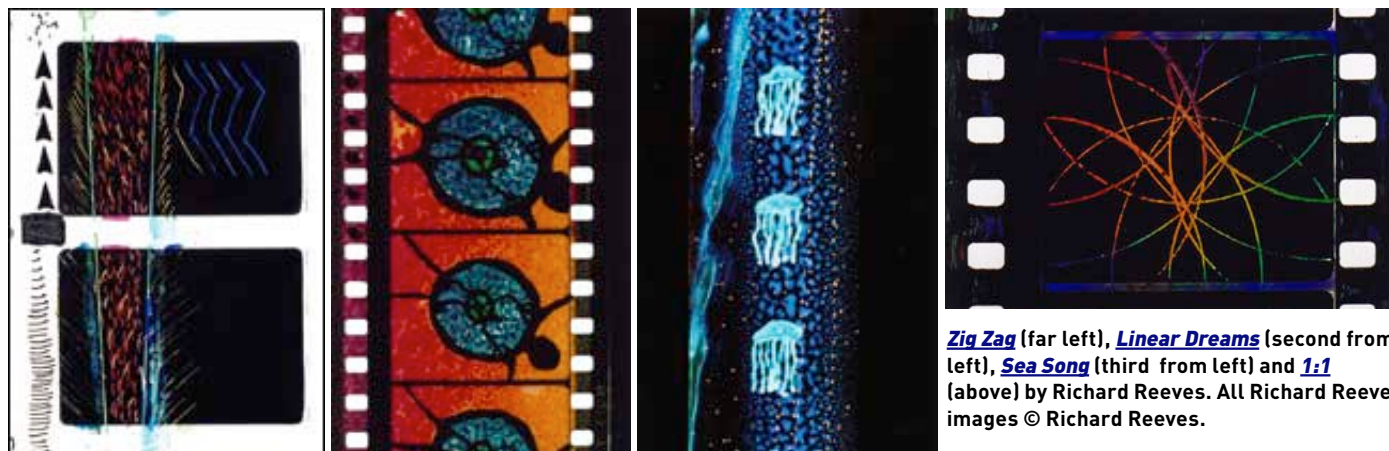
Tien is a remarkable writer and actor, and what he could bring to "non-narrative" animation is precious. He is one of those very few who would be doing this type of work precisely because he personally has seen the dead-end into which traditional animation has fallen.



Under the Veil [clip 1](#) and [clip 2](#) by Travis Wall Image. © 2002 Travis Wall; Music: *Kabul is Free Under the Veil* by [Muslimgauze](#), published by Yokomono Ltd, © Staalplaat.



Arches [clip 1](#) and [clip 2](#) by Tien Yang. ©Tien Yang. Music written and performed by Ng Tian Hui.



Zig Zag (far left), *Linear Dreams* (second from left), *Sea Song* (third from left) and *1:1* (above) by Richard Reeves. All Richard Reeves images © Richard Reeves.

I honestly think that Tien is going to come up soon with really exceptional work in a medium that is still to be explored beyond the obvious, because, in essence, this medium remains, for the most part, to be invented.

The next artist is Richard Reeves, a one-of-a-kind animator! Richard paints and scratches directly on film, creating both his images and sounds. He connects visually with "the real" through all sorts of doors, a simple fallen leaf may give him the spark needed to start his next piece. He's one of the best examples I know of someone who has found his/her "little music." Seeing him and his work make it at once clear that Richard has found his own voice. A rare bird!

Next, we will look at Steven Woloshen.

Like Reeves, Steven also works directly on film, and like Richard Reeves, he works on 35mm stock. However, he does not "make" his own music, he finds a piece he likes and, through repetitive listening, really becomes "one" with it.

Steven is having a visceral love affair with music through animation, and his work shows it. Anybody who ever has swung his arms to the sound of a band, as if he were the conductor, will know where Steven's uplifting animation comes from (I am reminded of the conducting of Sergiu Celibidache when I experience Steven's work on the big screen).

To be able to see his work in glorious CinemaScope is indeed a real treat.

When presenting the above examples of "animation in a different key," I have intentionally refrained from getting into detailed descriptions of both the artists, and their work. Each one of them would alone easily demand more than one such article to be presented, as they deserve. I do hope however that the tidbits we just have seen (several of those are available online for the very first time) will give readers a sense of what these people can make visible.



Steven Woloshen's *Ditty Dot Comma* (left) [clip 1](#), [clip 2](#) and [clip 3](#) and *Bru Ha* (right) [clip 1](#) and [clip 2](#). © 2001 and 2002 by Steven Woloshen.

I hope these works and many more like them will be increasingly more visible at animation festivals and elsewhere. It seems to me we are definitely ready for a break from teenager tantrums and the likes.

Last, but not least, we will look at [Pierre Hébert](#).

If it is hard to do justice to the previous artists in such a short space, it is absolutely impossible to do that with Pierre. His long list of films speaks for itself, though his more recent work is, as far as I am concerned, truly a pioneering venture.

Pierre has showed a remarkable film intelligence over the years. Much of his existing work already reaches beyond "animation" even if much of that was done while he still worked at the NFB (he was there for nearly 35 years).

Amongst other projects, Pierre now works with his musician partner Bob Ostertag, and together they have taken their *Between Science and Garbage* performance to many places around the world.

Pierre was kind enough to make a short excerpt



Between Science and Garbage. Image © Pierre Hébert and sound © Bob Ostertag.

available for this article, an excerpt from the recent European tour of *Between Science and Garbage*. This one comes from the show given at ICA in London on February 24, 2003.

His book, *L'ange et l'automate* (*The Angel and the Automaton*) is a must read not only for animators, but also for any artists and those who like/need to reflect on the nature of existence, of perception and art, of meaning. I am confident this book will soon be available in English as well (only French so far) and I heartily recommend it to all.

Pierre is a master in the real sense of the term, the likes of which I had only known personally when working in New York near artists like Bill De Kooning, Philip Guston and Mercedes Matter.

Pierre has developed a multi-layered approach to "animation" (this is, I believe, too narrow a term to describe his current work) that is very fragmented, and intentionally so. He demonstrates an uncanny ability to function efficiently within unresolved dilemmas, teaching by example how to carry on with the journey even (especially!) if the road has come to an end.

In his book, he comes back several times to the following sentence, "Faire son possible face à l'impossible" (to do one's best in front of the impossible). Readers may recall my referring, more than once, to Camus', "the failure shall be the measure of success," and to Giacometti's, "if the goal is out of reach, at least one can get closer."

This makes Pierre yet another Sisyphus, and I believe he shows that we can imagine Sisyphus happy, or at least being involved with his infinite task consciously and intentionally.

My first *Notes from the Underground* installment was titled *Animation: Prozac, or Kyosaku?* and there's

no doubt in my mind that Pierre is not tracing/following the "Prozac path."

Intelligence was once defined as not how much one knows how to do, but rather how one can function when not knowing what to do.

In that sense, Pierre is a very intelligent man besides being also extremely "cultivated" (cultivé in French). He demonstrates by how he lives and works that "humanism" isn't dead yet!

Given that we started with Mary Ellen Bute, whose work, in one way or another, has made possible (not necessarily directly) what most of the people presented in this article have managed to unearth, I have asked each one of them to tell me what she represents to them. (Their remarks appear below.)

Georges Detheux: "Cool! Nice movie, *with old music*."

Martine Chartrand: "At first, I thought I did not know her. Then, seeing the clips you showed me, I thought wow, another woman animator, and a good one at that! I remembered seeing some of her films at OIAF in 1998. Very poetic work, I must see ALL her work! I first thought she was working on a computer, but soon I realized that it was "hand made." Wow, I must really get to see all her work and read the words about her."

Tien Yang: "You know, I am like a young punk in animation and art — still very ignorant and knowing very little. Yes, I heard you mention to me Mary so many times, and it is only here that I finally catch a glimpse of her work. POETIC! Something unknown, unexposed, unrecognized, untaught among (most?) animation programs. The difference being (perhaps) between something connected to life against something born out of constructs (or institutionalized).

Oh, I forgot to mention that it reminds me SO much of Kieslowski's works. Especially *Bleu*.

Travis Wall: "I've watched Mary Ellen's work at a video at Quickdraw and it struck me how visually sophisticated it was; it had none of the animation themes I'm used to, it was more painterly — I was watching a painting unfold in time. I really love her work, I wish I could pass her the compliment 'you make me want to start a new film when I see yours'."

Sharon Katz: "I'm watching *Mood Contrasts* and at this late stage in her work I see that she has fully broken with illustration, or cartoon imagery. I'm still in a debate with the figurative, so it's that dialogue and progress in Bute's art — moving away from figurative references — that intrigues me. She creates her most

THE WORLD IS NOT MERCHANDISE AND NEITHER IS LIFE.

interesting work once she's free to play with the imagery. The truth is I was stunned when I saw the *Mood Contrasts* clip and I do think it is really exciting work. And you can quote me!"

Richard Reeves: "Yes, I know of Mary Ellen Bute's films, I was lucky to be able to see the retrospect of her work at Ottawa International Animation Festival several years ago. This was the best, to see the actual film prints on the big screen. Also, I have been able to see her work on video at the Quickdraw Animation Society. Mary Ellen Bute's work has been very inspirational, and I get a feeling that Mary Ellen Bute, as well as making discoveries, enjoyed the process of her animation."

Steven Woloshen: "In regards to Mary Ellen Bute, I have only seen *Spook Sport* (in Madrid) and I thought it was great. Beyond that, I am always on the lookout to see more of her stuff."

Pierre Hébert: "I 'know' Mary Ellen Bute's films, or rather some of them. I can't recall which ones I have seen, as that was about 30 years ago. That's why I place "know" between brackets. Her work belonged to my aesthetic frame of reference of that time but (unlike McLaren's and Len Lye's which I viewed regularly, and whom I knew personally), I have a rather imprecise recollection of her work as it is entwined with all that I was seeing at the time. Therefore, concerning Mary Ellen Bute, I think my education has to be redone."

What Mary Ellen Bute worked on, this connection between image and sound, is still a wide-open field, a vast horizon left to be explored. Music and animation share the same mystery — in essence, they do not "exist!" They do not exist "in themselves," as they require a reading in time in order to come to life. In that sense, the viewer/listener is a fundamental "component" of the "life" of both animation and music, and this essential contribution the viewer/listener brings to the experience is far too often totally ignored by animators (and musicians).

I see two poles between which these artists work. At one extreme we could have a "literal" connection with the "sound" aspect of music, a human oscilloscope of sorts, while on the other, we would have work presented with music, but with no apparent direct connection to it. The possibilities between these two poles are endless, and their exploration fascinating.

Here are a few quotes from *Essence of Life*, a special feature that is on the *Koyaanisqatsi* DVD:

These films are meant to provoke, they are meant to offer an experience rather than an idea or information or a story about a knowable or a fictional subject...

— Godfrey Reggio

It was like looking at the world for the first time...

— Philip Glass

When you watch commercials on TV, you realize that the image and the music are stuck on top of each other, there's no room between them for you to move in, there's no place for us! Let's say there's a space between the image and the music, and when the spectator crosses that line, that's when he personalizes the experience, it becomes his.

— Philip Glass

Music has a powerful ability to tell us what we are seeing.

— Philip Glass

In our time of militant dehumanization ("a face to face confrontation between the zombie and the fanatic," as Alain Finkielkraut described it), I feel grateful to those who, against many odds, still try to connect with their own experience, offering us glimpses of the universal in the particular.

The world is not merchandise, and neither is life.

In conclusion, I would like to send the interested readers back to themselves, to that which is the best we each can (and must?) contribute to the whole, one's own unique and irreplaceable "brand new point of view on the world."

Sure, it is a lot harder to do this than to enter a *confrérie* (a trade group). Finding and listening to one's own little music, nurturing it, can be very difficult in the midst of all the noise made by so many false prophets (the high priests of the "New World Order").

It may often seem pointless to do so, but, if "intrinsic worth" is important to oneself, is there really any other choice?

T. S. Eliot closes his fabulous *Four Quartets* with the following, I will definitely let him have the last (and first?) word:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall

And the children in the apple tree
 Not known, because not looked for
 But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
 Between two waves of the sea.
 Quick now, here, now, always —
 A condition of complete simplicity
 (Costing no less than everything)
 And all shall be well and
 All manner of things shall be well
 When the tongues of flames are in-folded
 Into the crowned knot of fire
 And the fire and the rose are one.

— Little Gidding V, *Four Quartets* (1943)

New 16mm prints of *Mood Contrasts* and other films by Mary Ellen Bute are available for rental or for sale from Cecile Starr: 70 La Salle St., #18D, New York, New York, 10027, 212.749.1250 or 35 Strong Street, Burlington, Vermont, 05401, 802.863.6904; Email: suzanne.boyajian@gte.net.

To learn more about the artists and art mentioned in this article, please visit these sites: Ronnie Burkett: www.johnlambert.ca/ronnie/rb_main.html; Studio Artist: www.synthetik.com; the animation work of Ecole J.-L. Couroux: www.nondidjuti.net/Couroux2001-2002/couroux_1.html; John Holt: www.holtgws.com; Sharon Katz: www.sharonkatz.net; Travis Wall: members.shaw.ca/travis.wall; Tien Yang: www.nutsidea.net; Bob Ostertag: www.detritus.net/ostertag; Koyaanisqatsi: www.koyaanisqatsi.com. ■

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



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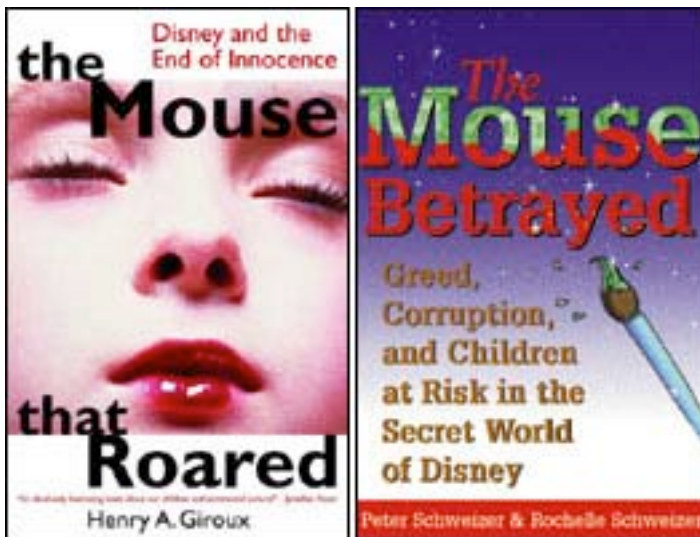
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TOON PSYCHOLOGY

Disney: The Evil Empire?

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman



The Mouse That Roared and *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed* blast the Disney empire from both the right and left.

SO IT GOES FOR PRESIDENTS, PERFORMERS, CELEBRITIES, SPORTS TEAMS SUCH AS THE YANKEES AND LAKERS, OR CORPORATIONS SUCH AS MICROSOFT... OR DISNEY

IT'S A NICE CONCEIT TO BELIEVE THAT EVERYBODY loves a winner. As things outside the world of aphorism typically work, it turns out that *some* people love a winner. Others react with [jealousy](#), resentment, sniping, and the stinging thought that the winner could have — should have — been themselves. Others attack the winner's character, measure the winner against narrow and dogmatic constraints to find him/her badly wanting, or in some cases hate the winner for no clear-cut reason other than the fact that they *are* winners.

Since few entities have attained personal or moral perfection, detractors are helped along by a winner's obvious or perceived flaws, which are then tirelessly harped upon despite any number of notable achievements the winner may have attained. Depressingly enough, the bigger a winner may be, the louder and more numerous the bashers and the more desperate their declamations. So it goes for presidents, performers, celebrities, sports teams such as the Yankees and Lakers, or corporations such as Microsoft... or Disney.

Disney-bashing is a relatively new phenomenon, developing over the past 15 years or so. Before that era, Disney was synonymous with wholesome family entertainment, iconic animation and exciting theme parks that provided a dizzying scope of experiences. Mouse-mashing has taken place in the shadow of two contexts: First, the notion of Disney as an "evil empire" has grown proportionally with the company's expansions and acquisitions; to many this represents increasing amounts of corporate money that can be (and sometimes is) used for political influence. The second context concerns the increasingly contentious public discourse between the cultures of the liberal left and conservative right, who perceive themselves beneficiaries or victims of said political influence. It is almost a certainty that an economic entity the size of Disney would be trapped in the crossfire.



Disney's recent record of mergers, acquisitions and expansions has resulted in impressive profits, but these will not be discussed in this article. I am not a business journalist nor am I an economic analyst. The focus of this article is the befouling that Disney has experienced in recent years across both poles of the ideological spectrum. Although there are numerous printed and Web resources available for perusal, two recent books do a nice job summing up how the left and right have seen fit to castigate Uncle Walt's Kingdom.

The fire on the right comes from Peter and Rochelle Schweizer, whose 1998 book, *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed*, highlighted alleged abuses at Disney theme parks and Disney's moral degeneration under Michael Eisner. The book is published by Regnery Press (a regular publisher of conservative-oriented material), and the Schweizers also chose the Reverend Jerry Falwell's syndicated TV program as the forum from which to tout their tome. The Schweizers, along with organizations of the religious right, are

some of Disney's most vociferous enemies, decrying Disney films and boycotting their products.

Among the charges in *The Mouse Betrayed* are Disney's promotion of homosexuality, political correctness, pornography and eco-feminist agendas that undermine family values. There are also charges that Disney promulgates Satanism through their cinematic subsidiaries. As far as Disney animation goes, all the tired old charges are repeated; hidden sexual symbols in films; the embedded word SEX appearing in *The Lion King*; the phallic video cover and the bishop's "erection" in *The Little Mermaid*; Aladdin instructing teenagers to take off their clothes; the adult, allegedly sacrilegious themes of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In reading the book, one becomes more suspicious that Disney's greatest crime in the Schweizer's eyes is Eisner's support of Bill Clinton and the despised Democratic Party.

The left is no kinder. Henry Giroux, prominent professor of education at Penn State, has had it in for Disney since the mid-'90s. A keen observer on how cultural hegemonies are formed and maintained, Giroux came out with his own book, *The Mouse That Roared*, in 1999. Giroux's version of the Evil Empire depicts a company that insidiously influences social and political discourse through products disguised as entertainment. In Giroux's opinion, this influence is decidedly toward... the conservative right!

In a 1995 essay predating the book entitled, *Animating Youth: the Disnification of Children's Culture*, Giroux accuses modern cultural studies of neglecting children's culture, and thus "surrender the responsibility to challenge increasing attempts by corporate moguls and conservative evangelists to reduce generations of children to either consumers for new commercial markets or Christian soldiers for the evolving Newt Gingrich world order."

It is somewhat evident by now that that the Newt won't be leading anyone anywhere, but the point is made. In Giroux's version of Disney, being white, suburban, middle class, (and subservient if one is female), goes happily along with consumerist capitalism, and such is the agenda Disney transmits to kids.

Reading the two books in sequence can be a truly disorienting experience. It amazes the reader that both authors can analyze films like *The Little Mermaid* and *Pocahontas*, and make feminist interpretations (Schweitzers) and antifeminist, patriarchal takes (Giroux) on the same films. Yet, this is how the culture wars are fought today, and both right and left claim the high ground in pumping the Disney empire full of holes. I proclaim a plague on both their houses. Perhaps we should turn that hell spot so despised by both

IN TRUTH, DISNEY IS LIKELY NOT AN INSTRUMENT OF SATAN, FEMINISTS, ECO-FREAKS, PORNOGRAPHERS OR GAYS.

sides, Disney World, over to their competing camps and let them duke it out as they may.

I, for one, would love to hear the catcalls and jeers cascading between Pat Robertson's "Christian Haunted Castle Ride" on one side and the Rigoberta Menchu "People's Space Mountain Collective" on the other. Better still to ignore both factions and go on exercising the free will that neither side will admit is your own.

Singling out Disney as the avatar of cultural and moral degeneration is useful to both archconservatives and liberals in that Disney is a large and easy target spread over a vast number of domains. In truth, Disney is likely not an instrument of Satan, feminists, eco-freaks, pornographers or gays. It is not an "evil empire" any more than it is the upholder of all that is innocent, good or righteous. The Walt Disney Company is an unfettered conglomerate in a free market, a richly diversified economic entity responsive to the vagaries and trends of market demands.

With that role comes creative delights, questionable business practices, multiple sources of profit, and cheesy merchandise. There can be the unquestioned triumph of *Beauty and the Beast* or the resounding disaster of *Treasure Planet*. In an increasingly global economy, Disney both makes — and rides — the tide. Interpretations may abound, but... why an Evil Empire?

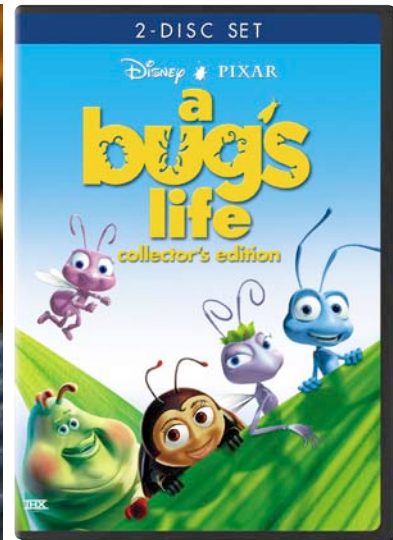
The problem, indeed, lies in the concept of "evil" as used against Disney. There is nothing inherently wrong with cultural criticism. It is the fusion of ideology and moral judgment that sours the critical pot. It is fair to examine whether Disney perpetuates the white-middle-class- Republican status quo but a certain line is crossed when the company is decried as a rampant engine of capitalist/consumerist global domination. It is eminently fair to scrutinize the content of Disney's films, but unacceptable to condemn them as anti-family because the company's ceo chose to support a certain political party, supposedly a right in a democratic nation. Virtually forgotten in the culture wars is the fact that Disney has produced some of the world's finest entertainment while this tiresome skirmishing has been going on. And so, looking neither left nor right, here are some of the "evil empire's" more beneficent gifts to the people.

Beginning in 1989, the Disney animation studio has produced some of the best films in the studio's history. *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and,



Little Mermaid and *Pocahontas* are interpreted as both feminist and anti-feminist propaganda by the right and left. © The Walt Disney Company.

more recently, *Lilo & Stitch* are new classics of American cinema. Even less than stellar efforts such as *Hercules* and *Pocahontas* easily outstripped the competition until *DreamWorks* showed up, and that company has a long way to go to usurp the Disney legacy. Disney is not the premier animation studio because shamans in Eisner's pay have been sticking voodoo pins into Richard Rich or *Don Bluth*. Disney animation has been, and remains, extremely proficient at what it attempts to do. Disney also participated in studio team-ups that produced gems like *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and it was under the Disney aegis that Pixar was able to stun the world with the *Toy Story* films, *Monsters, Inc.* and *Finding Nemo*. Although the companies may soon be parting ways, the benefits to both (and audiences) have been tremendous.



The long arm of Disney is responsible for distributing the works of Hayao Miyazaki in the U.S. His *Spirited Away* (left) beat out Disney's own work for an Oscar. The recently released collector's edition of *A Bug's Life* is an example of how Disney mines its material. Photo credit of Hayao Miyazaki: Eric Charbonneau, Berliner Studios; *Spirited Away* © 2002 Nibariki. TGNDDTM. All rights reserved.

The diversification of that same entertainment has led Disney to venues of presentation that no other studio has attempted. Disney has made use of contractual arrangements with the IMAX corporation, (headed by the son of ex-Disney savant [Ub Iwerks](#)), in order to present its films in six-story, surround sound glory, just as Walt would have wanted. Disney has parlayed other animated films into successful ice shows and Broadway presentations as well. This appears to represent successful entertainment more than successful attempts to enforce a conservative hegemony or further some gay/feminist/anti-religious agenda.

Speaking of diversification, despite the many howls of those who hate the dubs, the music or just the company, Disney has been instrumental in distributing the works of [Hayao Miyazaki](#) throughout the U.S., giving them a popularity that they might not have enjoyed without going into general release. One such masterpiece, *Spirited Away*, even bested Disney's efforts at the Academy Awards.

After a brief period where Disney's DVD releases were so penurious in terms of extras that "original disc art" was touted as a treat, the company changed its approach and began including voluminous amounts of material that added greatly to the enjoyment of the features. Many of Disney's greatest animated works of the Golden, Silver and "Silicon" Ages now come as "[Collector's Editions](#)," featuring separate disks that offer detailed and often fascinating segments including deleted scenes, interviews and insights into production.

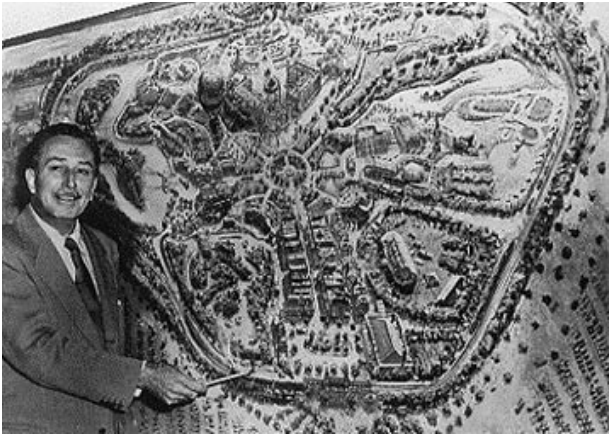
Compared to the amount of current material on DVD featuring classic and popular cartoons from other

"Golden Age" studios, Disney comes off quite well. DVDs such as the "Silly Symphony" compendium or the acclaimed "Mickey Mouse in Color/Black and White" compilations were gifts to animation aficionados. Say if you will that these "Collector's Editions" are a ploy to make greater profit. The product appears to be well worth the extra price.

Both the left and right despise Disney's theme parks, equating them with mindlessness, exploitation, consumerism and the perpetuation of Disney's nefarious agendas (pick either agenda; I weary of repeating them). Neither camp can force themselves to admit that these parks are not only entertaining, they are massively attended by the populace, all of which can't be fooled all of the time. Most of them seem to come home with considerably fewer funds yet readily admitting to a fine time for both self and family.

Again, dear readers, this is a free market. The patrons of Disney parks attend of their own free will. Smug and/or angry ideologues are not exactly forced through the gates at gunpoint, either. These watchdogs are free to pursue whatever high-or-lowbrow entertainment they please. It's time to allow everyone else to do the same without labeling them dupes of an evil empire.

I have not always agreed with Disney's every decision nor have I enjoyed every film that the studio has produced. In particular, I am disappointed with the company's decision to produce direct-to-video sequels of its classic masterpieces, an endeavor I believe to be artistically impossible and aesthetically corrupt. As a longtime fan of the National Hockey League, I was discouraged by the corporation's purchase of an expansion



Does he look like an evil emperor to you? Here Uncle Walt shows off the master plan for Disneyland. © Disneyland.

team that seemed to be a blatant promotion for a series of films and, later, a desultory cartoon series.

Not long ago I decried the decisions that resulted in the deep-sixing of a possible sequel to *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Still, some objectivity must be retained. These actions do not signify an Evil Empire, merely a

corporate giant operating in a free market, making the decisions it deems best for its own survival and prosperity. Deciding whether or not we agree with Disney should depend more on our own free will, critical judgment and individual taste than on dogmatic pronouncements from pulpits or ivory towers.

(Parts of this column were originally published as reviews appearing in TOON Magazine during 2000 and 2001) - Dr. T.

Dr. Toon would at this time like to express his appreciation to departing editor Heather Kenyon, who "adopted" his persnickety little column from *Animation Nerd's Paradise* nearly four years ago and gave it a home on this esteemed website. Ms. Kenyon's guidance, encouragement, honest feedback and sharp critical eye made these columns — and this columnist — far better than the rough drafts they often were. Thanks, Heather, and best of luck! ■

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

PLYMPMART

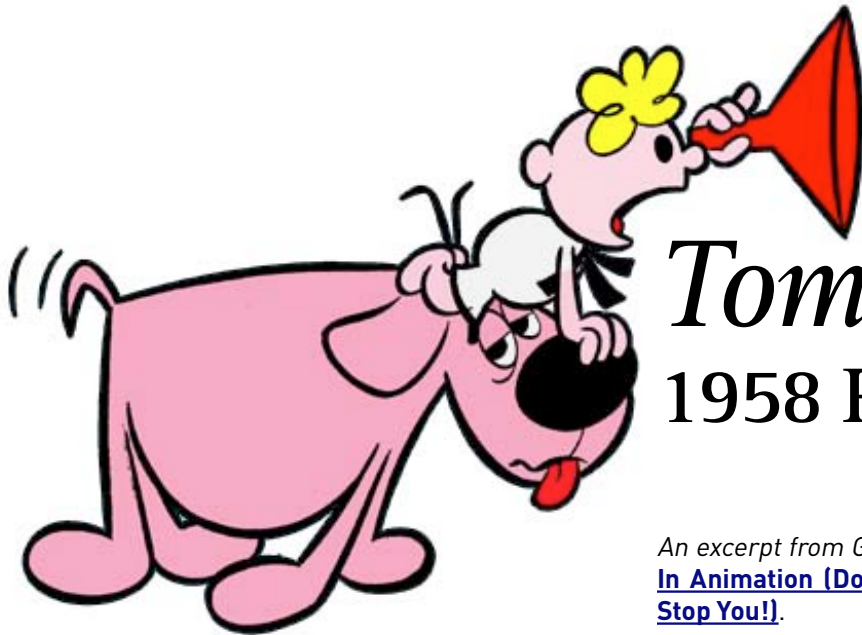


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BOOK EXCERPT

Tom Terrific

1958 Production Plan

by Gene Deitch

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

HERE IS A FAITHFUL REPRODUCTION OF THE SURVIVING actual production notes for the second series of *Tom Terrific*, as issued by me in March, 1958

From: Gene Deitch *TOM TERRIFIC* "PRODUCTION PROCEDURE" 1958 Series

I. GENERAL

The entire *Tom Terrific* project will operate on a Production Line basis in order to achieve a unity of style and a maximum output. Ralph Sancier will act as over-all production coordinator, reporting to Sparky.

II. ELEMENTS

The *TT* Project will consist of thirteen complete stories to be presented in two versions each:

Version I consists of five daily episodes. (called the DAILY VERSION)

Version II consists of the complete story in two parts. (SATURDAY VERSION)

The daily episodes will be constructed as follows:

	MONDAY	TUE-WED-THU	FRIDAY
STD: Standard Title	10"	10"	10"
Standard Song	30"	30"	30"
Recap, incl. title*	05"†	30"	45"
Story 2:15 2:00 2:00			
Preview*	30"	20"	15" [Std Preview]
STD: Std End Title	05"	05"	05"
Total Length:	3:35	3:35	3:35

†Story title and fanfare only

*Includes "teaser" title

Monday's title will name story but NOT "Chapter I"

The Saturday version will be constructed like so:
PART I

STD: Standard Title	10"	
Standard Song	30"	
Story Title Card	05" (Monday's Title)	
Mon-Tue-Wed Story	6:15	
Wed Preview	20"	
Black Leader		
		Part I total 7:20
PART II		
Thurs Recap	30"	
Thu-Fri Story	4:00	
Std Fri Preview	15"	
		Part II total 4:50
Std End Title	05"	
		TOTAL 12:10

III. STORIES

Tom Morrison will be the overall story and sound track director. The story ideas and basic plots will be worked as a matter of group discussions with the entire story department. The plots will then be developed in detail by Larz Bourne and Eli Bauer. Final dialogue will be added by Jules Feiffer. Recaps and Previews must be written in proper sequence, and the correct action and repeat scenes added. (Wed. Preview and Thur. Recap should refer to "NEXT PART" and "FIRST PART")

Tom Morrison will time the final scripts and turn them over to Phil Scheib for the building of the music-efx cue track. (This should be limited to a single tape.) George McAvoy will handle the technical aspect of this phase. *TT* stories will, as in the past series, be developed in script form only. The scripts will be typed and dittoed (30 copies) by Adele Teitell. Copies will be dispatched to Bill Weiss, Newt Schwin, Herb Carlborg (CBS continuity acceptance), Ed Friendly, Bob Keeshan, Frank Schudde and me. Adele will also build and maintain a script file. Tom Morrison will hold the balance of the working scripts, and will see that they are kept up to date with all revisions. He will deliver the scripts to the assigned Animation Directors.

IV. SOUNDTRACKS

Lionel Wilson will, as in the past, perform all the voices for the *TT* pictures. Music has been composed by Phil Scheib. Phil and George McAvoy will prepare a quarter-inch tape Music-efx cue track from scripts marked as to timing by Tom Morrison. The voice will be added by our "Live-Tape Mix" method. All Recap and Preview narration should be recorded in proper sequence and the entire track should be spliced together as indicated by the chart on Page 3, before the tape is transferred to 35mm. I want the exp sheets to read continuously, including the Recaps and Previews and the episodes' Title Cards. Lionel Wilson will read all titles at beginning of recap, and at end of preview. The final ten seconds (approx.) of the Recap should consist of a dub from the end of the previous episode. Here is the detail chart of a typical (Tues-Wed-Thur) Daily episode sound tape ready to transfer:

Std Title: 10" TERRYTOONS PRESENTS	Song 30"	Daily Title Fanfare 05"	Announce Title Recap Narration ← 25" →	Repeat Scene	Story 2:00	Preview Narration 20"	End Fanfare 05"
--	-------------	-------------------------------	--	-----------------	---------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------

Here is a Monday tape:

Std Titles: 10" TERRYTOONS PRESENTS	Song 30"	Daily Title Fanfare 05"	Story 2:15	Preview Narration 30"	End Fanfare 05"
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And a Friday:

Std Title: 10" TERRYTOONS PRESENTS	Song 30"	Daily Title Fanfare 05"	Announce Title Recap Narration ← 25" →	Repeat Scene	Story 2:00	Preview Narration 20"	End Fanfare 05"
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V. LAYOUT & BG.

As an adjunct to the regular layouts by the animation directors, there will be two special layout functions:

Larz Bourne will prepare, based on his familiarity with the stories, a special set of standard, all-purpose lay-outs including close-up lip-sync and reaction shots, walks, runs, standard poses, etc. These will be numbered, duplicated, and a set handed out to each animation director. Eli Bauer will be the over-all stylist of the series. He will design all backgrounds, working over the rough indication layouts made by the Animation Directors. He and Larz together will develop any new character models needed.

Each production will be filmed in sequence, without slates for individual scenes or sections. The attempt will be to edit as we go. The Recaps and Previews will be shot in their proper places at the beginning and end of each Daily episode.

E.G.: When the cameraman reaches the end of an episode, the sheets will indicate the scenes used in the preview. The exact section or sections of that scene will have been selected and marked on the sheets by the AD, The camera man will shoot only the marked sections as indicated, using the called-for scenes in proper order and without slates. He will

then slate the Recap for the next episode, shoot the selected scene sections and immediately go into the up-coming episode, without slating.

Sadly, there are two lost pages of these production notes, which covered the animation, inking, and painting. I was encouraging stronger animation, and for this second series, going for white opaquing of the characters. Brush inking was used throughout on *Tom Terrific*.

— GD

IX. EDITING

The Film Editor of *TT* will be assigned on the basis of commercial work in the studio at the time. If the plan, as developed so far in this outline is followed carefully, the editing job will be much less staggering than it was in the original batch.

The editor, after cutting out the NG frames, will need only join the Standard Openings and Closings to complete the episodes. The Title Cards for the beginning of each episode will be the first shot of each Recap. The Teaser card will be the last shot of each preview. Here is a chart of the film continuity for a daily episode:

STD TITLE	SONG	TITLE CARD	MON STORY	TUE STORY	WED STORY	WED PREVIEW	BLACK LEADER	THUR RECAP	THUR STORY	FRI STORY	STD RECAP	END TITLE
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Remove title card and announcement for Sat.version

The Saturday .version will be made up by REMOVING (from a dupe) the Recap-Preview material not needed and by setting up two sections, like so:

STD TITLE	SONG	TITLE CARD	MON STORY	TUE STORY	WED STORY	WED PREVIEW	BLACK LEADER	THUR RECAP	THUR STORY	FRI STORY	STD RECAP	END TITLE
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Remove title card and announcement for Sat.version

Title	Director
<i>The Missing Mail Mystery</i>	Rasinski
<i>Isotope Feeny's Foolish Fog</i>	Tendlar
<i>Moon Over Manfred</i>	Davis
<i>The Prince Frog</i>	Gent
<i>Go West Young Manfred</i>	Bourne
<i>The Million Manfred Mystery</i>	
<i>The Flying Sorcerer</i>	
<i>The Silly Sandman</i>	
<i>The Big Dog Show-Off</i>	
<i>The Everlasting Birthday Party</i>	

Only the first five episodes had assigned directors when these notes were written. I have no surviving records of the directors of the remaining episodes.

— GD

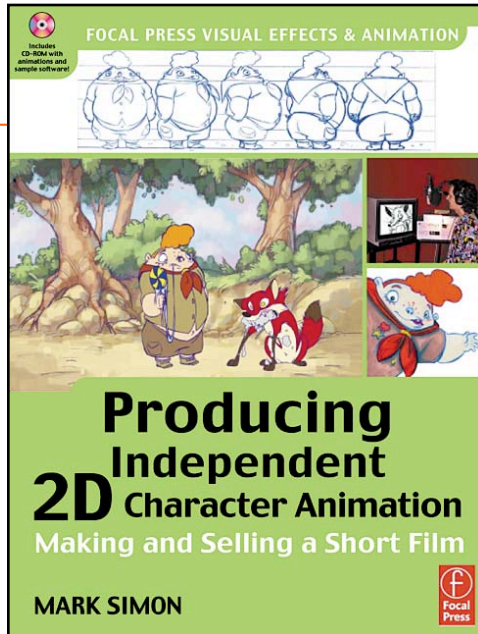
To [read](#) more about the production of these classics visit Gene's online book now. ■

GENE DEITCH is one of the last surviving members of the original Hollywood UPA studio of 1946 and the instigator of the CBS-Terrytoon "renaissance" of 1956-1958. He was also: Animation Department Chief of the Detroit [Jam Handy Organization](#), 1949-1951, Creative Chief of UPA-New York, 1951-1954, Director at John Hubley's Storyboard, Inc., New York, 1955, President of Gene Deitch Associates, Inc., New York, 1958-1960, Creative Director for Rembrandt Films, 1960-1968, and star director for Weston Woods Studios, Inc., Weston, Connecticut, 1968-1993. He has worked for over 40 years with the Prague animation studio, "Bratri v Triku."



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All images are from *Producing Independent 2D Character Animation: Making and Selling a Short Film* by Mark Simon. Reprinted with permission.

BOOK EXCERPT

Concept to Creation: Directing Dialogue

by Mark Simon

This is the fourth in a series of 12 excerpts from Mark Simon's book, *Producing Independent 2D Character Animation: Making and Selling a Short Film*. This book is a full-color concept-to-pitch guide that teaches animators, students and small studios the art and business of producing short, cel animation films. Animation producer Mark Simon has detailed the process in an accessible how-to manner using his award-winning series, *Timmy's Lessons In Nature*, as a guide. This 432-page book contains more than 600 full-color images, interviews and a CD-ROM containing sample animation, animatics and sample software described in the text.



Early sketch of the fox character.

The most important part of a production is a good script. Next you have to have good acting. Without great voices, even the best animation will seem flat and uninteresting.

Actors need to have the emotions of a scene explained to them. If you don't give an actor much information, they are less likely to give you much in return. Try having table readings with all the actors together. Table readings are early read-throughs of a script with all the actors, director and producer sitting at a table. Read through the script to see how it sounds with actors, and take notes. This is a great time to make last-minute script changes so that it sounds more natural. Once the actors really get into their characters, they will often make suggestions as to what their character would or would not say, and those suggestions are usually very good ones.

All actors respond differently to direction, but none of them like being given a reading. In other words, don't demonstrate how they should say a line. They feel it's demeaning, and you are likely to get a very poor reading from them afterwards. Instead,



Author, producer/director Mark Simon standing in the audio booth while delivering the fox's dialogue. Facilities provided by Sound "O" Rama.

give them direction by referring to other film or TV projects, relating a scene to real-life incidents, or anything you can think of to help them relate to the character's situation.

Actors should stand while delivering their lines to keep their energy up and help them project from their diaphragms. They should also be encouraged to act out the action during the session. You do not want low-energy actors unless the scene calls for it.

Audio sessions should also be fun. Try to avoid yelling at people during a session — it affects everyone who is involved. Sessions should also not go longer than three or four hours with each actor, with a number of breaks. Longer sessions are tiring and performances are likely to suffer, as well as being hard on someone's voice.

Just as big action never looks too big in animation, voices can also be much bigger and more animated in a cartoon than in live-action. Cartoons benefit greatly from truly distinctive character voices.

Many independent animators supply their own voices. When you record yourself, it is helpful to have someone you trust give you notes during a recording. Your voice never quite sounds the same in a recording as it does in your head.

In *Timmy's Lessons in Nature*, I not only recorded the fox's speaking voice, I also did his vicious attack. For the attack I made a badger sort of sound and shook my head violently so that my jowls shook around. We recorded multiple takes of this — until I got a headache — and mixed them all together to get the huge attack sound heard in the animation.

In animation, actors don't have a lot to work with — there are no sets, no props, few, if any, other actors

and blank walls in front of them. It is very important for them to see their character and the storyboards. Once actors see what is happening in their scene, they can offer you much more.

The rest of the chapter contains more information on how Timmy's Lessons In Nature, Lesson 3 was produced. To learn about other topics, check out Producing Independent 2D Character Animation, published by Focal Press. It can be purchased at any bookstore or [online](#). ■

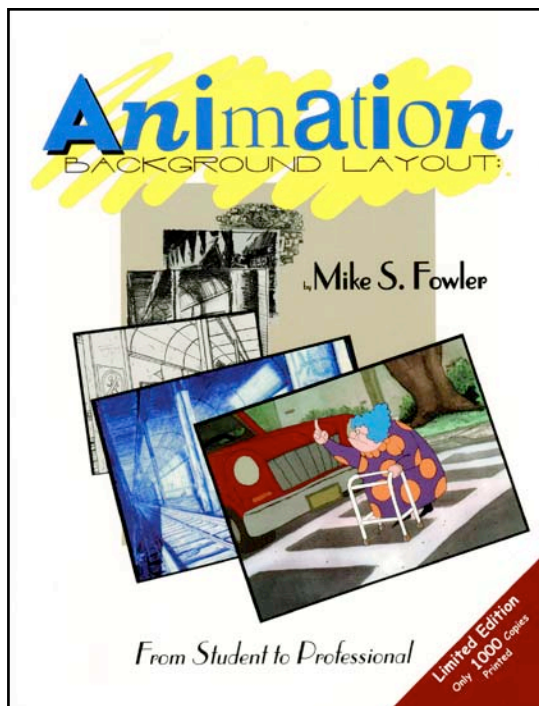
Producing Independent 2D Character Animation: Making and Selling a Short Film by Mark Simon. Burlington, Massachusetts: Focal Press, 2003. 432 pages. ISBN: 0-240-80513-5.

MARK SIMON founded and owns A&S Animation, Inc., an award-winning cel animation house in Florida, which develops and produces character animation for commercials, TV, training videos and the Web. He also owns Animatics & Storyboards, Inc., the largest storyboard house in the southern United States, which has provided work to more than 1,200 productions. Mark's accomplishments include owning an award-winning advertising firm, being a syndicated cartoonist, production designer of film, TV and animations, and writing entertainment industry books and lecturing on both animation and storyboards. Winning more than 30 animation awards, Mark has directed *Timmy's Lessons in Nature* (which he sold as a TV series), *My Wife Is Pregnant*, numerous commercials, training videos and television series special effects. Read more about [A&S Animation](#) and the author.

QUICK SKETCH

Animation Layout: Thumbnail

by Mike S. Fowler



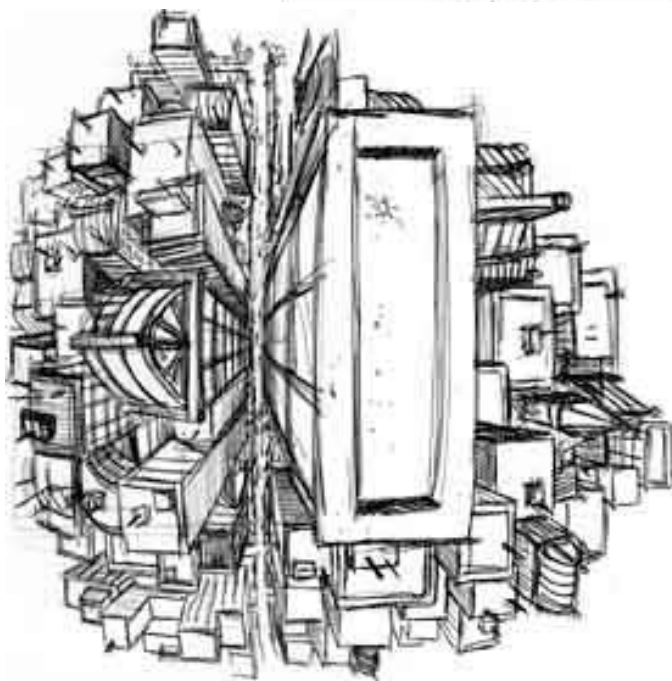
This month AWN continues a series of excerpts from Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional author Mike S. Fowler has especially adapted his book for our readers. In this essential and educational easy-to-follow guide, Mike, an animation layout artist, supervisor and college instructor illustrates the purpose and function of animation layout. He creates an easy to follow format with so much information and diagrams, people of any animation skill level should be able to learn something new. Whether an inquisitive beginner, the college animation student who wants to better prepare for a job or an animation industry professionals, everyone can learn something new in this book.

WHenever I introduce the concept of creating thumbnail drawings to explore the direction of the background, I have at least one student ask why they must be the size of your thumbnails. They could be, but usually are not. They range in size from a two-inch to a six-inch box.

The size of the thumbnail is really secondary to the thought that must be put into the drawing and whether this thumbnail represents the best staging for this scene. For the most part, thumbnail drawings are created quickly with limited detail to show staging, composition, perspective and the required element placements. My daughter, Michelle, at age five, created this sketch example. A thumbnail should be as spontaneous as this artwork.

I cannot over stress the importance of creating thumbnail sketches in layout and all other conceptual stages of animation. Why rush into a finished version of the background that maybe, at best, mediocre, when a few minutes of extra planning can produce dynamic results?

FOR THE MOST PART, THUMBNAIL DRAWINGS ARE CREATED QUICKLY WITH LIMITED DETAIL TO SHOW STAGING, COMPOSITION, PERSPECTIVE AND THE REQUIRED ELEMENT PLACEMENTS.



Below, note the use of composition (why things are placed), staging (characters freedom to move) and perspective (initial planning that will later be refined).

Thumbnail drawings do not have to be created specifically for animation or layout. They are ideas of how environments look to you. Most concepts and ideas are created from daily drawing in a sketchbook, on a napkin or even production meeting handouts. Whenever an idea arrives, it is best to sketch it out then define it more at another time.

During a very long staff meeting I shamelessly created the above elaborate three-point city sketch. I was pleased with the overall composition of this pen sketch and how it forces your eyes into the environment so much so that I started adding extraneous items such as dots for cars, brick texture and even a potty-humor extra large bird dropping on the roof. Like most sketches, it is a preliminary drawing without accurate perspective. (By the way, I strongly do not recommend drawing during meetings unless it will keep you awake.)

Incorporate patterns within your sketches. Try placing elements in groups of threes and utilizing repeat shapes. When necessary, give sufficient room for characters to easily move.

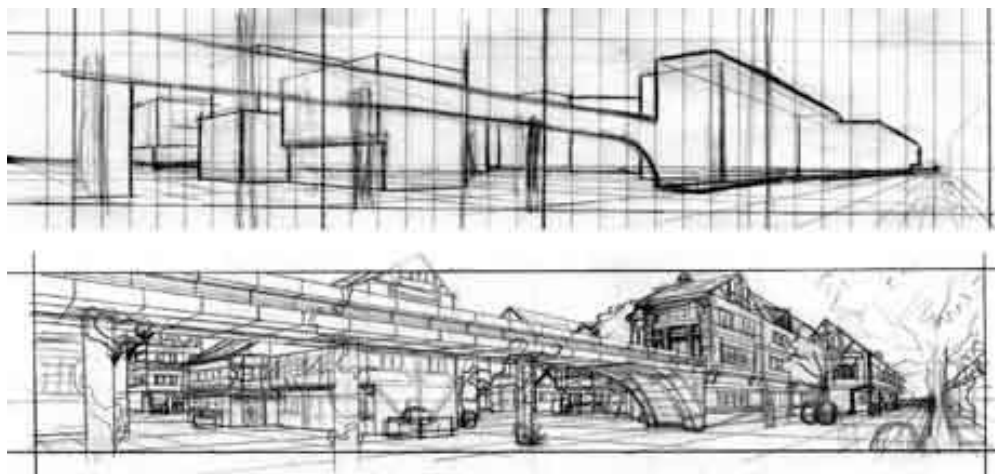
EXERCISES FOR THUMBNAILS

For the thumbnail exercises, I suggest using several 8 1/2" by 11" sheets of paper or a sketchbook and a black pencil.

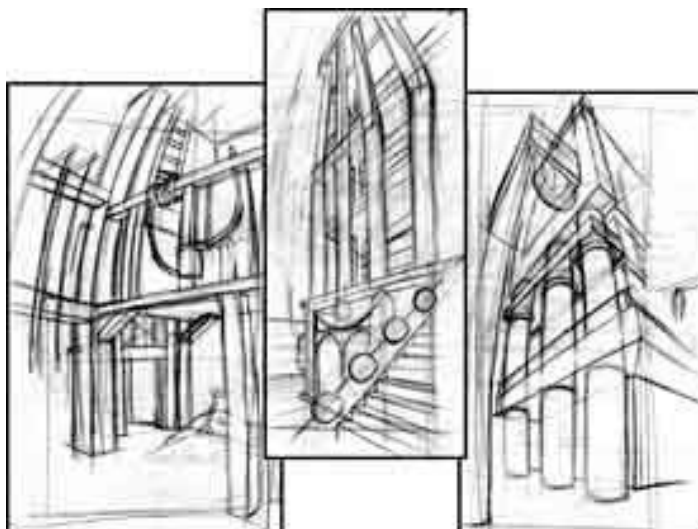
TIME YOURSELF or get a friend to time you as you draw. There are three rounds to this exercise; each one is longer in duration. The purpose of this assignment is to draw the first thing that comes to your mind and with as little detail as possible. The timed aspect forces you to concentrate on only the basic shapes of the elements and not extraneous details. This is the basis of a thumbnail; explain what the environment looks like in an easily read and understood manner.

Part one: Write a list of 30 different scenes or locations such as western saloon, a city downtown, a zoo or the interior of a church. Give this list to your friend, or place it on the table beside you.

Part two: Ten-second sketches for a total of two minutes. As you read or hear the style of location to be drawn, draw the first thing that comes to your mind in its simplest shapes. Repeat this until the time limit is up. You have just created 12 thumbnail sketches.



These roughs were created by my first-year layout student, Erick Levesque.



These three thumbnails sketches are from my first-year layout student, Jacques Daigle.

Part three: Thirty-second sketches for five minutes. Similar to the above, listen or read the name of the next environment and draw the first thing that comes to your mind. Start with the basic shapes, then add limited detail to suit the drawing and time limit.

By repeating this exercise over and over you will become accustomed to breaking elements down to their basic shapes and creating dynamic thumbnail sketches. ■

Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional by Mike S. Fowler. Caistor Center, Ontario, Canada: Fowler Cartooning Ink, 2002. 168 pages. ISBN: 0-9731602-0-9. \$35.00. Buy it [online](#) at Mike's website.

MIKE S. FOWLER has a passion for art and animation. His animation abilities as a supervisor, layout artist, poser, storyboard artist and fun pack designer are showcased in numerous shows. Credits include: Bob and Margaret, Ned's Newt, Hoze Houndz, Elliot the Moose, Little Bear, Eckhart, Maggie and the Ferocious Beast, Rainbow Fish, Anthony Ant, Franklin, Redwall, Ace Ventura and Blazing Dragons to name a few.

In addition to being a published political and panel cartoonist, graphic artist and classical animation graduate from Sheridan College, Mike has supervised various Flash Web series, promotional bumpers for major television shows and segments of an educational Flash-HTML based University learning program for U.S. and Canadian markets.

Mike has developed from, concept through to production, several critically acclaimed montage/demonstration films, artists' showcase books and educational promotional material.

Fowler's educational background covers Graphic and Advertising Design at Conestoga College, diploma in Classical Animation from Sheridan College, Management and Human Relations at Conestoga and Sheridan Colleges, and a Certificate in Adult Education from the University of New Brunswick. As the lead animation college instructor, he teaches animation, layout, storyboard, Flash and computer graphics.

With the release of his first book, Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional, Mike adds being a published author to his list of achievements. Read [more](#) about Mike.



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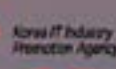
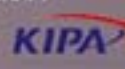
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CAREER COACH

Graduate to a Good Life



by Pamela Kliebrink Thompson

IF YOU DREAD GOING TO WORK ON MONDAY, YOU MAY HAVE THE WRONG JOB.

JUNE BRINGS GRADUATION AND FATHER'S DAY, A TIME WHEN WE reflect on the advice of teachers and fathers. I learned a lot from my dad and my father-in-law.

My father, Paul Kleibrink, found his passion in 1952, when he discovered computers. This passion was so all-consuming that he couldn't help but share it with those around him. I remember he enthusiastically explained the binary system to me when I was seven. That's great dad, I thought, but what I really want to know is what is $9 + 6$?

My father retired from IBM after 40 years, but he is still passionate about computers. Now he teaches other seniors how to use computers. If he wanted to, he could charge for it, but he does it for free, because he loves it.

Before I graduated college, my father gave me the best career advice of all — "It's your life. Live it how you want to live it, not how you think others want you to. Do what excites you the most."

Recently I spoke to a group of high school seniors and gave them the advice my father gave me decades ago — Do what you love. Choose something that gets you revved up and don't worry about whether you can make money at it or not. What would you do even if you weren't paid for it? That's what you should do, whatever that is. Don't choose a job simply because you think you can make lots of money at it.

If you choose to work at something that you truly love, you will be more excited about Monday mornings than the weekends. It's your life to live, so pursue your dreams and work hard to make them real. When you love what you do, you will be successful. You will be able to make a living at it. You won't have to dream about things to acquire, about getting away from work on the weekend, or summer vacations, because you will be living the life you want, every day.

Many people think they can't make money doing what they love doing. Or they think if they make money doing something they love, they will no longer enjoy it. So they put off doing what they love to the weekends or maybe they'll do it after they retire. Instead they pursue something that they think will be financially rewarding. They aren't happy at work or satisfied with their lives. They wonder why they dread going to work.

If you dread going to work on Monday, you may have the wrong job. Figure out why it's not right for you and change your life. Don't be afraid to pursue your dreams. Find someone who has a job he/she loves and learn from him/her.

My father-in-law, Rex Thompson, believed that you can do anything if you work hard at it. Working hard at it includes learning what you need to know, as well as whom you need to know. My father-in-law was a master at networking — he talked to everybody. And he listened. He was a master salesperson because he was a natural. He claimed that he would prefer to be alone, but he found himself often surrounded by people because they liked to be around him. After work, he coached a girls softball

team. He taught them teamwork and encouraged them to always do their best. He believed in them. He believed in me. He always advised me to stretch and grow. He encouraged me to take chances. If my employer didn't give me the chance to learn, move on. Don't be afraid to make a change.

My father-in-law's business card didn't have a title on it — just his name, Rex Thompson, and what he did, "Everything." What he didn't know, he was ready to learn. Rex died on March 10, 2003, and everyone who knew him had a story about him. He encouraged everyone who needed encouragement (which is everyone!) to pursue their dreams.

I hope this fatherly advice helps you graduate from a job you tolerate to life's work that will inspire you every day. ■

PAMELA KLIEBRINK THOMPSON is a career coach, recruiter and hiring strategist who helps clients to achieve their dreams in their personal and professional lives.

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ARTIFICIAL H₂O

Finding the Right CG Water and Fish in *Nemo*

by Karl F. Cohen

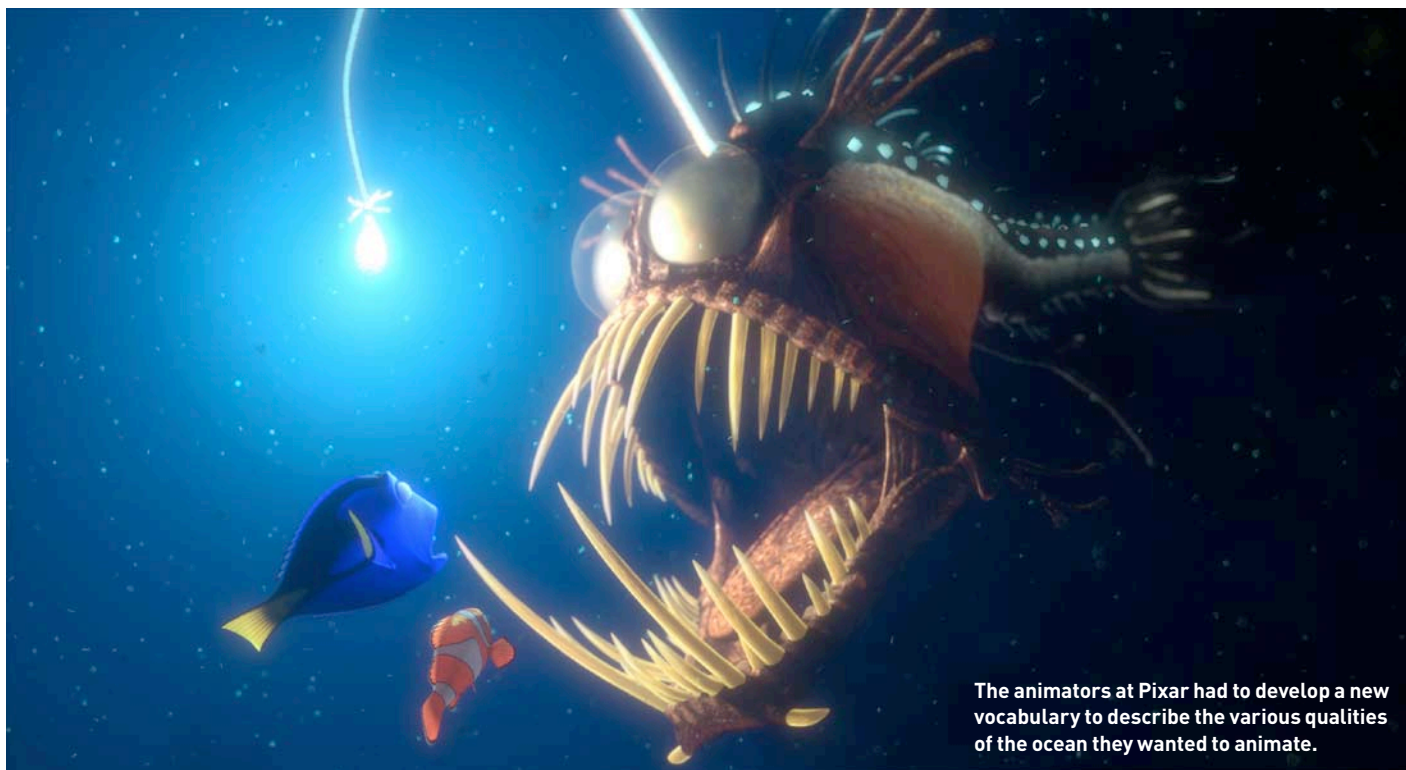


Pixar's crowning achievement in *Finding Nemo* is how well they captured the light and movement of the water onscreen. Unless otherwise noted, all images © Disney Enterprises Inc./Pixar Animation Studios. All rights reserved.

LIGHTING IS OFTEN MORE PRONOUNCED AND COLORS ARE OFTEN RICHER IN THE FILM THAN THEY ARE IN THE OCEAN.

AT FIRST GLANCE, *FINDING NEMO'S* BREATHTAKINGLY beautiful underwater computer-animation looks almost photo-real. Almost. "The animals are caricatures of sea creatures," explains supervising animator Dylan Brown. "I can see how people can look at our water and say it is photo-realistic, but it is actually caricatured as well."

The perception that *Finding Nemo* was intended to be photo-realistic is based on something that happened when [Pixar Animation Studios](#) was developing the project. "One of the things we did early on was a series of photo-realistic tests," Brown adds. "Our technical team figured out what elements are needed to create photo-realistic water. You have a murk that is like a fog underwater. You have particulate matter that is like little bits of dust floating around the water. You have the caustic lighting coming down that dances all over the ocean's floor. You have light beams, and you have surface im-



The animators at Pixar had to develop a new vocabulary to describe the various qualities of the ocean they wanted to animate.

ages. They designed all of the individual elements using the software that was on hand. They did tests using four ocean scenes, two above water and two underwater, to see if they could recreate real footage of the sea. The technical crew worked on it and eventually came back and showed us their work. We couldn't tell the difference between the re-created footage and the original. It blew us all away.

"We knew we could make a Jacques Cousteau-type of documentary, but that's not what we were trying to do. What we do at the studio is caricature and it would look funny to have cartoony caricatures of fish in this realistic world. We didn't want to fool the audience that they are in a real world. You have to believe you are underwater, but it doesn't have to be photo-realistic to do that."

Although Brown calls their backgrounds believable-looking virtual sets, he maintains that they created a fantasy world predicated on the studio's trademark hyper-realism. They dressed their sets with wonderful forms made of coral and other materials. They use carefully controlled lighting and colors. Lighting is often more pronounced and colors are often richer in the film than they are in the ocean. For example, a pale blue might become rich royal blue in the film. In the real world things become gray and difficult to see as they get farther away from you when you are underwater, but in the film their water remains saturated with color.

UNDERSTANDING WATER

One of the trickiest problems for Pixar's staff was learning to communicate to each other about actions, textures and other details that are not easy to describe in the English language. A new vocabulary had to be developed in order to communicate, and technical director Oren Jacob believes they never really mastered a vocabulary that describes all the nuances of how the water should look.

Once they were able to create realistic water, the art department began to request how the water in a scene should look. Jacob says, "That didn't make things easy. They might say, 'It's a little bit too confused, but what does that mean?' They were beginning to direct it aesthetically. That challenge continued right up until the last shot of the film."

Pixar invited a scientist to present lectures on waves, swells and other motions. Several staff members took a trip to Hawaii in 2000 to study water and sea life. They ended up using reference footage from that trip to describe conditions above and below the surface. Jacob recalled conversations at work such as: "Remember what it was like on the boat on Thursday afternoon? I want the water like that." Or: "Do you want it to look more like Wednesday or Friday?" They found that referring back to those experiences was more useful than saying, "I want it more choppy than angry."

Everybody had to learn and contribute to the dilemma of solving the water communication problems.



The animators also had to learn to read the surge and swell, and study how fast the water is flowing. Knowledge of water's behavior was needed to help them animate properly. Camera people needed to understand the effects of water on underwater photography. The lighting experts needed to learn how far away one can see underwater. They didn't need to build sets beyond 100 or 200 feet, since you can't see beyond that.

LEARNING TO ANIMATE FISH

Figuring out how to animate swimming fish was an enjoyable part of the project for Brown. Long before the animation began there were just a handful of people working on the film. Brown and seven other members of the crew took a field trip to the Monterey Bay Aquarium, where a scientist spent an entire day with them. They saw back rooms where they nurse fish and have different species that are not on display. They got to touch a lot of things. "We had fun doing that. It was a huge learning experience for us."

Their education continued when Adam Summers, a Ph.D. from Berkeley (now at UC Irvine), became their resident ichthyologist. He explained why fish do what they do and what he thought they were thinking. He explained the unusual body movements of the blue tang, which is the species represented by the memory-impaired Dory. They make an up and down motion as they swim and they rarely use their tails. Brown had noticed the movements at the aquarium, but he didn't know what they were called or why they happened.

Brown developed the movements of the animated Dory on what he had been taught. It resulted in an interesting lesson in understanding the difference between film and reality. After a screening of his preliminary motion studies, John Lasseter, the film's executive pro-

Dylan Brown and other Pixar animators studied the movement of fish at the Monterey Aquarium.



Executive producer John Lasseter noticed that Dory's tail didn't move, and felt it looked unrealistic.

ducer, asked him why Dory rarely moved her tail.

People have general ideas about how fish swim. They wiggle their tails and flap their fins. So when you have this preconceived notion and the movements on the screen doesn't support that, you lose believability. When Lasseter saw Dory swimming fast without wiggling her tail, it was physically correct for her species, but it didn't look believable to him. So Brown went back and added tail wiggle. He took creative license. He says, "Fortunately we caught that early on."



Walt Disney studied deer closely before embarking on *Bambi* in 1938. © Disney. All rights reserved.

HOW DO YOU TEACH A FISH TO ACT?

One of the film's biggest challenges was learning how to turn a fish into an entertaining actor. Brown says this was difficult to figure out, as Pixar's past features starred characters with two legs and two arms. To turn fish into good actors, Brown adds, "We had to develop a whole new bag of tricks. They were built on the same fundamentals of animation, communication, etc., but



The writing, acting and animation all came together for an emotionally charged scene when Dory and Marlin say goodbye. Ellen DeGeneres (with director Andrew Stanton) voices Dory.

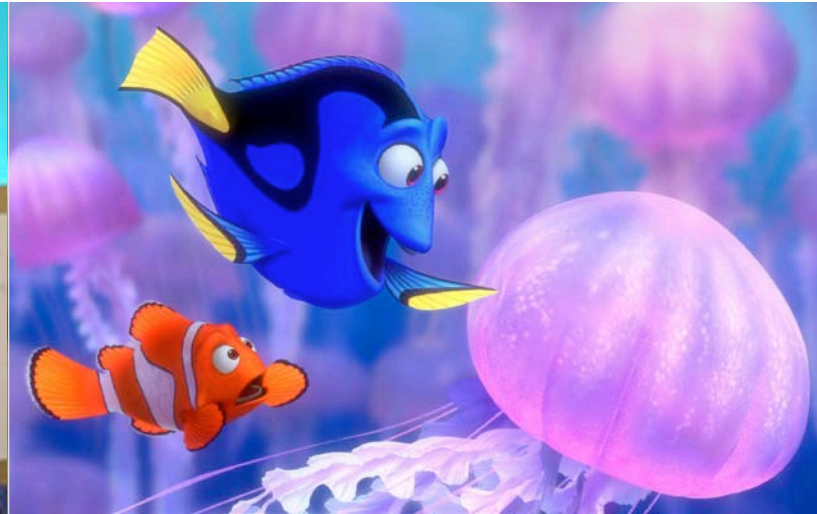
now we were dealing with fish that had no arms or legs. I know how to make a human walk sadly or happily, but how do you make a fish swim happily or sadly? Figuring all that stuff out was a definite challenge.

"We started from reality and went from there. Part of it was learning how to make gestures with fins. If I'm underwater and I move my hands up, my body is going to move back. If our fish are gesturing all over the place, do we want to have their bodies move all over the place too? Probably not. We needed to find the right balance of getting the fish to make the right acting gestures without having the gestures throw you out of the realm of the aquatic world we were creating."

They spent a lot of time studying *Bambi* (1942), as it didn't use a lot of anthropomorphic animals. Disney really stayed true to nature. Pixar knew they didn't want to make human-like fish that stand on their tails like the star of *The Incredible Mr. Limpet* (1964).

To get fish to act, Pixar had to take liberties. In *Finding Nemo* the face becomes very expressive. They humanized the faces in the characterization process. There is lip synch. Brown says, "We have more of a human face on a fish. A fish's face isn't that compelling. A real fish doesn't have flexible lips, just a hard membrane."

The bodies of the fish are more realistic. "A fish is really just a head with a tube thing stuck on to the back of it," according to Brown. "That's your main silhouette and communication piece." To maintain the look they wanted, they decided they didn't really need to use a lot of body gestures. When they did need to use fins like arms to convey emphasis, they tried to find moments when there was a motivation for movement so the gesture would be part of a physical act. It would become a



The constant movement of jellyfish proved to be a huge challenge for Pixar.

body accent and not an out of place movement.

One of the great moments of the finished film for Brown is the sequence they call "Goodbye Dory." It really tested the animators' ability to make fish act as it is an emotional charged scene in which the new friends part. He said, "You animate to the voices, and the reads we got from Albert Brooks and Ellen DeGeneres were absolutely on the money. Three people, Gini Santos, Dave DeVan and Mark Walsh worked on it. It was a pivotal scene... such sweet and sincere animation. It shows what we can do when we have impeccable writing, reads and just fantastic animation."

Brown believes the scene is so well done that people will probably not notice the excellence of the animation and acting. He says, "One goal of the animator is to make the craft of what you have done transparent to the audience. You want them engulfed in the film, absorbed by seeing the scene, empathizing with the characters, being entertained by them or the story. You don't want them thinking about the craft of the animators."

MORE DIFFICULT SHOTS

Animating about 77,000 jellyfish was quite a challenge for both the technical crew and the artists. With jellyfish nothing is static, everything moves. Water, wind and their swimming movements influenced their forms. That resulted in every frame being a different composition so it was hard to create actions and forms that matched up from shot to shot. Past Pixar features starred characters that looked the same from shot to shot and their movements and appearances were easy to match up. Now they had to deal with ever-changing forms.

To create shots that matched up, they had to create

key elements by hand. To avoid confusing the audience, they animated parts of 1,200 jellyfish. They were carefully placed in the foreground or middle ground of scenes so the cuts would look natural to the audience. Brown says, "We did those scenes three or four times before we got them right. It was so hard."

Procedural animation (movements created by computers) was used with the jellyfish. There are three parts to each animal, the bell that can float on the surface, the tentacles, which are the stinging parts that hang down from the outside of the bell, and the "oral arms," which look something like drapes of cloth that hang down from the center of the bell. (The oral arms pull the prey up into the mouth.) While the bell was sometimes hand-animated, computers automatically moved the stuff hanging off of the bell.

To create the computer-controlled movements they had to start by hand animating the basic shapes. Then the technical crew took the basic drawings and created three controls that could be used to adjust movements to get the desired random, natural look. The team could control speed, amount and offset. By adjusting the time and amount of each pulse of different animals, they created the random, natural feel to the scenes. Brown is glad they could get a hand feel to their work without having to animate 77,000 jellyfish by hand.

Procedural animation was also used to get the back and forth movement of the coral that is created by water as it surges and swells, and the movements of anemones were about 95% procedural. The anemone movements are actually similar to the movement of Sulley's hairs in *Monsters, Inc.* except gravity is turned upside down and the new effect is called buoyancy.

THE HARDEST SHOT

Brown is proud of the work they put into the development of the fish and he believes they created good humans, birds, crabs and other creatures. The accomplishment that he says was the hardest to achieve was being able to do water really well. "Water is the hardest thing to do in computer graphics. In the sequences with the whale there is splashing water going everywhere. It works so well. I don't know if it was more than we could chew, but we certainly bit off a lot. It was enough to make us really nervous going into the picture, but we knew we would come out OK. We expected to figure out a lot of stuff. That is why a lot of us work here. It's a challenge and we want to conquer it."

According to Jacob, Pixar normally trains their animators to use the technical tools so they can control all the parameters of animation. But when it comes to the most difficult shots, there are experts on the staff that are called upon to solve the problems at hand. It was



The expressive faces helped to humanize the fish.

Martin Nguyen, who did the actual work on the series of shots of the whale. Jacob says Nguyen spent almost a year animating "some of the most heavy duty, difficult shots of the film."

When Jacob first saw the film's storyboards he wasn't sure if they could do those shots successfully, but when Martin showed us his tests, "they were absolutely gorgeous." But the greatest moment for Jacob was when he realized they had mastered the most difficult shots.

In one memorable scene, the whale's tongue rises up and throws thousands of gallons of water up in the air and against the baleen in its mouth. Water splashes everywhere and then falls back into a pool at the bottom of the mouth. Jacob says it was difficult to get the physics of the shot to look right. It was hard to simulate, it was hard to direct, it was hard to control and it was hard to generate the needed data. "I think the splatter in the film was the most important effect we did."

OTHER GREAT MOMENTS

There were other difficult shots that required exceptional water treatment. He is extremely proud of a sequence created by Erik Smitt just a few weeks before the production came to a close. In the scene, a group of fish are descending back into the water. The camera goes from above the water and plunges underneath it. When he first screened the shot with people who had helped engineer it, the quality of their efforts took them by surprise. "Nobody knew exactly how we did it. That's an amazing shot."

There were other great moments for Jacob during the production. One was seeing for the first time the shot where a bag of water breaks on a dentist's tray. Another

came two years ago when Ken Lao and Bill Reeves first showed their test footage to see how closely they could duplicate the look of four photographic shots of water. They had been working on the project for several months. Jacob says, "I'll never forget the day we presented their work and you couldn't tell the difference. They just nailed it."

But for Jacob, the most satisfying moment was early in 2003, after the showing of the nearly completed film at the ShoWest exhibitors convention in Las Vegas. "I'd been buried in technical stuff, getting murk to work, getting ocean surfaces to work...They understood what Andrew [Stanton, the director] was trying to do... and it communicated to them.... It indicated that all our work was serving its purpose. The audience wasn't questioning our work, they were accepting it and moving on to the story and watching the characters evolve."

Dylan Brown, a former animation student from San Francisco State, was hired by Pixar in 1995 to work on the Toy Story CD-ROM. He worked as an animator on [A Bug's Life](#)

(1998), was one of two directing animators on [Toy Story 2](#) (1999) and was an animator on Monsters, Inc. (2001) before working on Finding Nemo.

Oren Jacob has been at Pixar since 1990 when he worked as an intern on a Macintosh software project. He quickly rose in the ranks to become a technical director on several of the computer animated TV commercials Pixar did in the early 1990s. Pixar then moved on to create animated features. Jacob worked on Toy Story (1995), A Bug's Life (1998) and Toy Story 2 (1999) before Finding Nemo. ■

KARL F. COHEN teaches animation history at San Francisco State (Dylan Brown was one of his students), is the author of [Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators](#) (McFarland, 1997), is president of ASIFA-SF and is a frequent contributor to Animation World Magazine.

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ANIME REVIEWS

New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten



High school student Juna is tapped to save the universe as the spiritual warrior Arjuna. © 2001-2002 ARJUNA PROJECT/Sotsu Agency-TV Tokyo. All rights reserved.

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.

Arjuna. V.1, Rebirth. V.2, Journey. V.3, Conflicts. V.4, Understanding.

TV series (13 episodes), 2001. Director: Shoji Kawamori. V.1, 3 episodes/75 minutes; v.2, 4 episodes/100 minutes; v.3, 4 episodes/110 minutes; v.4, 2 episodes/70 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

Arjuna is an unusually provocative and message-heavy series from concept-creator and director Kawamori, a fan-favorite for his development of exciting, yet thought-provoking works like [*Macross Plus*](#) and [*The Vision of Escaflowne*](#). *Arjuna* is a strongly pro-environmental sci-fi/fantasy based upon Hindu/Buddhist themes of the oneness of all life on earth, and that the earth itself has a planetary consciousness/soul.

Juna Ariyoshi and Tokio Oshima are two high-school students, more than friends but too young to know whether they are really lovers or not. A highway accident leaves Juna suspended between life and death, where she is recruited "to save the Earth" by Chris Hawken, a physically crippled, but mentally powerful telepath working for a secret global organization devoted to staving off planetary ecological collapse. Juna has the latent psychic power to become Arjuna, a spiritual warrior with the ability to fight off the Raaja, fearsome ectoplasmic monsters that are spontaneously generating in ever-growing numbers. Frustratingly, Chris refuses to instruct Juna on how she is to do this, saying that she must figure it out on her own.

Arjuna's battles against the Raaja are the standard slowly escalating sci-fi menace of many anime TV series (although a higher-quality CGI/2D mix than most); what is different is the nature of the menace. It is soon obvious to the viewer (if not Juna) that the Raaja are huge enlargements of microscopic intestinal bacteria and cancer cells being generated by the earth itself at sites of particularly gross pollution. Kawamori does not blame only the convenient targets of greedy giant industries, but all of us for our wasteful modern lifestyles. Juna's classmates' favorite hangout spot is a U.S.-style fast-food chain blatantly named "Merikan Burger," where the kids order burgers so huge that they only eat half and toss the rest in the trash (while millions are starving in Africa).

Juna and her video-game junkie boyfriend become the two sides of a Greek chorus; Tokio symbolizes the conspicuous consumption of industrialized society, unable to understand why Juna has become such a puritan, unable to eat food stuffed with "safe" chemical additives, while Juna is unable to get through to him that his casual wastefulness (multiplied by the whole population of urban civilization) is causing the Raaja that are now blighting all crops, contaminating all water, causing meltdowns in nuclear power plants, and building up to the destruction of the Van Allen radiation belt and a polar shift, which will destroy most life on earth.

Kawamori's skillful direction, attractive character art by Takahiro Kishida, haunting music by Yoko Kanno and high-quality (for a TV series) animation by the Sate-light studio, hold more for viewers than might otherwise be expected given the heavy-handed "Save The Planet" message. *Earth Girl Arjuna* (the Japanese title) was 12 half-hour episodes broadcast from January 9 through March 27, 2001. This DVD adds additional footage to some of them plus an entire extra episode to enhance the didacticism. *Arjuna* was somewhat notorious for having almost no merchandising, since practically any of the usual toys and knickknacks would be ludicrously at odds with the constant message against buying unnecessary consumer goods.



The Guyver on DVD is of historic interest to anime fans. © Takaya Production/Tokama; Shoten/Bandai/Movic/Kamakura Super Station.

The Guyver: Bio-Boosted Armor. V.1 & V.2.

OAV series (12 episodes), 1989-1992. Directors: Koichi Ishiguro; Masahiro Otani & Naoto Hashimoto. V.1-2, 6 episodes/180 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$24.95. Distributor: Manga Entertainment.

The Guyver was very influential in the late 1980s and early '90s, but is of historic interest today. An adaptation of a popular 1980s sci-fi manga by Yoshiaki Takaya, it was one of anime's earliest OAV productions, first as a 1986 55-minute featurette, then as this 12-episode serial. The first six half-hour episodes were released monthly between September 1989 and February 1990, produced by the Anime Film studio, and directed by Ishiguro. The story was continued for another six episodes in *The Guyver, Act II*, released between October 1991 and August 1992, produced under the name of Takaya Productions, and shows a dramatic drop in the already poor animation quality, directed by Otani & Hashimoto. The story still ends on a cliffhanger; Takaya's manga carried it much further.

These 12 episodes were among the first anime dubbed videos in the U.S. & Britain, and were the introduction for the English-speaking general public to Japan's stereotyped dramatic sci-fi plot of the tragic hero who is transformed into a superpowered but hideous monster. This made *The Guyver* very popular with superhero fans despite the poor animation quality; to the extent of leading to two American-Australian live-action *Guyver* movies in 1991 and 1994.

High school students Sho Fukamachi and Tetsuro Segawa are strolling in a forest when a nearby explosion showers them with debris including a container. When Sho picks up the container, a strange form flows from it transforming him into an inhuman machine-like

being. Three men appear looking for the "Guyver bio-booster." They transform into huge animal-like beasts to take it from Sho, and to kill the two students as inconvenient witnesses. The bio-booster turns the frightened Sho into an automatic super-warrior, enabling him to defeat the "Zoanoid" monsters.

The boys soon learn that the villain is the Chronos Corporation, a ruthless international company. Chronos' scientists have discovered ancient laboratories of alien "Creators" who had experimented with turning Earth animals into biological super-weapons. Chronos is now using this technology to create a hidden army of Zoanoid agents who will, when there are enough of them, turn into monsters and conquer the world. The Guyver units are the pinnacle of the Creators' technology; there are only three of them. Sho has acquired one by accident, and Chronos wants it back.

There is some slight plot advance in the 12 episodes, but they are basically very repetitive. Chronos sends new Zoanoid agents to threaten Tetsuro and his sister Mizuki (Sho's girlfriend) or to attack Sho's school to lure him out. Despite everyone warning him, "No! It's a trap!", Sho shouts, "I have to save everybody!" and races out for another long, bloody slugfest with the monsters. *The Guyver* was hot stuff at the time, but there is much better anime available today. One nice touch: the videos were originally produced for British release (despite the American dubbing), and the final episode was heavily edited to remove mild nudity. This DVD release not only provides both English and Japanese sound tracks for the first 11 episodes, it presents both versions of episode 12 in their entirety; making this *the* version of *The Guyver* to have if you do want this dated classic.

Mahoromatic: Automatic Maiden. V.1, Combat Maiden. V.2, Haunting Past. V.3, A Warrior's Fate.

TV series (12 episodes), 2001. Director: Hiroyuki Yamaga. V.1-3, 4 episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

At first glance, *Mahoromatic* is just another of the "super French maid" risque sci-fi comedies for hormonally-excited adolescent boys (age-rated 16+). At second glance, it seems more like a parody for adolescent girls of the silly girly mags that their male counterparts are suddenly going crazy over. At third glance, it seems one of those productions where the animation staff (the Gainax and Shaft studios) challenge themselves to keep surprising the audience. What starts off as a zany sex comedy turns into a grim sci-fi battle drama with wholesome family values and a Romeo and Juliet tearjerker romance.



Mahoromatic seems like a frothy sex comedy, but turns out to be a dark sci-fi drama.
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There is a secret war on Earth (hidden from the public by the Authorities) between humans and invading aliens. Both sides use combat androids disguised as ordinary humans, although they only last 10 years. Earth's top android warrior, Mahoro, has the appearance of a young girl (officially 19 because of all the full-frontal nudity, though she looks and acts more like 13 or 14). After almost nine years, her superiors allow her to retire to live her last year in peace. Since she has no idea what to do, she requests assignment as a housemaid (in traditional French maid uniform) to the young son of her former commander, because she feels responsible for not preventing his death in battle.

Suguru Misato is an eighth grade student (presumably 14 years old) who has lived alone in his family's large house since both parents died. After four years of juvenile bachelor housekeeping, he really needs a maid! Mahoro starts out pleased at being able to be useful, teaching him cleanliness and stifling his growing interest in porno magazines. But the more she observes the male-female socialization between him and his classmates (trying to understand such things as "why are boys so obsessed with big boobies?"), the more human she becomes herself. Moments range from the poetic as Mahoro learns to appreciate the beauty of sunsets and flowers (and Suguru learns by watching her), to the erotically comedic as Mahoro jealously protects Suguru from his exhibitionistically nymphomaniac schoolteacher.

Mahoro and Suguru become increasingly close, although they cannot decide themselves whether their warm and tender feeling is love between equals or a mother/older sister and child/younger brother relationship. The plot abruptly switches to stark drama when Ryuga, the aliens' top combat android, tracks Mahoro

down to force a fight to prove which is the better warrior. Mahoro cannot let the alien win, but a fight with super-battle weaponry would kill every human in the vicinity. Suguru is willing to sacrifice himself to protect Mahoro, but she knows that she has less than a year of life in any case.

Mahoromatic was a 12-episode TV series (October 5 to December 28, 2001) for the junior high age group in Japan, based upon a popular manga, which carried the story much further. The final episode reaches a satisfactory semi-conclusion but leaves lots of room for a sequel.



Neo Ranga packs a lot into each 15-minute episode. © Shou Aikawa/Pony Canyon/ Studio Pierrot/Marubeni

Neo Ranga. V.1, A God is Risen. V.2, Lost in the Spectacle. V.3, The Right of Kings. V.4, A Nation Apart. V.5, Ghosts of Days Gone By. V.6.

TV series (48 episodes), 1998-1999. Director: Jun Kamiya. V.1-6, 8 episodes/120 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

Nankai Kio Neoranga (Strange World of the South Seas: Neoranga) is somewhat of a curiosity among recent TV anime serials. The episodes are only 15 minutes each. *Neo Ranga* (animation by Studio Pierrot) was not an independent program, but was part of satellite channel WOWOW's *Anime Complex* program, with the first half (1st season) broadcast from April 6 through Sep-

tember 28, 1998 and the second season during the same dates in 1999.

The 15-minute format works quite well. It keeps each episode's story compact and succinct, within a convoluted plot about three sisters inheriting a mysterious giant robot. Their lives become chaotic as they are swept up in conspiracies to gain control of Ranga. Friendships shift as their neighbors squabble over whether Ranga is an asset (a big tourist attraction which will increase local trade) or a menace (so big it can't help smashing houses by accident; and what if it deliberately runs amok?).

The three Shimabara sisters (Minami, 24; Ushio, 15 and Yuuhi, 12) live in the Tokyo residential district of West Musashino. Their parents died about 10 years ago, and their older brother disappeared soon after. A young boy with tribal facial tattoos appears, claiming to be their nephew Joel from the small, independent, equatorial island kingdom of Barou. He tells them that their brother settled there and married their princess, becoming co-ruler. Both recently died. Joel is too young to become ruler, so Barou's elders have chosen his sisters as their new king and high priest, which includes control of their god Ranga. The sisters are not about to leave Tokyo for some primitive island. They are shocked when Ranga, in the form of an ancient giant robot, strides out of the sea, blithely smashing through buildings and overpasses, and settles in their neighborhood.

Minami, who has been raising her sisters as a harried single parent, wants to turn Ranga to their financial advantage (while denying liability for the damage it causes). Idealistic Ushio wants to use Ranga to help their neighbors in West Musashino, while egotistical Yuuhi wants to become a queen. Army Engineering Commander Takesue sees Ranga as a convenient "threat" to test his new weaponry against. But top-level orders come to secretly capture Ranga while pretending to destroy it. Then conflicting orders imply a struggle between secret political cabals within the government. Violence supposedly caused by anti-Ranga terrorists turns out to be a plot to frighten away the Shimabaras' neighbors and buy their property cheaply.

Ushio is distraught that her simplistic ideas of using Ranga to "fight for justice" is stymied by the invisibility of corrupt politicians, one of whom may be the father of one of her best friends. She denies that Ranga is a menace even though she is guiltily aware that she has no idea of its origins and powers (but apparently at least one of the secret cabals trying to seize Ranga does), and that Ranga sometimes acts when not controlled by her or her sisters.

A.D.V. Films will follow the Japanese precedent of holding a hiatus (although not for a whole year) before releasing the second half of the series. *Neo Ranga* is worth the wait.



The life of Alexander the Great is the subject of *Reign*. © 1999 Alexander Committee. TOKYOPOP Inc. and TOKYOPOP U.K. are registered trademarks of TOKYOPOP K.K. All rights reserved.

Reign: The Conqueror. V.1, Ascension. V.2, Obsession. V.3, Domination. V.4, Destruction.

TV series (13 episodes), 1999. Director: Yoshinori Kanemori. V.1, 4 episodes/100 minutes; v.2-4, 3 episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.99. Distributor: TOKYOPOP.

This strange but visually exciting sci-fi adaptation of the life of Alexander the Great began in 1996 as a Japanese-Korean co-production with American input for the international market, according to the creator interviews among the DVD extras. Production was coordinated through the Madhouse studio in Tokyo although the "integral parts of the animation" were done in Seoul. They invited Korean-American animator [Peter Chung](#) as their character designer because of the look of his *Aeon Flux* for MTV. Their goal was "originality," "the last thing you would expect Alexander the Great to look like," with costuming and architecture that look like they could exist but like nothing that ever did exist. The production was 13 TV episodes carrying Al-

exander's career to his farthest expansion east into India; the first four episodes, to the assassination of his father Philip II, were also condensed into a theatrical feature.

Shown at international film festivals starting in 1998 as *Alexander* or *Alexander Senki* (*Record of Alexander's Military Exploits*), the TV series was finally aired on Japan's WOWOW satellite TV channel from September 14 through December 1999; the theatrical feature was released in October 2000. In the U.S. the Cartoon Network premiered it as *Reign: The Conqueror* on its late-night Adult Swim block from February 10 to March 3, 2003.

Reign takes too many liberties to be used as a Cliff's Notes condensation of Alexander's actual reign. For example, Alexander did not kill Darius III of Persia in personal combat at the Battle of Arbela during a full lunar eclipse. The eclipse was on Sept. 30, 331 B.C. as Alexander's army crossed the Tigris to confront the Persian army. The battle was the next day; Darius escaped and was not killed until almost a year later (by his own courtiers to "spare him the humiliation of being captured by Alexander").

Some of the dramatization is clearly as fantastic as the sci-fi trappings of aerial death robots and fire-breathing elephants, such as the conversations between Aristotle and Diogenes as their "Platonic ideas" (spirits) hover in the sky above Alexander's advance into Persia, and the attacks by the Disciples of Pythagoras as a ninja-like assassin cult seeking to kill Alexander to prevent him from destroying the world. But history does record that both Alexander and Darius rejected their generals' advice of sneak attacks and insisted on "honorable" head-on battles; that Alexander's mother was a princess of Epirus who was also high priestess of a mystic religion there, and was scorned by the Macedonian nobility as a barbarian pagan witch; that Philip II was murdered during a great celebration to promote his leadership over the Greek states; and other dramatically colorful details.

The producers tried to avoid an "anime" look, although to most Americans any animation that is mature (*Reign* is rated 16+ for nudity and violence) and does not look "Disney" is considered "anime." This DVD release is the "Original Director's Cut — Unedited and presented as it was envisioned;" some of the half-hour TV episodes are closer to 40 minutes. ■

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), 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).

FILM REVIEWS

Fresh from the Festivals:

June 2003's Film Reviews

by Jon Hofferman



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

If you have the [QuickTime plug-in](#), you can view a clip from each film by simply clicking the image.

This Month:

Aunt Luisa (2003), 3 min., directed by Tim Miller and Paul Taylor, USA. Info: Tim Miller/Paul Taylor, Blur Studio, 589 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA, 90291. Phone: 310-581-8848.

Capoeira (2002), 7 min., directed by Lewis Campbell, U.K. Info: Adam Boulter. Tel: +44 (0) 207-590-4512. Email: adam.boulter@rca.ac.uk.

From Darkness (2002), 8.5 min., directed by Nora Twomey, Ireland. Info: Paul Young/Nora Twomey, Cartoon Saloon Ltd., St. Joseph's Studios, Waterford Road, Kilkenny, Ireland. Tel: +353 (0) 56 64481. Fax: +353 (0) 56 20089. Email: info@cartoonsaloon.ie. Web: www.cartoonsaloon.ie.

Harvie Krumpet (2003), 22 min., directed by Adam Elliot, Australia. Info: Melanie Coombs, Melodrama Pictures, PO Box 347, Fitzroy, VIC 3065, Australia. Tel: +613 9416 3566. Fax +613 9417 7336. Email: melodramapictures@bigpond.com.

Little Red Plane (2002), 8.25 min., directed by Joey Jones and Wira Winata, USA. Info: Joey Jones, Shaded-box Animations, 202 S. Lake Ave., Suite 300, Pasadena, CA, 91101. Tel: 626-356-3663. Email: info@shadedbox.com. Web: www.LittleRedPlane.com.



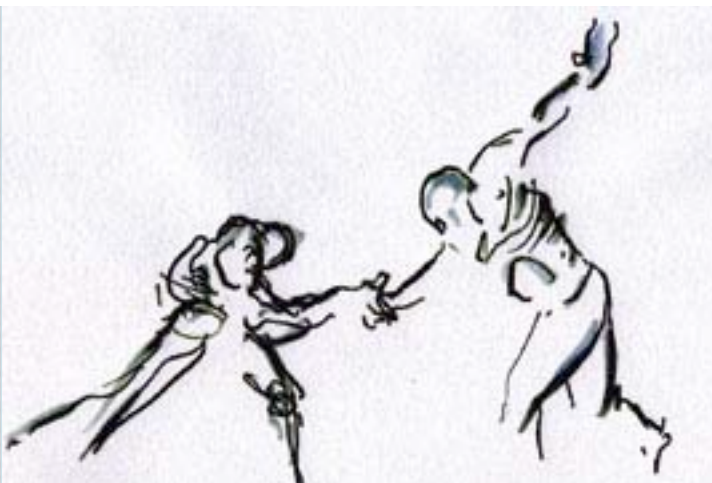
Nutty [Aunt Luisa](#) searches her house for Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians. © 2003 Blur Studio. All rights reserved.

AUNT LUISA

One of two shorts this month that deal good-naturedly with cognitive impairment (see *Harvie Krumpet* below), *Aunt Luisa* is a brief vignette about a woman who's become convinced that bandleader Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians have taken up residence in her house. Though she never manages to actually catch sight of them, she knows they're there because she can hear them playing. Director Tim Miller apparently based the character on one of his own relatives and, given the benign nature of Aunt Luisa's dementia, it's a pretty funny idea, one which he and co-director Paul Taylor exploit fairly thoroughly.

The CG animation is imaginative and nicely detailed, and the filmmakers employ a variety of interesting angles, colors and camera movements to explore the spatially constrained environment. At the same time, though, *Aunt Luisa* never moves much beyond being a funny idea, and the absence of some kind of narrative trajectory or a larger theme makes it feel disconnected and blunts its impact. However, since the film was produced "as a warm-up for producing animated features," it probably should be judged a success on its own terms. One can hope that, with the right script, the animators of Blur Studio will bring their talents to fruition.

After graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University, Miller worked as a broadcast designer, visual effects artist and character animator before co-founding Blur Studio in 1995. Recent projects of the studio include large-format films, commercials, concept art, feature effects, ride films and game cinematics. *Aunt Luisa* has screened at the Brooklyn International Film Festival, the Boston International Film Festival, the Dahlenega Festival (Atlanta) and the 3D Festival in Copenhagen.



African slavery and the Brazilian martial art form come together in [Capoeira](#). © Royal College of Art.

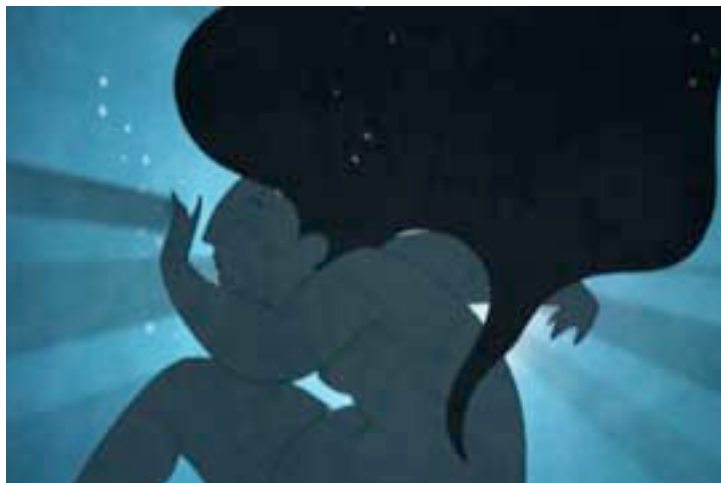
CAPOEIRA

Director Lewis Campbell's impressionistic hand-drawn film takes as its subject the Brazilian martial art of capoeira and, more specifically, its roots in the experience of the African slaves who created it. Considering capoeira's inherent kinetic appeal and its poignant and dramatic origins, it's a natural subject for an animated film, and Campbell is reasonably successful in evoking both the beauty of the form and the brutality suffered by its originators. Yet, while Campbell shows ability in many areas — particularly in his sophisticated use of framing — the film as a whole feels disjointed, frequently appearing to be more a series of movement studies (an impression heightened by his sketchy style) than a coherent whole. Also, despite the pointed juxtaposition of scenes of enslavement and capoeira practice, the connections between the two remain unclear, a problematic flaw in light of the film's primary objective.

Lewis Campbell attended the [Royal College of Art](#), where he made *Capoeira* as his graduate film in the M.A. program. The inspiration for the film came from his own practice of the martial art. *Capoeira* was screened at the 2003 [Tehran International Animation Festival](#) and at the 2002 Ottawa festival, among other venues.

FROM DARKNESS

Based on an Inuit folktale in which a woman who's tossed into the sea by her cruel father is reborn when a desperate fisherman inadvertently rescues her, *From Darkness* is often quite lovely to look at, but — perhaps as a result of the filmmaker's efforts to be faithful to her source material — suffers from a rather too schematic



A fisherman catches a surprise in *From Darkness*. © Cartoon Saloon LTD.

presentation that robs the film of resonance. Rendered primarily in shades of blue, grey and brown, director Nora Twomey's drawings have a diaphanous, almost abstract, beauty, especially at the beginning of the film, and, though the flatter, harder-edged figure of the fisherman often seemed to me to be at odds with the other elements, for the most part her stylized primitivism works quite well. It may be that there just isn't enough story or character development to fully engage the viewer and, ultimately, to support the climactic transformation of the "skeleton woman." Her magical regeneration at film's end, while touching, also seems a little silly and doesn't offer a very meaningful or wholly satisfying denouement.

A project of Cartoon Saloon in Kilkenny, Ireland, *From Darkness* was funded by a grant from the Irish Film Board as part of its "Frameworks" program. The backgrounds for the film were executed in charcoal, chalk and watercolor and modified in Photoshop. The effects were created using both traditional animation and Cambridge's Animo. In addition to being shortlisted for an Academy Award, *From Darkness* was voted Best Animated Short at the Galway Film Fleadh and received the award for Best short film/Animation at the Boston Irish Film Festival. Other screenings include Festival d'Amiens, the International Festival of Navarre, the Brisbane International Animation Festival, Animadrid, and the Anima festival in Brussels.

HARVIE KRUMPET

Drawing on themes previously explored in his award-winning clay animation trilogy, *Uncle* (1996), *Cousin* (1998), and *Brother* (1999), director Adam Elliot here expands his study of damaged human beings in the



Harvie Krumpet tells the saga of a man with Tourette's Syndrome. © Melodrama Pictures.

saga of *Harvie Krumpet* (né Harvek Milos Krumpetzki), a simple, ill-fated man with Tourette's Syndrome whose series of misadventures begins in a rustic cabin in Poland and ends in a nursing home in Spottswood, Australia. Along the way, he works in a dump, gets struck by lightning, liberates chickens, adopts a thalidomide baby, joins a nudist colony and learns a large number of "fakts," among other things.

If only by virtue of its 23-minute length and Dickensian scope, *Harvie Krumpet* is an impressive piece of work, although evaluating it as an animated short is a bit more problematic. The film is very text-dependent (the extremely well-written narration is read by Academy Award-winning actor Geoffrey Rush) and many sequences would be just as effective — and some perhaps more so — without visual accompaniment. Also, there's not much animation. Yet Elliot's minimalist style, which almost exclusively favors static shots in which most of the motion is confined to the characters' eyes and mouths, is well-suited to the film's deadpan approach.

The overall scarcity of movement is perhaps more than compensated for by the (not quite motivated, but thoroughly enjoyable) Busby Berkeley wheelchair sequence (wait for it). Though the whimsy sometimes feels a bit forced — the film is not without its moments of cloying humanism — *Harvie Krumpet* is admirable for its straightforward and humorous treatment of a number of dicey subjects, and its successful blend of humor, pathos and the grotesque is a substantial achievement.

Adam Elliot grew up on a prawn farm in South Australia and attended the School of Film and Television at the [Victorian College of the Arts](#). His biographical trilogy, *Uncle/Cousin/Brother*, has screened at more than 300 festivals and won more than 50 awards, including

four Australian Film Institute Awards. *Harvie Krumpet* was shot in sequence on Super 16mm with a converted Bolex over 15 months and was finished to 35mm in May 2003. It received the jury prize, the audience prize and the Prix FIPRESCI at the 2003 [Annecy festival](#).



A young boy remembers his fighter-pilot father in [Little Red Plane](#).

LITTLE RED PLANE

A joint project of students in several departments of the [Art Center College of Design](#) in Pasadena, *Little Red Plane* is a very nicely made CG production about the bond between a boy and his fighter-pilot father who was killed in action. The centerpiece of the film is an extended fantasy in which the eponymous toy becomes a real plane in which the main character is able to take to the skies to join his heroic parent. While there's no real story in a conventional sense, the narrative rhythms are well judged, and the film makes good use of a number of traditional visual storytelling devices, as well as the use of a tangential character (in this case, a bird) to facilitate transitions and help provide continuity. Despite its high production values, though, the film has a distinctly generic feel and suffers from a surfeit of sentimentality that only tends to underscore its lack of a strong emotional core. Also, while 3D animation is great for objects or for highly stylized characters and environments, it tends not to work as well in naturalistic contexts. Thus, while the planes look terrific, the human characters look unpleasantly artificial, a contrast that impeded my appreciation of the film's created world.

After graduating from Ohio State University with a degree in architecture, Joey Jones developed an interest in animation through designing simulated

walk-throughs of his virtual spaces. He went on to graduate work at the Art Center College of Design, where he completed his thesis on character animation and storytelling. Wira Winata, a native of Jakarta, Indonesia, began his education as a manufacturing engineer, but soon switched to animation, graduating from the Art Center with a concentration in entertainment design and animation.

Little Red Plane was created using Maya and After Effects, with Photoshop and Illustrator used for texture maps and background paintings. The film's many awards include a Student Emmy, a Director's Choice Award from the Kalamazoo International Animation Festival, and First Place animation awards from the San Luis Obispo and Columbus International Film Festivals. Other screenings include [Anima Mundi](#), Palm Springs, Edinburgh, [Hiroshima](#), [Tenerife](#), Animagrid, Tehran and Hong Kong. ■

JON HOFFERMAN is an independent filmmaker, writer and graphic designer. He is also the creator of the *Classical Composers Poster* (a unique work of art that makes a wonderful gift for anyone interested in or learning about classical music, available at www.carissimi.com) and a shameless promoter.



by Fred Patten

Yoshiaki Kawajiri wrote and directed *Program* (above), while writing *World Record* for protégé Takeshi Koike to direct. All images © 2003 Warner Home Video. All rights reserved.

FROM THE MOMENT OF ITS RELEASE IN 1999, THE BUZZ ABOUT *THE MATRIX* ACKNOWLEDGED ITS INSPIRATIONAL DEBT TO JAPANESE ANIMATION.

In 1999, *The Matrix* immediately became one of the top films of the year. In May 2003, [*The Matrix Reloaded*](#) set new box-office records. Now has *The Animatrix* done the same for a direct-to-video/DVD release on its June 3, 2003 release?

From the moment of its release in 1999, the buzz about *The Matrix* acknowledged its inspirational debt to Japanese animation. Andy and Larry Wachowski, the film's young creators, were big fans of anime. This was no news to anime fans, who could clearly see the influence of its dark sci-fi story concepts and its directorial moves throughout.

Just how much the Wachowski Brothers were anime fans is now even more obvious with [*The Animatrix*](#), an 89-minute movie released directly to DVD and video. The compilation feature consists of nine separate short animated films set in the live-action *Matrix* story-universe, tying the first two theatrical features together. The nine films are by seven different directors, five of whom are among the tops in the Japanese animation industry. The other two, both Americans, were already working with Japanese animators before joining *The Animatrix* project.



Cowboy Bebop creator Shinichiro Watanabe wrote and directed the noirish *Detective Story* (top). He also directed *Kid's Story* (bottom), which the Wachowskis wrote.

According to the "making of" information in the DVD's 78 minutes of special-feature documentaries, *The Animatrix* began as early as 1997 when the two Wachowskis and producer Joel Silver made a press tour to Tokyo to set up the Japanese theatrical release of *The Matrix*. The Wachowskis took the opportunity to meet many of their favorite anime directors. After the 1999 release of *The Matrix* (a major hit in Japan), they asked whether these directors (most of whom had loved *The Matrix*) would like to help create an animated version of it, showcasing their individual artistic and directorial styles.

Joel Silver picked [Michael Arias](#), an American computer special effects and digital technology expert working with the anime industry, as their representative in Tokyo. Arias was already associated with Studio 4° C, which became one of the project's two main production studios. The first step was deciding that *The Animatrix* should be a feature consisting of several separate short films rather than a TV series. A TV series would require more episodes of longer stories (averaging 22 minutes each). That would stretch the budget so the quality of each episode would be less; and it would be harder for the styles of different directors to stand out. Arias invited the anime directors. Some



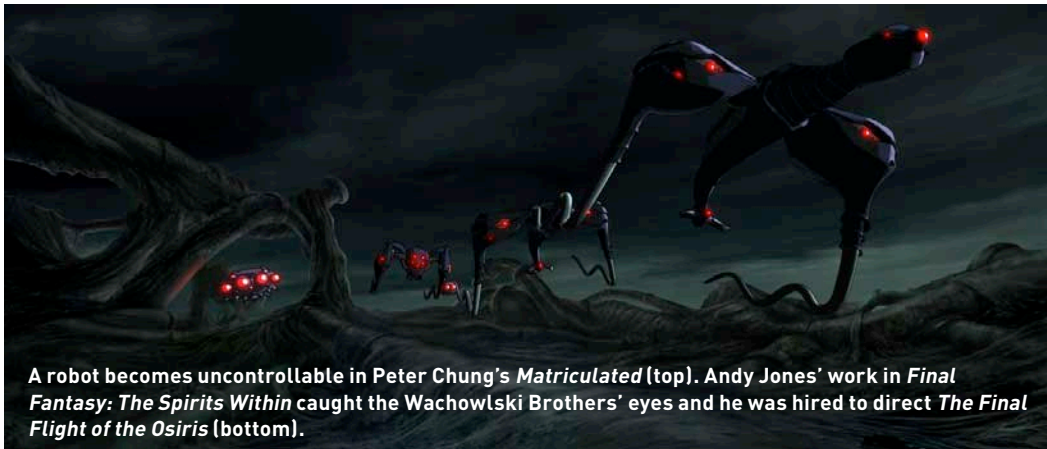
Producer Michael Arias (left), already working in Tokyo with Studio 4° C, served as the bridge between the Wachowskis and the anime directors. Yoshiaki Kawajiri (right) established a fan base in the anime world with his feature *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*.

could not accept because of prior professional commitments, but a "dream team" was soon assembled.

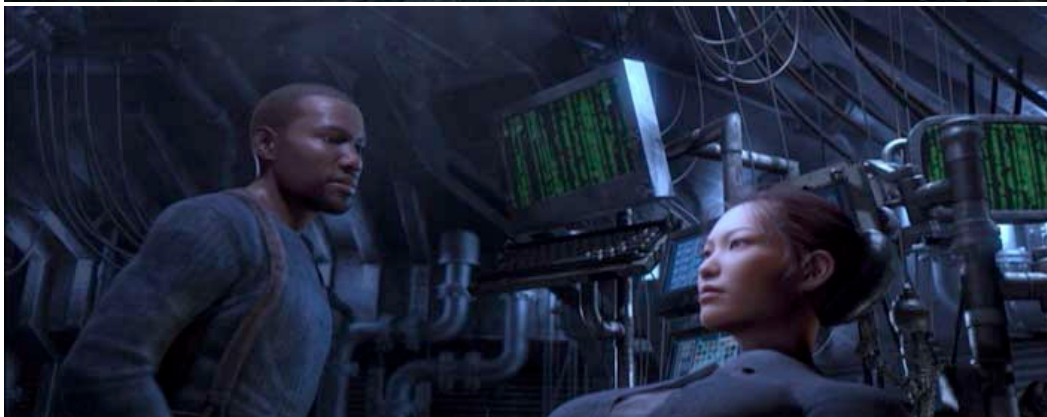
Yoshiaki Kawajiri (*Program*) was one of the founders of the Madhouse studio in the 1980s. His mature-themed anime features *Wicked City* (1987) and *Ninja Scroll* (1993) had already made him one of the most popular directors and character-design artists with American anime fans. Kawajiri's Madhouse became the second main production studio. He had ideas for two *Animatrix* stories that the Wachowskis liked, but he only had time to produce one of them himself. The second that Kawajiri outlined, *World Record*, was given to his protégé Takeshi Koike to fully develop and visualize.

Koji Morimoto was one of the founders of Studio 4° C, which also became the workshop for Shinichiro Watanabe and Mahiro Maeda. Morimoto (*Beyond*) was best known for his dark-humor sci-fi sequence "Franken's Gears" in the 1987 anthology feature *Robot Carnival*, but he was also an animation supervisor on 1987's mega-popular [Akira](#). Watanabe was co-director of the 1994 [Macross Plus](#), but he really established his name by directing the prestigious [Cowboy Bebop TV series](#) and [theatrical feature](#), one of the biggest anime hits in America. Maeda had recently directed the OAV series *Blue Submarine No. 6*, which set fans and professionals alike talking about his bold mixture of computer graphics and traditional animation.

It was at this time that [Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within](#), being produced by a team of American and Japanese animators at the Square USA studio in Honolulu, was publicized. The Wachowskis wanted its CGI style of anime in *The Animatrix*, and its director Andy Jones was recruited for *The Final Flight of the Osiris*. The final director, American animator [Peter Chung](#) (*Aeon Flux*) was already working on projects with Madhouse and with the South Korean studio DNA when he



A robot becomes uncontrollable in Peter Chung's *Matriculated* (top). Andy Jones' work in *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within* caught the Wachowski Brothers' eyes and he was hired to direct *The Final Flight of the Osiris* (bottom).



learned about *The Animatrix* from Kawajiri. Chung sold his own story idea, *Matriculated*, to the Wachowskis. Chung produced it at DNA in Seoul.

The directors all worked by remote control through Arias, who sent their developments of the Wachowskis' story outlines (or their original stories) to the two Brothers who were in Australia directing both *The Matrix Reloaded* and *The Matrix Revolutions*, and returned their comments to the directors. All agree that Andy and Larry supervised with an extremely light control, mainly making sure that each story remained consistent to their overall concept of the *Matrix* universe, since they wanted each short film to demonstrate its creator's own artistic personality, and the completed feature to display as many different anime styles as possible.

It has not hurt that a couple of these directors have become even more popular in America during the three years since work on *The Animatrix* began. Kawajiri's *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust* got rave reviews in the fan community, while Watanabe's *Cowboy Bebop* gained new fans through its Cartoon Network screenings and the 2003 release of the theatrical feature. Watanabe also became personalized through his self-caricature as "Nabeshin" in the zany TV series *Excel Saga*, a popular DVD release.

Warner Home Video does not release sales figures, so it will be difficult to tell whether *The Animatrix* sets any new records or not. But a theatrical preview on May 14 at the 1st Annual Los Angeles Anime Festival in Hollywood (its only theatrical screening in America) was the only feature to sell out before the two-week festival opened. Among the DVD stores that report their sales online, on the day after *The Animatrix*'s release, the Planet.DVD Website listed it as #1 on its Top 10 sales chart, while allDVDprices.com listed it as #4 and dvdoverynight.com placed it at #7 (and sold out). Whether or not *The Animatrix* sets any records, clearly it is already a hit — good enough that anime fans are encouraged to hope that other major sci-fi movie franchises will commission their own anime projects. An anime *Spider-Man* or *X-Men*? An anime *X-Files* or *Jurassic Park*? An anime *Terminator*? ■

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), 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).
