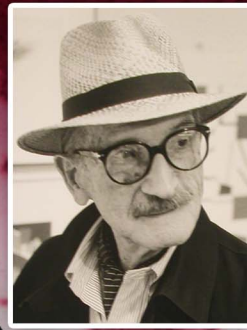


AW

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

September 2003 • Volume 8 Issue 06 • awn.com



*Jules Engel
Remembered
An AWN
Tribute*

EDUCATION & TRAINING ISSUE



**MILLENNIUM
ACTRESS**

**Plus: Anime Expo,
Educational Products,
Eric Goldberg Interview,
Czech Republic and more...**



Education & Training

Execs Talk Training

Rick DeMott conducted a survey of execs at several major animation and visual effects companies to find out what the industry is looking for when it comes to training.

BY RICK DEMOTT

Products of Learning Open New Doors

Sarah Baisley looks at how schools and studios supplement production and semester lows with the creation of educational products.

BY SARAH BAISLEY

A Tribute to Jules Engel

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BY AWN

Focus On

Czech Animation: Two Perspectives

Czech animation is renowned for its rich heritage, even as it continues in crisis. Andrew Osmond interviews two of its leading figures on upholding a proud tradition.

BY ANDREW OSMOND

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BY FRED PATTEN

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[Includes QuickTime movie clips!](#)

BY GREG SINGER



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EDUCATION / TRAINING

Execs Talk Training

by Rick DeMott

LOOKING FOR A SCHOOL? A JOB? QUESTIONING what are the most important areas to knowledge you need to address? 2D or 3D? In an effort to help answer some of these concerns, *AWN* asked top executives at leading animation, visual effects and gaming companies to tell us what they look for in [training](#). We received in-depth responses from [Frank Gladstone](#), head of artistic development at DreamWorks SKG Animation; Bill Dennis, ceo/president of Toonz Animation India; Randy Nelson, dean of Pixar University; and John Hughes, founder/president of Oscar-winning visual effects house Rhythm & Hues. It's amazing the similarities in their responses. Hopefully, their answers will help guide young and/or green artists in finding a clearer direction for their training and to find employment. It might also teach you that we all have a lot to learn.

ANIMATION SCHOOLS THAT FOCUS SOLELY ON TECHNOLOGY AT THE EXPENSE OF TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO ANIMATION ARE FAILING THEIR STUDENTS...

— FRANK GLADSTONE

FRANK GLADSTONE, DREAMWORKS ANIMATION

Gladstone has been working as a professional animator, producer, director, writer and teacher for more than 30 years. From 1973 to 1989, he managed his own Emmy award-winning studio, Persistence of Vision Inc., producing commercials and educational films, and has since worked for the feature animation divisions at Disney, Warner Bros. and DreamWorks. Besides



his studio credentials, he has spoken on animation at schools and institutions around the country, in the Caribbean, Europe and Asia and has taught various animation and cinematography courses and workshops for the University of Miami, VFX, Cinesite, UNICEF, Gnomon Digital, Vancouver Film School, Nickelodeon, UCLA, San Jose State, Stanford and USC. Gladstone has designed courses and helped train hundreds of people who work in the animation industry. Currently, he is the head of artistic development at DreamWorks Animation. Additionally, he serves on several school advisory boards, philanthropic and educational organizations, produces public service television commercials and programming and is a member of the City of Glendale Arts and Culture Commission and Animation Initiative Glendale's "Animation Bank" working group.

Are schools training animators properly? Some are, some aren't. Animation schools that focus solely on technology at the expense of traditional approaches to animation are failing their students, just as those schools that weight their curricula more heavily on traditional work, giving short shrift to the digital side of things, also fail their students in the long run. What I look for are curricula with a balance and an agenda that starts with fundamental artistic skills and then graduates to the newer tools. Without both, the school generally graduates a student who may be facile, but not adaptable.

What would you like to see schools teaching more about? Less?

More of? Film study. All kinds of film, live-action, animation, all genres, all eras. I am often shocked by just

how much folks in animation don't know about visual language, narrative techniques, story structure, even film history. After all, we are making films here! Hand in hand with that is a sense of literature and the sciences (don't skip your liberal arts classes!). Finally, communication and business skills are very important.

Less of? The notion that all one needs to know to be successful in this business is how to jockey the latest animation software package.

How much do you rely on outside training versus in-house? Digitally. We rely on outside training for our animation crews less and less as time goes by. Even with third party software, our use is so specialized and often so production driven, that an outside program cannot directly address our particular needs. Further, we use a good amount of propriety material, which, of course, necessitates in-house training.

Will you hire a new graduate? There are years when we have not and years when we have. We are fostering the idea of increasing our hiring of recent graduates. As far as whom we might hire, as with everyone who submits to us, it depends upon what we see in a reel and/or portfolio. If the skill set is right and the potential is clear, we would absolutely consider a new graduate.

Are the job opportunity expectations of what students think they can get right out of school realistic? It depends. What do students think is realistic? If they think they are God's gift to animation and will have a senior position on a long running project as soon as their unbelievably wonderful reel floors us... they are fooling themselves. If they think they will start at smaller studios and move from job to job as they gain experience and hone their craft, eventually working into the position(s) they really desire... that is more realistic.

Another misnomer that I think many students may share is that they will be able to do everything at the studio: design, layout, rig, animate (characters and effects), light, texture, etc. While this is very often the case at smaller studios, larger studios will want an individual to specialize.

What schools do you recruit from? Where have you gotten some good recruits? This is in no way an endorsement of some schools over others, but the names

DON'T GET CAUGHT WITHOUT A PENCIL AND PAPER. DRAW, SKETCH WHEREVER YOU ARE. IT'S THE PASSION THAT WILL LEAD TO SUCCESS.

— BILL DENNIS

that keep cropping up on the résumés of artists in whom we are interested are CalArts, Art Center, Ringling, Sheridan (Canada), Gobelins and Supinfocom (France) and Filmakademie (Germany). For technical folks, the big names are Texas A&M, Ohio State, Carnegie Mellon, UC Berkley and Bournemouth University (England).

There are other schools with very good programs that I have not mentioned here, mainly because we have not hired many people from them as yet. I expect that, in years to come, our list of recruiting schools will grow to include some of these institutions.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that some of our folks have just shown up "out of the blue," usually having come from other professions, like music, architecture, engineering, etc. We even have an MD! What all of these folks have in common is the drive to accomplish this transition (usually requiring going back to school to gain the necessary skills), a lot of world experience and a very mature, realistic attitude.

What advice can you give students about what training they need? Make sure the program is balanced between fundamentals and the newer digital approaches. At the end of your schooling you should have a good reel and/or portfolio that displays your skills well. Don't forget the film and storytelling studies and foster your communication skills. A good reel will get you a job... good communication skills will help you keep it. Finally, there are no shortcuts. If someone tells you there are, be wary. It is your career. Spend the time it takes to become truly accomplished.

BILL DENNIS, TOONZ ANIMATION

Dennis is a 20-year veteran production executive with the Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, California, involved in the production of The Lion King, Aladdin, Beauty and the Beast and The Little Mermaid. In 1995, he joined Hanna-Barbera as president/gm of their overseas production studio in Manila. In 1999, he teamed with G.A. Menon to found Toonz Animation India Pvt. Ltd. in Trivandrum. Dennis introduced



the first ever animation celebration in India – "A Week with the Masters." He has also founded ASIFA-India and serves as its president.

In very broad strokes, I'd give animation schools a "B-" when it comes to training animators for the studios. Naturally, there are some really great schools that do a marvelous job but there are some stinkers too. I don't think enough time is spent dealing with the basics. We find drawing skills are somewhat weak with a lot of students fresh out of school.

We'd like to rely much more heavily on outside training, but the fact is that we spend a great deal of time and money teaching students to animate for our studios. This is regardless of their training in schools and universities.

Since our studios are overseas, when we hire western talent, they are always very experienced and established. We do, however, hire new students from Indian and Asian art colleges and animation schools. And, Toonz now operates a training academy where we currently have over 50 students enrolled in a one-year animation program. We will likely hire many of the graduates to work in one of our studios. In January 2004, we will launch a new state of the art training academy in Calcutta, which will offer one-year programs in classical and 3D animation.

We've actually trained nearly 70% of our entire workforce (now over 500).

My experience with students has been that many are looking to step into lead animator roles fresh out of school. And that just isn't going to happen. But, it only takes a short time for reality to set in and for new grads to settle into assistant animator or cleanup roles.

More than any other school, most of our western (and some Indian) artists have trained at Sheridan. This might be a result of the International program, which Sheridan ran for several years. We also get students from NID (National Institute for Design).

My advice to students is to really develop a passion for this art. Understand everything about animation and how the various processes impact on your role as an animator and how what you do impacts on others. Don't even hesitate stepping into inbetween or cleanup roles. Don't get caught without a pencil and paper. Draw, sketch wherever you are. It's the passion that will lead to success.

[ANIMATION] ISN'T ABOUT COMPUTERS OR PENCILS, IT IS ABOUT THE COMMUNICATOR AND HIS OR HER RELATIONSHIP TO THE AUDIENCE.

— RANDY NELSON

RANDY NELSON, PIXAR ANIMATION

Nelson is the dean of Pixar University, providing training and education for all of Pixar's employees. He has a B.A. degree in Fine Arts from Santa Clara University. As a teenager, a passion for animation led him to computer programming. He has taught software development for the last 30 years. Nelson was one of the founders of the juggling group the Flying Karamazov Brothers, and worked in live theater, film and television for more than a decade. His credits include co-writer, co-director and performer of three Broadway shows, performances in the White House and for the president at the Kennedy Center, a role in the feature film Jewel of the Nile, and the opportunity to represent the United States at two Olympic Arts Festivals. He worked as a computer animator and producer for Pizza Time Theater, led developer training for NeXT Computer, created the developer program for the Apple and IBM multimedia joint venture Kaleida Labs, published the entry-level training book on Java at Sun, and was a senior instructional designer for Apple Computer.



Are schools training animators properly? Depends on the school: today there is a growing distinction between 2D and 3D animation. We think they are more similar than different. A good animator should know a wide range of tools and feel comfortable expressing ideas and emotions in action. How that action is realized is important and the techniques in 2D and 3D are different, but not as different as most think, as far as we are concerned.

Animation is all about how to bring emotion to life using action. It is about making us believe the character thinks before it moves. That isn't about computers or pencils; it is about the communicator and his or her relationship to the audience.

We think classic or traditional training that takes advantage of drawing is a good basis for becoming a 3D animator. Even if you never draw a single extreme, you still need to communicate your ideas, explore possibilities, plan your work and share that plan. Drawing is an essential skill for many animators, even if they do not use it in the direct execution of their work.

That said, we are really looking for actors and artists who can create an emotional response in an audience. One of the animators here was a Muppet puppeteer, she'd never touched a computer, but she could use a mechanism, the puppet, to move an audience. We offered her a chance to see if she could use a different mechanism, our animation system, to create the same emotional response. She learned in a few months everything she needed to know about the computer system, because she came in the door a skilled performer. We can teach the computer to someone who knows how to perform through a mechanism. The opposite is not true for someone who knows the computer but cannot already move an audience.

What would you like to see schools teaching more of? less of? More filmmaking — We think a good animator is a filmmaker: he or she knows about story, about creating a world, the world's rules, the characters that populate that world and their desires, how the character's desires push open the rules of the world. That foundation for storytellers is critical. Especially with the advent of computer-based tools, it isn't that hard to get something to move. It is a lot harder to get something to move us.

The most important thing a school can do is make sure the students make films every year. A film a year gives the students a chance to learn, experiment, apply what they are thinking about and seeing. The biggest concern we have when we look at animation curriculum is a four-year program with a single senior project. It takes a lot of experience to learn how to translate the theory of animation into compelling actions on screen.

More collaboration — Teaching collaboration is the thing that we find schools do least well. Really helping their students learn how to amplify each others work, to honor the process, sharing ideas in a positive way, making each other look good, saying yes to possibilities. Collaboration is at the heart of filmmaking.

More dimension — A well-trained animator should know 2D, like drawing and painting, 3D, like sculpture, and 4D, performance in time. A solid program should have a good balance between traditional and technological. Ultimately animators are communicators; they need to be deeply experienced in the world they are attempting to portray.

More breadth — An animator will show work to 10

million people in a single weekend, if a film like *Finding Nemo* is any guide. One out of every 30 Americans saw *Nemo* in its first weekend: that means there isn't anything you can safely ignore, a detail you can fudge, because the insight and experience of your audience is so broad. So we want artists and actors who not only know art history and film history but world history, political science, humanities, hard science, technology. A true liberal arts education, both deep and broad.

How much do you rely on outside training versus in-house? We train great candidates in-house exclusively, because we have a proprietary tools system. We look for great candidates from film and animation schools. Green and vastly talented is a type that has been successful here. You get in the door based on your reel. A school can be a good place to develop one, but it isn't the only place nor is it a certainty that because you went to school you'll have a solid reel.

Will you hire a new graduate? Yes, as long as the reel shows he or she has mastered a technique and can use it to express story-based ideas. We look for people with a strong storytelling sense and a comprehensive understanding of animation fundamentals. Knowledge of physical motion, weight, balance and timing should be evident in the reel.

Are the job opportunity expectations of what students think they can get right out of school realistic? Good ones do get to work in interesting studios using great tools, alongside world-class artists. There aren't that many of those opportunities. Many would-be film animators end up in game design, which is not I suspect where they wanted to end up.

The question for students to ask themselves is do their reels and portfolios look like the work they are seeing on the screen, the work being done by the places where they want to work? If it doesn't, they shouldn't expect to get into those places. I don't mean in terms of finish quality, that level of polish is not expected in a student reel, although it isn't a bad thing either.

What we want to see is work that reflects the sensibilities of the place you want to be a part of: so if your reel is muscled bodies in leather straps with swords, or rocketships or flying logos or toilet jokes, you probably won't get work at a place that does family movies with attractive characters based on original stories. Even if your leather-clad swordsmen are really good, we need to see that your work will fit in.

What advice can you give students about what training they need? There are four attributes in employees

that Pixar looks for: breadth, depth, a desire to collaborate and the ability to communicate.

Breadth — a wide range of knowledge and interest. Generalists are especially important in enterprises that innovate. You need people who can think about large problems in large ways. A broad general background is essential for that.

Depth — excellence in something, deep understanding — mastery. It is critical that you have people who have experienced excellence, people who routinely strive for and achieve world-class quality.

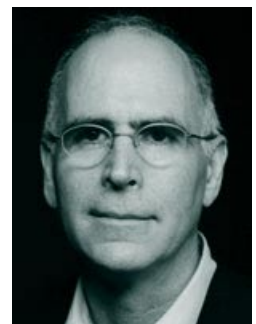
Collaboration — a genuine desire to work with others, to share. Filmmaking is a process that involves a large and diverse group of people. You must have people who enjoy the give and take of working together, of amplifying each other.

Communication — the ability to understand and be understood. Filmmaking is about sharing an incomplete vision and filling in the missing pieces, a little at a time, as a team. It takes great intuition, verbal and written skills, and a genuine interest in others to communicate effectively.

Build a great reel. Learn everything you can. Trust traditional skills and training. Remember you are a communicator. Van Gogh said I want a piece of art to say something comforting. It is a huge responsibility to try to add comfort to the world, but what a feeling when you succeed.

JOHN HUGHES, RHYTHM & HUES

Hughes is the president/founder of Rhythm & Hues Studios. After working at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Hughes traveled west to Los Angeles to join the pioneering motion graphics firm Robert Abel and Assoc., where he was instrumental in the design and development of motion-control camera systems. Hughes and a small group of former Abel employees established Rhythm & Hues Studios in 1987. In 1995, the studio was recognized with an Academy Award for Best Visual Effects for the movie Babe. In addition, he was a member of the California superintendent of school's Task Force for the Visual and Performing Arts,



EDUCATORS SHOULD STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF PEOPLE SKILLS AND COMMUNICATION THAT ARE BOTH SO VITAL TO SUCCESS IN OUR WORK ENVIRONMENT.

— JOHN HUGHES

and serves as chairman of the Education Committee for the Digital Coast Roundtable, and chair of the Digital Coast Foundation. He also serves on several boards of directors including the California Alliance for Arts Education (a member of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network), the Entertainment Industry Development Corp. and the Workforce Investment Board, a collaboration between government and private industry that oversees all federal and state training money in the City of Los Angeles. In addition, Hughes actively cultivates future generations of artists by offering computer graphics scholarships and internships to promising students, as well as studio tours to people from all over the world.

Are schools training animators properly? If, by the term "animator," you mean "computer character animator," then there are one or two programs in North America that are strong. However, most "computer animation" programs tend to train students to be more general digital artists, rather than character animators per se. As a large company, we are more interested in people who have become the best in a specific discipline, such as modeling, lighting, character animation, effects animation, compositing, etc.

For a student to think that he or she is a well-trained computer animation generalist is equivalent to thinking that he or she is a well-trained sculptor, cinematographer, actor, computer programmer, graphic designer and painter all at the same time. It's conceivable, but it would take a long time and enormous talent to be minimally professionally competitive at our company in all of these areas. For most students, even becoming competitive in one discipline means continuing their training by getting at least a masters degree and/or working in a smaller company first.

What would you like to see schools teaching more of? Ideally, while students do need a general understanding of all the different areas in order to communicate effectively with other team members, we would like to see schools more strongly support the concept of specializing in a particular discipline in both their bachelors and masters degree programs.

In addition, educators should stress the importance of people skills and communication that are both so vital to success in our work environment.

Due to the overlap of art and technology in our

field, we are always looking for a complementary mix of technical and artistic skills. We would like students to better understand the meaning of an entry-level position. There tends to be little comprehension of what they are actually qualified to do in the professional world. Therefore, their reels and résumés are often geared toward positions that are out of their reach.

For example, there is no entry-level lighting position at our company. A student lighter is competing with industry professionals for the same position. An entry level, 3D production position may be tracking or technical animation if the applicant is technical. An entry-level position for a candidate interested in compositing is likely to be a roto position. Overall, we need to see more focused examples of work that show an applicant's understanding of what we require.

Less of? We would like to see fewer cover letters stating that candidates are interested in every position we offer. Again, it is a matter of focus. Applicants have to be responsible for defining what they want to do. In some cases, we may determine from work samples that an applicant is best suited for a particular position. However, we would like them to at least attempt to define themselves. Both seasoned and new employees are continually expected to use their best judgment in fulfilling the requirements of their positions. If they know their strengths, they are better able to meet industry expectations.

How much do you rely on outside training versus in-house? We rely heavily on outside training. Ideally, we would like to spend as little time as possible on training our employees. Our "new hire" training covers the basic operation of our in-house proprietary software, as well as any job specific pipeline information. All other training will either be acquired on the job or will come from prior personal and professional experience.

Would you hire a new graduate? Yes, we do hire new graduates but they are competing with industry professionals. We would prefer more experienced professionals but we have both scholarship and internship programs to encourage and support the hiring of new graduates.

Are the job opportunity expectations of what students think they can get right out of school realistic? No, students do not have realistic expectations regarding job opportunities after graduation. As previously stated, students need a better understanding of what is meant by an entry-level position.

What schools do you recruit from? Where have you gotten some good recruits? More than a specific school, we look for candidates that have a high quality combination of both artistic and technical skills.

What advice can you give students about what training they need? Experience and individual characteristics are equally important within the Rhythm & Hues environment. We pride ourselves in having a creative and friendly yet professional atmosphere that we believe is unique to our studio. With that understanding, our most successful student candidates have a master's degree with a mixture of fine arts and computer science or related fields.

While a master's degree is not required, these individual characteristics are: creativity, commitment to quality and a life long quest for learning.

These characteristics are underscored by company core values, which we look for in our potential employees. Honesty, integrity, fairness and a strong work ethic are essential. In summary, our ideal applicant is someone with a good aesthetic sense, outstanding analytical problem-solving ability, strong communication skills and who can excel in a team environment. ■

RICK DEMOTT is managing editor of Animation World Network. Previously, he served as the production coordinator for sound production house BadaBing BadaBoom Productions and animation firm Perky Pickle Studios. Prior to that position, he served as associate editor of AWN.

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

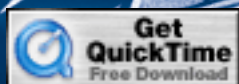
Online Highlights

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: SEPTEMBER 2003'S FILM REVIEWS

Greg Singer reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: [Last Rumba in Rochdale](#) by John Chorlton, [Little Numba](#) by Daniele Lunghini and Diego Zuelli, [The Fall](#) directed by Burak Sahin, [Escapism](#) by Avi Ofer and [Dollsville](#) directed by John Wray.

View the QuickTime clips online!



EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTS

Products of Learning Open New Doors

by Sarah Baisley



SCHOOLS AND STUDIOS ARE GETTING INTO THE educational products business. While only a few have jumped into the game, it won't be long before others discover what can be a welcome revenue stream.

With the cutbacks at animation studios producing television series and features in North America, as well as harder economic times, those seeking employment are advised to freshen up their job skills. Plus many animators and production people are finding they need to transition from 2D to 3D. So there is a boom in [animation education/training](#) and the need for products to help students practice or even learn on their own at home via products and online courses.

The increase in software and hardware products plus the steady stream of updated versions has been accompanied for some time now by instructional manuals, books, videos, CD-ROMs and DVDs. It's a nice additional revenue stream for the manufacturers of software/hardware and given rise to companies specializing in distributing books and products.

Animation World Magazine caught up with a few of the institutions and studios that have grown wise to this and are making forays into the field of educational products to augment income for their core business.

The Vancouver Institute of Media Arts in Canada launched a series of online lessons and lectures featuring the late Academy Award-winning animator, Lee Mishkin, offering lessons he developed with the faculty for the VanArts Classical Animation Program. Not a bad idea for preserving the inspiration and ideas future generations might draw from inspiring teachers and important animators, even after they are gone.

"We started thinking about distance education/online training around 1997," said Alan Phillips, president/registrar at Van Arts. The initial idea was to create high-quality animation education product that would reach several markets, from wannabe animators to educators to industry people getting back to basics. To accomplish this, we created the Lee Mishkin Lecture Series and online animation lessons. Lee was the founding director of VanArts' classical animation program and a highly acclaimed Hollywood animator with five decades of experience and an Academy-Award winning film."



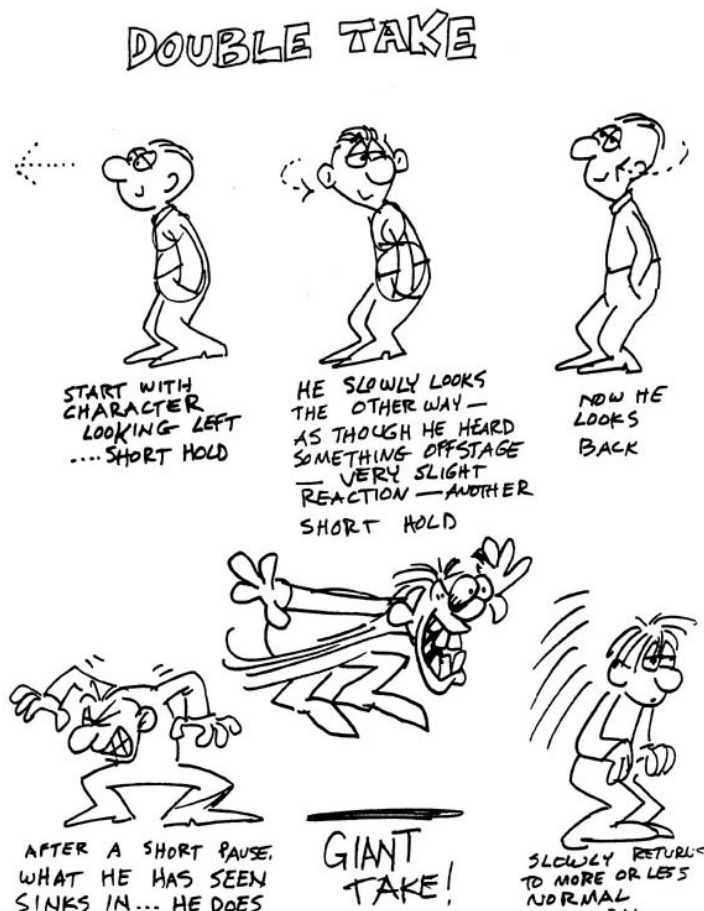
Alan Phillips, president/registrar at VanArts. Photo courtesy of VanArts.

After VanArts launched the lecture series and initial online lesson, *The Bouncing Ball*, Phillips said, "We are encouraged by the growing worldwide interest and orders we have received to date. The bouncing ball lesson was prepared by Lee Mishkin and other senior faculty in consultation with the University of British Columbia, Distance Education & Technology Unit. To view sample video clips from the lecture series or bouncing ball lesson, please visit www.vanarts.com/online/index.htm."

The course is structured so that students develop the ability to create drawings that are living, breathing characters behaving in distinctly personalized ways on screen. Lessons in the series cover the basic principles of classical animation including the bouncing ball, inbetweening, sack jump, character design, action analysis and the walk cycle.

Gnomon School of Visual Effects, a professional institute specializing in training for the high-end visual effects community in Los Angeles has also gotten into online training and has released an impressive series of training DVDs. Gnomon has created a division Gnomon Workshop, an online resource for the [Maya](#) community produces training DVDs and free tutorials.

A recent Gnomon Workshop release, *Dynamics, 14: Advanced Sprite Rendering*, includes 120 minutes of instruction, project files, lecture notes, resource spot-



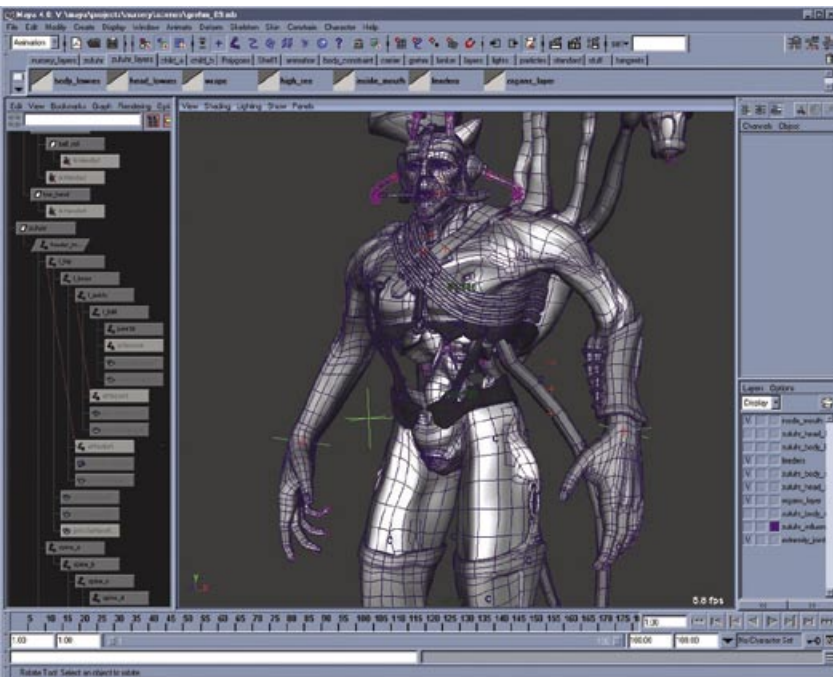
A sample page from Lee Mishkin's Lecture Series. © VanArts.

lights and bonus materials. The DVD was produced by Andrew Orloff, principal and vfx supervisor at Zoic Studios. The DVD explains the tools, with a focus on workflow, using a wide range of examples including wind-blown seedpods, a sea of microbes, depth-of-field effects, tossed coins and crowd simulations.

"We are very excited to have produced such an in-depth lecture," said Alex Alvarez, director of the Gnomon Workshop. "Andrew is an industry veteran who has played the role of artist, technical director and now vfx supervisor. He is also an excellent instructor, who, through this DVD, is sharing several techniques that have been used in a diverse range of visual effects shots over his career."

The Gnomon Workshop also just released four new training DVDs by concept designer Feng Zhu. Focused on the traditional and digital techniques of the concept design industry, these four titles contain more than eight hours of instruction. Feng's clients include Lucasfilm, Disney, Blur Studio, Electronic Arts, GT Interactive, Origin Systems, Microsoft, Film Roman, Universal, Warner Bros. and Sierra.

WITH THE CUTBACKS AT ANIMATION STUDIOS..., AS WELL AS HARDER ECONOMIC TIMES, THOSE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT ARE ADVISED TO FRESHEN UP THEIR JOB SKILLS.



Screen capture from Maya of work from Gnomon's *Kinematics I*.
© Gnomon Workshop.

Alex Alvarez approached me about making some DVDs almost a year ago," said Zhu. "At the time, I was just leaving for Lucasfilm, so it never materialized. Once I returned to L.A., however, we decided to get it produced. I had a lot of fun working on them. I thought about what a student would want to see, and put as much as I could into these DVDs."

More information and prices for Gnomon's DVDs are available at www.thegnomonworkshop.com.

Canadian animation studio Lost Pencil Animation Studios Inc. now makes educational products to pump up its revenue and to provide work to employees when projects are scarce. It was founded in Calgary in 1996 as a graphic design studio with just a couple people in-house, with access to other talented artists when the need arises. Then they moved into multimedia and the studio grew.

"That's when the 3D bug got us," said co-founder Paul Mikulecky. "As we gained experience in 3D, we slowly weaned ourselves off of the print and Web work. Now our mainstay is freelance character animation for other studios. Our character animations can be found in video, TV and games." Some of Lost Pencil's clients include Absolute Studios, Sony, Fox, Aurenaya, Hyper-Space Cowgirls and Blue Dream Studios.

"At one point, about a year and a half ago, we had a

lull. Well, bills needed to be paid and animators/modelers were without work. So we had to either spend time drumming up more work (in the other fields, Web, multimedia and print) or decide on something else.

"I had previously been teaching an introductory graphic design course at the University of Calgary, and that's when the thought occurred to me," Mikulecky continued. "Producing training material would enable us to learn more tools (keep us busy), improve our work (practice makes perfect) and pay the bills."

So Lost Pencil ramped up its first product, *Animator's Gym*, a CD that teaches basic principles of character animation and a walkthrough of the creation of a one-minute short. "It is created using Maya, but we encourage other tool users to purchase it as it is only about 25% software specific," said Mikulecky. "Initially we planned on specializing on training material for just character animation. But we found that we had a lot of requests, not just for the character animation training, but also the other aspects of the 3D workflow. This made us branch into the modeling/rigging and texturing fields."

With this good reception, Lost Pencil has added a number of other titles to its educational products list. These include a training series for LightWave, 3ds max and Maya. "Our biggest seller so far has been the *3D Apprenticeship* training series which covers a step-by-step creation of a realistic elephant in Maya," Mikulecky reports. "This training series included modeling the elephant, rigging it, texturing it and animating it doing a walk cycle. We are working on a similar product for 3ds max (except it won't be an elephant)," which should be available by the end of November 2003. Lost Pencil also gives away free tutorials, free models and rigs on its Website, www.lostpencil.com.

Mikulecky said he believes his studio's training series is unique, covering every step of the process, from the perspective of hands-on production people and animators, as opposed to educators and software developers/programmers. "You can watch everything being created step by step with the artist narrating the process," he said. "We don't strive to cover every detail of the tool (or all the options for a tool that we may use), but we give students the process that we use to create production animation for our clients."

The training material isn't meant to replace the manuals or other training products that give a tool overview from the developer/manufacturer. In order to use Lost Pencil's CDs, students must have an intro-

ductory familiarity with the tool. The studio claims the material can be useful for beginning to advanced users.

The training material generally is available on CDs, but in some cases DVDs are available. The DVDs are not viewable on a regular video DVD player and can only be viewed on a PC (some can be viewed on a Mac). Source files for the animations, models, rigs and textures are all provided so students can compare their result with the studio's completed files.

The Lost Pencil product line includes:

For LightWave:

Just Animate - Walk Cycles

Just Animate - Lip Sync

Just Animate - Facial Expressions and Body Language

Just Animate - Games!

Model and Rig in a Day!

For 3ds max:

Just Animate - Walk Cycles

3D Apprenticeship Series (planned for end of November 2003, it will have a similar line up to the 3D Apprenticeship series for Maya below)

For Maya:

Animator's Gym

Just Animate - Wheels (this is a free tutorial available for the price of shipping only)

3D Apprenticeship - Modeling

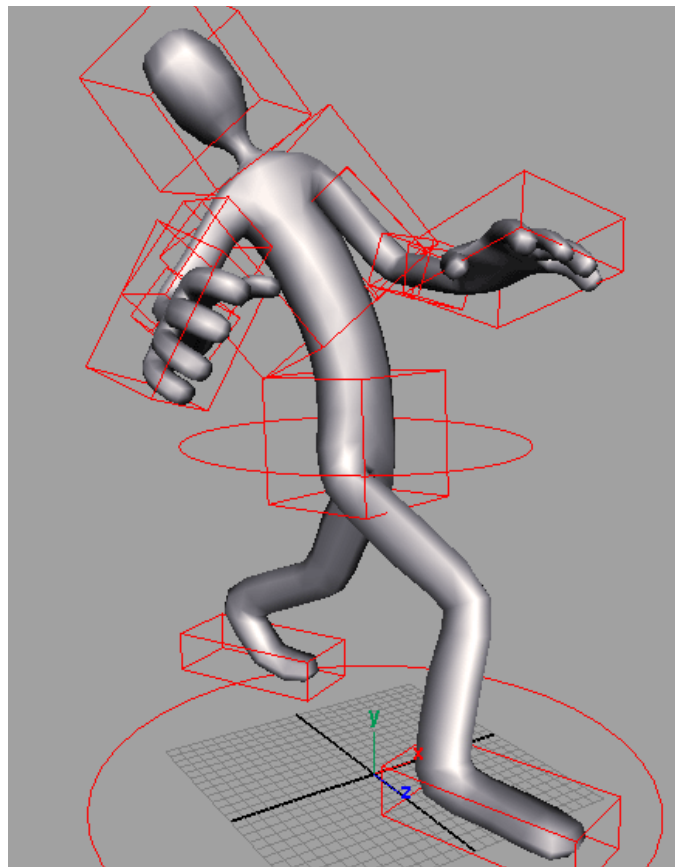
3D Apprenticeship - UV Mapping and Texturing

3D Apprenticeship - Rigging and Weightmapping

3D Apprenticeship - Animation and Render

Supporting its short film habit with products is Anzovin Studio. Anzovin was founded in 1998 in Amherst, Massachusetts by the father-and-son team of Steve and Raf Anzovin to create 3D animated short films with a sophisticated and lively sense of humor. The studio offers custom 3D design and modeling services, character animation and motion graphics for broadcast, as well as innovative cross-platform animation software solutions and animation training products.

Anzovin is a leading publisher of training materials for Hash's Animation:Master 3D animation software, has released a new instructional CD-ROM, *Secrets Of Animation:Master 2003*. Anzovin's Raf Anzovin and Bill Young take viewers step by step through some of the newest and least understood features of A:M 2003 (version 10/10.5). It features more than two hours of pristine, 800x600 QuickTime video and all associated project files, models and rotoscopes. Topics



Meet the Maya Guy from Anzovin's *The Setup Machine* for Maya 5.0. Photo courtesy of Anzovin.

include using deformation cages, working with expressions to create automated animation, using displacement textures to create water effects and Bill Anzovin's latest spriticle tricks. *Secrets Of Animation: Master 2003* is compatible with Windows and Mac. It can be ordered from the Anzovin Studio Store at www.raffhashvideotapes.com.

Anzovin also recently released *The Setup Machine* for Maya 5.0, a character rigging plug-in fully compatible with the latest version of Maya's animation environment. *The Setup Machine* for Maya 5.0 can be ordered from www.anzovin.com/setupmachine/setupmachinemaya.html.

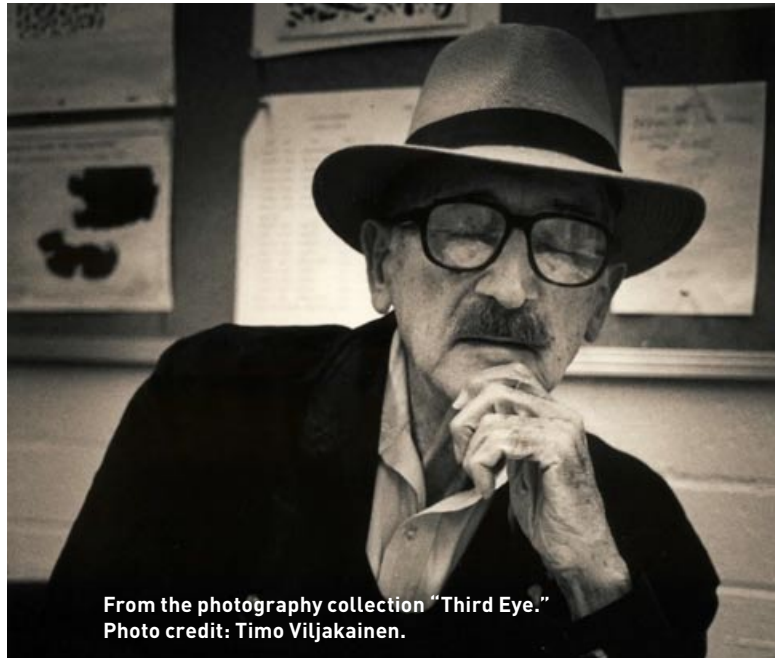
With the advent of more online learning and the growing need to compete and transition in the rapidly changing arenas of animation and visual effects, more educational institutions plan to enter the educational products field. Plus studios are finding they can teach what they do to make money and support their animated dreams. ■

SARAH BAISLEY is the editor of Animation World Network.

PASSING LEGEND

A Tribute to Jules Engel

by Animation World Network



From the photography collection "Third Eye."
Photo credit: Timo Viljakainen.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LEGENDARY ANIMATOR Jules Engel, who passed away on September 6, 2003, AWN has compiled thoughts from students and other professionals who the educator, artist and man influenced over the years. We begin with the eulogy his biographer Janeann Dill gave at his memorial and end with a touching remembrance from fellow CalArts faculty member Christopher Meeks.

His [official obit](#) can be read here.

Eulogy for Jules Engel
Memorial Service at Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills,
Burbank, California
September 13, 2003

As many of you know, I have been writing a biography on Jules for a while now, and I can tell you that placing this man's life between two covers is an enormous and overwhelming task. As we've come together today to celebrate his life, I hope that I can bring to you some of what I've learned about this extraordinary man.

I would like to begin my eulogy with a note from Kathy Rose, one of Jules' first students at CalArts who has carried on the tradition of artistic greatness in her own creativity. In 1972, Kathy threw the *I Ching* in — answer to the question: Who is Jules Engel? Here is what was thrown:

Nine in the fifth place means:
A melon covered with willow leaves.
Hidden lines.
Then it drops down to one from heaven.

The melon, like the fish, is a symbol of the principle of darkness. It is sweet but spoils easily and for this reason is protected with a cover of willow leaves. This is a situation in which a strong, superior, well-poised man tolerates and protects the inferiors in his charge. He has

THOSE OF US WHO KNEW JULES WERE EITHER A GREAT FRIEND OR A RESPECTED ACQUAINTANCE TO HIM. HIS STUDENTS WERE NOT STUDENTS BUT "TALENTS." HE WAS NO "STAR," JUST A GREAT HUMAN BEING.

— CHRISTOPHER MEEKS

the firm lines of order and beauty within himself, but does not lay stress upon them. He does not bother his subordinates with outward show or tiresome admonitions, but leaves them quite free, putting his trust in the transforming power of a strong and upright personality. And behold! Fate is favorable. His inferiors respond to his influence and fall to his disposition like ripe fruit.

How apt is this description. Jules did protect his 'subordinates' (his mentees) and was a maestro of elegance as he modeled life for us all.

An extraordinary intelligence and a visionary artist, we are here today to remember Jules Engel: the man, the artist and the mentor.

"For the artist communication with nature remains the most essential condition. The artist is human; himself nature; part of nature within natural space."

— from Paul Klee's. *Pedagogical Notebook*

Engel was a man fiercely committed to his art and fiercely disciplined in its practice. Jules created 33 personal films, produced 39 editions of lithographs, hundreds of paintings and sculptures since the late 1930s, and dedicated over 30 years of his life to teaching/mentorship at CalArts.

In 1945, Hazel Guggenheim (of the art patronage family) arranged for his first exhibition at the Frederick Kahn Gallery in Los Angeles. Engel and Guggenheim were visiting the gallery when Ms. Guggenheim said to Kahn that he should give Jules an exhibition. Surprised by the suggestion, Engel agreed to have an exhibition if Kahn would agree not to sell anything. You see, Engel felt that his work was not ready to sell yet. "Naturally," Engel said to me, "the first man to come into the gallery when the show opened wanted to buy one!" Laughing that delightful laugh of his, Jules told the story that Kahn honored his request and refused to sell the work. This story tells us volumes about the man.

Jules was delightfully humorous. Even in the hospital his last days, he maintained the sense of humor in carried throughout his life. I had the honor and privilege of being with Jules until he passed during these last two and a half weeks, and I would like to share a few of those moments with you.

Jules was a vital soul who lived and died in a manner consistent with the essential vibrancy of himself. While in the hospital, as was often the case, he got his days and nights somewhat mixed up, so he would rest during the day, and at night he was ready



Some of Jules' amazing work on *Fantasia*. *Fantasia* shows early hints of the experimental films Engel would do later on in his career. © Walt Disney Pictures.

to "rock and roll." At one point, sometime early one morning, he said to me: "I'm dying. Don't they have a suite for this?" Laughing, my response to him was, "Oh, Jules, we will try to find you a room with a window tomorrow!"

Another moment full of humor was one morning around 4:00 am when Jules looked up at me and said, "This is boring!" Laughing with him again, I said to him "this must be SO boring for you – looking at the same walls and the same people day in and day out! Would you like to see the sports page of the newspaper from yesterday?" [Pause.] "Quite frankly, I don't know what to do with myself." [Longer pause.] But, what the hell? Give it to me and I'll act like I'm doing something!"

What an incredible man. What a life we have the gift

of receiving. Jules Engel was a superbly elegant, kind and genuinely nice man. A philanthropist. A true visionary who fostered the talents of all he met.

The hat, the glasses, the ascot and the dark jacket.

How do we begin to thank such an endearing soul and life affirming energy — a life that cannot deny itself. He continues to blossom through all of us who have been touched by his wit and wisdom. It is indicative of Engel's large presence as a talent that today, September 13, 2003, we celebrate the magnificence of Engel's life at Forest Lawn while, simultaneously, one of Jules' paintings from 1966 is being exhibited in one of the "Pattern and Decoration" exhibitions curated by Michael Duncan opening at Bergamot Station's Rosamund Felsen Gallery. How many people can say they are having a funeral and an opening at the same time! Engel's parallel careers continue uninterrupted in the face of his mortality. How lovely, indeed.

In closing,

Thank you, dearest Jules Engel, for being the extraordinary human being you are. The honor of knowing you was ours.

The privilege of learning from you was ours.

The delight of sharing your humor was ours.

The genius and supremely individualized vision you brought to the history of our lives, was yours.

Janeann Dill

M.F.A., M.A., B.A. Engel biographer and artist in residence for the Creative Alliance at The Patterson, Baltimore, USA and doctoral candidate, Europäische Universität für Interdisziplinäre Studien (European Graduate School), Switzerland.



Jules Engel in his studio, 1949. Courtesy of Tobey C. Moss. Photo credit: Lou Jacobs Jr.

It was indeed a moment of grief having heard about the death of animation pioneer Jules Engel. Our deepest thoughts are with him always... may his soul rest in eternal peace.

Sincerely yours,
Vineet Surana
Champion Media Works

I was pretty ill when I went to CalArts, and I wasn't always in my best artistic form. But I remember no matter how poorly I felt, or how weak my work was, Jules would make an effort to come by and say, "that's nice honey, did you try this?" and, with a single stroke of a pencil, completely awaken my drawings. I had just left the hospital at one point and had been feeling well, and he made a comment to me that he had said about my artwork so many times, "Good colors honey." Whenever I get well after being ill, or whenever I have problems just getting through a day, I think of a single pencil stroke, or the three words that just made me smile for hours. What am I wearing to Jules' funeral? "Good colors honey."

Cathe Boudreau Alleger
M.F.A. art geek, and independent animator
Las Vegas, Nevada

This is one of my favorites. After I had been at CalArts for about a month, myself and some other students noticed that he called all the men either "Champ" or "Sport." After class one day, where the assignment was to animate a person throwing a heavy object, I was startled to hear him say "Doug" while I was leaving. I had animated a man throwing a shot put, and he asked me why I had the man's elbow pointing up at a certain point during the motion. I said that when I was on the track team in high school that was how the throwers did it. He told me that that was incorrect and that their elbow should be pointing down at that point. I put up a little argument and he just put his hand on my arm and said, "Trust me, I know what I'm talking about."

Doug Vitarelli
Freelance animator NYC
M.F.A. Experimental Animation, CalArts, 1995

I was a student at the California Institute of the Arts. Jules Engel had a lot of fun meeting his new students on our very first day in the Experimental Animation department. He would ask the Experimental Animation students to identify themselves out of all the film and video students. He would then announce, "I love you!" to us all as a way of introducing himself. He was very affectionate with his students and charmed our visiting parents too, so much so that when my mother read his obituary in the *South Carolina State* newspaper, she called to say, "Your friend, that cute little man that liked you, Jules Engel, died".

Helen Hill
Filmmaker and animation teacher

I wanted to express some thoughts on Jules.

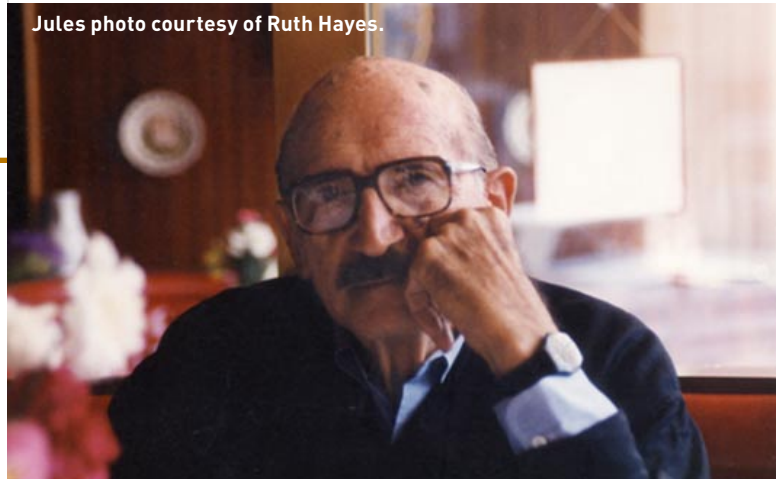
Jules was my mentor. He was kind, concise and funny — with an uncanny ability to see a much bigger picture than what merely lay before him. He always had a light in his eyes. He never rested on past accomplishments — but was always trying new things. I have such a huge amount of respect and admiration for him. He has made an enormous impact on my life and I will carry that with me always. I'm so grateful that I got a chance to know him — and I miss him.

Temah Nelson
Former CalArts student

In Jules' Monday morning animation analysis class, Jules would get us so excited and fired up to produce our own animation. He would show us amazing films and his explanations and anecdotes would bring the films down to earth. Instead of filling us with awe and putting great animation out of our reach, he inspired us to go out and create. I remember leaving that class floating on air. Jules would always leave us with his signature line: "Ring the bell."

Kristen Hagen
Former CalArts student

Jules photo courtesy of Ruth Hayes.



Jules was my mentor when I was at CalArts from 1989-92. I think it was in my first year there that he put up two shows in the CalArts galleries that taught me a few important things.

In one gallery, he suspended paper bags from the ceiling. These were large shopping bags one might get at high-end boutiques. He had collected them over a period of time and now hung them at varying levels throughout the space. By hanging them as he did he elevated their status from just paper bag to thoughtfully designed object. But he also created a wonderful spatial effect that reminded me of walking into a garden of large flowers, or wandering through a field of floating balloons. It was a whimsical, joyful experience so different from the serious and heavily theoretical artworks that were usually installed in and around the main gallery.

For the other show, Jules recruited all the Experimental Animation students (I think at that time there were nearly 60 of us) to produce small sculptures. He had salvaged 12"x12" wooden tiles from the

Institute's Super Shop, along with a variety of wood scrap. He gave one square tile to each of us and told us to paint it black and then construct a sculpture on it using whatever of the wood scraps we chose. He also asked us to paint the wood scraps in bright colors. Jules collected the finished works from us and then spent the better part of a day tiling the floor of the gallery with them. I was amazed to walk into the gallery when he was done and see how he had integrated all his students' diverse responses to the same problem into an engaging study in abstraction that also allowed each tile a "presence" as he might have said, a place in the viewer's attention.

In much of his artwork, Jules used a similar playful approach to choreographing collections of shapes and colors in spaces in and beyond the film frame. In his teaching, Jules valued students as individuals and worked with us to elevate, in a way, each of our particular strengths as artists. But he also kept the larger picture in mind. So among the things I learned from Jules were these: to keep a spirit of play while working, to design simple structures that allow complexity to emerge, and in my teaching to go to where the student is and appreciate his or her individuality both on its own and as part of a larger pattern.

Ruth Hayes
Animation faculty at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington

Beginning a course in B.A. Hons degree in animation at the University of Lincoln the year before, one of the first assignments given to us after a lengthy introduction to abstract animation was to research a significant figure in this field. Due to his Disney background (the "Mushroom Dance" in *Fantasia*), we chose to study a certain Hungarian fellow by the name of Jules Engel.

After weeks of frantically searching for information from various sources, including *AWN*'s regular contributor Gene Deitch and the Tobey C. Moss Gallery, of whose insights was of a great help to me, I came to find a Website representing a new abstract organization. Thinking it was a long shot, I decided to contact them.

A few weeks later, a knock came on the door of my hall of residences, to which of my flatmates was waiting holding a quite stuffy looking envelope.

"This came for you today, it looks important. It's from America."

The address on the front was handwritten. It was personally from Jules Engel.

Upon opening it I was startled at the amount of in-

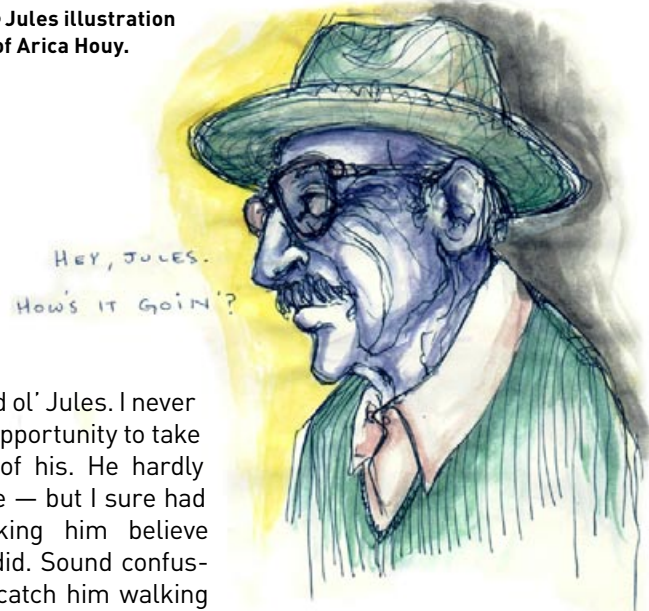
formation, all sent personally from Jules, even including his personal address in case I needed anymore of his help. Even though I only knew him from a personal view, I couldn't help but think of the man's complete lack of an ego. Here was a man who had his feet firmly stuck on the ground, and would not be afraid to indulge his vast knowledge and experience to anyone who requested it.

It was also because of Jules, and his career, I discovered CalArts and it's hugely impressive history and relevance in animation, of which Jules association has proved to be a cornerstone in the institute's success. I now dream of being able to study there, and learn as much as Jules' students have before in the past.

P.S.... We got a good mark on the project! I would only like to pass on my condolences to Jules' friends and family. Thanks for everything, Jules.

Yours faithfully,
Andrew Holden
2nd year animation student, University of Lincoln,
Hull, East Yorkshire, England

Hey There Jules illustration
courtesy of Arica Houy.



Good ol' Jules. I never got the opportunity to take a class of his. He hardly knew me — but I sure had fun making him believe that he did. Sound confusing? I'd catch him walking down the halls at CalArts and spark up random conversations with him. He sometimes looked a little confused, like I might have been a student of his that he didn't remember — but I never got to tell him I was just a great admirer.

Arica Houy
Character animation student, CalArts
Burbank, California

I loved Jules Engel as a second father, and admired him both as a human being and as the great artist he was. I will just miss him for the rest of my life and that's it.

Giannalberto Bendazzi
Animation historian, Italy

Jules had integrity. I am very lucky to know him as a teacher and a successful artist. It's very hard to find a real teacher with lots of experiences and he was the one.

Atsuko Kubota
CG artist/ animator
Los Angeles

I arrived to CalArts in 1996 with a Fullbright grant to study in the Experimental Animation program. Jules was the most colorful thing in a school where everything is saturated to a maximum degree. His style and sense of elegance would make any Hollywood star look tasteless, his charisma and quality as a human being, his intelligent smile and charming remarks could only make you feel grateful to destiny for having brought you to Valencia, California on time for a 15-minute thesis-meeting with him.

Love forever dear teacher.

Alejandra I Jarabo
Freelance graphic designer-animator
Instructor at Santa Monica College, Art History and Contemporary Art

Here are some valuable things that Jules taught me about animation and life:

1. Make a great entrance.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Sugar is energy.
4. Go out with a bang.

I loved talking to Jules about color, nature and the "big picture."

Cheers to Jules!
Jefferson Thomas (Jeff-O)
Experimental Animation Class of 1994,
Earthquake Graduating Class

Poet, philosopher, artist, director, teacher, administrator and our FRIEND, JULES ENGEL 1909 – 2003.

We will sorely miss our conversations in the gallery, over dinners, at the viewings. Every time we will mount a new exhibition (see the REDCAT in November!), we will remember him... often.

Tobey and Allen Moss and Erin Weiss
Tobey C. Moss Gallery

I encountered Jules Engel only five or six times, but each time was good. The first was when we did a show and tell together about 30 years ago in California. I was showing some award-winning films made by children at the Yellow Ball Workshop, and Jules was showing his amazing abstract animation.

The next time was in the early '70s when he was a judge at the New York International Animation Festival. We were lucky enough to win an award and be able to hang around in the halls and talk to Jules and Isabella Rosellini, two of the judges for the festival.

After that, I remember recommending two of my Yellow Ball Workshop students, Deirdre Cowden and Amy Kravitz, to Jules at CalArts for his Experimental Animation Program. Both of these students had an overwhelming appreciation for his talents as a teacher, mentor and friend.

Later, when I became head of the film/video/animation program at RISD we began to send our RISD animation grads to CalArts for his graduate animation program. Jules and I lived on opposite sides of the country, so most of our encounters were on the phone.

The last time I spoke to him was when Sheila Sofian, a RISD grad was going to CalArts on a scholarship and to arrange for him to come to RISD to make a presentation for our school. The following semester, when he came, I was away on sabbatical, but Amy Kravitz and her husband, Steve Subotnick, both CalArts grads, teaching at RISD were very pleased to present him to the school. His showing was a big hit.

Jules has made a lasting impact on the world of animation in his own work and his encouragement of students to experiment with new techniques and ideas. It is a pleasure to have known him.

Yvonne Andersen
Professor emeritus, RISD

TIME SPENT WITH HIM WAS ALWAYS VALUABLE, BECAUSE HE RELATED ART TO LIFE AS A WHOLE...
— BEN MCCLURE

I just graduated M.F.A. from CalArts' Experimental Animation program this spring. Jules served as my mentor during my time there.

I was deeply saddened to hear that Jules had passed away. I feel immensely grateful that I was able to partake of his immense knowledge and wisdom. Time spent with him was always valuable, because he related art to life as a whole, so that we were able to learn unexpected things about a full spectrum of areas from the starting point of, say, an ice-skater's pirouette. He taught me to see connections where I never would have expected to see them before meeting him. We will all miss him.

Ben McClure
Freelance artist working on a film called,
The Devils' Party

I met Jules Engel at CalArts in 1997 when I was photographing "animation people" for my project "Third Eye." Everybody in my pictures was eyes closed. Thanks to [Acme Filmworks president] Ron Diamond I got a chance to meet this charming gentleman. First thing Jules Engel said to me when we met was: "It is nice to meet people from the country where Paavo Nurmi was born." Mr. Engel told that he was interested in running after seeing Paavo Nurmi run in the U.S.

It was really magical meeting with him. He was such a huge personality. I was very happy to get him in my collection.

Timo Viljakainen
Photographer, Helsinki, Finland

Jules Engel, a significant master of the "wordless truth" in the abstract cinema, has left us with the wonderful legacy of his work. Another legacy I would like to point out was his profound guidance to many artists throughout the years with the power and respect for individual vision. He tended to show by example, and set you free to create. At the CalArts' film library I was able to see many of these student films he had collected over the years. Many of these students went on to have a major hand in great productions for the big and small screens. Many also won festivals all over the world and

some are teachers. Jules had a major impact on the creative spirit of the experimental and commercial animation worlds.

Joel F. Mariano
CalArts MFA-Film/Video, Experimental
Animation, 1987

Jules Engel was a generous supportive mentor that not only opened my eyes to the universe of soulful and poetic animation, he also created a safe environment of encouragement and a network of thoughtful and supportive students at CalArts that was key in my search for a unique process. Looking back, I have to believe that I was unaware that he was planting profound seeds that have since grown greatly. I remember Jules in the legacy he left of the many, many artists he affected and nurtured.

Mark Osborne
CalArts B.F.A. '92, director of the short films *More* and *Greener* and the live-action feature *Dropping Out*

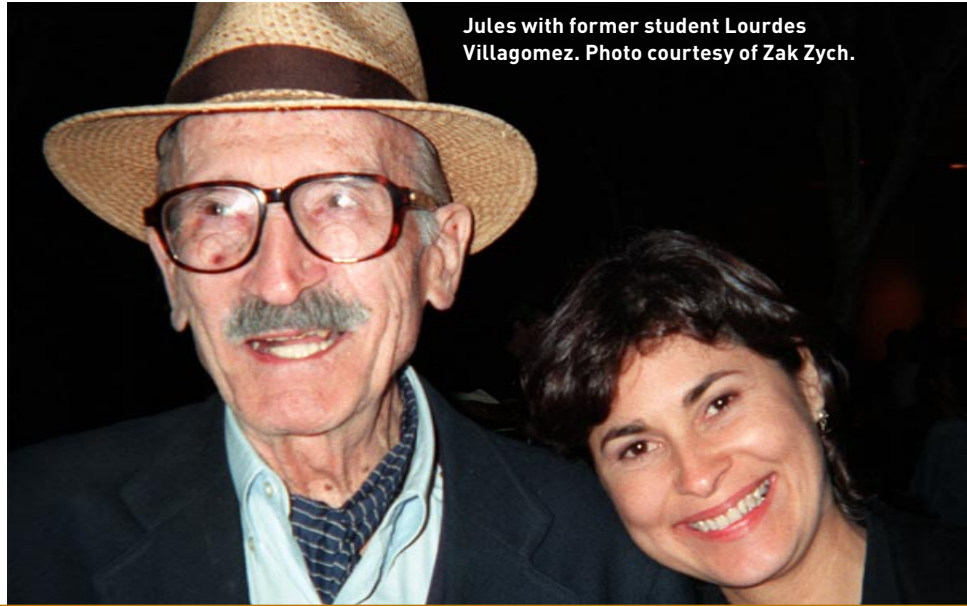
Jules was the closest thing to heaven in my creative screenwriting universe that introduced us 15 years ago. He allowed the stars and Mars to jar, the lines to create sublime divine reflections of our innermost creative voices. Like a child, he saw everything as new and was a constant in my creative life as it evolved and changed shape like the magic images he created to change the world. I may have been considered his adopted daughter, but it is all in the perspective of things. In Jules' language, he was a presence, his work special and his perspective the most upbeat, witty, wonderful one in the world. He was my biggest fan, as I was his. I was the writer he longed to be and he was the artist I wished I could become. Most importantly, he was my heart, and I hope it forever beats inside me in his special corner marked Jules.

Patricia Rust
Author, *The King of Skittledoodoo*
founder, The Rust Foundation for Literacy

I was a student of Jules Engel's between September 1992 and December 1994. When I read that you were putting together a tribute for him I looked through all my old photos from CalArts, and this was my favorite.

This is a picture of Jules with one of his former student Lourdes Villagomez, taken at the end of the year animation showcase, at the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences, Friday May 14, 1999.

Zak Zych
Instructor, the Center For Advanced Imaging, St. Louis



Jules with former student Lourdes Villagomez. Photo courtesy of Zak Zych.

I met Jules in London in 1966. At that time I was animating for Halas & Batchelor in Soho Square, and the studio had just signed a subcontract deal with Format Films to produce animated episodes of the *Lone Ranger* TV show.

Jules came over with Herb Klynn to demonstrate the unique poster-graphic style that he had developed for the show. We looked on amazed as he sketched a heavy grease-pencil outline of a background on cel, and then proceeded to tear up pieces of colored paper and place them under the cel. It didn't matter how roughly this was done; in fact the rougher the tear and the more outrageous the color the better — and the effect was magical!

As we got used to the possibilities of this technique, I remember one background artist, for a bet, producing one entire episode with a desert setting entirely in shades of GREEN paper — and it worked!!!

A fitting tribute to his astonishing skill and versatility.

Cam Ford
Cinemagic Animated Films
Moss Vale, NSW, Australia

Many have touted Jules for always stressing the positive aspects of our work (as opposed to pointing out the negative). My Jules was a little different. I remember working on an assignment for the late great Ruth Kissane (Casey to those who loved her). Deep in my work, I hadn't noticed that Jules was watching over my shoulder. "Baby, what IS all this shit?" I ex-

plained to him that I was experimenting — after all I was in Experimental Animation. He said, "Baby, that will never work." The following week, after two viewings, Jules said, "Son of a bitch, it works!" He was first to admit he was wrong.

And it is true; he referred to his students as artists or talents — except for me. I was extremely lucky to be accepted into the program at age 18. Jules arranged to have Bill Melendez come for a visit. I was so excited to meet him — *A Charlie Brown Christmas* cemented my love of animation. I came up to Jules in the hall outside the studio at CalArts where he and Mr. Melendez were talking. Jules said, "Bill, I want you to meet someone." Here it comes! Jules is going to call me 'the talent' — I was thrilled! "This is 'the Child'." Aaargh! I kept what became a term of endearment until I had a child of my own.

It was just after I met Mr. Melendez that Jules and I had one of many heart-to-heart talks. He told me to make sure my name was incorporated into the name of my studio ("I'm going to have a studio, Jules?" the child asked in total disbelief) and he told me that someone should make a film about Don Quixote. At the time, I took it to mean that I should make a film about Quixote. I'm certain that I am not the only one he mentioned this to — there have been a few excellent film interpretations since. Last winter I had a chance to speak at length with Jules about the short film I'm working on — the prison scene from *Man of la Mancha*. He absolutely lit up as I explained how it was going to be animated and that my dad was going to sing for the film (Jules always asked about my dad, keeping track of his career). It took 15 years, but I'm finally doing it!

A fantastic mentor, a brilliant artist and a man with a wicked sense of humor — Jules, thank you for gracing us with your existence!

Shayne Hood
Mommy and filmmaker
Newhall, California

I graduated for Experimental Animation at CalArts in '98. He is a hero in my heart, and his inspiration will be all around the world wherever our alumni are. I'd like show my new son to Jules Engel, as a grandfather. Thank you for you all you did.

Jonghyeck Ahn
Professor at Konkuk University
South Korea

The following is a poem about Jules:

Jules
He sat in the corner of the studio
With the door open.
A straw hat on his head
And a striped cravat around his neck.
Whenever you appeared at his door
A smile spread across his face
And his was truly glad to see you.
Whatever your project or question
His interest was genuine.
Even when you faltered
He believed in you...
Asked you questions
To make you think
And delve to greater depths.
But mostly to bring out the vision
You had inside.

His presence
Small but full of vigor,
His laugh contagious,
His hands and face expressive and animated,
That is whom you think of.

Today that corner of the studio
Is empty.
The door you open is your own.
You need to believe in yourself
As much as he did.

And a remembrance:

The last time I saw Jules was two years ago when he was receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Edison Black Maria International Film Festival.

As gifted, talented and accomplished as Jules was, he was awestruck at having such an honor bestowed on him. When receiving the award, he joked with the panel and audience that maybe they had come to see someone else, and seemed humbled by the applause and attention that was given to him.

After sending him some photos from the evening, he left a message on my machine, "The pictures arrived! Hah, hah. Thank you, thank you!" I could hear the smile on his face.

He was more than just a mentor, more than inspirational. He has taught us all to experience and enjoy life, to be honest and true to ourselves, and to bring that into our work. His life brought so much to so many and I will miss him dearly.

Jackie Ross
CalArts graduate student 1991-94
New York City

A REMEMBRANCE OF JULES ENGEL

Those of us who knew Jules were either a great friend or a respected acquaintance to him. His students were not students but "talents." He was no "star," just a great human being. Now that he's gone, I'm struggling to understand him as I never had before.

I first got to know him because we each worked at CalArts. As and institute writer at the time, I interviewed him for an article early in my tenure and found him fascinating. Talking with him was like finding the Grand Canyon when you expected just a cut in a river-bank. I also learned we lived near each other, so I invited him over for a family barbecue with friends. He fit right in. He didn't mind getting barbecue sauce on his hands.

For a couple years, we carpooled, and when I taught to 6:00 pm, sometimes he'd join my class. When I made a good point, he'd be nodding, or he'd laugh with the others if I said something funny. In the car on the way home, we'd go over the high points of the class, which was often a student's writing. "That person is a major talent," he'd say.

I would often call him up to see if he'd like to grab lunch or dinner, and he'd say, "Ya," in that clipped way he had, and then he'd suggest a time. I always worried about being even a few minutes late, because I'd find him standing next to his apartment house on the corner of Beverly Glen and Ilona, in his straw hat, cars like



Jules' work and mentoring has inspired generations of artists.
© Walt Disney Pictures.

crows whizzing past the great artist.

As I ponder his age now — a topic he would never discuss — he stands as a great example of how to live though “the golden years,” which to college students starts about age 30, and if you were Jules, it was somewhere yet ahead in the 100s. Jules has shown us all a path. No need to live extravagantly when the next art piece is so challenging. No need to put something off if you can create something now. No need to feel old when a seeing a play, a dance, a film or even the gesture of a person on a cell phone can enliven you. Movement in any form, in fact, can be as invigorating as the seeds of a dandelion taking to the air.

He also showed us that being with someone — having a dialogue and moving across the topics of the day — is an art form in itself. Go be artists.

Jules particularly enjoyed hearing about the process of writing, as if it were magic, but I thought what he did was supernatural. A few years ago, he let me watch the process of his latest work. As he sat in front of his Sony flat-screen TV, a gift from the School of Film/Video, he tuned to a sports channel, the one he knew by heart on his cable box. He had a pair of scissors and cut seemingly randomly at colored sheets of paper: red, blue, green, orange. Some shapes he made intricately with curves like George W. Bush's nose, a little crooked. (Jules loved talking politics, too). Other shapes were simple squares and rectangles. Once he had a pile, he said, “And now I do this.” On a black sheet, he arranged the bits of paper, moving furiously, his fingers as fast as someone reading Braille. In short order, with the colored paper in an abstract design, he smiled. “There,” he said, as if that explained the music in his soul. Those pieces of paper would later be glued down and a litho-

graph made from the whole.

He'd want to know how I worked. I told him, for example, how last month I had the strangest dream about a play I had written. I was a theater critic critiquing my own play as if I had not written the play. I was telling myself, “You have a good play here, and you don't even realize it.” I gave myself minute detail of what needed to be changed, including the name of the play. “What a fascinating dream!” Jules said right away and wanted to know more. I told him more. Jules laughed when he heard everything and said the human mind was an amazing thing.

His mind was an amazing thing.

Go to the Website http://www.netropolitan.org/engel/engel_main.html, and you'll see some incredible quotes from him. For instance, in his statement, he says, “My work is not realized through mathematical formulas or theories. It is gained through visual trial-and-error. It is a process of perception. It is a process of trial-and-error.”

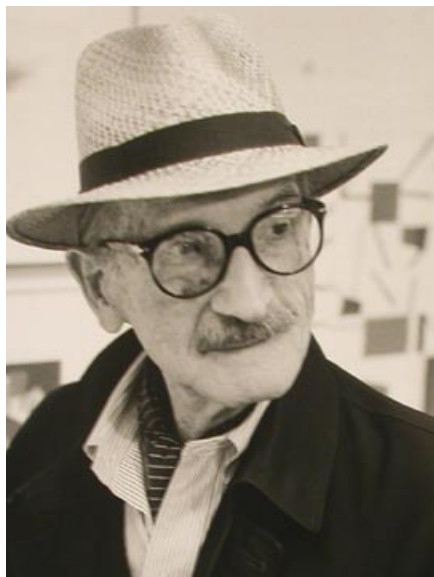
This is how I work at writing, and I think he saw that commonality between us. He even once told me, “I'd give up art and animation if I only could write.” Thankfully, he didn't give up anything. He was working on art and animation until the week he entered the hospital. And, the thing is, he did write. He wrote poetry. He said if he found a special word, he'd keep it on a piece of paper in a bowl, and when he had many words, he'd start playing with them. He wanted 10 poems, and he came up with about eight, which he then made into a book and self-published into a beautiful volume, selecting just the right paper and binding and having a limited run of copies, just like his lithographs.

He said, “Movement is the content. Don't merely look at a movement, FEEL it.” He also said, “Movement emerges, only to disappear.” He was movement in our lives. He has only partially disappeared. There remains a persistence of vision.

Christopher Meeks
CalArts character animation faculty

THE JULES ENGEL PRESERVATION PROJECT

When Jules Engel passed away in September 2003, he left behind a legacy of more than 33 personal films. The Jules Engel Preservation Project was established to insure the archival conservation of those works. Through the support of individual contributions and institutional grants, and anchored by leadership funding provided by the National Film Preservation Foundation, the project has been able to restore



Jules Engel at his exhibition at the Tobey C. Moss Gallery 2001. Courtesy of Tobey Moss. Photo Credit: Mark Kirkland.

several of his short abstract films. In recognition of Jules' brilliant career as educator and artist, CalArts recently became a major supporter of this effort. The work of the project fulfills the commitments, made individually and on the part of our community to our friend, mentor, collaborator and inspiration, and guarantees that his achievement will be available to future generations of students, scholars and cinema lovers everywhere.

A number of new and restored prints will screen at The Jules Engel Retrospective at the REDCAT in Los Angeles on November 23, 2003.

The Jules Engel Preservation Project wishes to thank CalArts, IOTA, The National Endowment for the Arts, the National Film Preservation Foundation, Audio Mechanics, Cinema Arts, Chace Audio, Cineric, DJ Audio, Audio Mechanics, NOMI Group, Stephen Lavine, Chris Meeks, Steve Anker, Myron Emery, Dr. William Moritz, Tobey Moss, Christine Panushka, Ruth Hayes, Lorelei Pepi and the Rochester Institute of Technology, School of Film and Animation, and many individual donors.

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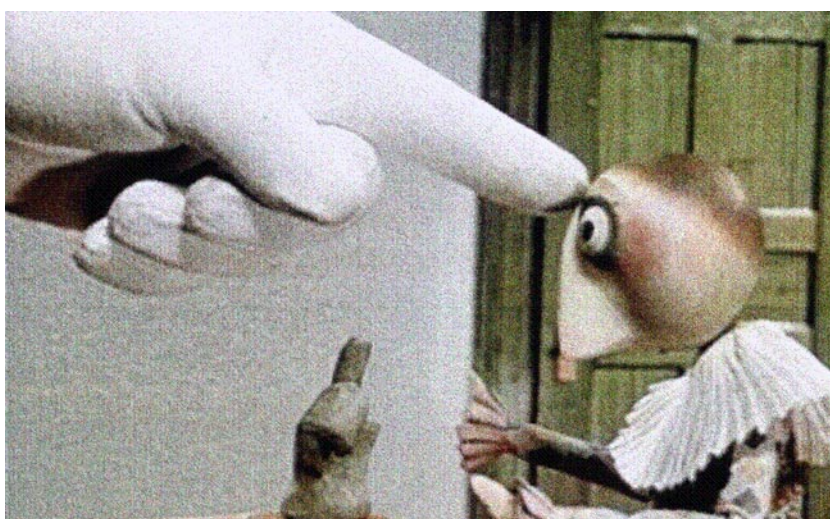
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ANIMATION HISTORY

Czech Animation: Two Perspectives

by Andrew Osmond



WHEN ONE READS ABOUT CZECH ANIMATION — what we could once call Czechoslovakian animation, until the political upheavals in [Eastern Europe](#) led to the establishment of the Czech Republic a decade ago — two very different portraits emerge. On the one hand, there's Czech animation's heritage, in all its incredible diversity. Even animation fans who haven't had the opportunity to see the classics know the masters' names: people like Karel Zeman, the Czech Melies; the brilliant [Jiri Trnka](#), stop-motion maestro behind the magic *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1961) and the brutal *The Hand* (1965); and the surreal, caustic Jan Svankmajer.

And then there's the industry's pessimistic present — full of scare stories and glum news. The era of Communist state support is now a memory, often remembered with wry "nostalgia" by those artists who were supported and restricted by it. According to Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, the main post-communist years of decline were 1990 to 1996, between which the number of Czech animated films dropped from an average of 140 a year to 50. Since then, production has risen, but there were only about 75 films made in 2001, many coming from film schools like Prague's famous academy Famu. It's difficult to write about Czech animation without sounding elegiac, accepting the passing of an animated age.

However, neither of the two industry practitioners interviewed here have much time for wistful regrets. It's tempting to say they represent two generations of Czech animation, and in some ways they do, but at the same time, they see themselves as part of a continuing history and industry, albeit one that encompasses a multitude of styles and approaches. And they don't think it's over yet.

It's difficult to think of anyone better placed for an overview of Czech animation than Zdenka Deitch. Formerly Zdenka Najmanova, since 2000, she has headed



Check out this great clip from [The Hand](#) (top). At home with Gene Deitch and Zdenka Deitchova. *The Hand* © Rembrandt Films. All rights reserved.

the great Prague animation studio Bratři v Triku, where she's worked for nearly 60 years. The studio, whose name means "Trick Brothers" or "Brothers in Trick," was founded after World War II by Trnka and Eduard Hofman (director of the 1958 feature *The Creation of the World*). It's the oldest and the largest studio in the industry, responsible for more than 1,600 titles, including many for children that range from two-minute shorts to full-length features. Zdenka Deitch is the wife of famed U.S. director Gene Deitch, whose own account of coming to Bratři v Triku can be found from [Chapter 16](#) onwards in his online book, [How to Succeed in Animation](#), available on this site.

Here's Zdenka Deitch's account in her own words.

"When I was a young girl, I was an art school student, but the universities were closed during the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in World War II. In the summer of 1945, just after the war had ended, I went to a big live-action studio called Barrandov in Prague. I went with a writer friend who was doing research on the German occupation. While we were sitting there, I saw an advert on a little table for the opening of a new animation studio in the center of Prague. The studio chief was Jiri Trnka, who was already a very well known artist. [The studio's parent company is Kratky Film Praha. Bratři v Triku specializes in drawn cartoons, with its sister studio, Studio Jiri Trnka, specializing in puppets, though the puppet side is dormant now because of the expense and length of production.]

"There had been a studio before, working on titles and advertising, so there were already several offices. Everyone was thrown somewhere else during the last years of the war, and, afterward, people were invited to start the studio again.

"I looked at the advert and thought it might be interesting, so I took my portfolio of drawings and went there. The studio people looked at my drawings. I was maybe too young for them but they said, well, we will try! I started on July 2, 1945, right at the beginning. At first I was coloring and inking, then I was animating. Then, because I had some kind of talent for organization, I became a production manager working with Mr. Trnka, who was then directing and designing films for UNESCO. His client in London came over to Prague and the studio called on me, because I was the only person at Triku who spoke a little bit of English...

"The early days were an absolutely amazing time. There was a tremendous spirit just after the war. Many young people, thrown out of university, were drawn to the studio. We were really starting from nothing, from blank paper, learning everything, which



Jiri Trnka working on his film, *Good Soldier Schweik*. © Kratky Film Praha.

was absolutely fascinating. The early films were so individual and poetic. There were no series of films, each title was individual and the directors were always thinking of quality, trying to put something special in the design. In 1947, one of our films, based on a famous Czech fairy tale, won a prize at Cannes, and, from then on, we gained a reputation in Europe, where people were very surprised by this Czech studio nobody had heard of.

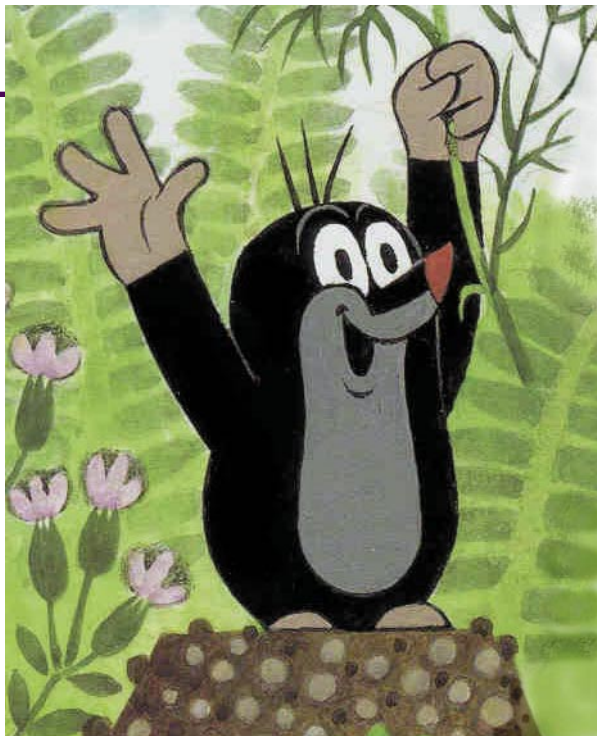
"We were growing, growing, growing, with lots of success. I worked with such a good group of people. Animation is not only about talent, but also about patience and love. You don't make cartoons to make money or to become rich, only a few people get rich and then the money comes from merchandising.

"You have to give children respect in animation. What you give to kids in these films will be returned by them when they grow up. You will not find ugliness in our films. I hate messy, stupid cartoons that are not for children, but only for boobies. A good story is the most important thing, a story that will give something to the younger generation and will be taken up by different generations. Everybody wants to have computer animation today, but classic animation comes from the heart. These days, we send our drawings and backgrounds to a nearby studio, which colors them on computer, but if you're telling a simple story, for example about little kids going somewhere, having fun, then you need the classical style.

"During the war, Germans captured a black-and-white print of Disney's *Snow White* and brought it to Prague. There was a machine called a Kinox, made of

old projector parts, which you could put a reel of film on and study it frame by frame. The Czech animators saw the character movement and learned from that, but they only learned the basics, which we adapted to our own humor and character.

"Czech characters are more stylized; we work more with the design. [Gene Deitch describes it as a symbolic approach to storytelling, based on suggestion and mime.] Each film is a different design, and we put the animation in such a way that the art would dominate. In an animation like *Mole* [one of Bratři v Triku's best-known children's titles, by Zdenek Miler], the artist is full of poetry, and he makes a story to give out something positive. The animation promotes poetry and visuals in children, their feeling for beauty, the importance of how they live. It's an aesthetic that promotes the best in kids and humans in general. There are no words and the movement is slow. Kids are enchanted by little creatures, and it's great animation because the characters are done in such a way you feel they're part of you. We want to promote kids' feelings for aesthetics.



***The Mole*, one of Bratři v Triku's best-known children's titles. Courtesy of Gene Deitch. © Kratky Film.**

"We did work for American clients as well. [Zdenka was appointed head of the studio's "Snyder unit," set up by U.S. producer William L. Snyder, who later sent Gene Deitch to Prague.] We animated for Warner Bros., Weston Woods Studios in Connecticut [who commis-

sioned numerous films of children's picture books] and *Tom and Jerry* cartoons for Rembrandt Releases (1961-2). We learned much from *Tom and Jerry*, about timing and American-school theory, but to use rather than copy. They were made on a much lower budget than the U.S. *Tom and Jerry* films (\$10,000 each, compared to over \$40,000 for the originals), and I'm proud of what we did for the money. We also made *Popeye* and *Krazy Kat* films for King Features TV.

"Of course, the pressure was to finish the package of films in a certain time. In those days it was too much, because we were only a small group, so we were helped out by the Zagreb studio in Yugoslavia. It was a good collaboration. [Zdenka and Gene Deitch had a custom production unit separate from the main studio site, which Zdenka headed. For a longer account of the custom series, see [chapters 20](#) and [21](#) of Deitch's book.]

"Czech people have a special sense of humor. They'll recognize something that you didn't even mean, in the style of the cartoon, something that's against the regime. After the Russian takeover, there was a special committee that decided what could and couldn't be done. But artists were always finding ways around,

THE ERA OF COMMUNIST STATE SUPPORT IS NOW A MEMORY, OFTEN REMEMBERED WITH WRY "NOSTALGIA" BY THOSE ARTISTS WHO WERE SUPPORTED AND RESTRICTED BY IT.

showing things that the officials didn't see. It wasn't always intentional. For example, my husband directed a film called *The Giants* (1968, made just as the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia), which visualized the problem of Palestine and Israel. It was a film about two small guys who always fight. They don't have enough strength so they both call on giants, in pink and blue. When it was shown, the reaction was absolutely hilarious! People were clapping, taking the film quite differently from what my husband had in mind. The film won the Grand Prize at the Spanish film festival, but it was banned so no one could see it for years and years. [For Gene Deitch's own perspective, see chapter 24 of his book.] Now you can do whatever you want but you have no money. In those days you were restricted, but you had money... so what's better?

"During the communist era, the politicians thought animation had no value, but they saw it as 'bread and circuses' for the public, so they gave us money. The revolution was great, but now there is no money! There are some small grants from the Ministry of Culture, about \$3,000, but they're usually only given to young

Complaints about U.S. firms pale when you see where the Kratky animators worked. Courtesy of and © Gene Deitch.



people who do everything from A to Z. After 1989, people thought that there was the possibility of a 'new wave' of Czech animation, and several small studios were established. People left our studio for that reason, especially young men because they had families and needed more money. Now, most of our workers are female.

"In Prague, we have a film faculty and there is one class that teaches animation. The students can start in the studio as apprentices, making some test animation. After a year, they may be accepted to university for the next five years, during which time we try to help them because they have to prove they can make cartoons. They can use the studio facilities, spend maybe one or two months before the camera to make a short film and we charge them nothing. Later on, when they are in the fourth or fifth grades, they produce another film, which we take and show at festivals.

"I don't want to put young people down but they have no patience. They need more patience if they are really going to learn how to draw, how to make the characters. Young people always want to make something fantastic, spectacular, but they need to work hard, study, learn and be very honest in their animation. I would like to establish more young talent, and draw more people from the universities. I feel there will be a change of generation. We established the studio, as it was, now I think we should give chances to young people, young artists. It is very important they follow in our work. I would be absolutely crushed if I realized there would be no one who would do it.

"We are making films for foreign customers, who keep us going. We have to live off what we get, which

is not so easy. My husband has won an Oscar so we are well known, but still, if you want to do a nice small film, there's no place for it. Everyone wants a 52-part series. International festivals like Annecy are very important, when everybody can get together and talk and show films. Our current animation includes projects for Palm

Plus Media in the Netherlands and for Weston Woods Studios. We're doing a film for Weston Woods right now, and we've also finished *Bark, George*, adapted from a children's picture book by my husband's friend Jules Feiffer [who wrote the story for Gene Deitch's Oscar-winning *Munro* (1960)].



Extinct World of Gloves shows off Barta's unique style.
© Kratky Film Praha.

"We're also making new animation for Czech TV. In Prague, there is an evening TV slot for children's programming, which shows our films, introducing them to a new generation, which is important. Some of our films are also shown on Saturday mornings. *Mole* is very popular with little children, they really love it!

DURING THE COMMUNIST ERA, THE POLITICIANS THOUGHT ANIMATION HAD NO VALUE, BUT THEY SAW IT AS 'BREAD AND CIRCUSES' FOR THE PUBLIC, SO THEY GAVE US MONEY.

"Overall, I think it's a good start. It's rather difficult to get the customers, there are always money problems, but we try our best!"

One of the younger Czech animators that Zdenka most admires is the artist and director Jiri Barta, recognized as one of the most significant figures in the post '60's industry. Among Barta's short films is the spooky tale *The Last Theft* (1987), a largely live-action film directed as if with puppets, and the stop-motion *Extinct World of Gloves* (1983), where hand garments re-enact Hollywood history. Perhaps Barta's most striking short is *The Ballad of Green Wood* (1984), an audacious stop-motion film in which sticks dance and fight through a rugged landscape of mountains and caves, all filmed outdoors on location.

Green Wood involved filmmakers from the Jiri Trnka studio, which later lent its resources to Barta's ambitious feature *The Pied Piper* (1985). Barta was most interested in the film's crooked setting and depraved townspeople, who get a deserved comeuppance from the fearsome *Pied Piper*, all placed in the trappings of a medieval morality play. Barta is now developing a feature version of the *Golem* story, and screened a seven-minute promotional reel in London last year.

"I studied at the College of Applied Arts, in the Department of Film and Television Graphics. If I look at the work of my colleagues, they are partly art designers and partly animators. Animated cinema is a collection of many individualities, and I think nobody wants to follow anybody else. Everyone has their own way. I met Jiri Trnka at the very beginning of my time in animation. He taught at our art school in illustration and graphics, because he said animation is very complicated and he didn't want to do it! Trnka belongs to the older generation (he died in 1969) and is a legend.

"I don't think the problem of Czech animation is a problem of money, it's more distribution. If you have no cinemas or TV channels to show animated films, then there's no one to finance them. You can ask from the grant system, which might give you 50% of a budget but I am speaking about very small budgets. We look for collaboration with other countries; sometimes we're successful, sometimes not. I've worked in Cardiff, Wales [on the 13-minute short *The Tyrant and the Child*, co-produced with S4C], but I seldom have such opportunities.

"Animation festivals are very important, not only to show our work but to see the work of other anima-

tors. It's very important for us to see the situation in the world. In particular, we can see many computer-animated films now, and mixes of computer and hand animation. I don't think computer animation is better than hand animation, but you can choose one way or another. At the beginning, I was against computers because I thought the animation was a little bit cold, showing a very scientific world, but, after several years, I've changed my feelings. My students work on computers and I know their commercial possibilities, so they are important.

"My feature film *The Pied Piper* was made in 1985 between West Germany and Kratky Film Praha, with the money coming from both sides. It was a huge and complicated project for us, taking about two and a half years to make. I was lucky because I could ask my friends and colleagues to help me. There were about 30 people working on the project in all. The film used several different techniques, including 3D puppets and the illusion of 3D space created by light on a series of glass sheets. All the film's sets were made in a special perspective, so that the backgrounds seemed very distant, but they were only painted and sculpted that way.

"Animated film for Czech animators is about stylization and art design. If I talk about the Czech animated 'school' [the name given to the strand of Czech animation influenced by Trnka, Zeman, their predecessor Hermína Týrlová and their successor [Jan Svankmajer](#)], that doesn't mean one style, but many individualities, many different styles. *The Pied Piper* started from the idea that this was an old German legend, so it needed to be expressionist, medieval. Czech animation can be both grotesque and funny. Nothing is absolutely serious, but there are greater or lesser degrees of humor.

"I didn't make a script for this film, only storyboards. A script had been developed before I came on board, but it was hard to get it to feature length, so I was invited to make the film. I liked the story, the ideas, the atmosphere and thought I could get something. I was most interested in the mood, and I made the film according to my feelings. *Pied Piper* is a film about character, setting a city of evil against a few bright characters, like the lady Agnes, who's an island in the middle of darkness. Then there's the extraordinary figure of the *Pied Piper*, who's like *Destiny*, *Death* or *Time*, with further symbols of time in the

CZECH PEOPLE HAVE A SPECIAL SENSE OF HUMOR.

film like the town clock on the tower. I gave the story a different ending [in which the Piper turns the townspeople into rats] because there are many kinds of expression.

"I like *The Ballad of Green Water*, my short film, because I needed to imagine all the possible situations when we were animating, up in mountains and caves. Filming it was a big adventure and sometimes very funny. We would find a place and try to shoot, but it was so complicated, because the weather could change in a few minutes. You might be able to animate for an hour before having to cancel and start again next day. We had to set up so many shots and choose from them. We had three times as many shots as in the actual film. The shooting took from winter till summer. Seven or eight months, for 10 minutes of animation!

"With my current feature *The Golem*, I suppose I'm in a parallel situation to Yuri Norstein making *The Overcoat*. (I like Norstein's work, he has a very nice mood and stylization, absolutely distinct.) I am preparing many storyboards and trying to approach producers. Some people in Japan promised to help me with the film, but they were cautious because they said the story was dark, it had a little bit of a deep mood. They said it wasn't for Japanese people. It's strange, because at the outset, they said yes to everything, but now they're silent. I'm also putting the film to Czech TV, and looking around in many different directions." ■

ANDREW OSMOND is a freelance writer specializing in fantasy media and animation.

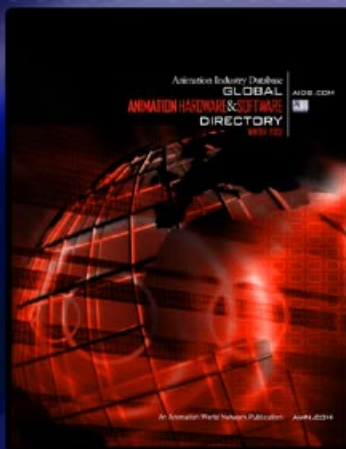
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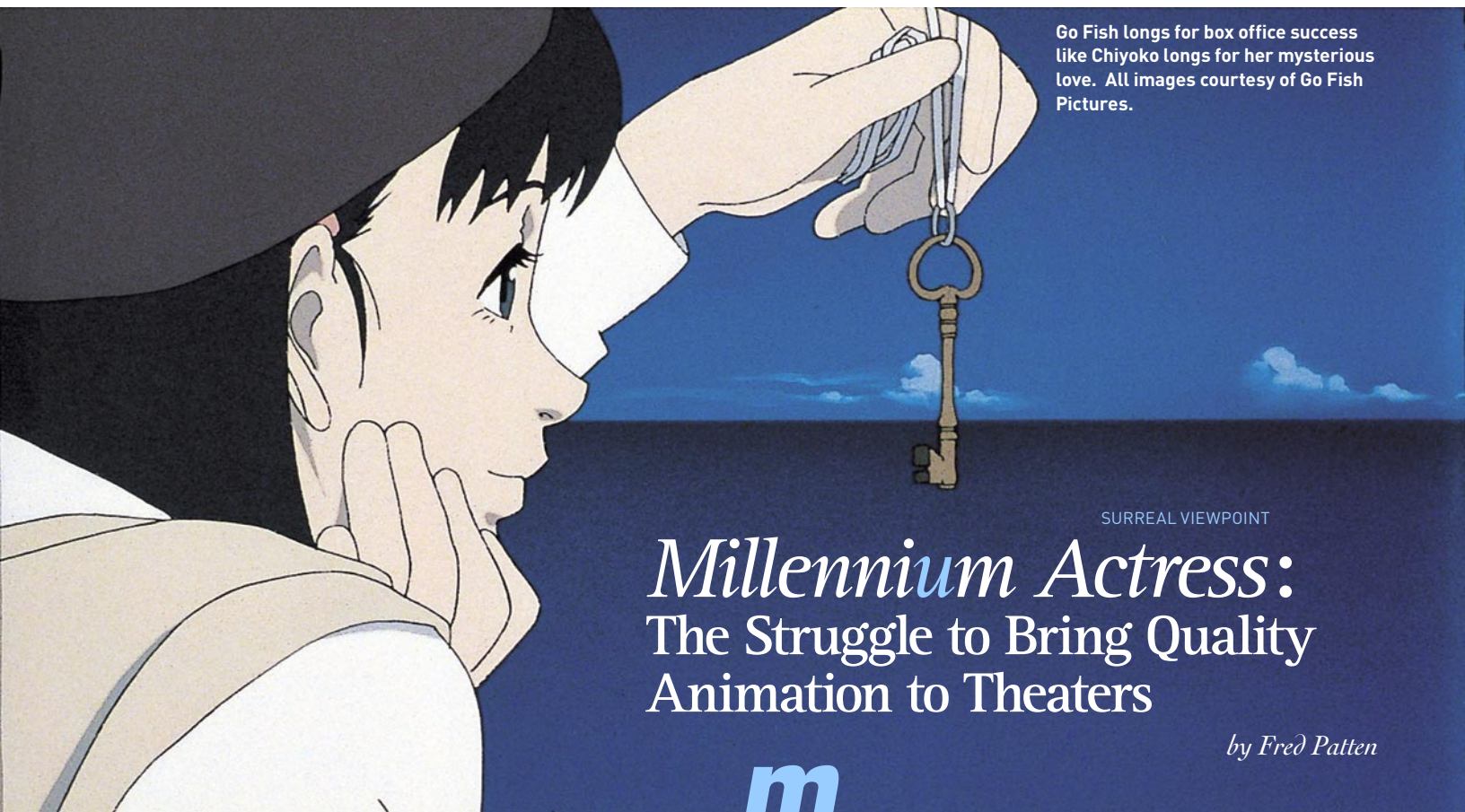
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Go Fish longs for box office success like Chiyoko longs for her mysterious love. All images courtesy of Go Fish Pictures.

SURREAL VIEWPOINT

Millennium Actress: The Struggle to Bring Quality Animation to Theaters

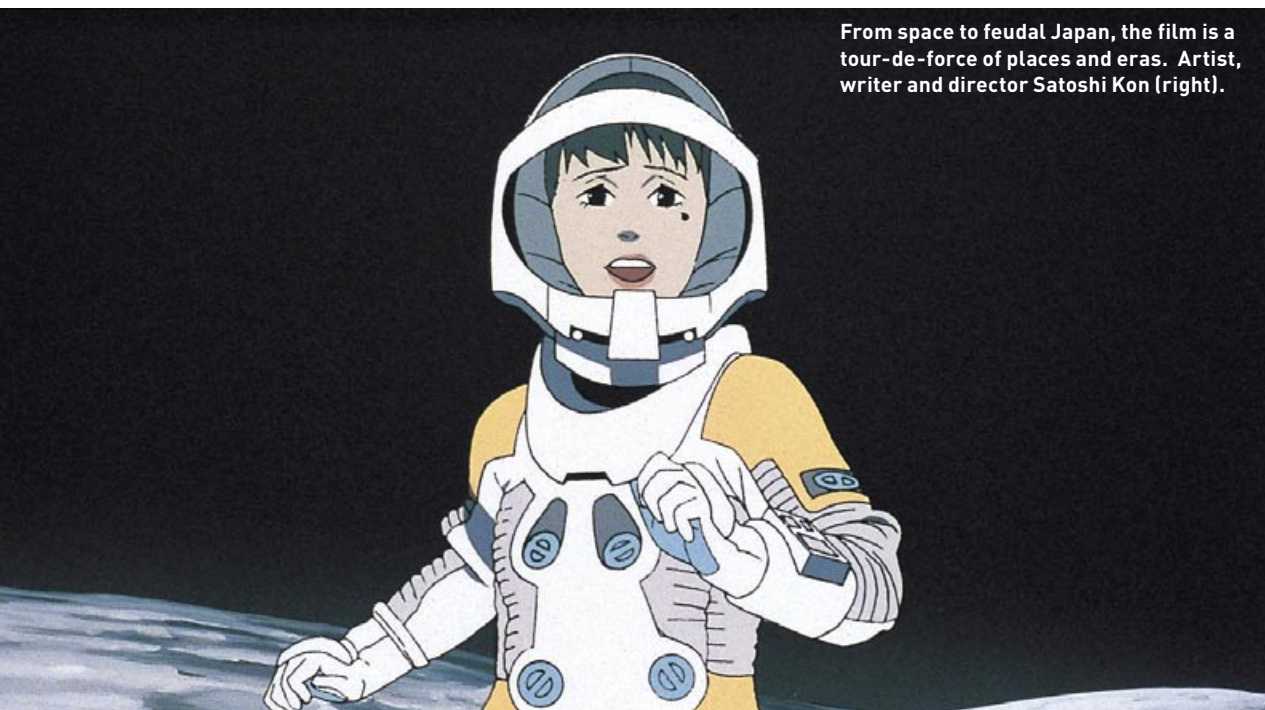
by Fred Patten

IF *PERFECT BLUE* IS COMPARABLE TO *HITCHCOCK*, THEN *MILLENNIUM ACTRESS* IS SIMILAR TO JAMES CAMERON'S *TITANIC*...

MILLENNIUM ACTRESS, ONE OF THE BEST ANIMATED features of the new millennium (and likely to remain so, no matter how many more are produced during the next 997 years) has finally come to American theaters — although in a release so limited that you will miss it if you blink.

Millennium Actress (Sennen Joyu) is the second critically acclaimed/anime fan favorite theatrical animated feature created by artist/writer/director Satoshi Kon and screenwriter Sadayuki Murai, produced by Tokyo's Madhouse studio (best known for *Wicked City*, *Ninja Scroll*, *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*, and some of the sequences in *The Animatrix*). Their first was the 1997 *Perfect Blue*, a murder mystery that was likened to an animated Alfred Hitchcock thriller.

Millennium Actress has superficial similarities: Kon's distinctive art style; a mystery set within Japan's cinematic industry; and a surrealistic viewpoint from inside the heroine's mind. But where *Perfect Blue* emphasized a nightmarish paranoia to make both the heroine and the audience wonder whether she has become a psychotic killer, *Millennium Actress* is a more benign look into a retired actress' bittersweet memories. If *Perfect Blue* is comparable to



From space to feudal Japan, the film is a tour-de-force of places and eras. Artist, writer and director Satoshi Kon (right).



Hitchcock, then *Millennium Actress* is similar to James Cameron's *Titanic*, as an elderly woman's flashback of romantic reminiscences, which are so vivid they draw her audience back into the past with her.

It starts with a sci-fi scene very like [2001: A Space Odyssey](#), but featuring a female astronaut. This turns out to be from a movie being watched by Genya Tachibana, a middle-aged independent documentary filmmaker. It was the final feature made by Chiyoko Fujiwara, Japan's greatest actress from the 1930s until the late 1960s when she abruptly vanished into seclusion. Now, 30 years later, Chiyoko's old studio has hired Genya to produce a documentary about her. Genya and his brash young cameraman Kyoji Ida track her down and persuade her to give them a personal interview.

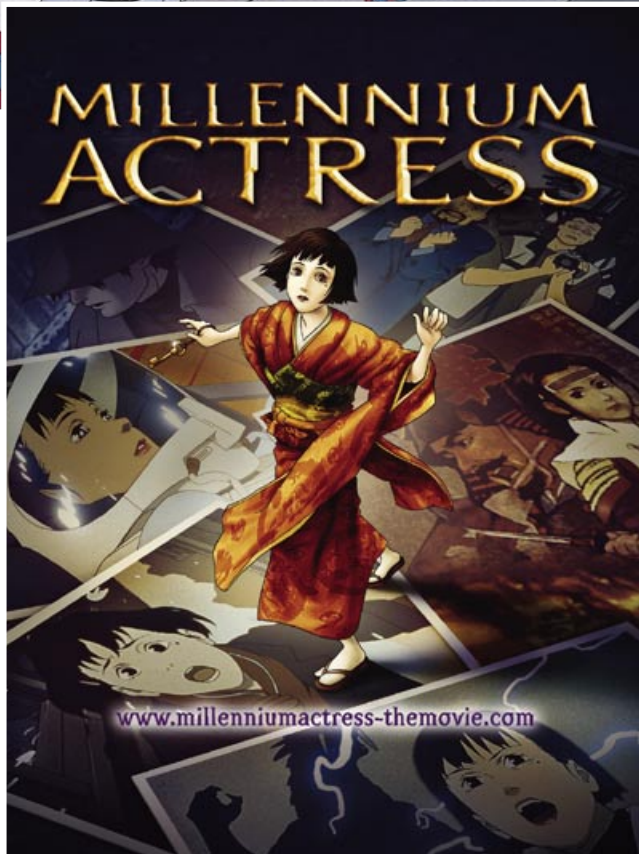
As the frail but gracious Chiyoko relives her past, Genya and Kyoji become supporting characters in her memories. These present both a behind-the-scenes look at the Japanese movie industry of this period, and the individual features in which she starred. Viewers "in the know" will recognize pastiches of Japan's greatest films from *Throne of Blood* to *Godzilla*, although they work equally well as an enjoyable sampler of Japanese movie genres for viewers who do not know the specific films.

Regarding Chiyoko's personal story, it turns out that Genya had met her as a bashful teen assistant on the studio lot just before her final film. He still has a puppy-love crush on her; and although it is not necessary for his documentary, he wants to know the secret of what drove Chiyoko into hiding so long ago.

Filming *Millennium Actress* in detailed 2D animation, rather than live-action, permits a more seamless transition through the scenes from the "real present" to the "real past" to the often jarring contrast of Chiyoko's different movie roles. (Animation also enables the monsters and sets in the sci-fi movies to look more realistic than the actual '50s and '60s live-action movies ever did.) This becomes an intellectual puzzle as Genya and Kyoji gradually realize that Chiyoko's memories may be more romantically enhanced than what really happened, and they must consciously separate the truth from her idealized view of reality.

Satoshi Kon's *Millennium Actress* was released at about the same time as [Hayao Miyazaki's Spirited Away](#). But while both garnered critical praise — the two tied for Japan's Agency of Cultural Affairs' 5th Media Arts Festival Grand Prize in December 2001 — *Spirited Away* went on to box office success in Japan while *Millennium Actress* went after international film festival fame. Its world premiere was at Montreal's Fantasia 2001 Asiatic fantasy film festival in July 2001, where Kon personally introduced it to a sold-out audience. (It won First Place in the Best Animation Film category, as well as The Fantasia Ground-Breaker Award.) It next played at the Sitges 2001 festival in October, winning the Orient Express Award. Then came the Media Arts Festival in December; a screening in Japan but a limited one.

Millennium Actress' Japanese theatrical release did not come until September 14, 2002, in the midst of playing at other international festivals from Singapore



to England to Australia to the U.S. (Kon appeared at its screening at the AFI Fest 2002 in Hollywood in November) to Japan again (it won the Best Entry Award in the Theatrical Movie category at the Tokyo International Anime Fair in March 2003). Kon seems to be following this route again with his newest feature: *Tokyo Godfathers* (also animated by Madhouse) has just had its world premiere at the Big Apple Anime Fest (BAAF 2003) in New York on August 29 - 31, where Kon was a guest of honor.



The publicity went out in August. "As part of the recent studio trend, DreamWorks SKG has formed a new specialty division, Go Fish Pictures, with *Millennium Actress*, the critically acclaimed anime title by Satoshi Kon, as its first release. *Millennium Actress* opens September 12, 2003 in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco and Toronto." But it only shows at only one theater in each of those six cities.

The announcement goes on to say that Go Fish Pictures' expected second release, in spring 2004, will be the anime feature *Innocence: Ghost in a Shell II*.

"Go Fish, considered by DreamWorks as a lab experiment, will look to indie filmmakers and small production companies for product. We are looking for anything that is compelling whether it is animation or live-action," DreamWorks president of distribution Jim Tharp told *VFXWorld*. While Tharp admits that anime has had a difficult time in the theatrical marketplace (with all of its kudos, *Spirited Away* was not a commercial success), Go Fish will experiment with *Millennium Actress* and *Ghost* to see if it can attain better box office results.

"It is very difficult, and we realize that you can't overpay for them," he added. You can't overspend, either, which is why the new specialty division will focus first on targeting the core anime fan base with *Millennium Actress* before reaching out more broadly if the movie performs in its limited theatrical run. And if it

exceeds expectations, Tharp said the studio may even push back the DVD release, which is now scheduled for Oct. 28 through DreamWorks Home Entertainment.

This press release has a resigned air compared with DreamWorks' high hopes for *Millennium Actress* less than a year ago. And why not? *Millennium Actress* had been winning international film awards for more than a year. *Spirited Away*, highly publicized in the U.S. by Disney since its limited theatrical distribution began in September 2002, was getting into the news around the country for its record-setting international (outside the U.S.) grosses, its rave reviews and all the prestigious awards that it was garnering.

Spirited Away was up for the 2003 Academy Awards in the new Best Animated Feature Film category. Everyone in the animation industry was hoping that if it won, it would go on to popular success similar to the live-action *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. And DreamWorks hoped that *Millennium Actress* could quickly follow it.

On March 23, 2003 *Spirited Away* won the coveted Oscar. On the March 28-30 weekend, Disney increased *Spirited Away*'s theatrical distribution from its previous maximum of 151 theaters nationwide to 711 theaters. It was wasted money. Despite all the acclaim, the public was not interested in seeing this foreign theatrical animated feature. *Spirited Away* had grossed \$5,616,071 by the weekend of the Academy Awards presentation. As of September 4, *Spirited Away*'s grosses stood at \$10,055,859, meaning that Disney's re-release in more than 500 more theaters brought in less than \$4,450,000 more. (Statistics from the Box Office Mojo Website.)

This decisively killed any dreams that *Millennium Actress* could become a box office hit in America. If the American public could not be convinced that *Spirited Away* is worth seeing as a delightful family film, it appears impossible to win large audiences for an animated feature "about the Japanese movie industry" that is "not for children."

Considering these strikes against it, DreamWorks is to be congratulated for giving *Millennium Actress* a theatrical release at all. It is well worth seeing on the big screen, if you are lucky enough to live in one of the six cities showing it. If you are not, don't miss the DVD release. Critics from animation and major consumer publications and newspapers in the U.S. are enthusiastic, giving it high praise. Some are even calling it a contender for the animation theatrical Oscar. ■

FRED PATTEN has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s.

LOONEYS RETURN

Eric Goldberg: Back in Action

DR. TOON SAT DOWN WITH THE ANIMATION VETERAN TO RAP ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES ON *LOONEY TUNES: BACK IN ACTION*, AS WELL AS HIS INTIMIDATING RÉSUMÉ.

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

E**RIC GOLDBERG** IS AMONG TODAY'S MASTER ANIMATORS and animation directors. He began his career with Richard Williams and later animated such memorable characters as Aladdin's Genie and Philoctetes after moving to Disney. While there, Eric also co-directed the film *Pocahontas* before animating and directing the stunning "*Rhapsody In Blue*" and "*Carnival of the Animals*" segments of *Fantasia 2000*. He is currently the animation director for Warner Bros. upcoming film *Looney Tunes: Back In Action*.

Dr.T: Eric, how is post-production going on *Looney Tunes: Back In Action*?

EG: Well, we're still in PRO-duction as opposed to post-production! We're still animating furiously, but it's going well. Like all movies of this nature that are expensive and difficult to make because of the live-action/animation combination, there are many changes that are still going on, all the way through production. So we have to be flexible in terms of — "Uh, oh, that line of dialogue changed!" I feel kind of like I'm a waiter who takes peoples' food away before they're done eating it, but I have to say I've got a great crew and they really do beautiful work. I think it's going to surprise people that it has the *Looney Tunes* spirit.

Dr.T: Joe Dante said that one of the challenges was that he's got human characters that are six feet tall and animated characters that are three feet tall. What type of challenge did that present to you and your team?



Eric Goldberg. © Disney Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved.

EG: That's actually a huge challenge. The other factor in that is that we've got a Panavision screen frame as well. So, aside from the fact that you've got six feet and three feet, if you cut Brendan Fraser off at the knees, you're cutting Bugs and Daffy just under the chest — or just under the head — so we have to be able to compose these things to be able to work. We do take cheats once in a while, just to make it look as if everybody's in the same frame for that format, but it is tough. Obviously, you have to look after eye lines, you have to look after size relationships and make sure they're consistent from scene to scene, but by the same token, I'm not above cheating for the composition of the scene to look right within the screen format.

The method has been, on this show, that we actually posed out the entire movie before it got to the animators. I used the Wacom Cintiq tablet; I can draw

Goldberg is feverishly finishing up work on *Looney Tunes: Back in Action*. © Warner Bros.



poses of the characters and the editors can superimpose them over the live action so we can see immediately how the scene is going to play. Everybody started dissecting all these poses as to whether they were right or wrong on the first few sequences that we did. But then, when the animation came in, they got it. They could see that Bugs and Daffy really were in that scene, acting and reacting, and so things got more comfortable.

It's given me and the animators here more license to put in some extra bits. Little acting choices, little timing choices, some nuances that everyone's been very pleased with. We could also throw in some secondary gags that weren't necessarily in the poses. Which is all to the good, because I think the animators came up with some great ideas, and they all have ways of realizing something that's beyond what an initial pose drawing would be. And that — that's what's going to make it all work.

Dr. T: *What have been some of the other challenges in working on this feature?*

EG: Aside from the technical challenges, of which there are many, my biggest aim is to present these characters the way people have loved them for years. It's actually very, very important to me. I was friends with Chuck Jones, I know this stuff backwards and

forwards in terms of all the cartoons, the history and it's very important to me that feels like a *Looney Tunes* movie that satisfies *Looney Tunes* fans. That Bugs and Daffy are who Bugs and Daffy are — not necessarily just drawn well, but that they act the right way, that they say the right things, that they move the right way. That their motivations are clear. It sounds very high-falutin', but if you're going to have these characters sustain a 90-minute movie, you've got to treat them as though they're real characters, and you have to be true to who they are. Because the audience will smell it a mile away if they're not. I keep feeling like Chuck is looking down saying, "OK, you'd better do this one right!"

Dr. T: *It's been a pretty long road leading up to your position as animation director for the Looney Tunes movie. First there was a stop at Universal where you were toying with the director's job for the *Where the Wild Things Are* project. How exactly did you go from working on that film to this one?*

EG: I was on *Where the Wild Things Are* for a year. I was developing it with some very talented people. We had Brenda Chapman, Sue Nichols, Jennifer Klein, all as my story crew. We had Dave Reynolds as the writer — a pretty darned good crew, and I actually think we had a take on the movie that probably would have worked. I think the participants — Tom Hanks, Maurice Sendak and their associated producers — felt it was such an important movie that they never could quite come to terms with exactly what they wanted the movie to be. So, when the *Looney Tunes* opportunity came up, it was around the same time that Universal decided to either go ahead — or not go ahead — and so it seemed to dovetail that way.

I don't bear anybody on *Wild Things* any ill will. In Maurice Sendak's case, I can absolutely understand. This is his jewel in the crown, his baby, and he wants to see it done right. If we're not getting what's in his head, then so be it. Whoever winds up doing the film, it's always going to be a major undertaking when you take a 15-page children's book and turn it into a 90-minute movie.

As far as ending up on the *Looney Tunes* movie, Allison Abbate, the animation producer, gave me a call. She said, "Would you be interested in coming over and doing some consulting?" So I started doing some consulting — and more consulting — and more consulting...and then it became permanent. The first stop was to bring me in and have me meet Joe Dante and the other producers, Bernie Goldmann, Chris DeFaria and Larry Doyle — at the time Paula Weinstein was not on yet — and make sure they were comfortable with what I knew about the characters. That went very well, and then we continued from there.

Dr. T: *Joe Dante has always struck me as a frustrated cartoon director. He showed his true colors as far back as the "cartoonland" sequence in the Twilight Zone movie.*

EG: I love working with Joe. First of all, I knew before I even got to this project that he was the right choice for it because he knows so much about the animation medium and about Warners cartoons in particular. He's got so much film knowledge at his fingertips anyway. But he has such a huge respect and understanding of animation — particularly classical animation — that makes him the right choice for this film. And yes, he has a slightly edgy... how shall I put it... There's certainly cartoonish elements in many of his films.

Even if he *didn't* know all the Jones and Clam-pett lore, he'd still be the right guy for this. It was kind of a match made in heaven; he's given me a lot of latitude and a lot of trust in being able to bring the characters alive. By the same token, he's the director and if he feels there's something we need to change, we try and accommodate that. I would say that 97% of the time we're on the same wavelength and that's made it a very fun project. Joe's a very gracious guy in terms of accepting input from a lot of sides as long as it makes it better and funnier.

Dr.T: *Eric, many critics and reviewers, when they saw the film Aladdin, likened your characterization of the Genie as being more along the lines of the Warners, rather than Disney, type of humor. Have the Warners cartoons really been that big an influence on your work?*

EG: Without question. I think all the years I was at Disney, I think that everybody felt I had more of a Warners bent to me, which was something that I kind of brought to Disney just to make the humor a little zippier. With the Genie, he was so mercurial — he had to change characterizations and attitudes so

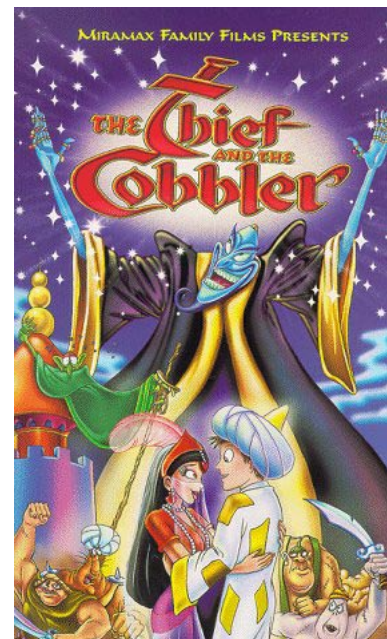
quickly — that I would go straight to Warners "smear drawings" and all the other tricks of the trade in order to make those quick transitions. Just philosophically, I always felt that Warners animation was much better suited to comedy than Disney animation. Because it's sharper. Because it's more distinctive. It telegraphs an idea in a pose in a much more "gettable" way than the more florid animation in most Disney features.

Dr. T: *The poses. That's where your friend Chuck Jones was such a master.*

EG: Absolutely. Of all the Warners directors that influenced me, he was the one that influenced me the most. I was lucky enough to know Ken Harris as well when I was at Richard Williams' studio from 1977 to 1981. He was there for a couple of years working on *The Thief and the Cobbler*. Although, at the time, he was kind of an unassuming, self-effacing guy — "Oh, hell I can't draw! Dick always does everything for me!" — He was 80 years old and he could turn out 30 feet a week. And it was all great! Now, he couldn't explain it, but Dick could. I asked, "Dick, how does he do that?" And Dick said, "Well, he's a master of the charts." He showed me that Ken would plan one key here, one key here and the breakdown would be askew. Then he would put a chart on it and you would get automatic overlap when you put the inbetweens in. I thought, "Oh my god!" It's like a light came on — that's how these guys at Warners got through all that footage and it still looked great.

It's the kind of thing where it was a huge influence on the way I approached animation because I always liked snappy timing, I always liked the spirit of the forties and fifties films and I didn't quite know how they got there until Dick analyzed it for me. Then I would study it more and more, the more I wanted to learn.

I think when I was a kid, about 14 years old, I would start to notice what the directorial styles were, and one thing that really impressed me was the ones



Goldberg hopes to help bring Richard Williams' *The Thief and the Cobbler* back in the version it was meant to be seen in.

I KNOW THIS STUFF BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS IN TERMS OF ALL THE CARTOONS, THE HISTORY, AND IT'S VERY IMPORTANT TO ME THAT FEELS LIKE A *LOONEY TUNES* MOVIE THAT SATISFIES *LOONEY TUNES* FANS.



Fantasia/2000's "Rhapsody in Blue" is one of many highpoints in Goldberg's amazing career. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

I laughed at the most, which were Chuck Jones' cartoons. The ones that could kill you with just an eyebrow raised or the Coyote's ear flopping down. Why was it funnier? I realized that one of the few components that few animated films have is wit. It was a perfect visualization of wit. It's a certain conspiracy with the audience. The characters that Chuck would draw, they knew they were being humiliated, you knew they were being humiliated and they would conspire with the audience for that humiliating moment! And that takes it to a completely different level. There's a lot of things I like about the other Warners directors. I love Freleng's timing, I love Clampett's wildness, I love the Avery spirit that suffused all of them before all the other directors matured. But, I think out of all of them, Chuck influenced me the most because of that sheer economy and wit in his work.

Dr.T: *Well then, let's suppose you could have been working at Warner Bros. during the Golden Age of Looney Tunes, shoulder to shoulder with Chuck and [Bob Clampett](#) and Tex Avery. Which characters would you have loved to have animated or directed back then?*

EG: Oh boy... lots of them, but my favorite is still Bugs Bunny. I just think he's the greatest animated character in history. Of all the Warners characters, he's one of the few who is actually a heroic character instead of just a

character whose foibles we recognize. He lives by his wits. He's not big enough to live by his brawn, so he has to live by his smarts. That's a very appealing characteristic. He's a very elegant character; if you handle him the wrong way, then he becomes grotesque, if you know what I mean.

I think that in his best moments, he's a very refined character. That doesn't mean he won't break out and do something wild once in a while. It does mean that he's a character best underplayed than overplayed. I think that's really his strength because that shows how much control he has over any situation he's in. And he makes me laugh! I love Daffy too and I love all the other characters. I also have a big affinity for Wile E. Coyote, for that matter. He has a couple of really good moments in the movie, too.

Dr. T: *I remember you saying that you considered the Genie in Aladdin your most satisfying achievement. After those terrific sequences in [Fantasia/2000](#) – "Carnival of the Animals" and "Rhapsody in Blue" – is that still your opinion?*

EG: That's a tough question. As a director, I am proudest of "Rhapsody in Blue." As an animator, I'm probably proudest of the Genie. It's like being parent to two different things. As an animator, I'm proud of "Carnival of the Animals," too. It's interesting that you pick those three things, because there was a lot of stuff in between, but I would have to say that the Genie and the *Fantasia* sequences were certainly the Disney career highlights for me. In many ways "Rhapsody" was a dream project that finally got realized; I'd wanted to make it for seven years.

"Carnival" was a chance to animate a sequence all the way through from start to finish. And of course, I got to collaborate with my favorite art director, Susan, who happens to live under the same roof. They were both very satisfying. "Rhapsody" was very personal in terms of a lot of the ideas in it and the characterizations, and the Genie, well, the Genie is what put me on the map in this country because I had been in London for so long doing commercials. I think I'll always have a soft spot for the Genie, because he was so warmly received by everybody when the film came out. I'd say that the three of those projects run a pretty close equal.

Dr. T: One project that must have been a disappointment to you was the never produced Roger Rabbit sequel. I understand that you were slated to be the animation director and that you had even redesigned Roger for the film.

EG: That's correct. I streamlined him a little bit so that he would look even more like a '40s character. I felt in the original version — even though that was great — he still had a little too much fur on him, a little too



Goldberg and company helped bring toons back with Roger and company. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* image: © Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved.

much detail to actually feel like he was really from that era. What I did wasn't a huge amount; he was still absolutely Roger to everybody who saw him. We'd actually done a CG test with Roger — well, we did two versions. We did one that was traditionally hand-drawn with the tone mattes and the whole nine yards, and we did one with the same animation translated to a CG model of Roger. And the CG model worked very, very well. Better than most people would expect it to work because it had all the squash, stretch and overlap that you would associate with the character.

That's why I wanted to try it — if you can do that in CG, you can do anything in CG. It isn't impossible to get that kind of animation in the 3D medium. It's harder and requires a lot more modeling, but you can do it. As far as the actual Roger Rabbit project itself is concerned, yes, I would have enjoyed doing that. It's a shame that didn't go forward for a variety of reasons, but hey, I'm working with Bugs and Daffy now!

Dr. T: You once had your own commercial studio in London, Pizazz Pictures. Have you ever considered opening another studio in the future?



Animated love story: Eric and Susan Goldberg. Courtesy of Disney Pictures. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

EG: Once in a while, we toy with the idea. [\(My wife\) Susan and I](#) have incorporated as Cartoons In The Basement Inc. It's really just the two of us but if something larger would come along, I think what we would do is build up the studio for the purposes of making a particular movie and then collapse when the movie was done rather than maintaining a studio that continues to self-generate material. The biggest problem right now in animated film production is that the overheads are killing everybody. We have to find a way to produce these films more cheaply and part of it is not having a big darned building and a huge staff to maintain. So if you do it purely for the time of production needed, I think that's a viable way to go. Kind of like the old cottage industry used to be — like *Ferngully*, for example. I don't think there's anything wrong with that; God knows there's plenty of talent around Hollywood that could do that kind of stuff.

Whether I'd go back into commercials again... I don't think so. I did many years in commercials and they were a great training ground in lots of ways, but it's too hand-to-mouth for me. We had a "successful" company in London, but we'd still look up at the boards and say, "What are we doing in three months?" And we were still in the position of having to say "yes" to every job and hope that enough of them would fall away so that we'd still be able to produce the ones that were left.

AS A DIRECTOR, I AM PROUDEST OF "RHAPSODY IN BLUE." AS AN ANIMATOR I'M PROBABLY PROUDEST OF THE GENIE.

Dr. T: *I picked up in another interview that you were interested in pursuing some personal projects of your own, like an animated musical based on the life of... Dr. Jonas Salk? Were you serious or pulling some poor journalist's leg?*

EG: Completely pulling people's legs! Can't you just see dancing polio needles! It'd be great! You know, the little sugar cubes with the pink medicine on top! It'd be really good!

Dr.T: *You could throw in a show-stopper musical number where they throw the crutches aside...*

EG: I think Mel Brooks is listening...

Dr.T: *God, I hope so!*

EG: There are personal projects I would like to do. I won't go into what they are; I think there're a lot of things we can do with this medium that we haven't even scratched the surface of, in terms of comedy, in terms of technique and in terms of style. There are all sorts of interesting directions in which you can take animation that aren't necessarily sought after in the commercial marketplace that I think could open a few eyes. The great thing about working in television commercials for so many years is that I really learned to adapt graphically to the needs of any particular project. So, if we had to do fashion drawings one week, OK, it was fashion drawings. If we had to do woodcuts, OK, we're doing woodcuts. If we had to do *Tom and Jerry*, OK, we're doing *Tom and Jerry*. I still love that about the medium.

I give Richard Williams a lot of credit for that, because he was really the one in London who pushed that notion forward more than anybody else. He had that "Whatever will stick on a cel" kind of attitude. He would use any medium in order to achieve any effect,



Goldberg's Genie (along with some help from Robin Williams) stole the show in *Aladdin*. Courtesy of Disney Pictures. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

whether it was supposed to look like oil painting, charcoal drawings, whatever. I think a lot of people consider that you can do different styles, but sometimes the animation suffers, like, "OK, if I have to make it look like this, then that's really complicated to draw" — Dick was never like that. Dick was always saying that it had to be great animation, too.

We've got a sequence in this *Looney Tunes* film where Elmer is chasing Bugs and Daffy through the Louvre museum and every time they jump into one of the paintings, they become the style of the painting. They become Dali, they become Toulouse Lautrec, they become Munch. When people see the final sequence, I think they'll be very pleased with it. Stylistically, we're matching these things in a way that you wouldn't expect. That's one of the compelling things about this medium. You really can go in different directions and still make it entertaining.

Dr. T: *What would Bugs Bunny have to say if I were to ask him what it was like working with you on this picture?*

EG: (flawless Bugs Bunny imitation) "Nyah, lessee... he's a control freak! He t'inks he knows everything, holy Gawd!" Anyway, I would hope he really enjoyed the working experience. It's certainly one I'd like to repeat with him. ■

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

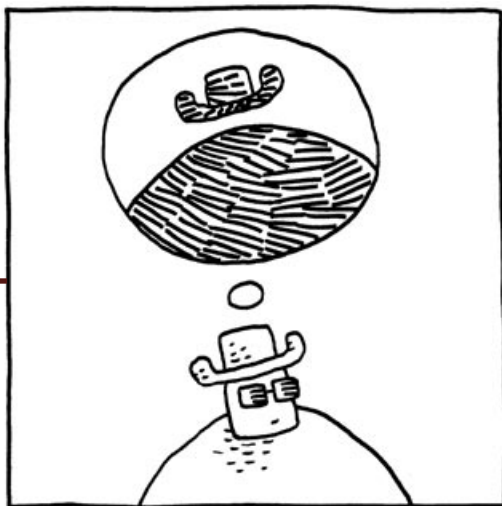


Illustration by [Andreas Hykade](#).
Courtesy of Chris J. Robinson.

HYKADE

ANIMATION PIMP

Pleasure and Pain: *Ren & Stimpy's* Adult Cartoon Party

I'D SPENT THE LAST 12 YEARS INVOLVED IN ANIMATION AND, BAM, JUST LIKE THAT, IT WAS POTENTIALLY GONE.

by Chris J. Robinson

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

DON'T HAVE CABLE BUT I MANAGED TO GET A HOLD of these new [primetime adult cartoons](#) showing on TNN, Spike TV, Bud, Guy, Dude, Sociopath, Yo, Big Daddy, Old Man or whatever the fug this Viacom-owned network aimed at closeted breeders afraid of real-life women is called. These new toons are apparently gonna be full of raunch and 'tude. No kiddies, housewives or sissy boys allowed here. The opening credit starts with a bang: CARTOONS FOR F**CKING ADULTS (and for the blind, a narrated interpretation of those words: "Cartoons for BLEEEP Adults." Wow... this is gonna be some raunchy kick-ass stuff cause man they really seem to mean it. Real edgy stuff. Must be since they're sorta using REAL heavy words like F**K. I'm a little ashamed to admit that I'm not really hip on the slang their using. What does F**K mean? Apparently, when spoken, it translates into a beeping sound, like that of an answering machine. So, sorry, I'm not entirely sure what it all means, but it must be real bad.

First up is [Striperella](#). I twitch when I see creative consultant: Pam Anderson. There are two writers. One of the first, and best, lines is: "Show me Some Titties!" Hey, is that the REAL Pam Anderson? Ya gotta figure that this animated version must in fact be more real than the living cut-and-paste one. Sort of a *Playboy* cartoon meets Marvel Comics look. The plot of the first episode seems to be about thin models chubbing out. Apparently the characters know that their dialogue and actions are stupid because they are continually commenting on them ala Groucho Marx. Ha ha. It's funny, especially the 21st time. Chief Stroganov is Striper-

ella's boss. Get it? Stroganov is a type of food. Two writers.

I'm on to episode #2. This cheap Jon Lovitz-sounding villain is actually pretty funny... oh..wait... here it comes... FINALLY... the TITTIES! Hey... wait a minute! How come it's all blurry where their boobies should be? It's what, 10:00 or 11:00 pm. The whole premise of this evening is to celebrate the unmentionable — and apparently the unseeable too. Maybe you need special glasses or earplugs. Strange, cause they aren't really titties per se, they're digitally rendered impressions of ideal titties. I guess the problem is that the creators have never actually seen any titties. That would explain it. That makes sense, cause, I mean, why on earth would you blur out not-real titties? It's not like they'd be fleshy titties, just drawn titties that don't really exist anywhere but on a harddrive or, more likely, a floppy disk.

There's nothing really erotic about this show unless you're 10.

Someone said this is sexist. They're right. It's pretty demeaning to men.

GARY THE RAT

I spent all my sarcasm so phuck ME, IT and YOU.

REN & STIMPY

For the record, I don't find [John K's](#) films all that funny (although when I saw Jose — this Ottawa animator and real funny guy who I last saw looking for pain relief for some dental work at shoppers drug mart — 'appearing' as the bartender in the new *Ren & Stimpy's* I did laugh — for a minute), but I also happen to think that "Man's Best Friend," (most of) "Boo-Boo Goes Wild," and the first two 'new' *Ren & Stimpy's* that I saw are brilliant.

I love Kricfalusi's, 'I'll stop when I fucking feel like it' sense of timing. Unlike most animators, Kricfalusi stretches a scene, not to make something funny or to overplay some joke for the schmuck who missed it, but to hold onto some dark, grotesque moment (like a booger hanging from a nose) and squeeze every ounce of pain, tragedy and humiliation out of it. Sure we laugh a little, but then the laughter is replaced by an awkward silence, then a bit of frustration, even anger, then you become disturbed and then start laughing again... and then it all just becomes kinda surreal, like you've smoked some Dutch skunk. In these little moments, Kricfalusi takes us through a boomerang of emotions.

Kricfalusi is animation's answer to GG Allin and Bob Flanagan, a pseudo-masochist (OK... let's not get too crazy, unlike Allin and Flanagan, the only real pain Kricfalusi feels is in his head and hands) using rage and violence for pleasure, pain and release. Flanagan, in particular, is a great comparison. Flanagan had a pretty

damn lousy childhood. To combat the agonizing pain of cystic fibrosis, he started jerking off and experimenting sexually. With this, he found a kind of balance between pain and pleasure — or more than that — pain and pleasure merged.

Kricfalusi's work embodies the same ideas. Ren and Stimpy (although Ren in particular) get off on loving and abusing one another. They seem to thrive off their opposing extremes in behavior. I don't want to analyze Kricfalusi, but I was sitting on the can the other day reading an interview he did in *Animation Blast* (a damn fine swell slap-bang-daddy-bitch of a magazine), and he spoke of his stern father (the model for George Liquor and Kricfalusi's updated Ranger Smith) and his dislike of authority figures with their bizarre rules and reasons. Did Kricfalusi suffer as a kid? I don't fuggin know, but something is sure as shit fueling these films (check out "Ren Seeks Help") because these are mightTEE passionate denunciations of authority. And yet... Kricfalusi recognizes the beast in himself.

My hatred for my overly authoritative father peaked when I became just like the fugger. But hey... let's stop with the therapy. I've said it before: violence and conflict are natural ingredients in who we are. Sometimes I want to slap a few of you around, but I don't. Sometimes I want to kick my dog or your dog, but I don't. That doesn't change the fact that I still feel rage from time to time. Most of the time I write it out, box it out or Jerry Lee Lewis it out. It's good, it's healthy and no one gets hurt. Kricfalusi's films reflect that same twirling contradictory nature. He gets and gives pleasure from unleashing his rage and anger through his pen(i)s.

Now, to me it's no wonder that traditional cartoon folks like Mike Barrier (among others) seem disappointed and ill at ease with Kricfalusi's latest offerings because, well, frankly, they're not all that funny or cartoony in the usual sense. Aside from Flanagan, these new *Ren & Stimpy's* (like "Man's Best Friend" and "Boo-Boo Goes Wild") are closer to the nightmarish dream worlds of David Lynch, Igor Kovalyov, [Jan Svankmajer](#) and [The Brothers Quay](#), than they are to our traditional perception of cartoons. The Quays, Lynch and Svankmajer use a lot of symbolism, but more than that, they create atmospheres, tones, impressions and fragments. You often leave their films confused, not entirely sure what you saw, but feeling a strong emotional impression (yes, boredom is a valid impression). These are artists who make you work for answers that are not there in the first place. Meaning is in your hands.

Kricfalusi's work has the same effect. They're hypnotic. You drift through this cesspool of a world filled with obscene, gross and violent stuff, but you just get used to it. You get used to Ren and Stimpy living in this dirty, dark

world. Kricfalusi's worldview is nihilistic, but in some weird way, the heart of these films is these two imperfect 'guys' struggling to find any strand of imperfect love (which sometimes involves violence) they can in this cold, dank world filled (literally — although I guess it's not really human refuse since it's drawn) with human refuse. Kricfalusi doesn't judge this world. It just is. It's as if he's saying... yeah... the world can be dark and violent and filled with all sorts of absurd, grotesque and unexpected turns... but ya just keep going on, you keep trying to find any pleasure you can in the muck and fuck of it all.

For my money, Kricfalusi has taken the cartoon to a higher and perhaps more honest level. He's removed the harness and the playpen. And yet to call his work extreme or exaggerated is misleading. In the same interview that I was reading on the can, Kricfalusi spoke about his desire to exaggerate existing Hanna-Barbera characters. We all know, he says, that Fred Flintstone is a fat fuck and that Barney is a hee haw. But it's only implied, and never explored in any great detail. We know that Fred (or Homer Simpson for that matter) probably runs a finger along his asscrack to smell his own shit. We know that Barney probably tries to suck himself off whenever Betty's out of the

house. But Kricfalusi is wrong to call this exaggeration. This is plain ol' down and dirty realism. Now, do we need to see this? Apparently we do because why else are people creating these animation Websites featuring Shaggy shagging Scooby or Wilma carpet-bombing Betty?

My writer chum, Matt Firth (by the way... do yourself a favor and buy Matt's great book of short stories, *Can You Take Me There, Now?* — You can e-mail me for details) and I were talking recently about the boundaries of fiction and non-fiction, I was saying that what I love about works like Nick Tosches' *Dino and Hellfire* is that the apparent fictional or exaggerated parts of these biographies actually uncover more truths about the subject than any amount of facts ever could. Kricfalusi's work is the same way. By becoming seemingly more extreme and 'out there,' he is, in fact, taking us closer to the unspoken and unseen essence of human nature. ■

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>.



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BOOK EXCERPT

Don't Give Your Right Name! — Part 3

by Gene Deitch

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

Read [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) from the beginning.

MCCARTHYISM HAD TURNED [GENE DEITCH'S world upside down](#). The Pentagon accused him of being a member of the Communist Party, but Gene successfully fought the charges and resumed his career.

The affair could have nipped my animation career just as it was budding. The actual truth was that I had indeed been an intense left-winger in my teens and early twenties in Hollywood, though never an active communist, and I of course knew that some of our jazz session guests might have been actual communists. I had hoped that my early political orientation would not surface at JHO, which was all-out-right-wing conservative — almost an annex to the mighty General Motors Corp.

I WASN'T AT ALL CONVERTED TO THE WORSHIP OF BIG BUSINESS, BUT I LEARNED THAT IF YOU HAVE A WIFE AND KIDS, AND THE NEED TO MAKE A LIVING, YOU HAVE TO MAKE A FUNDAMENTAL CHOICE.

So it was terrifying and obviously job-threatening. Having privately smirked at what I saw as a jingoistic outfit, I now had to be grateful that the Christian Science veneer did steer the leaders of the company toward tolerance. At least they were not willing to peremptorily dump me until a case against me was proven. I was grateful for their fairness, and dedicated myself to do the best job I could for them. I wasn't at all converted to the worship of Big Business, but I learned that if you have a wife and kids, and the need to make a living, you have to make a fundamental choice. If your beliefs are strong enough, you must take a stand and say to hell with the establishment. But I found that nothing was that clear.

Though I despised the McCarthy witch-hunters, I had been equally turned off by the communists I had known in Hollywood, with their rigid and mindless Stalinist acceptance. I learned right there, that finding any creed to believe in unquestioningly is a tough call. There is no substitute for independent thinking.

Resuming my full role as head of the JHO animation unit, I was plunged into the development of a film for the U.S. Air Force, to be aimed at recruitment. It would be shown at schools, with the idea of instilling the romance of flying into their little heads. Mass air travel had not yet taken hold, but was clearly on the horizon, and we were all dazzled by airplanes. In my first wartime job, I had been a parts-catalog illustrator at North American Aviation, in Inglewood, California. I learned to read blueprints, and to draw detailed aircraft parts assemblies in such a way that the thousands of unskilled employees could see how to put them together. Though it seemingly had nothing to do with animation, the understanding of technology I gained in this work was extremely valuable to my later career.

Besides peering at blueprints, I also was able to walk through the plant to see how the actual parts were attached to actual planes. Through the din of constant riveting and stamping of aluminum sheeting, I saw the great planes of World War II being assembled. The two main products of the plant were the magnificent B-24 Billy Mitchell bomber, and the elegant P-51 Mustang fighter. What a gorgeous plane that was! I definitely caught the airplane bug, and so I was very enthusiastic about the Air Force film I was

about to make at JHO.

Still under the UPA influence, I thought about *Gerald McBoing-Boing*, the parable of a little boy with an extreme speech impediment. "*He couldn't speak words, he went 'boing-boing' instead!*" It's a basic of movie cartoons that there has to be something extreme about a character. Donald Duck and Daffy Duck both rose to fame on the weird sounds of their twisted tongues. Some kind of impediment or physical extreme has to be there. So I just extended this idea, and created a little boy whose passion for airplanes caused him to actually grow little wings from his shoulder blades. I called him Roger Windsock, "Roger" from the airplane pilots' standard response of understanding, and "Windsock" from the cloth tube that flutters from poles at airports. Rudy Zamora mainly animated the film, but I never saw it finished. This time, my tenure at JHO was interrupted by good news!

I got a phone call from Steve Bosustow that kicked my adrenaline. He was flying to Detroit to see me! (There it was! The age of air travel had actually come into my life!)

The fact that the prez of UPA would fly across the country to see me, the former apprentice, gave me a gratifying boost. Somehow, word of my accomplishments in the bosom of big business had made its way back to my true home studio. My old boss, Bill Murray, the leading live-action director at JHO, continued to be my booster, and felt that my light would eventually go out, if indefinitely hidden under the Jam Handy bushel. He had kept UPA informed of my progress. Again luck. It's great to have the right kind of friends!

When Steve arrived, he told me more of what he only had sketched out on the phone; that UPA had decided to open a New York branch in order to cash in on its reputation, and go for the now burgeoning TV commercial market.

He knew the lure of the Big Apple with UPA was something I could hardly refuse, even though his offer came with a catch. I was now a genuine animation director, having personally directed five longish films, and many TV commercials. But Steve had committed to Abe Liss as director, and he offered me only the second position as the New York studio production designer.

Then there was *money*. I couldn't consider even

"GENE, YOU'RE A MARXIST, AREN'T YOU?"

the lure of returning to the nest and glamorous Gotham without a substantially higher income. Manhattan living costs were something else than in the Detroit suburbs.

The classic Bosustow touch was next. He put his hand on my shoulder once again. Earlier, it had been to suggest that I was being groomed as the next UPA director. This time, it was a plea for the acceptance of poverty: "Gene, you're a Marxist, aren't you?" There I was, in the city where I had been accused of being a Marxist — a threat to my existence, and now I was expected to be a Marxist and accept a low salary as a comradely act for the UPA "commune." It was hard to keep a straight face.

But hell, you know what I had to do, and so did I. I went along with it, because the promise was obviously there. Steve was willing to transport me, my wife and kids and my worldly goods to a lovely apart-

ment in Westchester County, New York, and place me in the founding cadre of UPA-NY.

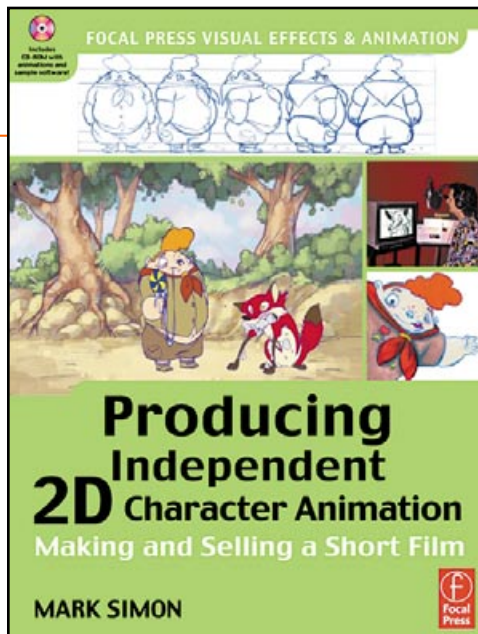
To [read](#) more about the production of these classics, visit Gene's online book now. ■

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, Bratři v Triku.



How To Succeed in Animation (Don't Let a Little Thing Like Failure Stop You!)

GENE DEITCH, A SUCCESSFUL AMERICAN ANIMATION DIRECTOR, USES EXAMPLES OF HIS OWN FAILURES TO MAKE POINTS AS TO HOW YOUNG ANIMATORS CAN AVOID SOME PITFALLS ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS, AND STIRS THE POT WITH MUSINGS ON THE MEANING AND WONDER OF ANIMATION. A GREAT READ FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN THE WORLD OF ANIMATION.



Character Animation: Making and Selling a Short Film by Mark Simon. Reprinted with permission.

BOOK EXCERPT

Concept to Creation: *Rotoscoping*

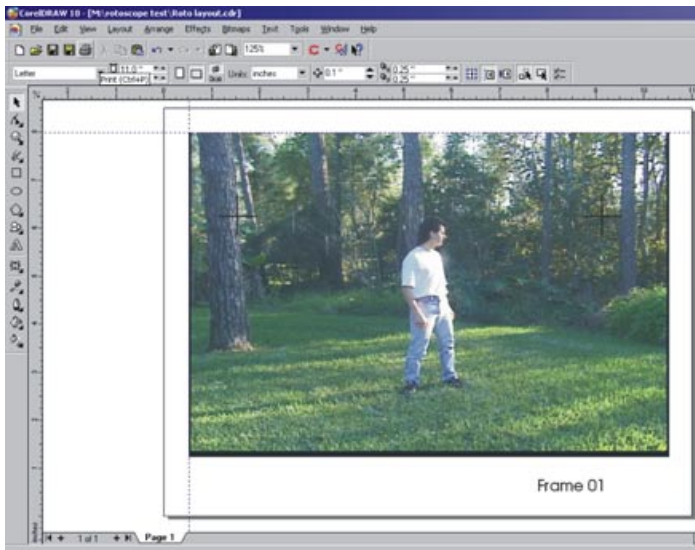
by Mark Simon

This is the seventh 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 animated 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.

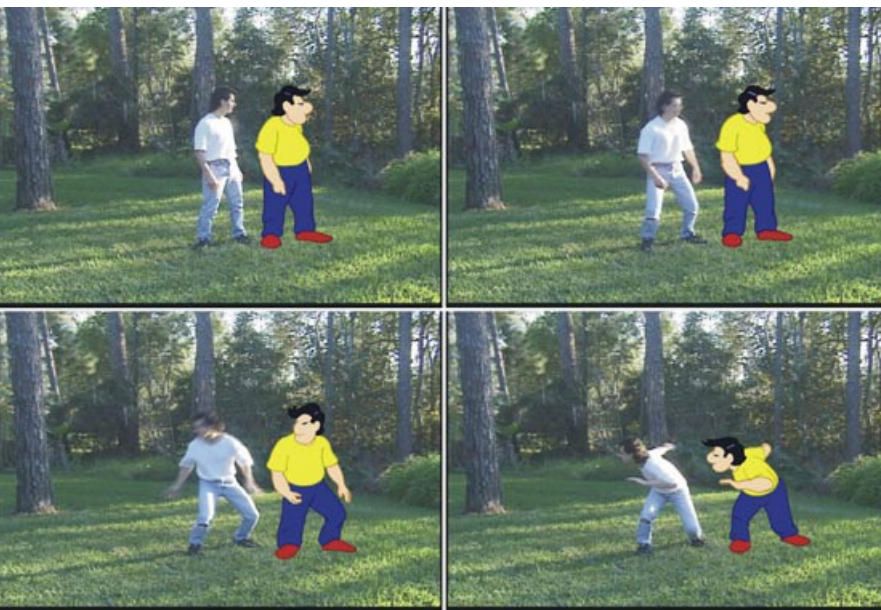
THE ART OF ROTOSCOPING CONSISTS OF DRAWING over live-action to produce your animation. The purpose of rotoscoping is either to animate a scene completely using a live-action reference, or to add animation to a live-action scene while tracking the movement of the camera and the live-action elements. More and more rotoscoping is done these days to produce mattes of elements, also known as roto-matting, within a live-action shot either to remove unwanted elements or to add special effects.

For example, if we wanted to visually remove the legs from the character in Figure 1, we would pull a matte of his legs. The matte would consist of drawing an outline tightly around the outside of his legs. His legs are now the elements that we may remove or add effects to. In order to remove his legs, we would need a clean shot of the background without the character. The leg elements then would be replaced by portions of the clean background.

There are a number of different ways to roto-scope, and a few of them produce completely different results. Rotoscoping may be used to create a com-



[Figure 1] Rotoscope template in CorelDraw (top left). The image snaps to the corner of the guidelines, and the crosshairs allow us to line up the images when taping on the animation header strips. **[Figure 2]** Use the crosshairs to align your rotoscope prints to the peg bars (top right). **[Figure 3]** Sample images that have been rotoscoped and composited onto the live-action reference plates. The CD-ROM includes a complete rotoscope animation using this reference footage. Animation by Mark Simon.



pletely realistic motion, or as a test to study motion. Animators who shoot live-action footage and just use it for research are not actually rotoscoping; they are simply using live-action reference for inspiration.

When you are shooting footage for rotoscoping, set your film or video camera to a fast shutter speed. Accurate movement is what you are looking for, and fast movements with a slow shutter will be blurred.

Rotoscoping always starts with storyboarding and then filming live-action of the shot you need. If you are shooting with film, you will need the frames scanned and saved as digital sequential files. If you are shooting with video, you will need to be able to capture the scene onto a computer or move a frame at a time with your video player. Some software allows you to rotoscope directly within the program. Figure 1 shows a video

frame captured in Adobe Premiere, exported as a .TGA file and imported into CorelDraw.

An accurate way to rotoscope is either to paint within a software package or print the frames you need and trace over them on a light table.

To rotoscope with software or to print the frames you need, you should first digitize your video footage. Digital cameras can connect to computers via their firewire connection. There are many video cards that will capture your analog footage through RCA, BNC or S-Video connections. Once you've captured your video into your computer, you can export the video file from your editing or compositing program as individual sequential files. In other words, export the frames as .jpg or .tif extensions, such as roto-01.jpg, roto-02.jpg, and so on. NTSC video runs at 30fps. To cut down your work, you can reduce the video to 15fps. This will be the same as animating on twos (two frames for every one drawing).

When adding an animated character to live-action, it is always best to rotoscope every frame, or the animated character may seem to slide around over the live-action.

Once the individual live-action frames are exported, you need to set up a template in a layout program such as CorelDraw or Adobe Illustrator. In the example from CorelDraw in Figure 2, we placed guidelines half

an inch from the top and from the left. We then made two crosshairs and included a reference to the frame number on the bottom. Then we saved the form so that it never changes. Import each video frame into the form and have it snap into the corner of the guidelines (Set the program to 'Snap to Guidelines'). This places every frame in precisely the same position. The crosshairs will help you align all the frames when you tape the header peg strips to the printouts. Print each frame with its own frame number.

The remaining chapter describes laying out and registering your roto-prints and rotoscoping using animation and compositing programs. 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, Mas-

sachusetts: 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 for film and TV 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.

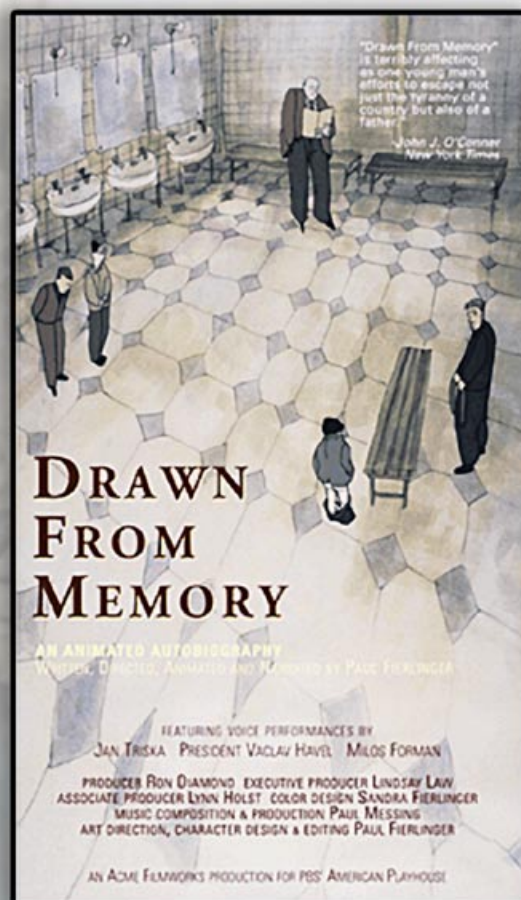
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—Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer

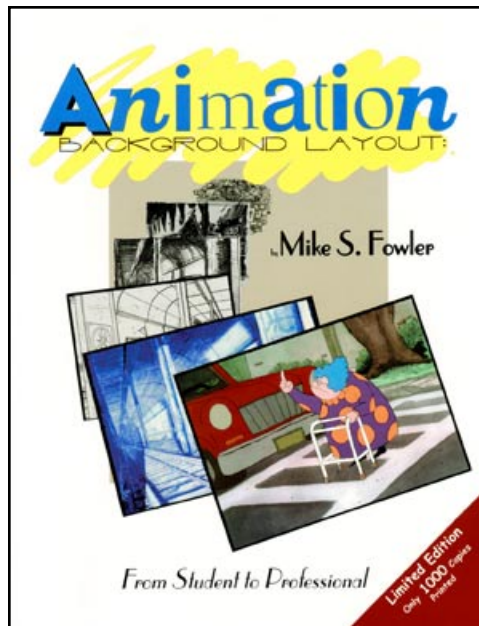


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LAYOUT SUPPORT

Animation Layout: Layout Support Material

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.

In this chapter, we focus on the support material for layout including [storyboards](#), location designs, character designs, and prop designs. To understand the role of the layout artist and the use of the previously mentioned support material, here is a process of how animation layout gets started.

The storyboard is presented to the director, supervisors, animation staff and occasionally the investors of the production by various methods. Each studio presents the storyboard differently depending on the production type and restraints. One presentation method is to have the storyboard acted out live. The panels are posted on large walls or moveable corkboard panels. As the board creator points to each panel, s/he acts out the dialogue and action. This has many names including storyboard review, board presentation and story pitch session.

Some studios only create a realtime video of the storyboard panels. Each panel is filmed for a predetermined amount of time and then combined with the rough audio track. This is called a leica reel. All studios use this at some point in the animation production.

A method I prefer, is a combination of acting out and overhead projection. Animation students project their material on a large screen as they act out each panel, (as seen in this picture). This allows all students to clearly see the storyboard, without interference, or having to strain to see a corkboard presentation.

Once the director approves a storyboard, the next step varies from studio to studio. For television animation, props and characters are created before the storyboard is started. Ideally most second or third season television shows that have established characters, locations, special effects and prop designs need only small amounts of new material created for each completed storyboard.

After the design department, the support material is then shipped with the storyboard to the layout department to start production.

WHAT IS A STORYBOARD?

A storyboard is much like a very detailed comic book. Storyboards must have clear visuals to explain what the scene, or even entire board is about. Many studios ensure there are no visual questions by having the storyboard artist take the drawings to finished clean drawings.

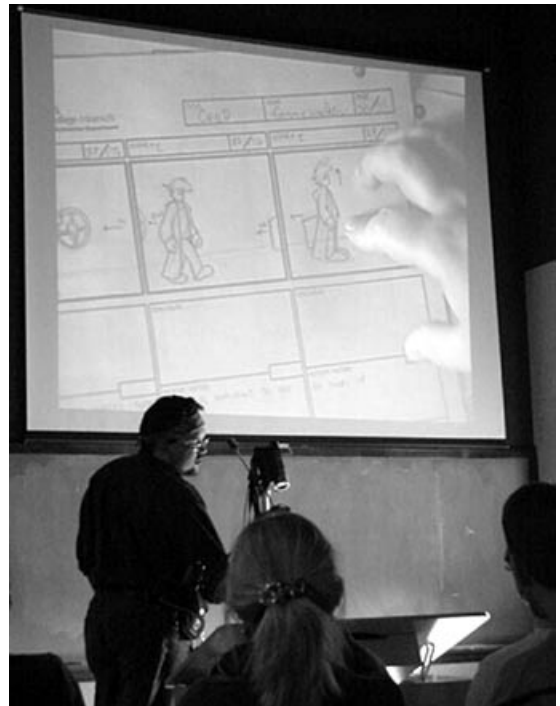
In fact, artists that have a background in either animation layout, or comic book art, create most storyboard work. Motion film, advertising, and especially animation, rely heavily on creating a sequential visual plan of major actions, long before the main production starts.

Storyboard art is created from a written script. This visual interpretation of the story can range in length from 12 panels long in advertising to well over 1,500 panels for a 22-minute animated show. Feature films conservatively start at 3,000 panels.

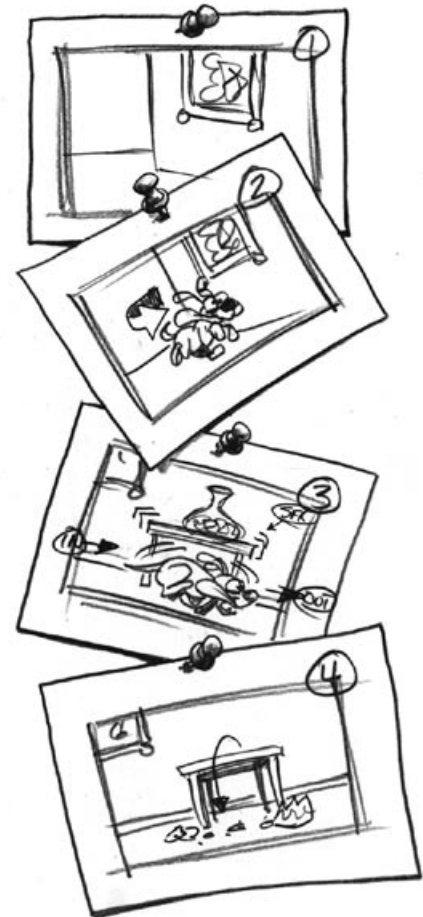
What determines the length? The amount of action in the sequence does. Consider a small sequence where a dog runs around a corner and knocks over a vase that was sitting on a table. The storyboard would contain an image of the room first and have the next panel showing the dog running around the corner. The next panel shows the dog hitting the table with the vase wobbling. The final frame has the dog exiting the scene while the vase falls to shatter on the floor. We need four panels to describe the action.

A sequence where a car chase progresses through a city street, just missing bystanders, then ends in a fiery crash may require up to 15 or more panels depending on the length of the car chase.

No matter what the sequence is about, the storyboard must clearly show a strong and dynamic visual,



One of my college students presenting a storyboard in class using a projector.





Kaj Pindal, May 2002.

As a young animation student, I remember when these two guest speakers were brought in to teach us storyboarding. To paraphrase Kaj, "By providing a strong storytelling base and pictorial continuity, the viewer will understand and connect with the storyboard. If you have to read what was transpiring in the scene, the visual was wrong and must be replaced."

This made sense to me. I adopted this tidbit of information and applied it both to my animation industry work and to my teaching repertoire when I became an instructor.

Years later I met Kaj Pindal at a book signing and asked if he would be a guest speaker at the college where I was teaching. He agreed and spent the better half of two days lecturing, viewing and critiquing the students' work.

Kaj ended the final viewing of student films by articulating the same information he told years before. Then, without missing a beat, he looked at me, then back to the students and said, "I can see both you and your instructor have listened well."

Kaj Pindal's animation career started with the first major Danish animated film in the late 1940s, brilliant commercial work for Richard Williams and directed and animated many animation works while at the NFB, (National Film Board of Canada), such as *Peep* and the *Big Wide World*.

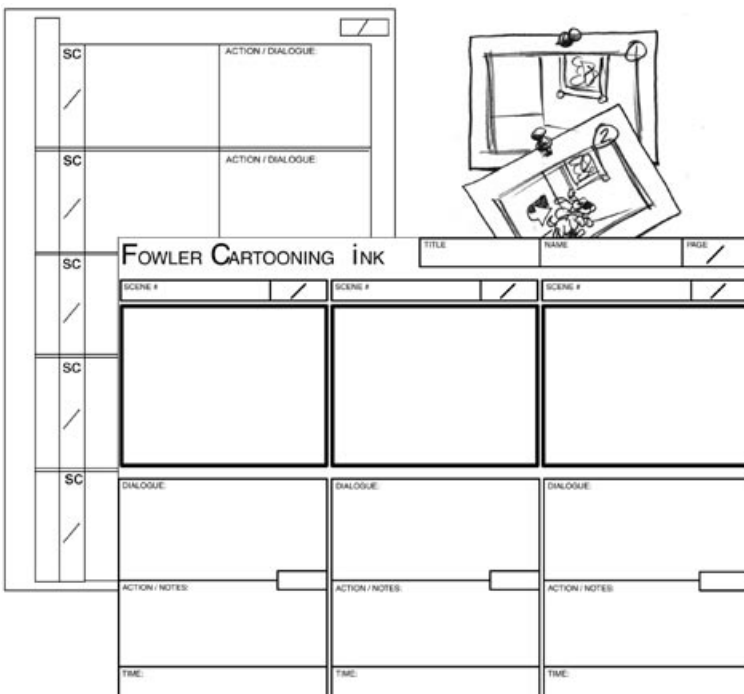
Zach Schwartz's career spans from the early 1930s as a background painter with Warner Bros., Disney and as one of the founders of the revolutionizing U.P.A. animation studio.

DO ALL STUDIOS USE THE SAME FORMAT OF STORYBOARD?

For those that were hoping for consistency in animation, this is not the time. No one style of storyboard is universal. Even the same studio will use different versions of storyboards for each different production. I have used storyboards that are nothing more than a 5"x7" drawing with a few notes on it to an 8"x11" page with five small panels with copious notes. Television, advertising and feature storyboards also follow different presentation formats.

This page has examples of blank storyboard sheets. This only a small fraction of the various styles available. The format may vary, but the content remains the same for each studio. By learning any one style, the rest will be easy to produce. Note the similarities of each.

I have dissected a generic storyboard to explain the technical information required to complete it. There are three main aspects of the storyboard that must be shown. They are visual, dialogue and notes.



coupled with a written explanation as to what is happening in each panel.

WHO USES THEM? ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Everyone from the director, to the layout artist, to the animator, uses the storyboards. How important is it? The best way to explain the importance of the storyboard is to explain it the way I was taught by Zach Schwartz and Kaj Pindal.

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

The Action/Notes portion that is extracted directly from the written script. Its purpose is to clarify, in words, what the visual is showing. This area can also be used for director's notes on how the scene's timing, colour or special effects are to be handled.

Dialogue and sound effects are placed in a box with the character's or object's name preceding it. Occasionally the dialogue is spaced over several storyboard panels in order to best explain the actions of the character speaking.

Timing or slugging is added to assist in speaking and non-speaking portions of the show and for creation of the total running time of the show.

Scene Transition and camera directions include information on how the scene will end, or transition to the next scene and whether or not there is a camera movement.

Visual portion must be created from the originating script, using existing location, prop and character designs, and matched to the action and dialogue sections. Action will determine how many visual panels are required in the scene.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH LAYOUT?

The creation of background layout is based directly on the artwork in the storyboard. Depending on the studio that defines a background layout position, preliminary character poses may be required. For more on this topic refer to the chapter, "Background Layout vs. Character Layout."

Once in the hands of the layout artist, the storyboard panels are enlarged or recreated, to suit many different factors and elements. For now, think of the storyboard panels as the first rough sketches the layout artist will see. After studying the content of the sketches, a new, well-defined completed version is created for use in other departments. This completed work is called the layout package.

With that said, there is other information storyboards must contain for them to be useful to the layout department.

The transition terms listed below are the most common for creating storyboards. Other terms not listed here, such as PANS, TRUCK-IN or OUT, and

Storyboard layout diagram showing a 3x3 grid of panels. Labels point to various sections:

- SCENE #**: Points to the top-left panel.
- PANEL # (1/4)**: Points to the top-left panel.
- EFFECTIVE VISUAL OF CAMERA ANGLE**: Points to the top-left panel.
- DIALOGUE BOX: SPOKEN WORD, SOUND EFFECTS, AND MUSIC**: Points to the middle-left panel.
- ACTION / NOTES: BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ACTION AND CAMERA MOVES.**: Points to the bottom-left panel.
- TIMING / SLUGGING IN SECONDS**: Points to the bottom-left panel.
- SCENE TRANSITION BOX: INFORMATION SUCH AS "CUT", "X-DISS", "FADE", "WIPE" (NOT ALL BOARDS HAVE THIS BOX)**: Points to the bottom-left panel.

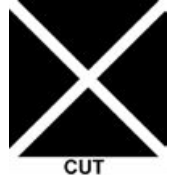
Header information: Show Name, Number or Project Title; Storyboard Artist's Name; Page Number (1/465).

Storyboard title: FOWLER CARTOONING INK

Storyboard layout includes fields for TITLE, NAME, and PAGE.

CAMERA SHAKE are camera moves and will be defined in a later chapter of this book.

CUT: A term used to describe an end to the current scene. The next scene consists of a different location or angle that is separate from the previous scene. (The end of the scene)



CUT

FADE-IN: A camera function. Opening the aperture from 0% to 100% exposure, over a number of frames. (Starts dark and gets bright)



FADE-IN

FADE-OUT: A camera function. Closing the aperture from 100% to 0% exposure over a number of frames. (Starts bright and gets dark)



FADE-OUT

CROSS DISSOLVE: A combination of fade-out and fade-in produces a "ghost-like" effect as one scene disappears while the other appears at the same time. Start and Stop frame are the same for both the fade-out and fade-in.



CROSS DISSOLVE

POSE SHEETS (MODEL SHEETS):

The pose sheet is used as an animation and layout accuracy tool to keep the characters, props, locations, and special effects on model. This is a widely used and accepted tool of the animation trade. Below on the generic pose sheet, I have labelled key infor-

CHARACTER / PROP: NEATLY PRINT CHARACTER OR PROP NAME

ARTIST: PRINT WHO DID THE ARTWORK. (HELPS TO GET PAID)

CHARACTER / PROP	ARTIST
FINAL	DATE / /
REVISED	DATE / /

FINAL / DATE: CLEARLY DATE WHEN THE ARTWORK WAS FIRST COMPLETED

REVISED / DATE: THIS IS THE DATE THE DIRECTOR REVISED THE ARTWORK. (SOME STUDIOS USE STAMPS, SIGNATURES, OR A NEW SHEET WITH AN "R" BESIDE THE ITEM NAME.)

CHARACTER OR PROP ARTWORK IS DRAWN IN THIS AREA WITH OR WITHOUT THE FLOOR LINE.

REGISTRATION FLOOR LINE: A GUIDE TO LINE UP A CHARACTER ROTATION. POSE AND PROPS DO NOT REQUIRE THIS LINE.

PROP DESIGN

PRODUCTION BOX: PRINT THE NAME OF THE SHOW, PROJECT AND SCENE NUMBER.

PRODUCTION

tonal interpretations of the concept. The art director has final approval of any material designed.

Once the layout department receives the storyboard, prop, location and character designs, the work begins.

The layout department dictates the quality and direction the artwork will take on. If the perspective is off; if the characters are off model; if the background elements are not designed with character movement in mind, then the overall quality will be lost.

mation sections that you will expect to see at most studios. For reason of clarity use CAPITAL LETTERS to label all parts of the POSE SHEET.

For the animation student, take the time to prepare these sheets for a professional touch to your portfolio.

CHARACTER POSE SHEETS or FIVE POINT TURN-AROUND consists of normally one character in five poses that include: full body frontal view, 3/4 view, side view, 3/4 rear view and a back view. Supplemental sheets include various action poses, facial expressions and the lip synch guides.

Character Line-Up Sheets consist of all or as required, characters from a show, arranged like a police line-up for size, height and other comparisons.

CHARACTER MOUTH SHEETS AND PROP SHEETS.

The character Mouth Sheets contain six to eight standard mouth position for dialogue. Many sheets are created to convey different character emotions.

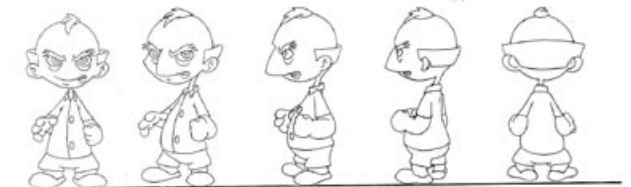
PROP SHEETS consist of normally two to three various positions of an object. Only one prop per sheet is shown. The prop sheet is used to ensure consistency in size, form, structure and proportion.

As illustrated above, a storyboard is included to indicate where the prop is used. The details supplied on each prop depend on the type of animation the show consisted of.

LOCATION DESIGN consists of an overall view of the environment where the animation will take place. Traditionally, a story, in the form of a script is provided to the lead location designer. Working with the director, it becomes the designers responsibility to shape the style, or look of the show. This includes artwork of floor plans, aerial view artwork, long pan backgrounds and

LAYOUT IS THE CRUCIAL STEPPING STONE TO THE REST OF THE PRODUCTION. PLAN THIS STAGE THOROUGHLY!

CHARACTER / PROP	ARTIST
BERT	CRYSTAL WALL
FINAL	DATE / /
REVISED	DATE / /



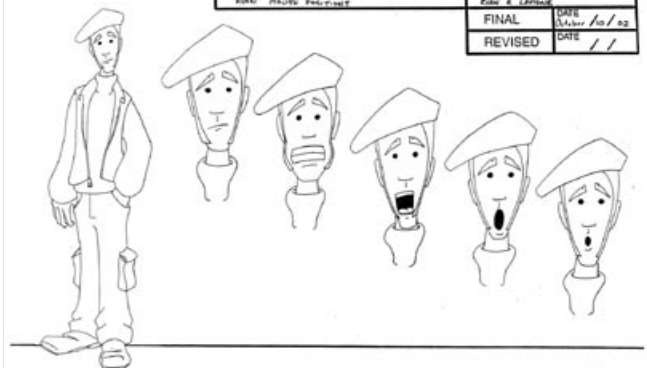
CHARACTER

PRODUCTION

THE GUN & THE FLY

www.kip.com

CHARACTER / PROP	ARTIST
"Bert" Mouth Positions	Bob & Sarah
FINAL	DATE / /
REVISED	DATE / /



CHARACTER

PRODUCTION

DEMO REEL - "LIP SYNC"

www.kip.com

Created by a year two animation student Ryan Lavigne.

PRODUCTION NAME

EXT-DAY: DOWN SHOT CITY

SC# 6,14,67,312



L — 56

PRODUCTION NAME

EXT-DAY: DOWN SHOT CITY

SC# 6,14,67,312

REVISED: 19/03



L — 56

By not fixing perspective, continuity, fielding and staging problems all following departments, (ink-and-paint, BG painting, animators, and compositors), will unfortunately produce inferior work. Remember, when in doubt; draw a thumbnail sketch to fix it.

Whether for television, or feature production, it is always advised to re-read your assigned storyboard sequence several times to ensure it is understood. In feature film, always check with the lead layout designer for continuity and style questions that may arise.

The focus of the layout artist is to now dissect the storyboard scene by scene, and panel by panel, looking for: perspective, required camera shots and angles, composition and framing, staging and perspective grids, element placement and level separation. This has all been covered thus far.

Having read to this point of the book, you should now be more familiar with the foundation building blocks of the layout artist. The next chapter prepares the layout artist for the technical side: the dark side. ■

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.

Do not miss this chance to meet Mike Fowler at this year's SAFO 03 in Ottawa, Canada. Mike will be signing copies of his book, Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional on Sunday October 19, 2003 at 3:00 pm. His book will be on sale through out the SAFO 03 Animation Festival.

MIKES. 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, a 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.

CAREER COACH

Unemployment Insurance

by Pamela Kleibrink Thompson



IN THE LAST MONTH, SINCE I STARTED RECRUITING for a new client, I've been reminded how creative artists are in coming up with ways to keep from being hired and avoid being interviewed. Here are some of my favorites:

USING AND MISUSING THE INTERNET

"My résumé is on my Website." Send a Website address instead of a résumé and expect the employer to visit the Website to retrieve the résumé. Make *them* do the work. If the Website doesn't work or your résumé can't be retrieved or found, that's fine. The employer can try the connection again later. Expect the employer to do extra work by visiting your Website to get your résumé. Don't just send it to them. Don't include your Web address on your résumé for employers to check out.

TOO ATTACHED

Send an attachment, which can't be opened. Send attachments that take a long time to download. Any company worth working for should have a high-speed Internet connection. If the attachment takes more than a minute or two to download, that's fine — what else are employers using their computers for anyway?

GOT THE PICTURE?

Embed huge images in e-mail to freeze up mail systems. Big files can't be opened but you'll intrigue the employer, and he'll contact you to ask about what you sent.

SEND A WEBSITE ADDRESS INSTEAD OF A RÉSUMÉ AND EXPECT THE EMPLOYER TO VISIT THE WEBSITE TO RETRIEVE THE RÉSUMÉ. MAKE *THEM* DO THE WORK.

SABOTAGE YOUR RÉSUMÉ

Here are some ways to keep the phone from ringing and reducing e-mail.

INCOMMUNICADO

Leave your e-mail address off your résumé. You don't want recruiters contacting you any time, day or night. (Some don't bother with résumés without e-mail addresses on them.)

Send a résumé, demo reel and breakdown sheet with no contact information on them. Don't clutter your résumé, demo reel and breakdown sheet with your name, phone number and e-mail address.

E-mail your résumé but don't include your e-mail address on the résumé. A potential employer should be able to cut and paste the e-mail address into the résumé. It doesn't matter if some companies get résumés in huge databanks and they never see the original e-mail address. You don't want to work for a big company like that anyway.

Don't include your contact information. Send a résumé with just your name on it. Don't include your phone number (with correct area code), e-mail address and mailing address.

Send a résumé in an e-mailed message by cutting and pasting HTML format so the code is imbedded in message. Employers love reading between the lines.

Send a résumé in JPEG format. This makes it difficult to open or print.

Send your résumé as an Adobe Acrobat pdf file and make sure some logo graphics obscure and cover important information like your e-mail address and other contact info.

Play hard to get by having different phone numbers on each of your marketing pieces — the numbers on your résumé, demo reel and demo reel breakdown should not match. Make them figure out which phone number is the current one with the correct area code.

Be secretive about the types of software you know — mention that you know 3D software but don't be specific about what 3D software you do know, such as Maya or 3ds max. Make them call you to find out.

Choose a font where it is difficult to distinguish between a lower case "L" and the number one. Choose a font that is hard to read and small enough so when it is copied or faxed, it is illegible.

Include graphics on résumés.

YOU'RE SUCH A CARD

Include only your name on your business card — maybe just a first name or nickname. They don't need to know how to reach you or know what you do (title — are you a producer, artist or writer?). If you have an image on your card make sure it obscures important contact info. Don't include both your phone number and e-mail address on your card. Hide your phone number on the back of your business card.

DEMO REELS: IF YOU WANT ME, YOU HAVE TO SHOW ME.

"You have my reel." Ask the recruiter or employer to find your reel. After all, you just gave them one at SIGGRAPH, along with hundreds of other applicants. Why give them another? They are supposed to keep your reel and résumé for at least six months, so why send a new one?

Don't follow up quickly when a recruiter or potential employer requests your reel. Delay sending the reel — they can wait. Don't have packages ready to go out the door, which include a demo reel, demo reel breakdown and résumé with current contact info on all.

Tell the recruiter you need time to redo your reel and take your time getting around to it. After all, you are working, in school or busy with other important stuff.

Why update your reel every six months, whether you are working or not? You can always get around to it when a job comes your way.

Don't label your reel with your name and phone number and e-mail address. Or, keep an old label on it with an outdated phone number and area code — it shows you get around.

Ask to get your reel back. Expect a company to pay postage to mail your reel back so you don't have to spend time picking it up.

Put everything you have ever done on your reel in no particular order. Employers will be impressed by how much you've improved over the years.

Put stuff on your reel that is not relevant to the job — i.e. cartoony stuff for a photoreal project. Don't tailor your reel, résumé and cover letter to the job. Send out the same reel no matter what the job — don't customize.

"I don't have a reel, but can you view CDs or DVDs?" Don't provide a viewer with your work so an employer has to work to see your stuff.

PLAY HARD TO GET BY HAVING DIFFERENT PHONE NUMBERS ON EACH OF YOUR MARKETING PIECES — THE NUMBERS ON YOUR RÉSUMÉ, DEMO REEL AND DEMO REEL BREAKDOWN SHOULD NOT MATCH.

BREAKDOWN SHEETS: GUESS WHAT I DID!

Don't include a breakdown with your reel. Let recruiters and employers guess what you did on the reel. Make them call you to find out what you did so you can draw them into a lengthy conversation. Maybe you can convince them to give you an animation position when all you've ever done was wire removal.

Don't include your name and contact info on your breakdown list.

GIVE THEM THE BRUSH.

Don't have an answering machine or service so people can get through to you. Set your machine on maximum rings if you have one so they'll have to call back when you're home.

Don't update recruiters when you move, change e-mail addresses or phone numbers — be mysterious.

Don't stay in touch with employers. You'll never run into them again.

The recruiter's job is to help companies find top people. Make them work to find you and contact you. Don't help them do their job — they might help you to get one.

If you find a company you want to work for, make them work hard to hire you. After all, whom else are they going to get? ■

PAMELA KLIEBRINK THOMPSON *is a recruiter, hiring strategist and career coach. She is recruiting artists for a visual effects film being produced in Los Angeles and is amazed by the variety of obstacles artists put in their path to being hired.*

GOT AN APPETITE FOR ANIMATION?

**news
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jobs
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forums
galleries**

AWN.com Everything about Animation. Only Online.



Welcome to another world. All photos
by Lionel Lum, courtesy Anime Expo.

Anime Expo 2003: Anime Conventions Enter Their Adolescence

by Fred Patten

ANIME CONVENTIONS CAN TRACE THEIR GESTATION BACK TO THE FIRST ANIME VIDEOTAPE ROOM PARTIES HELD AT SCI-FI AND COMIC BOOK FAN CONVENTIONS IN 1977...

LOOKING AT THE ESTIMATED 18,000 FANS CROWDING into the Anaheim Convention Center and adjoining Hilton and Marriott hotels for Anime Expo 2003 during the four-day July 4th weekend, it is hard to imagine that the annual AX began with only 1,750 attendees 12 years earlier. The baby has grown up.

Anime conventions can trace their gestation back to the first anime videotape room parties held at sci-fi and comic book fan conventions in 1977, a year after the first giant-robot sci-fi adventure cartoons appeared on American Japanese-community TV channels. During the 1980s, anime became an increasingly prominent portion of those conventions, with an anime video room as part of the official programs, fans in anime character costumes in the masquerades and anime merchandise in the dealers' hall.

By the late 1980s, anime fans began asking for conventions of their own. It was not a coincidence that this was also when the first specialty companies were founded to license anime and release it commercially on video. The first all-anime convention, with the support of the new American anime specialty companies



As companies get bigger so does their presence at Anime Expo.

that featured guests of honor from the Japanese animation studios, was held in 1991. It was a success, but it was organized as a stand-alone event. Anime fans wanted an annual convention like the sci-fi and comic book cons. Mike Tatsugawa in the San Francisco Bay area organized the non-profit Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation (SPJA) to "make it so." Anime Expo '92, in San Jose, California staked out the July 4th holiday weekend. In 1994, AX moved to Southern California and has been in Anaheim, Los Angeles or Long Beach ever since. As anime (and manga, its comic book counterpart) became increasingly popular during the late '90s and early '00s, AX attendance has risen sharply. Other annual anime conventions have become established throughout the U.S. and Canada, but AX remains the oldest and largest.

AX has also taken on many of the aspects of a trade show rather than a fan convention. At the early fan conventions, and still at many of the regional conventions, the dealers' hall consists of small anime specialty shops and individual fans selling and trading collectibles. AX's dealers' hall still has a lot of those (enough to result in long lines of fans at the convention center's ATMs getting more money), but it is dominated by professional commercial display booths of all the major American anime producers and retailers. Some of these were two-stories-tall, with huge plasma or projection TV screens constantly showing their latest anime. At the early conventions, programming consisted mostly of panels of fans discussing their favorite anime titles and characters. At AX, the programming is divided



Anime Expo's guests of honor (above) and attendees take in the voice over panel (below).



up among the anime companies to let each one tell the fans what new projects it has under development, and what new titles it will release on DVD or theatrically during the next few months. This is news that the fans want to hear, but it is also more commercial than it is artistic.

(A technological sign-of-the-times: practically every anime retailer had a "super discount" corner offering anime video tapes and laser discs at \$5 each or three for \$10. By next year, anime in any format other than DVD should be extinct.)

AX 2003 featured 13 Japanese guests of honor: Yoshitoshi ABe (anime character designer and/or writer), Kazuki Akane (director of TV and theatrical anime), Kazuhiro Furuhashi (director), Mitsuru Hongo (director/writer), Yuki Kajiura (anime music composer), Yao Kazuki (voice actor), Yousuke Kuroda (screenwriter), Mahiro Maeda (director and designer specializing in CGI anime), Atsuko Nakajima (character designer and animation director), Koushi Rikudo (writer/cartoonist of the fan-favorite *Excel Saga* manga), Goro Taniguchi (di-

rector), Misa Watanabe (voice actress), and Nobuteru Yuuki (character designer). Some of these guests were invited by AX, while others were sponsored by an anime company to promote one or more of their productions to the fans. AX presented these guests in a series of "focus panels" throughout the convention, in which the guest (and a translator) were introduced to an audience of several hundred fans to discuss their works and answer questions. Yuki Kajiura, a current fan-favorite because of her music for the anime series *Noir* and *.hack//SIGN*, presented an hour-long concert of the most popular songs from them.

American voice actors Crispin Freeman and Wendee Lee mingled more directly with the fans in voice acting workshops. There were also some animators/cartoonists who hosted how-to-draw workshops using Japanese art supplies (provided by import shops hoping to increase sales).

One sign of the increasing popularity of anime is that the list of anime specialty companies presenting panels at AX grows longer every year. There were three or four

brand new companies at AX 2003 announcing their first licensed anime releases. Two prominent Tokyo animation studios had panels of their own, both on the occasion of anniversary celebrations, Studio Gonzo (10th anniversary) and Studio Pierrot (25th anniversary).

The most impressive news was from A.D.V. Films, founded in 1992 and now one of the largest anime DVD releasers in America. In addition to announcing its acquisition of some of the hottest new anime titles in Japan, A.D.V. has just launched an Anime Network cable TV channel (fans were urged to contact their cable TV providers to request it), and is about to start new divisions to publish its own releases of licensed manga and of anime music CDs. Also, A.D.V. will begin producing its own anime, using the facilities of Japanese studios whose titles it has been licensing. Preliminary art designs were shown for a 26-episode TV anime adaptation of American s-f author David Weber's *Mutineer's Moon*, the first novel in a trilogy. If it is successful, anime adaptations of Weber's two interstellar sequels will follow.

For those who came to AX to watch anime, there was a 35mm film program and four simultaneous anime video rooms. Several of the anime specialty companies also had mini-theaters featuring their own DVD releases. It was possible to watch anime around-the-clock for four days. (There were signs asking fans not to sleep in the anime theaters.)

Fan activities remain a major part of AX's programming. Thursday's main fan event was an idol (pop singer) contest. There was also a presentation of an amateur *Sailor Moon* musical. Friday had a new "mini-masquerade" event (for fans too inexperienced at costume construction to compete in the main masquerade), a J-Rock dance contest and an evening of screening fan-produced anime music videos. Saturday was dominated by the main masquerade, which began with preparations at 2:00 pm and lasted until well after midnight.

AX still uses the traditional English words "masquerade" and "costuming" in its program guide. During the last few years, the fans have been adopting the Japanese fan term "cosplay" (an abbreviation of "costume play"), so there was far more talk about "cosplaying" than about costuming. As impressive as the formal masquerade was, it was insignificant in comparison with the number of fans who wore anime costumes all convention long.

It was easy to tell which anime titles are currently popular by the number of fans dressed as their characters. *.hack//SIGN*, *Trigun* and *Hellsing* were among the most popular for adult characters, while any girls eight or younger were sure to have been dressed by their mothers as either Sakura from *Card Captor*



Sakura, Sugar from *Sugar: A Little Snow Fairy* or one of the cat-eared little girls from *Di Gi Charat*. There were even some cosplayers as Storm from the *X-Men* movie "because Storm looks like she ought to be an anime character;" and as Neo from *The Matrix Reloaded*, because "everybody knows that *The Matrix* is really just live-action anime."

(Is it possible to have too many cosplayers at a con? If only 10% of the 18,000 attendees were wearing costumes, that was still 1,800 cosplayers. It was almost impossible to walk three feet without accidentally stepping in front of someone taking a photo of a cosplayer. There were so many fans in the same costumes that impromptu group photo sessions were scheduled: "Would all the fans in *Lupin III* costumes meet in the Hilton main lobby on Friday at 4:30 for a group photo?" There were enough *.hack//SIGN* cosplayers to start a separate convention.)

Sunday was the traditional "packing up to go home" day, but there were still enough attendees to make the benefit auction for the City of Hope medical foundation (AX's official charity) a rousing success. An AX tradition is having its Japanese cartoonist guests of honor draw two or three rough sketches of



Some fans go all out.



Other fans like to glam it up.





Kids get into the act (top images) while two of the cosplay winners pose for the camera (bottom images).



AT THE EARLY CONVENTIONS, PROGRAMMING CONSISTED MOSTLY OF PANELS OF FANS DISCUSSING THEIR FAVORITE ANIME TITLES AND CHARACTERS.



Miyazaki sure has his fans.

their most popular characters for this auction. Two by Koushi Rikudo of his *Excel Saga* cast, that may have taken five minutes each to draw, went for more than \$2,000 each. Some bidding went "\$500 - \$2,000 - \$2,500 - \$3,000 - \$5,000 - no more bids? Sold!" in less than two minutes. The highest bid was \$6,400 for a marker-multicolored sketch by Nobuteru Yuuki of Pirotesa, the dark elf warrior from *Record of Lodoss War*. The grand total for the City of Hope was \$74,020 for 55 items; an average of almost \$1,350 each.

The Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation's Anime Industry Awards (anime fandom's equivalent of the Oscars) are both voted on and presented at Anime Expo. The ballot is included in members' registration packets. Voting is held during the first three days of the con; the ballots are tallied Saturday evening and the awards are presented as the main event at the closing ceremonies.

Will Anime Expo 2004 break the 20,000 attendance mark? The fans are confident that it will. If AX's first 12 years have been anime conventions' childhood, what will adolescence bring?

Society for the Promotion of Japanese Animation 2003 Industry Awards (presented during the closing ceremonies)

1. Best Male Character: Japanese Release
Amon (in *Witch Hunter Robin*; Sunrise, Inc.)

2. Best Male Character: USA Release
Kenshin (*Samurai X*; ADV Films)

3. Best Female Character: Japanese Release
Robin (*Witch Hunter Robin*; Sunrise, Inc.)

4. Best Female Character: USA Release
Yukino (*His & Her Circumstances*; TRSI, Inc.)

5. Best Non-Human Character: Japanese Release
Grunties (*.hack//DUSK*; Bandai Visual Co.)

6. Best Non-Human Character: USA Release
Menchi (*Excel Saga*; ADV Films)

7. Best Manga: Japanese Release
Fruits Basket (Hakusensha)

8. Best Manga: USA Release
Naruto (Viz LLC)

9. Best Publication: Japanese Language
Newtype

10. Best Publication: English Language
Newtype USA (ADV Films)

11. Best TV Series: Japanese Release
Naruto (Studio Pierrot)

12. Best TV Series: USA Release
.hack//SIGN (Bandai Entertainment)

13. Best Film: Japanese Release
Inu Yasha: Kagami no Naka no Mugenjiyo (Sunrise, Inc.)

14. Best Film: USA Release
Spirited Away (Buena Vista Home Entertainment)

15. Best Film Debut at Anime Expo
The Animatrix (Warner Home Video)

16. Best OVA: Japanese Release
.hack//Liminality (Bandai Visual Co.)

17. Best OVA: USA Release
Read or Die (Manga Entertainment)

18. Best Music Album: Japanese Release
Final Fantasy X-2 Original Soundtrack (Avex Mode)

19. Best Music Album: USA Release
.hack//SIGN Original Soundtrack 1 (Bandai Entertainment)

20. Best Company (USA)
TOKYOPOP ■

FRED PATTEN has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s.



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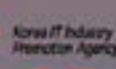
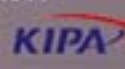
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ANIME REVIEWS

New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

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

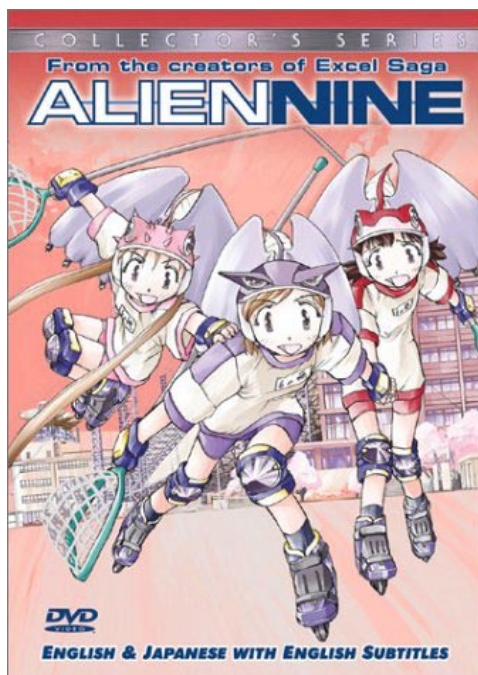
Alien Nine

OAV series, 2001. Director: Jiro Fujimoto. 100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.99. Distributor: Central Park Media/U.S. Manga Corps.

Some anime is mysterious and confusing in a good way. *Alien Nine* starts off fine, but it is frustratingly incomplete unless you are willing to read the cartoon-art novel to continue the story.

In the near future (2013 if you add the dates up), attacks by alien feral animals on Earth's elementary schools have become such a routine occurrence that students are assigned to capture them as a school chore, like taking out the trash. This is not considered dangerous because the children are issued intelligent alien "borg" symbiotic partners to protect them. The borgs, which look like giant talking frog heads or lizard heads, perch on their heads and live on their hosts' body wastes.

At No. 9 Elementary School, the alien fighters are one girl from each of the three sixth grade classes. 11-year-old Kasumi and Kumi are volunteers who think it is cool to get excused from classes to race around the school on roller blades with tranquilizer guns chasing creatures that range from mouse-size



Alien Nine's producers ran out of money after the fourth episode. Real fans will have to read the manga for the rest of the story.

to horse-size (many drawn as recognizable “tributes” to famous literary sci-fi aliens, such as the Pierson’s Puppeteers from Larry Niven’s stories), with their symbiotic partners as an eye-catching uniform. Their third partner, Yuri Otani, is their total opposite; a girl who considers all aliens yucky, who is humiliated by having to go around in public with a giant slobbery frog sitting on her head, and is disgusted by having to take it into the bathroom to eat her wastes. She was stuck with the job because none of her classmates would take it.

Yuri equates all aliens with the deadly chest-bursting monster from the old movie, especially since those she is assigned to catch usually look like giant spiders and centipedes. She is usually so scared that she either faints or her terror triggers her borg into overreacting and killing the alien instead of capturing it. Although it is obvious to all that Yuri is totally unsuited to the post, the school’s cheerful Alien Party Advisor Ms. Hisakawa refuses to release her.

Alien Nine starts out as wacky humor, nicely mixing the bizarre and mildly gross-out situations that 11-year-olds like with a cryptic, but apparently well-planned sci-fi plot. It is a bit annoying that the protagonist is such a crybaby that you want to slap her, although it gradually looks like she may have a justification to be. Are the aliens really “picking on” Yuri more than on the others? Is Ms. Hisakawa, who is less human than she originally seemed, targeting Yuri for “special attention” — and if so, for benign or malevolent reasons? Do comments about the children “getting used” to their symbiotic partners have a sinister biological double-meaning?

Unfortunately, as is revealed in the DVD’s extras, this anime project ran out of money after the fourth 25-minute episode. *Alien Nine* was produced by the new GENCO company, with animation by the J.C. Staff studio, and released as four OAVs on 6/25/01, 9/25/01, 11/25/01 and 2/25/02. (The original Japanese trailers are also among the DVD extras.) GENCO founder and exec producer Taro Maki, in a video interview, admits that the ending is “ambiguous” and that he hopes to raise funding to continue the anime.

Meanwhile, a commercial blurbed, “The story has just begun!” advises you to buy CPM’s English-language edition of author Hitoshi Tomizawa’s original *Alien Nine* manga to find out what happens next. There are many anime direct-to-video productions that break off in mid-story; *Alien Nine* is more forthright than most in admitting what has happened. If the American release is popular enough, maybe production can afford to resume.



In *.hack//SIGN*, Wavemaster is caught in *The World*, a role-playing game site and can't get back to the real world.

.hack//SIGN. V.1, Logon. V.2, Outcast. V.3, Gestalt. V.4, Omnipotence. V.5, Uncovered. V.6, Terminus.

TV series (26 episodes), 2002. Director: Koichi Mashimo. V.1-2, five episodes/125 minutes, v.3-6, four episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

There is no doubt that *.hack//SIGN* is one of the most popular anime titles of the moment, just judging by the number of fans attending 2003 anime conventions in costume as *.hack//SIGN* characters. It was a cult hit in Japan (26 TV episodes broadcast from April 4 through September 26, 2002), and with anime fans in America on The Cartoon Network from February 1 through August 30, 2003.

It is actually just one component in a successful mass-merchandising project by entertainment media giant Bandai Visual. In a fictional near-future, the Internet is controlled by the CyberConnect Corp. CC has created a hugely popular online fantasy role-playing site called “The World,” where people can log in to become warriors, knights, thieves and other sword-&-sorcery characters to go on solo adventures or band together for group quests. Players around the world transport themselves into The World for a few hours of fantasy fun. But rumors start that a tiny number of players are found in comas at their computer keyboards. Have their consciousnesses become trapped in The World?

Bandai has developed this *.hack* (pronounced dot-hack) scenario in an actual videogame, a text novel, a manga novel (which has since been animated as a 12-episode TV series, *.hack//LEGEND OF THE TWILIGHT BRACELET*), an anime TV series, and an anime four-

episode OAV series (*.hack//LIMINALITY*), each of which reveal new aspects of the mystery. This review is concerned with the *.hack//SIGN* anime TV series.

.hack//SIGN can serve as a showcase of most of the assets of Japanese TV-style animation. The actual animation (by the Bee Train studio) is limited, but the fantasy settings (the background paintings) are stunningly beautiful, the character designs by top designer Yoshiyuki Sadamoto are appealing and imaginatively original (thanks to the fantasy-world costuming), and the music by Yuki Kajiura has caused the anime's soundtrack CD to become a constant sell-out at anime specialty shops.

The story takes place inside The World, with only brief black-and-white flashes to hint at what is happening simultaneously to the players in the real world. A strange young Wavemaster (mage), Tsukasa, appears who acts in a manner supposedly impossible by the nature of The World. He cannot remember his identity outside the game, and he cannot log out and return to the real world. Some players consider him a threat to the gameplaying rules; some view him as a victim and wonder who or what is manipulating him; and some try to take advantage of his special abilities. Some are sympathetic and try to help him.

.hack//SIGN is really their story: of the friendship that develops among Mimiru, Bear, Subaru, Crim and Tsukasa, of what they learn about each other, and the real nature of the electronic fantasy world which they are in. This is another attribute of good TV anime: not much action, but intelligent and intriguing dialogue that will make you anxious to find out what will be revealed next, rather than dismissing it as only a lot of boring talking heads.

Junkers Come Here.

Theatrical feature, 1995. Director: Junichi Sato. 105 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

This charming award-winner and laureate of the Japanese Board of Education puts a fantasy gloss on a serious problem faced by many modern affluent youth. 11-year-old Hitomi Nozawa apparently has no worries. She has lots of school friends, and her workaholic parents provide her with a lovely home. Her mother is a busy executive for an international hotel chain who seldom gets home before midnight, while her father is a commercial photographer who is constantly on assignments around the world.

Hitomi knows that they love her, even if she sees less of them than of Fumie, their friendly though scatterbrained housekeeper, and Keisuke, a college student

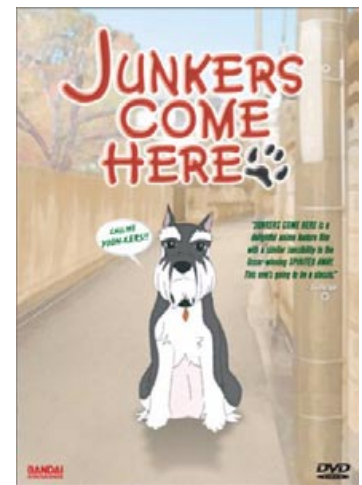
who is her live-in tutor (whom she has a crush on). Her best friend of all is Junkers, her pet German schnauzer, who can talk — but only to her.

Then it starts to fall apart. Her parents, who have been drifting apart due to their separate jobs, decide to do "the sensible thing" and have a friendly divorce. Her mother has just been appointed manager of her chain's newest luxury hotel in San Francisco, and she will take Hitomi with her. They are sure that Hitomi, who is so logical and intelligent, will realize that this is best for her. Hitomi learns that she could not keep her Japanese home life even if she chooses to stay with her father, because the reliable Keisuke is about to graduate from college, marry his fiancée and leave to begin his own career; and Fumie is too unreliable to be a guardian by herself.

Then Junkers reveals that he can do more than talk; he can grant three wishes. Hitomi finds her intellect and rational logic is in conflict with her 11-year-old emotions. Is it fair to use magic to force her parents and Keisuke to adjust their lives to her convenience? — especially when a tentative attempt to wish that Keisuke will not leave turns out to have unexpectedly unpleasant consequences.

Junkers Come Here, based on a young-adult novel by Naoto Kine (who composed the movie's music and provides the voice of the father), was animated by the Triangle Staff studio and released on March 18, 1995. Everything is developed in such a low key that it could be called pedestrian, although it is clear that this is deliberate. The art style is nicely realistic, painted in pastel watercolors. Kine's music is pleasantly adequate, but unmemorable. The dialogue is what you might expect from listening to an imaginative 11-year-old.

The emphasis is on the human-interest problem. What stands out are the warm relationship between Hitomi and Junkers (the dog has an engagingly quirky personality, including using a toilet in a human manner when nobody is looking), and the conflict between logic and emotion that even the most intelligent child would face in such a situation. In some respects Hitomi's intelligence makes her suffer even more. It gradually becomes clear that all her schoolmates are juvenile and



A German schnauzer is about to grant a confused girl three wishes that lead to surprising results in *Junkers Come Here*.

shallow; Junkers is the only "person" she can relate to as an equal. (If it were not for a couple of gag situations such as a school crossing guard overhearing Junkers talking, the audience could wonder whether Hitomi's loneliness has caused her to imagine Junkers' human intelligence and speech.)

Hitomi is torn between pride that her parents respect her intelligence, and resentment that they do not really show any understanding of her own feelings; and between her realization that Keisuke and her parents have their own lives and goals, and any child's emotional reluctance to "leave the nest." Junkers Come Here is an excellent film for children who are about to experience the emotional trauma of growing up, whether their home lives are secure or not.



Lupin the 3rd: The Movie — The Secret of Mamo parodies Spielberg, *Strangelove* and Clinton.

Lupin the 3rd: The Movie — The Secret of Mamo.

Theatrical feature, 1978. Director: Soji Yoshikawa. 100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$24.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

Cartoonist Monkey Punch's *Lupin III* has been filtering into America since before anime began to be commercially licensed. There was a 1971-1972 23-episode anime TV series by the Tokyo Movie Shinsha (now TMS Entertainment) animation studio that was moderately popular; then a 1977-1980 155-episode series that was so popular that it spun off two theatrical features; this one, *Lupin III*, released December 16, 1978, and *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro* (Hayao Miyazaki's theatrical feature directorial debut), released December 15, 1979. (The list of TMS' *Lupin III* TV and theatrical anime credits from then to date would fill a page.) *The Castle of Cagliostro* is generally considered a better feature, but *The Secret of Mamo* (to use this DVD release's title) is still plenty of fun and is more faithful to Lupin's TV persona.

Lupin III is the modern descendant of early 20th century fictional gentleman-thief Arsene Lupin; a suave, jet set international master thief usually accompanied by partners Jigen (a Chicago-gangster type) and Goemon (a traditional Japanese samurai), and pursued by Interpol Inspector Zenigata. Also present is *femme fatale* Fujiko, though one never knows whether she will be Lupin's ally or his rival.

For this first *Lupin III* theatrical feature, the whole cast was pitted against Mamo, a mysterious French megalomaniac who tried to use Lupin as a dupe in a scheme to seize control of the U.S.' and the Soviet Union's nuclear weaponry. The story is fast and funny, with constant unexpected plot twists that melded many parodies of scenes from 1960s and '70s TV and movie thrillers from Spielberg's debut *Duel* to *Dr. Strangelove* into a coherent original and suspenseful thriller. The superb jazz score by Yuji Ohno also deserves a mention.

TMS had it immediately dubbed into English for a JAL trans-Pacific in-flight movie. Barely-legible bootleg videos of that dub were popular among anime fans until a new commercial dub was released on video in 1995 as *Lupin III: The Mystery of Mamo*. This Pioneer release is a third English dub. Since the plot involves a terrorist nuclear threat, it is amusing that the three dubs include references to world events in 1978, 1995 and 2003, with parodies of the voices of presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Pioneer's DVD includes the original Japanese soundtrack with a subtitled translation which was not previously available, in addition to its new English dub which is less faithful than the previous two. (Granted the dialogue is full of witty repartee, Inspector Zenigata's lines now unfortunately sound more like inane one-line jokes than reasonable conversation. This lessens the cleverness of Lupin's escapes, since it does not take any great intelligence to outwit an adversary who sounds like a boob.) The DVD extras include a translation of the original 1978 12-page souvenir press book.

In the 1980s when TMS began turning out *Lupin III* movies in quantity, the studio retroactively retitled this one *Lupin vs. the Clone*. If you hear of that title and wonder if that is a different movie, no it is not.

RahXephon. V.1, Threshold V.2, Tonal Pattern. V.3, Harmonic Convergence. V.4, Dissonance. V.5, Synaesthesia. V.6, Aria. V.7, Crescendo.

TV series (26 episodes), 2002. Director: Yutaka Izubuchi. V.1, five episodes/125 minutes; v.2, 4 & 6, four episodes/100 minutes; v.3, 5 & 7, three episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

The publicity for *RahXephon* ("This century's first high density sci-fi animation," "Finally, a mecha anime for the 21st century!") implies something special. In general, it delivers. *RahXephon* was the first major TV anime series created by the new BONES, Inc. animation studio (founded in October 1998 by veterans from the Sunrise studio), and they went all out to make it stand out with especially attractive character, costume and mecha designs. The solipsistic sci-fi plot of an average guy finding out that he is not average, and actually the whole world is a sham constructed around him, is nothing new (from the Japanese *Megazone 23* to the American *The Matrix*). Creator/director Yutaka Izubuchi stated in interviews that he took a lot of old sci-fi anime stereotypes and updated them to a modern, more sophisticated artistic and plot level.

Ayato Kamina is apparently a normal high school student. Suddenly Tokyo is attacked by mystery fighter planes, and Japan's Self-Defense Force defends with incredible flying giant stylized statues of singing women named Allegretto and Fortissimo who shatter the attacking planes with sonic waves. Ominous "men in black" government agents try to hustle Ayato off at gunpoint, but he is saved from them by an ass-kicking female secret-agent type while one of his classmates, a girl whose beauty is so ethereal that it is a good bet she is not human, leads him to an unmarked subway stop that looks like a cross between a military base and an Aztec shrine, where... (and this is in just the first episode).

After this attention-grabbing pilot episode, an introspective mood soon predominates. Ayato learns that Tokyo was conquered by aliens called Mulians 15 years earlier, and enclosed in a force-field dome cutting it off from the rest of the world. The Mulians use mind control on the inhabitants to Tokyo to keep them from realizing what is going on. Ayato is soon helped to escape from Tokyo, and he joins the Earth Federation's TERRA defense force which seeks to learn more about the aliens to combat them effectively. Several episodes are spent introducing a supporting cast and building up their varied personalities.

Yet Ayato is quickly aware that he is not being told everything. Part of the secrecy appears due to petty factional backstabbing among the international agencies fighting the aliens, but some of his new acquaintances also seem to have secret personal reasons to help or hinder him. The more paranoid Ayato becomes and investigates what is being hidden from him, the more reasons he learns everyone has to distrust him. Is his mother the leader of the Mulians? Who are the Mulians, really? Who is actually behind the Earth Federation?

RahXephon was a 26-episode TV series, broadcast on Fuji TV weekly (with several breaks) from January 21



***RahXephon* delivers the goods, especially in the areas of characters, costumes and mecha designs.**

through September 11, 2002 on Tuesdays at 1:58 am (!). Despite the ungodly timeslot, it was popular enough to be condensed into a theatrical feature with about 20 minutes of new animation (released April 19, 2003) and made into a videogame. The action is not as important as the mature emotional depth of the characters and their relationships (episode 18 is a particularly somber shocker), and the complex sci-fi scenario involving different time-rates (time passes more slowly in Mulian-controlled Tokyo) and the uses of song and music as a sonic weapon (the 26 episodes are called First Movement, Second Movement, etc.). ■

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:

September 2003's Film Reviews

by Greg Singer



Escapism © 2002 Avi Ofer.

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:

Last Rumba in Rochdale (2002), 10 min., directed by John Chorlton, U.K. Info: Josephine Law, Producer. Tel.: 44 (0) 7747 848894. Fax: 44 (0) 208 896 1669. Email: josie@illuminatedfilms.com.

Little Numba (2002), 3.5 min., directed by Daniele Lunghini and Diego Zuelli, Italy. Info: Daniele Lunghini, via Ruffini 10, 42100 Reggio Emilia, Italy. Web: www.ondaonirica.com.

The Fall (2002), 1.25 min., directed by Burak Sahin, Turkey. Info: Burak Sahin, Kuzgun St. #1-13, A. Ayranci 06540, Ankara, Turkey. Email: sahinburak@hotmail.com.

Escapism (2002), 6.25 min., directed by Avi Ofer, Israel. Email: info@aviofer.com. Web: www.aviofer.com.

Dollsville (2003), 9.5 min., directed by John Wray, USA. Tel.: 310-592-3981.



The dead can dance in *Last Rumba in Rochdale*.
© 2002 John Chorlton.

LAST RUMBA IN ROCHDALE

Last Rumba in Rochdale is a black comedy. It tells the tale of Bodney Brooks, a 12-year-old boy who lives with his father, sister and grandma (Gran) in the family-run morgue. Bodney always seems to be getting into trouble and grounded, for some reason or another. So, he wiles away his time in his room, reenacting the day's events with computer-controlled puppetry. In order to make amends for his behavior, and to return to the good graces of his family, Bodney decides to organize a party for Gran where she can fulfill her youthful wish to dance once again with Federico Formaggio — the greatest dancer in all of Italy!

Old-timer Federico reluctantly agrees to Bodney's imploring, but through an accidental turn of events, Federico meets with his demise. Bodney schemes to turn the untimely disaster into a hopeful outcome, reinvigorating Federico's corpse at the party with the forte of his computer-controlled puppetry. As the slow dance with drunken, clueless Gran turns to flash dance and

breakdance, Bodney struggles to keep pace, and eventually the ruse falls apart.

It would appear that *Last Rumba in Rochdale* has been produced on a shoestring budget, but it is achieved with such professional flair that it is a clear indicator of the resourcefulness and talent of John Chorlton and his collaborators. Chorlton is a recent alumnus of National Film & Television School in England, and *Last Rumba* is his graduation film. With the help of producer Josephine Law, cinematographer Jon Driscoll, editor Richard Overall and sound designer Toni Bates, among others, Chorlton managed to animate much of the 10-minute, 3D stop-motion movie over the course of 10 months. Add to the project the volunteered time of local voice actors, recording studios and equipment companies, and one can begin to see how production value was layered into the film. Its overall direction, pacing, set design and camera work allow the story to unfold with wonderful quickness and humor.

Last Rumba has screened at such film festivals as Anima 2003 (Brussels), Cinanima (Portugal), Brief Encounters (Bristol, U.K.), and PISAF Animation Festival (Korea). It won the Gold Plaque at the Chicago International Film Festival (2002), and Best Animated Short Film at the 2002 Sitges International Film Festival (Spain). *Last Rumba* also won the Verna Fields Award at the Motion Picture Sound Editors Golden Reel Awards (2002) for Best Sound Editing in a Student Film.

Toward the end of the movie, as Bodney is grounded again in his room, we briefly see the hand of the stop-motion creator (John Chorlton) working the model of Bodney, as the boy himself manipulates his computer-controlled puppets. It is a welcome, wry wink.

LITTLE NUMBA

Little Numba was created using pencil, china ink, 3ds max and Adobe Premiere. It has a very fast-paced quality suited to its story, culminating with the revelation that such frenetic energy is self-limiting. Everything that has a beginning, by its nature, also has an end.

The film starts with what seems a microscopic perspective, as what appears to be singular, cellular life vigorously divides, multiplies and grows. We watch in fascination as the miraculous machinery of life continues to build upon itself, creating more and more complex structures and foundations on which to support its expansion. Deep underground, the life pushes and splinters its way to the surface, taking hold, until humankind (or its sketchy facsimile) is bustling on the scene. On a macroscopic scale, the trend continues as human civilization builds upon itself, grows and hungrily occupies more of its environment.

Never content in its expansion, humanity looks to become bigger and bigger, to move higher and higher. Pointing to the stars, telescopes and missiles are invented to realize the growing conquest. Rocketships carry human beings to the heavens, and life takes root again, and each world becomes a platform for human-kind's insatiable growth. Eventually, the exponential



Little Numba shows the “phallusy” of unmitigated growth.
© 2002 Daniele Lunghini.

panspermia collapses, and what remains are the ruined monuments of the unquenchable, unconscionable growth of civilization.

Despite the general indifference, decadence or arrogance to the contrary, humanity behaves with the adolescent exuberance of life that will last forever. However, like some fast food buddha, *Little Numba* points to the sage, sobering reality that everything passes away.

With such animation influences as Karel Zeman and Bruno Bozzetto, director Daniele Lunghini gently alludes to the possibility that there are other, less foolish, ways for humanity to “grow up” — and, in the re-awakening of our intellect and conscience, for civilization to be reborn.

THE FALL

Ah, sweet nostalgia. *The Fall* is hand-drawn animation, the student work of Burak Sahin.

A bird of prey descends on a wild horse as it drinks from a river. The bird turns into a man, presumably, and he attempts to lasso the horse. The horse then drags the man through the river, and whips him over the edge of a waterfall. As the man plummets, he gracefully morphs once again into the bird and screeches away.

You can lead a horse to water, no doubt, but in wrangling our passions and soaring to new heights, it's



The wind beneath one's wings is the saving grace in *The Fall*.
© 2002 Burak Sahin.

not always the easiest adventure.

Sahin is a civil engineer from Turkey who went on to study classical animation at Vancouver Film School. *The Fall* looks much like a pencil test. Some coloring was done using Toon Boom UAnimation. The film is short and to the point, and shows much promise.

The Fall has screened at Anima Mundi (Brazil), the 15th World Festival of Animated Films (Zagreb) and Zoiefest Film Festival (USA).

ESCAPISM

Escapism is the story of a soldier who keeps guard in a watchtower, and who daydreams of faraway places and memories to overcome the interminable boredom and nothingness stretching around him. With no storyboard, with no cleaning or tracing of frames, director Avi Ofer used an electronic tablet and pen to draw the 2D traditional animation directly in Macromedia Flash. The animation is therefore scratchy and wiggly, but in no way compromised by its simplicity. Ofer's use of minimal lines and colors offers an overall pleasing effect, and the essential emotion of the story is conveyed with economic ease.

The story begins with the character's 18th birthday, blowing out the candles of his cake and receiving the gift of a hair trimmer. With newly shaven head, he is straightaway conscripted into the military, manning his post amid the ceaselessly dismal rain. Pensive and lonely, he draws finger doodles on the foggy glass of his watchtower booth. He transforms one doodle of a hangman's noose into the smiling, happy face of a birthday balloon, a distant recollection of his childhood friendships. The character puts on his SUNY Walkman — in symbolic search of that which is “sunny” — but the



Escapism allows a soldier to dream of sunnier days.
© 2002 Avi Ofer.

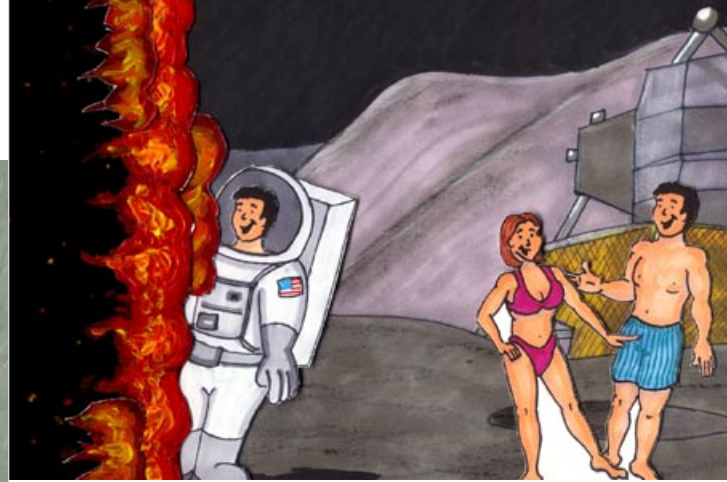
music doesn't chase away the dreariness. The dripping ceiling of the watchtower soon catches his attention, and the shape of the light bulb reminds him again of his birthday balloon.

The young soldier notices a book taped to the ceiling, and so he fetches it down with the barrel of his gun. It is a backpacking travel guide for Australia. Fantasizing about a colorful, sunny Australian beach, he stands in the scene of his imagination with a surfboard and enjoys the wind blowing through his long hair.

The soldier then takes off his gun and uniform and climbs down from his watchtower perch. With a little dream of koalas in his mind, he walks through the rain along a barb-wired fence extending off toward the horizon. He comes across other characters also in their skivvies — playing ball, building dirt castles, reading, bicycling. He keeps on going.

The story ends with flies buzzing around his partially eaten 18th birthday cake. On the dresser, someone places a framed picture of the boy smiling alongside a koala bear.

Escapism was accepted into Anifest 2003 (Czech Republic).



Welcome to the dollhouse in *Dollsville*. © 2003 John Wray.

DOLLVILLE

At the movie's beginning, *Dollsville* advertises itself as "a paper doll book in full color with 30 exciting environments!!!" By the movie's end, it assures the viewer that no astronauts or animals were harmed in the making of the film.

Dollsville is funny in much the same way that *South Park* is funny. Given our expectation for what animation generally is, the crudeness of its cutout technique comes as cathartic relief.

The premise of the movie is simple enough. Peter and Angela are going out on a two-dimensional date. They are each looking for someone different than they naturally find in their conformist, cookie-cutter world. All of the male and female characters in the movie look the same, move through the same environments, eat the same foods. As Peter prepares for the big night out, he rapidly mulls over the possible outfits he can wear — until he settles on one which is the same as all the others he could have chosen. Angela, for her part, rifles through her wardrobe — ballerina, bunny mascot, scuba diver — until she settles on a simple dress that she originally tossed aside as too boring.

As their night together unfolds, Peter and Angela's affection for one another is founded on their mutual disaffection for everything else in their world. They soon go back to Angela's home, one thing leads to another and the sparks begin to fly — literally. (Here, we are introduced to an age-old truth: the reason people sweat is so they won't catch fire when

making love.) The friction from the “heavy petting” of their cardboard bodies ignites a conflagration that consumes their entire world. The town, the polar caps, the deep ocean, even the moon — everything is engulfed in flames. When all seems lost, Peter and Angela must make a leap of faith beyond the confines of their doll book world. They do so, and they land safely among the pages of a neighboring magazine — specifically, an advertisement for cigarettes. (Remember, kids: smoking is a leading cause of statistics.)

John Wray comes from a background of directing theater and comedy improv, and *Dollsville* is his first film as part of the UCLA Animation Workshop. Inspired by Don Hertzfeldt's films, that he could have fun telling a story without the use of strong drawing skills, Wray created his characters using markers and cardboard cutouts. Never having taken a drawing class prior to his work at UCLA, Wray's intent was to turn his weaknesses into strengths. Working with cutouts allowed him to concentrate on the story with-

out getting caught up in the technical challenges of full animation. Wray's improvisational background was helpful in animating directly under the camera, as he was able to make changes and add jokes with the same kind of dynamic spontaneity as on stage. His directing style also carried over from theater, unwittingly mimicking the proscenium vantage of the audience.

Dollsville has played at the L.A. Film Festival. Having won a Spotlight Award from the UCLA Film Department's 2003 festival, it also screened at the Directors Guild of America.

In addition to working on his next film at UCLA, Wray is working as a freelance writer for Disney. He has written three episodes for the new *Lilo & Stitch* animated series. ■

GREG SINGER is an animation welfare advocate, eating in Los Angeles.

