

# AW

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

October 2003 • Volume 8 Issue 07 • awn.com

THIS MONTH  
INNOVATIVE ANIMATION TECHNIQUES

Disney PRESENTS

**BROTHER BEAR**



**Plus: Cartoon Forum,  
Fast Film, Jakers!, Batwoman,  
"Death" of 2D and more...**

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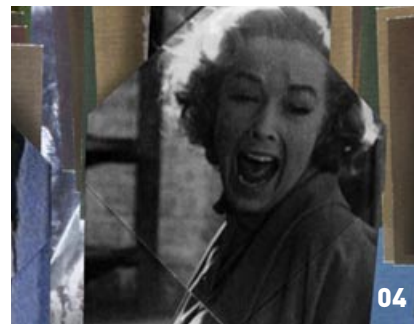
Ellen Besen ponders the use of analogy in writing for animation in this the first of a six-part series.

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# AW

ANIMATION WORLD MAGAZINE

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[Includes QuickTime movie clips!](#)

BY GREG SINGER



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ANIMATION INNOVATION

# Tearing up the Tracks: Virgil Widrich's *Fast Film*

by *Chris Robinson*

Virgil Widrich used images from 400 live-action feature films to create *Fast Film*. All images © Virgil Widrich Film — und Mutimediaproduktions G.m.b.H. & Minotaurus Film Luxembourg, 2003.

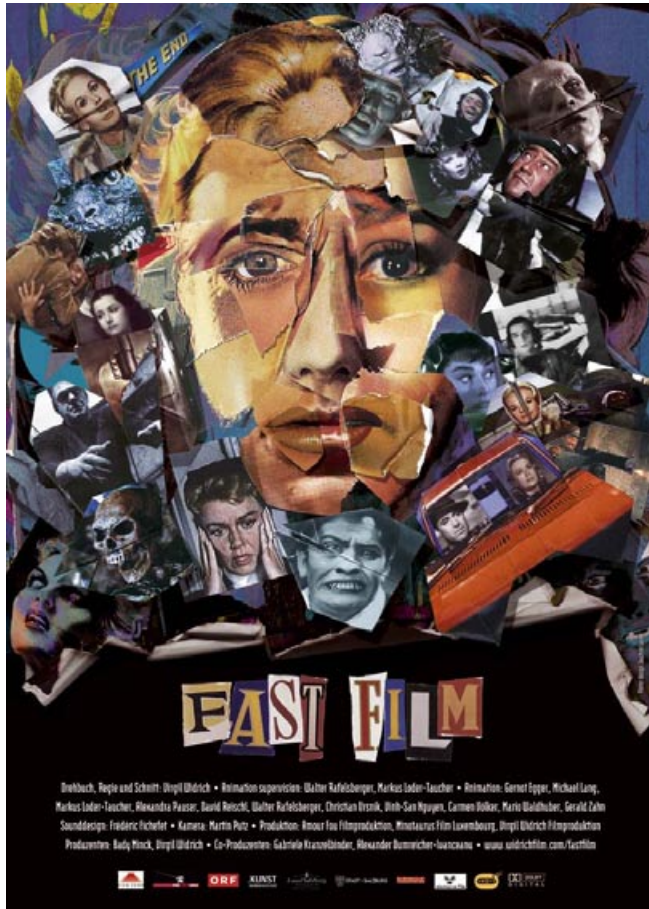


WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, THERE HAVEN'T BEEN many films on the animation festival circuit over the last year that tickled me. One of those that did though was a technological and conceptual dandy from Austria called *Fast Film*.

On the surface, the plot is a bit been there, done that. A man and woman kiss. The woman is imprisoned in some Doug Henning-like trunk and taken away. The man follows after her via horse, train, car and plane. He finally locates her in the villain's underground lair. The duo flees from the lair and survives a dramatic airplane chase/shootout, before finally reaching safety where they end as they began: with a kiss.

OK... so... yeah, it's not all that impressive a story. Seen that three or 36 times before. But remember that wacky Luis Buñuel film, *That Obscure Object of Desire*, where he had one character played by two actresses? Well, in *Fast Film*, the hero, heroine and villains are portrayed by different actors every 5-10 seconds. The hero is played at various points by Gene Kelly, Hum-

THIS 14-MINUTE SHORT IS COMPOSED OF MORE THAN 65,000 PAPER PRINTOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL IMAGES FROM 400+ LIVE-ACTION FILMS...



The storyline in *Fast Film* may be facile, but the technique Widrich employs and the overall effect of the movie is unique.

phrey Bogart, Cary Grantx2 (young and old), Buster Keaton, Gary Cooper, John Wayne, Sean Connery and even Rod Taylor. The woman shifts from Lauren Bacall and Mary Astor to Eve Marie Saint, Grace Kelly, Vera Miles and my favorite old hottie, Cyd Charisse. And the villains include Vincent Price, James Mason, Dr. Strangelove, Frankenstein, Godzilla, John Garfield and the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

Still not impressed? Well, how about that this 14-minute short is composed of more than 65,000 paper printouts of individual images from 400+ live-action films (including *Maltese Falcon*, *The Bandwagon*, *Videodrome*, *Psycho*, *North By Northwest*, *Godzilla*, *The General*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *To Catch a Thief*, *Breathless* and a variety of Sean Connery era Jimmy Bond performances). Director Virgil Widrich and his production team took the paper printouts and folded

them into a variety of objects including train cars, planes (e.g. a photograph of John Wayne as a fighter pilot is folded into a paper airplane), landscapes and a clever little "wheel of fortune" torture device that mix and matches heads with body parts. (The best one features the head of James Woods with a body comprised solely of a hand flicking a lighter.) The printout landscapes and scenarios were photographed using a Canon EOS D30 digital still camera with 2,048x1,536 pixel resolution and then loaded into the computer one image at a time. Adobe After Effects was the most technical tool used in the process in addition to the computer hard drive.

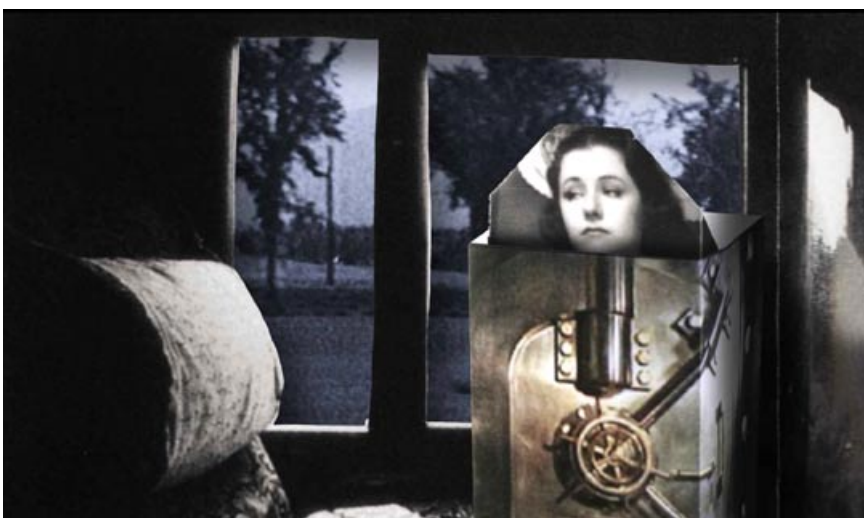
Now are you impressed? Thought so.

Widrich got the idea for *Fast Film* while finishing his last film, *Copy Shop*. As he says during an interview from a short *Making of Fast Film* documentary, "While in the studio we tore up lots of paper for the film's [*Copy Shop*] sound effects. By that evening the floor was covered with all the images from *Copy Shop*. And then I noticed that there was this man walking in some of them. So there were these objects on the ground with a walking man and I suddenly thought that it could be made into a film."

*Fast Film* took two-and-a-half years to create with almost a year of that devoted solely to folding and animating. The complexity of the film also required a strict but supple system: "We digitized 1,200 scenes from film," says Widrich, "and kept an extensive database with titles, keywords, image description etc. to be as fast as possible whenever we needed a certain shot. ('Ah... where was that shot with the hand holding a gun in black-and-white?') Then we had 65,000 physical objects to sort and store — and really millions of files of all the versions of all the shots and all the objects. So... keeping pedantic order was essential to stay flexible."

Remarkably the film was made for only €100,000. "It was very small," notes Widrich, "and the film could only be made with a very enthusiastic crew. Some of them had a day job and worked for *Fast Film* in the night. Me, too."

At least three different images are used in background, foreground and action of every scene. The most complex and elaborate scene was the train crash sequence. About 30 layers of images were used for this scene which shows five trains (with cars attached) racing along the tracks and over a cliff. "So we had movement of the trains, films in each locomotive and car, and the camera (and a zillion reflections in the rotation to kill)" said Widrich. Widrich and his crew spent almost six months dealing with the challenges of this single scene.



But *Fast Film* is more than just another one of tech-fetish films. The technology is certainly fascinating in itself, but its uniqueness and complexity also injects the narrative/plot/story with a medley of critical readings. Each screening undresses a new identity. You can follow the paint-by-numbers plot, enjoy the film as a tour of film history or dive in a little deeper and explore the film as a clever little self-reflexive text that ferociously criticizes the sweeping sameness of Hollywood cinema.

The fact that 400 films and an assortment of interchangeable actors can all be compressed with relative ease and believability into a single short film says a lot about the shortcomings of classical narrative cinema. Or maybe *Fast Film* is about the future of animation. Is *Fast Film* animation's resistance against the fear of digital domination? Does *Fast Film* assimilate photorealistic images and digital technologies into an animation world? Or is animation the medium being devoured once and for all?

Whatever your take, *Fast Film* is a clever, cool, happy-go-schizoid cross between [Marv Newland's](#) *Anijam*, [George Griffin's](#) *Viewmaster*, [Frank Mouris'](#) *Frank Film*, *That's Entertainment 1, 2 and 3*, *Film Stud-*

ies 101, *Walter Benjamin*, and my cousin, *Edna*; a rare piece of animation that transgresses the often hoarding and myopic borders of animation's hermits. *Fast Film* is more than animation; it's the you-best-be-seeing-this moving picture of the moment. ■

Go buy it now at [www.widrichfilm.com/fastfilm](http://www.widrichfilm.com/fastfilm).

**CHRIS J. ROBINSON** is the artistic director of the *Ottawa International Animation Festival* and the *Ottawa International Student Animation Festival*. He is also the editor of the semi-annual *ASIFA Magazine*. His book *Between Genius and Utter Illiteracy: A Story of Estonian Animation* will be published in May. He is working on a strange book about childhood, alcoholism and an ex-hockey player tentatively called *The Boy Who Never Grew Up*.

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

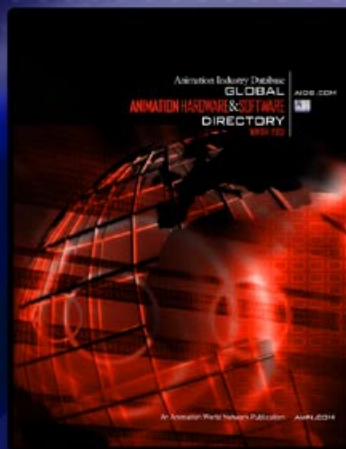
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Rose Bond's *Illuminations #1*. Image courtesy of Rose Bond.

CREATIVE CONCEPTION

## Insight to Innovation

by Sarah Baisley

**Q**UONDBREAKING AND FIRST EVER WERE FREQUENTLY used terms in studio and network promotional copy to describe its latest project. Innovations in animation were coming fast and furious with little time to absorb and appreciate new tricks or even departures in animation production. But use of these terms and claims has trickled off lately. Has down-sizing and quick turnarounds lessened the time and budgets to experiment or are innovations coming some quickly that they have less impact or there just isn't time to trumpet them? *Animation World Magazine* surveyed a cross-section of professionals from various walks and levels of animation production for their insights and observations. See in what areas they say innovations are on the rise as well as means and methods that may help you in your projects.

### **RALPH GUGGENHEIM, EXEC PRODUCER, ALLIGATOR PLANET, SAN FRANCISCO**

The current economic downturn provides as much of an incentive to innovate as the go-go days of the "bubble" that recently passed. What's changed is that powerful animation tools are cheap and available around the world, making it possible for animation studios to pop up in countries and places where they hadn't been seen before.

Alligator Planet is concentrating on forming partnerships



**Ralph Guggenheim,**  
exec producer, Alligator Planet.

with animation companies (both inside and outside the U.S.) that are taking advantage of what we like to call "disruptive technologies" to lower the cost and accessibility of animation.

A good example of this is our North American representation of TV-Animation of Copenhagen, Denmark. They have a variety of characters and shows that are aired on TV throughout Europe, but haven't been seen here before. Their "disruptive technology" is their Cartoon Broadcast System (CBS) that allows 2D scenes to be pre-animated for subsequent real-time performance. Let me repeat that: real-time performance. Actors walk into a booth, put on a headset microphone and achieve realtime lip-sync of their characters. They can control the animation of their characters in realtime as well through the use of simple videogame controllers. Thus, a 24-minute episode of an animate series can be produced in... 24 minutes! That's only about 10,000 times faster than the current six to nine months it takes for conventional TV episodic production.

What's more, this realtime capability allows kids to call into a show and talk to the characters on the air live, with a live animated character assigned (and lip-sync'ed) to the caller. Furthermore, realtime interactive games can also be created as part of the show, with callers using their telephone keypads as "game controllers" all through this same system.

It's our belief that necessity and adversity are the mother(s) of invention. In this case, the need to create animation that can be customized for various localities and current economic pressures are the twin forces that drive innovative solutions in animation.

#### **KEVIN O'DONNELL, SVP, DIC ENTERTAINMENT, BURBANK, CALIFORNIA**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

Personally, the new look on *Kid Notorious* is extremely eye-catching. It stands out as a unique way of expanding the realm of animation. It also lends itself to the writing so that you have a real connection to real characters, even though they are animated. I've also been impressed by the inroads independent creators are making with Flash-based projects. I think a lot of future of entertainment is floating around on the Internet right now.



**Kevin O'Donnell, svp,  
DIC Entertainment.**

*Kid Notorious* has a unique look.  
© Comedy Central.

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*

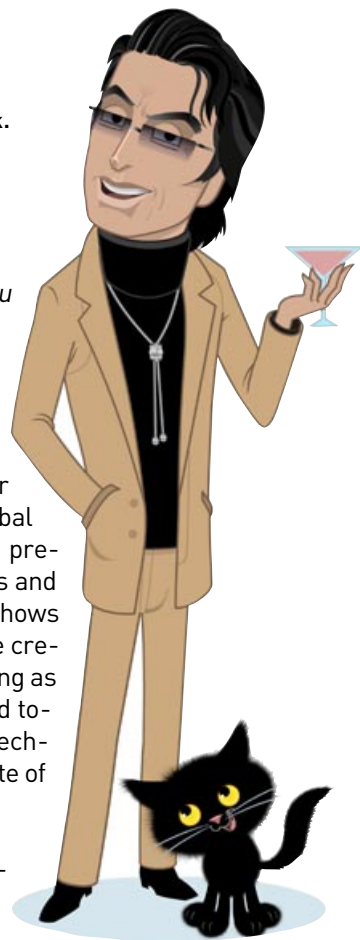
I think you need a challenging environment where the status quo will not work anymore. This could be because of budgetary or artistic reasons. The global glut of animation has put a premium on breakout concepts and new ways of producing shows that cut costs and share the creative burden. There is nothing as motivating as necessity, and today it is necessary to use technology to broaden the palette of production techniques.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

This is an incredibly innovative time. There is so much new technology that you can't help but be on top of it or it will run you over. Plus, the screens are changing as we speak. Kids are now watching everything from 72-inch plasma hi-def monitors to two-inch phone screens. To them, they are equally entertaining.

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*

We are working on the new Stan Lee series called *Super Seven* and we are animating it with new CGI technology that allows us to create a POP ART look. We're literally bringing a comic book to life with 3D characters and environments that are flattened out and saturated with colors for a look that hasn't been possible before, without spending feature dollars. We're doing it with a small team of artists and technicians who come out of the gaming world. The result is fantastic and has allowed us to attract other artists from the hip-hop world in order to recreate the traditional cartoon SOUND as well. This show is turning our studio upside down because new doors have opened and once they've opened, you can't help but enter a whole new world.



THE CURRENT ECONOMIC DOWNTURN PROVIDES AS MUCH OF AN INCENTIVE TO INNOVATE AS THE GO-GO DAYS OF THE "BUBBLE" THAT RECENTLY PASSED. — RALPH GUGGENHEIM

**RAQUEL BENITEZ, CEO/PRESIDENT, COMET ENTERTAINMENT INC., TORONTO**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

Animation is an industry in which the advances go depending on other industries developments like computer software. By this I mean that the introduction of animation software like Animo, Toon Boom and others long ago, lead all the producers to the use of wonderful tools in creating new visions like the camera movements, longer pans, etc. However, if we do need to mention someone who was really an innovator, it was Disney with his cameras, sound system and many other advances. Without his ideas the animation industry would never be in the position where is now.



**Raquel Benitez, ceo/  
president, Comet  
Entertainment Inc.**

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*  
I would say time and funds.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*  
I will go with the second option you provide.

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*  
Well, I would say that our company is well know because of our digital pre-production that help the studios to save money and be faster.

**ERIC COLEMAN, VP, ANIMATION DEVELOPMENT & PRODUCTION, NICKELODEON, BURBANK, CALIFORNIA**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

I've been excited by some pitches and demo reels lately that combine 2D or Flash with CG environments with a quality that I didn't see a year ago. More than ever before directors and producers are making the technology work for their creative vision, and for the production schedule.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*  
I believe lean times actually lead to innovation. When we

are forced to re-think our methods for development and production, we are always looking for new ways to apply or adapt the various technologies out there.

**ROSE BOND, INDEPENDENT MEDIA ARTIST, WWW.ROSEBOND.NET, PORTLAND, OREGON**

Innovation is spurred by a set of circumstances. Within, innovation thrives when there's a willingness to risk coupled with a drive to realize a vision that won't let go. It happens when you hit a wall and just have to get through. In the outer world, innovation can happen when someone trusts enough to give you support even though they don't really know what you're up to. Innovation takes a flexible mind, a belief in more than one way, and an ear to voices outside the mainstream. Innovation is not the tried and true.

For an independent animator accustomed to 16mm and mini DV, innovation means securing equipment that has been pretty much the domain of high-end, media savvy corporations. Innovation needs support from others. For *Illuminations #1*, I owe my thanks to Mitsubishi, Comp View, Sound Ideas and the corporate people who saw potential in an AE laptop test.



**Rose Bond, independent  
media artist.**

**PETER SCOTT, HEAD OF IMPOSSIBLE TV, LONDON**

Innovation is an odd beast. It's often said to disappear when budgets tighten and companies reduce expenditure on R&D... on the other hand, in these circumstances, you can be forced to innovate just to make anything work.

We had a similar situation on our recent series *MechaNick*, a 40x7 CGI pre-school series, part-funded by Carlton International and screened on Channel Five in the U.K. Impossible TV has been around for over six years now, primarily making youth and mainstream-aimed cartoons for late-night



**Peter Scott, head of  
Impossible TV.**

The high-flyin' adventures of *MechaNick*. Image courtesy of Impossible TV.



audiences, and this was our first pre-school project.

But the issue was that after a short pre-production phase, we had to make an episode every four days from the start to hit our delivery dates. To maintain high quality with this kind of turnaround meant we had to come up with a cost-effective way to produce a large quantity of animation effectively.

We mainly use 3ds max and character studio, and so utilized MAX's ability to create plug-ins to write programs to speed up our production. Many were produced, the main innovation a lip-sync system that everyone, from our most junior animator to me as the boss, can use with little or no training.

The program is incredibly simple – load the audio in, press a key to move through it and then click on the mouth-shape you want. Then another keypress previews what you've just done. And that's it. This system meant we could lip-sync an entire episode of *MechaNick* with one person in two or three hours. On our previous series, *Audrey and Friends*, it took three animators a day to lip-sync the same amount to the same quality.

But then we thought we could apply the same rules to other areas of animation. The same system expanded to do expressions, initially just the mouth, but then the eyes and eyebrows too, so it became a quick and easy way to auto-animate the entire face. Click on sad, happy, concerned, puzzled, thinking... options that expanded as the series went on. The program created a file that was then loaded into the 3D scene and tweaked manually to give the best possible outcome.

Without a tight timescale and the need to innovate in this area, we'd never have developed this system. It's what everyone always knows – pausing for a short while at the start of production, in order to assess what can be done to ease the process, ends up saving vast amounts of time over a 30+ week production cycle.

And the results are lovely!

#### ANDREW ORLOFF, CG SUPERVISOR, ZOIC STUDIOS, LOS ANGELES

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

I think that with the price of powerful hardware and software coming down at such a rapid rate, we are in time of extreme innovation in all areas of CG animation. Boutique animation houses and individuals alike now easily obtain tools previously unreachable by the all but the largest of companies. TV series, commercials and even features that once necessitated large teams with huge facilities can now be done literally out of a garage. Global illumination and radiosity are becoming standard with most new rendering packages bringing truly photorealistic rendering within everyone's grasp. Motion capture is now commonplace and the data is easier to work with than ever. Professional quality video editing equipment is now available at your local mall. Animation students today have so much more production value at their fingertips now than they did even five years ago.



Andrew Orloff, CG supervisor, Zoic Studios.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

I think we are in an exciting time where the old way of doing things (big studios, big budgets) are giving way to a more dynamic system. We will see many more new creative voices from the DV generation than we have in the past. Newer, more powerful, cheaper tools will make it so any 13-year-old kid, from Minnesota to the

Nepal, can write, produce, shoot, edit and distribute their own feature. The Internet is already a fertile playground for animation ideas and techniques, and I believe that this is only the tip of the iceberg.

**KEVIN VANHOOK, VP/GM, FORUM VISUAL EFFECTS, N. HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

One of the most creative uses of animation that I have seen this year was in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill*, in terms of the way the movie was able to seamlessly segue from a live-action story to a traditionally animated piece, very much in the style of manga comic books. Without any foreshadowing or apology, it just transitioned from live action to animation and back, yet it still felt very much part of the whole.

Much more high profile in terms of pure animation was *Animatrix*. To be able to take nine very talented animation studios with disparate styles and mold together all these backstories into the fabric of *The Matrix* was a very exciting and innovative use of animation.



**Kevin VanHook, vp/gm, Forum Visual Effects.**

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*

There are two sides to this question. One set of conditions occurs when you have enough of the luxuries of money and time to be able to stop and think about how to do something differently than what's been done before. Yet, the exact opposite can be true too. If you haven't got the funds and the time, often you are forced to be innovative in terms of your creativity and production model, and I think that's an interesting dichotomy. In either case, you can end up with wonderful directions to go in. UPA in the 1950s is a prime example of what you can do with very little money. They were able to design a streamlined style of drawing that set an entirely new tone and style that represented the design of the commercial art styles of the time.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

I think we are at the dawn of a new period of innovation. With some exceptions, I think that the industry has been a little content over the past few years with the status quo. But what we are going to see in the next two or three years will be quite different. We're coming out of a period where the downsizing and budget cuts were

forcing people to approach things a certain way; the immediate reaction was always to simplify. Unfortunately, people who made the larger salaries were often those cut first, and those are the people who typically brought more experience and creative clout to a project. I think that companies are now seeing that that probably was a mistake and are allowing those kinds of people to have a more creative voice once again.



**Image from *The Amazing Jorge*, a CGI short that has been entered for Academy consideration.**

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*

I am not sure I have actually innovated anything; I am standing on the shoulders of giants! But on the other hand, Film Roman this year completed an unusual short film called *The Amazing Jorge*, the story of a famous Polish clown. Thematically, it's a film that provides a reflection on the true nature of celebrity and fame. All 3D animation and modeling was completed by Forum's Chadd Cole, and the biggest thing he brought to it was to combine a photorealistic render with this unusual, bizarre character design.

The fact that you can have any animator tell a story for nine-plus minutes of what is essentially a talking head and keep it interesting is quite a challenge. Jorge emotes, he cries, he laughs and he's rude. And as with any good actor's monologue, you actually fall into the trap of what he's saying, despite the fact that you are hearing all his dialogue being translated by some unknown narrator. Though it's a short, I think it's some of the most innovative CGI I've ever seen, and we've even entered it for Academy Award consideration.

**TREVOR A BENTLEY, CEO/VP CO-PRODUCTION, ATOMIC CARTOONS, VANCOUVER**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

Lately, there seems to be a trend to re-do or revamp old toons from the past. As much as I like the old stuff I'd prefer to see development money put into new ideas. Obviously the other big trend is vector-based animation. There is some really nice stuff out there.



**Trevor Bentley, ceo/vp co-production, Atomic Cartoons, Vancouver.**

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*

Lately, I'm finding quiet works best. Also lots of good reference doesn't hurt.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

Depending on the studio I think people are still being innovative. Even the big studios are still able to try new things and are.

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*

Currently we are maximizing the "Atomic Mojo" animation pipeline. A combination of 2D, 3D and clay animation. Keep your eyes peeled.

**JERRY SPIVACK, CD, RING OF FIRE, WEST HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

Webster's definition of innovation is: Something new or different introduced. Introduction of new things or methods. The work is getting better and the tools are getting faster, but I have not seen any breakthrough innovations lately. I have seen different ideas combined together in new ways that are somewhat innovative, but the word innovation to me seems like the kind of bigger idea word that needs a major breakthrough to be called innovative.

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*

There are a few important elements that need to be aligned in order to be innovative — having the right team put together, time, lots of booze, food and a masseuse.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

Innovation happens everyday and on every job. Every



**Atomic Cartoons uses the "Atomic Mojo" animation pipeline on its project *Baster*. Photo courtesy of Atomic Cartoons.**

job requires some of it, some more than others — whether it is approaching a shot with a combination of different techniques that develop a new look or dealing with innovative ideas in a short time frame and budget.

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*

Not really. In this competitive market any innovative edge that a company has is best kept as a bonus for your clients and for others to copy. If I told you I would have to kill you.

**PATRICIA BECKMANN, CHAIR OF THE ANIMATION DEPARTMENT, SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA**

*What examples have you seen lately that you find innovative in traditional animation or CGI?*

Improvisational acting is becoming a popular form of storytelling.

*What conditions do you need to be innovative?*

A healthy budget.

*Are we in a busy time of innovation, or are people too busy with downsizing and budget cuts to be innovative?*

Innovation may be coming out of the ambitious artists who are unemployed, but love the medium enough to continue working on personal projects. The industry is not likely to provide innovation that is not tied to profit. Much innovation comes out of students who cannot find coursework in something they want to do, and must devise ways to accomplish a task on their own creatively.



**Patricia Beckmann, chair of the animation department, Savannah College of Art and Design.**

*Any of your own innovations you'd care to share?*

Suhwan Pak, a master of fine arts degree candidate in animation, is creating a realtime animated character.

### GENE DEITCH, OSCAR-WINNING INDEPENDENT ANIMATOR, PRAGUE

"Animation Innovation" or "2D-3D-Doo-Doo"

In recent times we have been confronted with a terminology that has threatened to divide our craft. Now there is "2D" animation vs. "3D" animation. The truth is, there is only *animation*!

Let's be sensible. What is a painting on a wall? It's a "2D" medium – a flat piece of canvas, but upon which a painter is usually attempting to create space. The same is true of any drawing on paper, or any other piece of graphic art.

In so-called 2D animation we have always attempted to create a sense of depth. 3D animation is usually just a term to mean CGI – Computer Generated Images.

"3D" means 3rd dimension. True 3D movies are in stereovision, where viewers usually have to wear red/green or polarized spectacles to be able to witness a realistic spatial effect.

What is now called 3D animation is basically a technology enabling rounded appearing, textured characters and objects that increase the effect of solid realism, produced on highly refined computer programs. One of the prime movers of this technique, John Lasseter, said that the computer is just another tool, as was a pencil or brush. He says



**Gene Deitch, Oscar-winning independent animator.**

that working with the computers can be learned relatively quickly, but the computers themselves cannot animate. *Animators* are needed to produce CGI movies! The same principles of animation needed for "2D" animation are required for "3D" animation. It's simply a new tool for an animator to work with.

The main threat of CGI animation is not to so-called 2D animation, but more likely to stop-motion, tabletop puppet animation. Such puppets are generally locked to the table, and only with a lot of gadgetry, wires, threads and supporting devices, can they be made to lift off the ground. Their actions can rarely achieve animation perfection, nor be tweaked or refined after shooting. The most devastating problem with puppet animation is that any error usually requires re-shooting the entire scene. CGI work completely eliminates all of those problems, and opens the way to effects impossible to achieve in puppet animation. It offers countless possibilities for corrections and refinements, without the need to redo entire scenes or sequences. That in itself is a principal innovation.

And traditional, drawn, "2D" animation, scanned, colored and composited onto computers, offers the same new possibilities. Computers offer new protection and flexibility to both 2D and 3D animation work. Rather than divide those two various graphic input styles into opposing camps, computers can actually bring them together and combine them in new and exciting ways.

In my mind, true "innovation" in cinematic animation will always come in the conception, story content, staging, acting – the creative elements of the art and craft – rather than in the technologies employed! ■

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**SARAH BAISLEY** is the editor of Animation World Network.

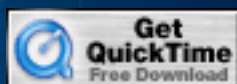
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## Online Highlights

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: OCTOBER 2003'S FILM REVIEWS

Greg Singer reviews five short films fresh from the festival circuit: ***Henry's Garden*** by Moon Seun, ***The Polar Bears*** by Pierre Coffin, ***Terra*** directed by Arisomenis, ***Eat Your Peas*** by Paul Hargrave and ***Love is a Bullet in the Heart*** directed by Diego Alvarez.



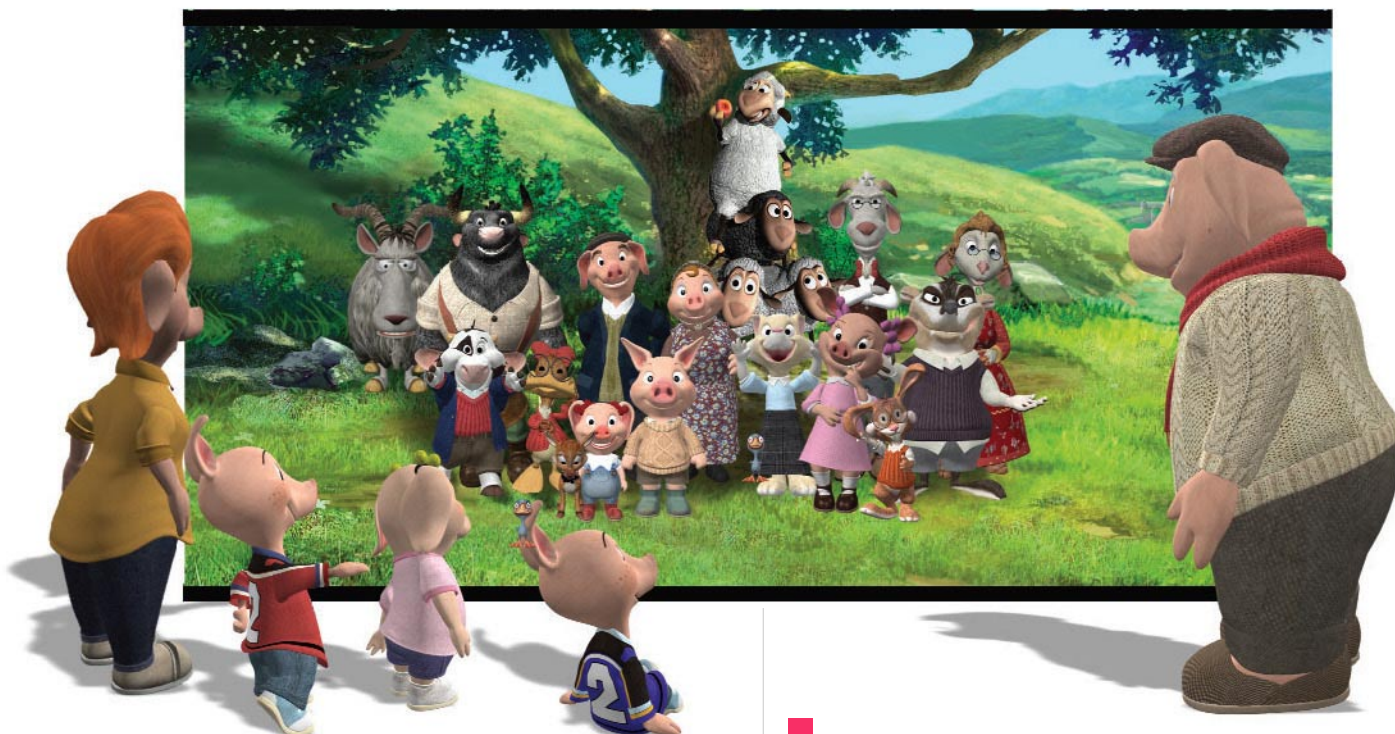
View the QuickTime clips online!



CGI STOP-MOTION

# Mike Young Figures Out How to Count CGI Sheep

by Sarah Baisley



The entire cast of *Jakers! The Adventures Of Piggley Winks*. All images courtesy of and © Mike Young Prods.

IF YOU HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE YET, CHECK OUT THE new PBS series, *Jakers! The Adventures Of Piggley Winks*. It looks like a lovely designed, stop-frame animated series for kids. But a talk with exec producer Mike Young, co-founder of Mike Young Prods., reveals that the series of 26 half-hour episodes is done entirely in computer-generated animation, and the producers never intended to mimic stop-motion.

The new series for kids 4-7 follows the adventures of Piggley Winks, a spunky eight-year-old pig, and his friends Dannan the Duck and Ferny the Bull on Raloo Farm in Ireland. While the intrepid trio are enjoying their escapades (*Jakers!* is their oft-used Irish expression of delight and amazement), American transplant Wiley, voiced by Mel Brooks, offers wild and woolly advice to his all-too-sheepish flock. Each story opens and closes with Piggley Winks as a granddad, telling these tales of childhood shenanigans and life lessons to his three contemporary, rambunctious city-dwelling grandpigs.

## IT WAS NEVER OUR INTENTION TO MIMIC THE LOOK OF STOP-MOTION ANIMATION... — MIKE YOUNG

**Mike Young Prods.** in Woodland Hills, California, produces the series with London-based Entara, which created the property.

"This was to be Entara's first foray into kids television, and exec producers Stephanie Gurgeon and Louisa Stretton were just beginning to build relationships in the animation industry," said Young, who is Welsh. "As luck would have it, they contacted me about the project just as I was on my way to the United Kingdom. They soon decided they shared a passion to create quality children's programming and that their Mr. Piggley character would make a great show.

They created a show bible containing information about the characters, where they live, the kinds of things they do, what happens in their community, with one thoroughly developed storyline and a half-dozen or so story ideas that indicate how the series will progress.

"Because of the reality and specificity of Piggley's world, we decided to use 3D CGI, and to aim for a quality previously seen only in feature films," said Young. "3D CGI lends a degree of realism, almost photographic in nature that you simply can't achieve with any other kind of animation."

The series is set in two very different, very specific places, so the use of textures, lighting, landscapes, clothing and props was going to be of the utmost importance to the series. Each episode opens and closes in Boston in 2003, while the bulk of each episode is set on Raloo Farm, Ireland in the 1950s.

They decided to go with half-hour stories that would allow them to create more sophisticated stories, with "B" sub-plots. After commissioning storylines from a variety of writers, which are then read by the exec producers (including co-exec producer Bill Schultz), producers (Liz Young, John Over), director and story editor (Sindy McKay) of the series. Roughly one story in nine is selected to go into production. The writer makes a beat outline — a scene-by-scene breakdown of the entire story. Once the beat outline is approved, the first draft of the script begins. The screenwriter does the first two drafts of the script, then the story editor generally takes over and writes the final, or polish, draft.

Script notes are given at all stages by all the producers, the director and PBS KIDS. An educational consultant also reads and gives notes on all drafts and guides the curriculum of the series.

Once a final draft is approved, the story moves forward in two directions.

Young said the 2D pencil artist is still extremely important to his CGI production. The original designs



**Mel Brooks lends his voice to Wiley.**

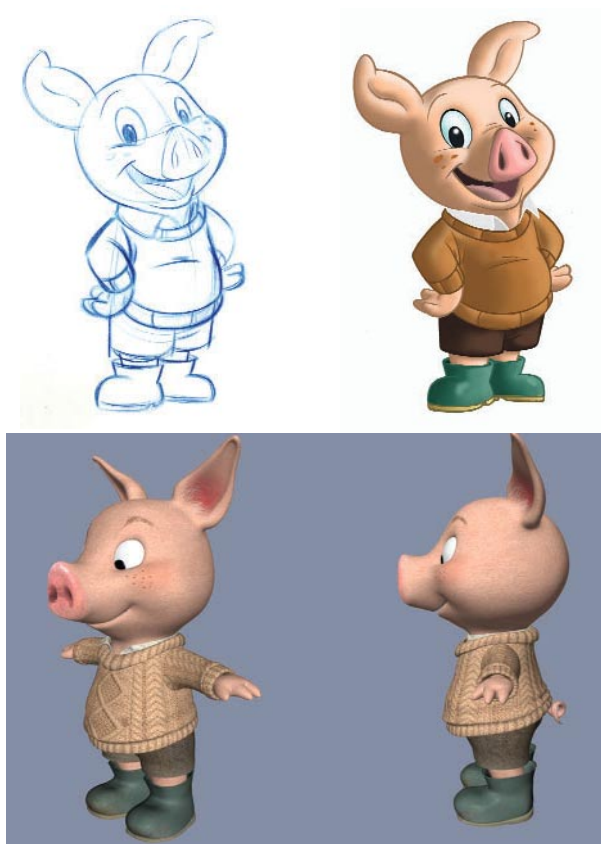
of the characters, sets, and props were all produced in pencil first.

Set designs went through a rigorous process, according to Young. "We even produced architectural drawings called schematics for each set. This is why Piggley's barn looks like a real, working barn. Unlike in 2D, in 3D it is very difficult to cheat when designing characters and sets, because they need to be purely functional." Characters need enough room to move within a set — to walk through doorways or sit in chairs. In 2D animation, this is often "cheated," he explained. "For instance, a character may be standing outside a tent of a certain size, but when he goes inside, the interior is of a completely different scale. You can't get away with that in 3D."

The production designer (John Over) went on a field trip to Wales and Ireland, and took a series of photographs of homes, roads, school houses and school rooms, barns, farms, walls, towns and villages, rivers, woodlands to be used as direct references by the pencil layout artist to design the world the characters live in. After the layouts were approved, the art director (Ellen Jin) and background painters, working digitally, but first in 2D, painted up and textured the sets.

The 2D models, props and environments were scanned into computers using both Maya and SOFTIMAGE|XSI software. Then the 3D artists digitally sculpted the characters maquettes and key sets (or bgs in traditional terms), following the 2D designs as closely as possible. The sets were then lit for various times of the day — e.g., barn in the morning, barn at noon, barn at dusk and barn at night.

While the result looks like a mix of stop-frame characters moving in a 3D set interspersed with many photographic or highly textured elements, the photos were just used to create realistic looking CGI elements.



The evolution of Piggley.

"It was never our intention to mimic the look of stop-motion animation," said Young. "It was a by-product of the design of the show. Our *Jakers!* CGI-animation features a tremendous amount of textures, which tends to give it that stop-motion feel," explained Young.

When asked to describe the art style of *Jakers!* they strove for, Young said, "It's a mixture of Beatrix Potter and *Stuart Little*, combined with a heavy dose of our own producer/director, John Over's, and our art director, Ellen Jin's, own unique styles. We wanted it to be rich, robust and realistic. John and Ellen have done an incredible job in bringing to life the original vision for the series."

While this digital design work is underway, the storyboard artists spend up to six weeks storyboarding each script. The average *Jakers!* storyboard has upwards of 300 scenes and takes up to 600 pages. The storyboard is then scanned and given to the animatic editor (Ben Choo), who roughly times out the episode.

Meanwhile, after exhaustive auditioning, each of the characters was cast with a voice over actor, including Brooks as Wiley the Sheep, chosen for his comedic timing and the contrast of his American/Bronx sound amongst the Irish accents of the rest.

Rounding out the cast are some of the industry's most well-know voice actors, including Maile Flana-

gan as Piggley (*Men In Black, The Series*); Russi Taylor (the official voice of Minnie Mouse) as Ferny the Bull and as Mrs. Winks; Tara Strong (Bubbles in *Pow-erpuff Girls*) as Dannan the Duck and Molly (Piggley's little sister); Paeder Lambe as Grandpa Piggley; Nika Futterman (*Catdog*) as twin grandpigs Sean and Seamus; Melissa Disney (Ginger in *As Told By Ginger*) as Meg (the twins' older sister); **Charlie Adler** (*Rugrats In Paris*) as Da (Dad) Winks and as schoolteacher Mr. Hornsby; Fernando Escandon (*The Pagemaster*) as Don Toro (Ferny's father); and Pamela Segall Adlon (Bobby in *King of the Hill*) as Hector (Piggley's teasing schoolmate).

For each episode, the actors record a script together at Salami Studios in Los Angeles, under the guidance of the voice director, Kelly Ward. Well, almost all, says Young, "Our Grandpa Piggley, actor Peadar Lambe, sends his authentic Irish brogue straight from a recording studio in Ireland." Once all the dialogue is recorded, the track is given to the animatic editor. The AE, working with the show director, times out the acting on the storyboard to fit with and around the dialogue.

While working on its *Butt-Ugly Martian* series, Young and his crew found it helpful to have live-action actors actually perform each scene on video to give the animators valuable reference material. Character performance director Larry Swerdlove directs the troupe of character performance artists. So they stuck to this extra step on *Jakers!* "It's one thing to read in the script: 'An exhilarated Piggley and Ferny leap up from the tall grass — they are STOKED!'" said Young. "It's quite another to see that action, from the facial expressions to the physical leap, performed by real actors."

Once the scripts, voices, characters, settings and background designs, animatic, timing and live-action performances have all been completed, the package is exported, both digitally and physically, to the sub-contracting animation studio, Crest in Mumbai, India to animate.

The overseas director (Upen Fyzeel) works directly with the animation team while remaining in constant communication with the producers at MYP. Programs used for the animation, lighting, rendering and compositing include SOFTIMAGE|XSI, Photoshop, USAnimation, After Effects, Adobe Premiere and Avid Symphonies.

The overseas studio animates the characters following the storyboard, timing and live-action reference, sets up and follows the lighting directions on a scene-by-scene basis, renders and composites all the elements and outputs them to either digital broadcast quality tape or DLT drives to ship back to MYP. A number of scenes may also, under extreme deadline, be delivered via FTP sites.

Young has grown to be more confident about send-

### 3D CGI LENDS A DEGREE OF REALISM, ALMOST PHOTOGRAPHIC IN NATURE THAT YOU SIMPLY CAN'T ACHIEVE WITH ANY OTHER KIND OF ANIMATION.

ing 3D work outside contractors than with 2D animation. One of the great advantages of CGI production, according to Young, "Is that once the infrastructure is built, it cannot be changed, and, unlike 2D, is not subject to varying artist and studio styles.

MYP has sent work to many countries, including growing production areas such as China. This is one of the few American productions entrusted to a studio in India for an entire series. Production capabilities have dramatically increased in this country, but experiences and results have been spotty for the most part according to production chiefs at various animation and visual effects houses in the U.S. and Europe. However, Young said working with a studio in India has growing advantages. "For starters," according to Young, "We all speak the same language, which is a huge advantage! The communication was not only easier, but we all understood the same jokes and gags.

"In regards to Crest specifically, they had produced a test for *Jakers!* that really blew us away," Young continued. "Although they and the country of India in general are not as well established as their Asian counterparts, we felt the quality of the CGI was unrivaled and immediately felt comfortable collaborating with them on the project."

MYP receives the completed animation in unedited batches of scenes, and then digitizes it into an AVID editing system. The editor roughly assembles the show and then sits with the director to call retakes to the studio in India and they do the scene again. Changes are usually completed more quickly than in 2D, especially when altering a design element such as color. The editor (Michael Bradley, supervising editor is Richard Finn) and director fine-tune the scenes and tighten up the lip-sync.

Once the episode has been cut to the correct length and assembled to everyone's directions, a cut is made and tapes are sent to the composer (Steve Marston) and sound effects editor (Locky Butler).

The music and sound are synched up to the picture, the sound levels are mixed and the show may be tweaked with some color correction before it is ready to deliver to the broadcaster.

*Jakers!* was output in high-definition and digibeta in-house at MYP, while The Farm in Ireland produced the high-definition version.

"We also created a 14x9 hybrid version specifically for PBS KIDS," Young added, "which allows audiences without widescreen TV in their homes to see the entire picture with only a small element of letter-boxing effect."

Production started in March 2002 on the first 26 episodes and the show debuted on PBS KIDS, September 7, 2003.

Young says his studio has been at the forefront of creating shows in CGI since the technology first became available. "We have produced more programs in this medium than any other independent production company to date," claims Young. "Therefore, we've experienced firsthand the amazing progress that's been made in this format and have encouraged our 2D artists to embrace the 3D software. Five years ago, CGI was used mainly by computer experts who were not necessarily artists. Today, many talented animators are now skilled computer experts too!"

*Jakers! The Adventures Of Piggley Winks* is a strong example of a 2D sensibility and innovative production applications by Mike Young Prods. translating into rich, visually appealing CGI entertainment. ■

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**SARAH BAISLEY** is the editor of Animation World Network.

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BROTHERLY LOVE

# Fraternal Obligation Disney Revisits the Animal Picture in *Brother Bear*

by Taylor Jessen

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BY 1997, THE BEAR IDEA HAD KICKED AROUND DEVELOPMENT IN THE FORM OF SOMETHING CALLED *TIMBER*, AS WELL AS ANOTHER IDEA THAT APPROPRIATED *KING LEAR* WHERE AN OLD BLIND BEAR TRAVELED THE FOREST WITH HIS THREE DAUGHTERS.

“THINK ANIMALS ARE ALWAYS SO CUTE,” SAID Hobbes, worrying a sick raccoon, in one of Bill Waterson’s *Calvin and Hobbes* strips from 1988. The image of a stuffed tiger talking wistfully of the cuteness of an ailing raccoon speaks considerably to the unwritten motto of Disney feature animation, the original home of cute talking animals that move. From the *Three Little Pigs* to *Bambi* to *Baloo* to *Stitch*, giving human qualities to the non-human has been the through line and the meal ticket for Disney; but in *Brother Bear*, the studio’s latest offering, anthropomorphism graduates from subtext to text.

Kenai, the middle brother of three Native Americans living in the Pacific Northwest some time after the retreat of the glaciers, witnesses the death of his older brother Sitka at the hands of a grizzly bear. High in the mountains, Kenai exacts his revenge on the bear, but the auroral Great Spirits have other plans and Kenai shortly awakens in a different terrain and a different body. Transformed into a bear and separated from everyone he knew, bear-hating Kenai must ally himself with a bear cub named Koda and find his way back to the mountaintop, where the Great Spirits can undo the change.

Troubles vex him, not least his own brother Denahi, who was moments too late to witness the transformation, and now considers Kenai, the bear, as the bear who killed Kenai. Kenai must fend off not only his own broth-



Kenai and Koda arrive at the annual salmon run to join up with their extended bear family and swap exciting stories.

er's attacks, but attacks of conscience when he realizes his companion Koda, a motherless cub, is motherless for a specific and terrible reason that Kenai alone knows.

The story kernel formed, so legend has it, when [The Lion King](#) blew up the box office in 1994, and Disney CEO Michael Eisner saw no new animal projects in the pipeline. Eisner wanted something specifically North American, taking particular inspiration from an original landscape he'd bought by Albert Bierstadt: epic in girth, its colors hyper-real, the product of a 19th century school of painting trying to contain in its canvases the sheer vastness of the still-unexplored American West. To track the "king" idea, the hero would naturally be a bear, king of the forest.

"I came on about six years ago and started doing research on different bear myths and legends from around the world," says co-director Aaron Blaise, "and I came upon these transformation myths that the Native Americans had. They really lent themselves to animation, and the magic we like to portray in our stories." He became a bug in the ear of then-division head Tom Schumacher. "Blaise was a well-respected animator, had done Rajah in *Aladdin*, and Nala in *Lion King*, and really ran his supervising crew well," says producer Chuck Williams. "And Schumacher said, 'Well, Aaron, you might make a good director.'"

## IDEA OF THE CENTURY

By 1997 the *Bear* idea had kicked around development in the form of something called *Timber*, as well as another idea that appropriated *King Lear* where an old blind bear traveled the forest with his three daughters. "I heard they were knocking on doors and sleeping in beds," says Williams. "Aaron didn't want to tell a story like that. He wanted something much more naturalistic." In 1998 Blaise and Williams came up with a two-page description of a father-son story where the son is transformed into a bear, and in the end remains a bear. "Tom Schumacher held it up and said 'This is the idea of the century,'" says Williams. "'Let's get you guys a writer.'" Tab Murphy (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, [Tarzan](#)) was hired, and the project began to blossom.

Disney's Florida studio produced *Brother Bear*, which represents its first fully homegrown product. The Orlando studio opened April 17, 1989, the day Blaise, Williams and co-director Robert Walker originally met. At first numbering 70 (they have since grown to 400), the staff was assembled to produce featurettes for Mickey, Donald, and Goofy. "We actually never did that," says Blaise. "We ended up doing the [Roger Rabbit](#) shorts, and then we became a B unit for California." After animating sequences for the likes of [Beauty and the Beast](#), the Florida studio finally got its own feature to animate, 1998's [Mulan](#). Last year's hit [Lilo & Stitch](#)

was also animated entirely in Orlando; yet they never worked on a story entirely their own. "This one was formed in Florida from its inception," says Williams, "from the blank sheet of paper all the way through to the end."



Aaron Blaise (left) and Bob Walker (center) make their directing debut on *Brother Bear*, while Chuck Williams (right) demonstrated responsible filmmaking, his first outing as producer. There were no missed deadlines or overruns on the budget.

After the project was greenlit, Blaise immediately went into the field to research. "I've been going to Alaska for years doing my own paintings," he says, "so I thought, man, setting this thing in Alaska would be great." He and his story department visited Alaska's Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes and Kodiak Island, detouring as well through Yellowstone National Park, The Grand Tetons and California's Sequoia National Park. "Environmentally, within the movie," Blaise says, "We've created this idealistic North America, grabbing the best of everything."

### CREATIVE LEADS

The style of the film's backgrounds came from a source closer to home. There's a hallway on the studio's third floor where Disney artists show their own work in a gallery setting, and one day the wandering directors were exposed to the work of Xiangyuan ("Jay") Jie. "Bob and I knew we wanted a real rugged, artful-looking film," says Blaise. "We didn't want it to be really detailed and highly rendered." When they saw Jie's bold, impressionistic landscapes, they were hooked. "You could see every brushstroke," says Bob Walker, "and the way he handles color is incredible." The rest of the unit was immediately trained to paint like Jie.

As the story developed, the creative heads burned daylight endlessly looking for a voice to play the lead. Kenai would be a demanding part, because in *Brother Bear* there is no good guy/bad guy dichotomy. "There is no villain in the movie," says Blaise. "The villain is our hero... We concentrated so much on trying to find the right voice qualities, we were kind of shooting ourselves

in the foot." They were still regrouping when *Gladiator* came out in 2000; and there was Joaquin Phoenix, earning the audience's sympathy even as his character killed his own father. "[With Joaquin], we thought: Here's a guy that has great vulnerability," says Williams.

**"IT'S NOT JUST OUR STUDIO," WILLIAMS SAYS, "IT'S ABOUT BEING RESPONSIBLE FILMMAKERS. IF WE WANT TO KEEP MAKING FILMS, WE HAVE TO BE ABLE TO MEET THE BUSINESS SIDE OF THINGS."**

Bear cub, Koda, proudly displays a salmon that he has caught at the salmon run, an annual gathering of bears from all over the Great American Northwest.



Jeremy Suarez started playing Koda in *Brother Bear* at age 11, voicing a character who, in human terms, would have been seven or eight. "He was actually on an audition tape with a whole bunch of actors for *Finding Nemo*," says Walker, "and we fell in love with him." A current co-star on *The Bernie Mac Show*, Suarez has all the qualities of Koda, says Williams: "the talkativeness, being excited about something even to the point



Kenai, a young man who has been transformed into a bear, and his cub friend, Koda (right), encounter the Great Spirits on the mountain where the light touches the earth.

where you slur your words from talking so fast.”

Most of the recording sessions were solo affairs, with Suarez and Phoenix working together only once or twice. Dave Thomas and Rick Moranis as moose brothers Rutt and Tuke, however, performed simultaneously throughout. “They were the easiest guys to cast,” says Blaise. “We thought, if Kenai’s going into the animal world, why not give the animals different dialects just like in the human world? And then we thought, well, this is North America, you gotta have some Canadian characters in there. And then right away it was moose, and then right after that we thought, okay, it’s got to be Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas. It all happened within minutes.”

Getting the two actors to commit to the idea wasn’t as simple, but once Moranis and Thomas had agreed on all the ways the moose could be funny and still *not* resemble Bob and Doug McKenzie, the two were off and running and the directors were cradling their aching faces. “Aaron and I had front-row seats at every recording session,” says Walker. “They’d do the pages, then they’d develop their own little thing, and by the end it was nuts. We’d come out of there with sore jaws from laughing.”

### NOT A MUSICAL

The film has six songs, sung by the likes of Tina Turner, the Blind Boys of Alabama, the Bulgarian Women’s Choir and the film’s co-composer Phil Collins. This is Collins’ first foray into film scoring, a job he shares with Mark Mancina, and Williams calls the results surprising: particularly the action sequences, which play out not to stop-on-a-dime tempo shifts but steady driv-

ing rhythms. “Typical scores go for the in-the-moment shifting,” Williams says; “Phil writes as a drummer. He drives right through it.” As in *Tarzan*, *Brother Bear* is musical but not a musical. “Frankly, I don’t feel like people really want to see characters singing anymore,” says Blaise. (Little Koda does in fact attempt to break into song at one point, and Kenai stuffs him in a hollow log for his efforts.)

*Brother Bear* is in Cinemascope, but it doesn’t start that way. Other animation has been in Scope, but never before has an animated feature changed aspect ratio mid-stream. Like the 1982 sci-fi flick *Brainstorm*, *Brother Bear* is part Academy ratio (1.85:1) and part Scope (2.35:1); and, as in *Brainstorm*, the format shifts with changing points of view. “We figured, why not have the audience go through a different point of view,” says Walker, “like Kenai does when he gets turned into a bear?”

Throughout act one, with Kenai still a human, the frame is in Academy ratio and stationary, with the colors growing progressively muted. When Kenai is transformed into a bear in act two, the screen widens to Scope, the color palette changes from gray to highly saturated, and the camera is freed to move around. Walker says that although the saturated colors do pop out, he hopes the aspect ratio change will be felt rather than seen: “A lot of people don’t notice it until they’re told, actually.”

Apart from the issue of securing the title — which had to be licensed from the owners of the Berenstain Bears — the production went off with no major setbacks, under budget and ahead of schedule (no mean



Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas only agreed to voice moose Rutt and Tuke if they weren't just going to recycle the Mackenzie Brothers.

feat since it was originally scheduled to come out next April, before its play date was switched with *Home on the Range*'s). This brings particular satisfaction to producer Williams, who is only too aware of recent ani-

mated box-office failures.

"It's not just our studio," Williams says, "it's about being responsible filmmakers. If we want to keep making films, we have to be able to meet the business side of things." And today's CGI-versus-traditional debate isn't helping; it's twaddle, surely, but how many executives are secretly (and not-so-secretly) buying into the traditional-is-dead trope?

"It's not the technique, it's the project that matters," Williams says simply. "Do you care if your cabinet's put together with nails or screws? No. It's what it does for you, and how it functions in your life. [Our] next film *A Few Good Ghosts* is a hybrid film. It's 2D and 3D. There may be a different tool for the project after that. It may be clay animation. Who knows. The people here can embrace it, and still tell good stories." ■

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**TAYLOR JESSEN** is a writer and archivist living in Burbank. His piece on the production history of the animated feature *Twice Upon a Time* will appear in *Animation Blast* #9 in early 2004.

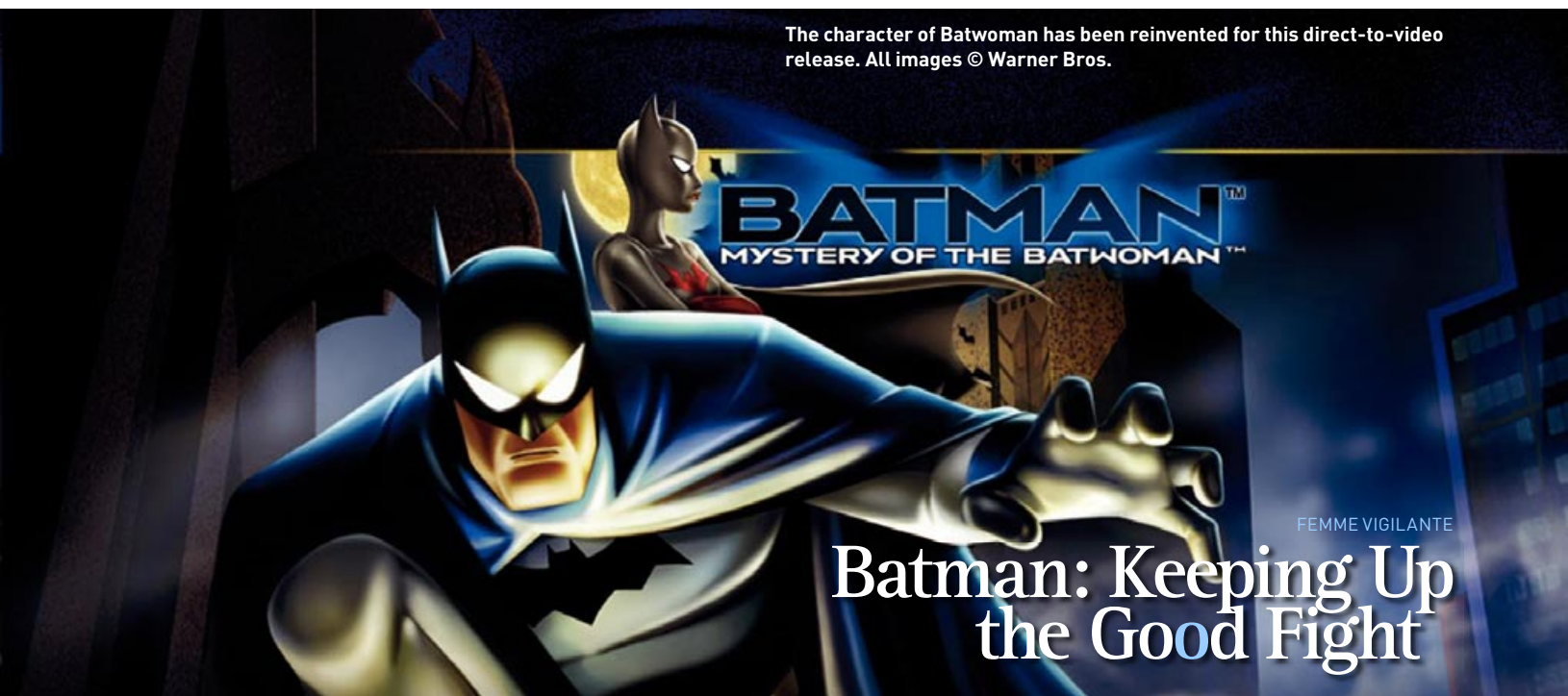
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## GOT AN APPETITE FOR ANIMATION?

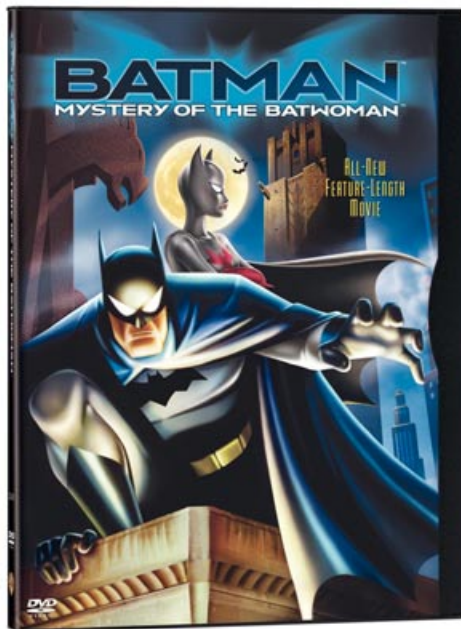
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The character of Batwoman has been reinvented for this direct-to-video release. All images © Warner Bros.



## Batman: Keeping Up the Good Fight



THE ANIMATED WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN TRUE TO THE ORIGINAL SUSPENSE MELODRAMA NATURE OF BATMAN AS CONCEIVED BY BOB KANE AND BILL FINGER IN 1939.

It's almost like a parallel-earth sci-fi series. There are these two Batman movie and TV worlds, one live-action and one animated. The live-action world is best known for silly comedy, deliberate and otherwise. This reputation was started with the 1966-68 comedic *Batman* TV series with Adam West and Burt Ward. Although the first two theatrical features (*Batman*, 1989; *Batman Returns*, 1992) went a long way to restoring the image of the Dark Knight as a seriously dramatic hero (thank you, Tim Burton!), the third and fourth (*Batman Forever*, 1995; *Batman & Robin*, 1997) dragged the franchise back down into the gutter of campy humor that embarrassed all real *Batman* fans.

The animated world has always been true to the original suspense melodrama nature of *Batman* as conceived by Bob Kane and Bill Finger in 1939. DC Comics, the publisher of *Batman's* comic-book adventures, had to struggle to maintain this image from the mid-1950s through the early 1980s due to the strictures of censorship to keep comic books "safe" for children. The TV cartoon versions of *Batman and Robin* by Filmation in the 1960s and '70s may have had quality problems, but at least they tried to treat the characters seriously. The juvenile public image created by the campy '60s TV series evolved back to the somber vigilante thanks to Frank Miller's well-publicized *The Dark Knight Returns* graphic novel in 1986.



Warner Bros. Animation president Sander Schwartz (left) decided to greenlight this new installment of the *Batman* series. Supervising producer Alan Burnett's (right) long standing professional relationship with writer Michael Reaves helped streamline the writing process for this project.



By 1990 Warner Bros. (the new owner of DC Comics and *Batman*) had revitalized its TV animation studio with Steven Spielberg's *Tiny Toon Adventures* and was looking for new TV animation concepts that would capture an audience ranging from kids to teens and adults — something with the look of the rediscovered (thanks to home video) Fleischer Studio *Superman* cartoons of the early 1940s and the newly popular “anime style.”

*Batman: The Animated Series* debuted on the Fox network in September 1992. Its trademark “Dark Deco” look and mood made it so popular that it ran for 85 episodes until September 1995, with one episode winning an Emmy Award in 1993. It was followed on the small screen by *Batman: Gotham Knights* from 1997 to 1999, and by both *The New Batman/Superman Adventures* from 1997 to 2000 and the futuristic *Batman Beyond* from 1999 to 2001.

On what once would have been “the big screen,” it was also followed by the theatrically released movie *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* in December 1993 as well as two direct-to-video feature-length *Batman & Mr. Freeze: SubZero* in March 1998, and *Batman Beyond: Return of the Joker* in December 2000. Now there is a fourth: *Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman*, released this October 21, 2003. *Mystery of the Batwoman* was previewed on a theatrical-sized screen at the Comic-Con International in July and at several later publicity previews around Hollywood such as the September monthly Los Angeles Comic Book Convention, to enthusiastic response from the fans.

Each *Batman* movie focuses upon one or more of the well-known cast of villains and sidekicks, plus in-

roducing some new characters. In *Batwoman* it is a team-up of costumed villains The Penguin and Bane with traditional crime bosses Rupert Thorne and Carleton Duquesne. *Batwoman* is both old and new. Batman had a *Batwoman* partner in the comic books in the 1950s and '60s, but the character has been completely “reinvented” for this movie.

Gotham City has a new masked vigilante crime-fighter who calls herself *Batwoman*. But she is more callous about avoiding injury to bystanders, and she uses deadlier scientific gimmicks than Batman does. Because of the similarity of their names and costumes, the public assumes that Batman and *Batwoman* are partners and that Batman condones her brutal violence. The Dark Knight and the four villains find themselves fighting each other as they all seek to unmask their female foe, whom they (and the audience) are led to suspect is one of three young daredevil women: Duquesne's disaffected daughter Kathy; technical researcher Dr. Roxanne (Rocky) Ballantine; and Police Detective Harvey Bullock's new partner, Sonia Alcana.

Does this mean that more *Batman* animated features can be expected? *Batwoman's* creators, at a publicity panel at the Comic-Con and in interviews since, just grin and say, “Who knows? Not us!”

Curt Geda, *Batwoman's* producer/director, says that because the *Batman* animated features are “movies,” the public tends to assume that they are made in the manner of theatrical animated features which are usually publicized as being in production for three or four years, carefully crafted over a long period by a team of several writers and hundreds of animators collaborat-

CURT GEDA SAID THAT IT IS STANDARD FOR WBA TO ASK DC COMICS FOR ITS FEEDBACK ON COMICS-CHARACTER STORIES TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE NOT TOO FAR OFF COURSE.



ing closely together, and so forth. "Actually," says Geda, "a straight-to-video production like the *Batman* movies is more similar to a TV production. Warner Bros. Animation today is primarily a TV production studio, and its straight-to-video features are considered an offshoot of its TV productions. They are often done in down time, to keep a crew together between TV series."

The ultimate creators of a straight-to-video feature are less the writers and animators than the management of Warner Bros. Animation and Warner Home Video. "Warner Home Video is part of the TV production," Geda continues. "WHV tries to involve itself with all WB animation properties, which includes Hanna-Barbera characters these days. There have also been *Scooby-Doo* and *Tweety* direct-to-videos. This production could have been one of those as much as a *Batman* movie. Presumably it was Sander Schwartz's idea to do a new *Batman* movie. We are not working on any *Batman* TV series currently, so Alan Burnett who was very involved with the previous series but is working on *Static Shock* and *Ozzy & Drix* today was probably the first *Batman* holdover who was available."

Supervising producer Burnett told the audience at the [Comic-Con](#), "My boss, [WBA president] Sander Schwartz, walked into my office and said we're going to do a *Batman* home video." Burnett expanded on this for *Animation World Magazine*. "When I say I'm the last to know, the management people here at Warners Animation are the ones who continuously ascertain home vid-

eo's needs and try to figure out what we can sell them. We try to keep ahead of the game, though. My boss, Sander Schwartz, wanted two *Batman* scripts, to give home video a choice. *Batwoman* was the one they preferred at the time. Once Warners Home Video and Warners Animation approved the concept, we were off and running. Our one enemy was the deadline. We had to have a script finished in five weeks [and that included coming up with the concept.]"

The *Batman* TV animation creators are familiar with the 60-year-old comic-book canon, but do not consider themselves bound to follow tradition. Burnett says, "I wanted to do a *Batwoman*, but a more mysterious *Batwoman* than what Kathy Kane of the '60s offered. The costume was also going to be completely revamped. (Do you remember Kathy Kane's original outfit? Oy.) This was going to be a *Batwoman* for now, not then. Even so, I have an affection for the old Kathy Kane, and managed to get her name in the show, sort of."

Burnett has been with WBA since *Batman* started in 1992. To write *Batwoman*, he called in Michael Reaves, the story editor of the first animated series. "The *Batwoman* project came as a surprise," Reaves says. "I had left WB Animation after working on the 85 episodes of *Batman: The Animated Series*. My contract expired, and I left just as they had their screening of the first cut of the *Mask of the Phantasm* feature. I went to Disney to work on *Gargoyles* [as producer and story editor], and then to DreamWorks [he was producer of the *Invasion America* animated TV series]. Alan and I kept in touch, and one day he phoned out of the blue and asked me to write this new *Batman* direct-to-video feature. I said 'yes' — actually, I jumped at it. I was happy to get back to Gotham City and hang out there again for awhile."

The *Batwoman* plot had already been approved by the time Burnett called Reaves. "The obvious reason for using *Batwoman*," Reaves says, "is that instant interest in the movie is generated with the name. It's a no-brainer — we wanted to use a character from the '*Batman* family,' and, since *Batgirl* had already been done and we already had a *Robin*, there weren't a whole lot of char-

acters left. Batwoman had the added advantage of some 'legitimacy' in that there had been a Batwoman character in the comic's earlier years. But there was no pressure to use the original Kathy Kane version. (We did use a version of the name.) We wanted to re-invent her just as we'd re-invented Batman 10 years ago."

Reaves credits Burnett with the story. "Alan created all the major twists. At first he would send me pages of the story, and we would go back and forth on it over the phone, so I may have had a little input on it at that stage. Earlier drafts included things like an electromagnetic pulse cannon, waterspouts in Gotham Bay — all jetsam that we eventually tossed to make the story lean and tight. But then we started to get behind on the deadline, and we didn't have time to discuss the plot. Alan told me to start writing what we had already decided on, and he would finish the story. From then on I just scripted what he sent me. It worked out fine."

Burnett's view of this was, "The story is the treatment — a prose telling of the entire film. The script is the script, breaking everything down into shots and action and dialogue. I was e-mailing the story to Michael as I was writing it. We both discussed it at length in the beginning, so we both knew the major character arcs and where the whole story was going. I was a half-dozen scenes or so ahead of him as we were writing. Michael is very good and very fast, which was important because of our deadline. He writes with great clarity, and since we worked for so many years together on *Batman: The Animated Series*, we could talk to each other in shorthand."

"I don't know how long the treatment was, since I was sending it to him in chunks, but I tried to be as detailed as I could for both our sakes. After all, this was a mystery where we had to make sure we tied up all the loose ends. We were on the phone almost daily with changes and comments. It's not the greatest system, but it worked for us."

Geda said that it is standard for WBA to ask DC Comics for its feedback on comics-character stories to make sure they are not too far off course. "In this case, the Kathy Kane Batwoman was so far in the past that everyone felt it was okay to do something fresh." Geda had known that a new *Batman* feature was coming, but his first involvement was when he was handed the finished script. "I had worked together with Alan and Michael for years on the TV series [Geda started at WBA as a storyboard artist on *Batman: The Animated Series*]. We all trusted each other."

Geda repeats that a straight-to-video feature is treated more like a longer-than-usual TV episode than a theatrical feature. "We had a pretty tight production schedule. By the time I got the script, there was little

time to do anything but produce it just as it was written. TV animation schedules have so many deadlines and must go so fast compared to theatrical features that the attitude is just 'get it done.' We started in August 2002. Our pre-production package was ready to go overseas by Thanksgiving, and we started getting the first animation back after three months. The animation was completed by nine months [May 2003], and the post-production was finished in time to show it at the Comic-Con in July. I'm very proud of it!"



Is there any chance that the second *Batman* story concept by Burnett will also be produced? Michael Reaves' professional guess is that, "Many, many scripts are written on assignment for movies that never get made. I heard the percentage pegged once as 500 to 1 (500 assignments for every one film produced) and I can believe it. If anything, I'd say it's a little optimistic. It basically comes down to, the more money the movie makes, the more likely WHV is to make more of them."

Burnett agrees, not regarding his second *Batman* idea specifically but about any more straight-to-video productions featuring WB animated costumed heroes such as the *Teen Titans*. "If *Batwoman* is a big success, it can only help with other superhero home videos." ■

*Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman from Warner Home Video; approx. 78 minutes; ISBN: 0-7907-6704-X; SRP: \$24.98 (DVD), \$14.94 (VHS); DVD features biographies, documentary, featurette and interviews.*

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

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2D ALTERNATIVE

# Death of 2D: Rush to Judgement

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman



Has 3D Nemo killed and buried the likes of 2D Long John Silver and Sinbad? *Finding Nemo*: © Disney Enterprises Inc./Pixar Animation Studios. All rights reserved; *Treasure Planet*: © Disney Enterprises. All rights reserved; *Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas*: Courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures.

**A**BOVE THE STREETS, PASSERSBY SHOUT, DUCK and cover as animation desks are heaved out the windows; splintering crashes resound down the streets and alleyways of Hollywood, Burbank and Sherman Oaks. Legions of grim-faced 2D animators (or the dozen or so still employed) snap their pencils in two and forswear ink-and-paint forevermore; forward they rally to the 3D computer stations of animation nation to begin delving into wireframes and pixels, ever so high on CGI. In the U.S. corporate boardrooms the "Harrumphs!" are sounded, layoffs are planned and plans are laid out: *Thou shalt produce traditional 2D features no more!*

Last rites have been given, the body is growing cold and the grave awaits. Minister **Nemo** presides over the desiccated corpses of Sinbad and Long John Silver. Oh, sepulchral sight! Let such lamentations ring out as only the funereal box office figures can summon — 2D is dead, dead at last, they say!

My hyperbolic statements are not very far from the facts. DreamWorks and Disney have pretty much forsworn traditional animation for the foreseeable future. 2D animators are being laid off in bunches and those fearing a future that includes serving French fries are

retraining at the speed of LightWave. The biggest question on the collective lips of the trade is not whether 2D animation has a future, but whether it shall survive at all. The question on my lips is "Where did that idea come from?"

One of the more flammable ideas being tossed on to the pyre of 2D animation is that 2D is somehow in direct, foredoomed competition with 3D, as if the 1930 Chicago Bears were slugging it out with the current version of the St. Louis Rams. One recent example of this is a tabulation published by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on July 20. The posting, which compares the biggest box office takes among animated films in the past 10 years, counts traditional animation defeated by a 7-3 margin. The heading reads: "Traditional vs. CGI: 10 Years of Animation." My problem is with the use of the combative *versus* in making this comparison. Although this may seem like a matter of semantics, the message is clear: The two have met on the silverscreens of battle and a clear winner has emerged. *Animation Magazine* went even further, presenting 2- and 3D characters as opponents in a boxing match. Why must this be so, and if the only arbiter is that of box office take, must 2D animation be doomed?



2D and stop-motion animation like *Chicken Run* have managed to co-exist in the past. © DreamWorks SKG.

Another bizarre idea is the notion that 2D animation is a dying branch on the evolutionary tree, an antiquated form of the species relegated to fossil status in the wake of a more highly evolved life form called *Computeris Generaticus Imagii*. It is easy to subscribe to such a view when one considers that both traditional animation and 3D animation are both children of cinematic technology. It is the nature of one technology to supersede another; no one could viably argue, for example, that the Sopwith Camel is superior to the F-16 as a weapon of aerial combat.

However, animation is more than its science alone — it is also an art, and art can exist in a multiplicity of mediums. If the argument is accepted that 2D animation is obsolete, then so is stop-motion animation, clay animation, cutout and collage animation, and every other sort of animation that ever existed. Again, why should this be? Did 2D animation kill clay, stop-motion or plasticine animation? Would anyone care to contend that *The Nightmare Before Christmas* or *Chicken Run* were simply big, bloody wastes of time and resources?

Yet another piece of delusional thinking posits that the public will no longer go to see movies made in 2D animation. Well, isn't this a great piece of foresight? When the studios are infallible in their predictions we might accept this line of reasoning. We might accept it when major bombs are no longer produced, when a heavily-hyped blockbuster no longer falls to 30% of its opening take by the second week of release, and when the studios begin to accurately monitor the pulse of the moviegoing public. Then the corporate line that says audiences are disdainful of 2D might hold more ink and

## I WILL BE HAPPY TO TELL YOU THE EXACT DATE WHEN TRADITIONAL ANIMATION WILL DIE.

paint. The decision to abandon traditional animation exclusively for CGI seems to be a decision made primarily from the top, born in one great convulsion of follow-the leader studio politics and desperate readings of spin and hype.

To predict that there will never again be another great feature done in traditional animation is foolhardy; of course it can happen if allowed. One might also do well to remember that styles and tastes are cyclical in nature. If 3D were to rule uncontested for 10 to 15 years, I would almost bet that some studio releases "A stunning fantasy made in the full richness of classic animation!" As a jaded public swarms to enjoy this retro treat, the media will probably be gushing with praise and articles about "lost arts" and "traditional artistry"... that is, if there are any 2D animators left by then.

It may be closer to the truth to say that both forms of animation are evolving internally on parallel tracks. There is no doubt that 3D animation has made gargantuan strides in the past few years, especially in depicting textures and realistic human simulacra; this evolution benefits us all in terms of aesthetics and entertainment. 2D animation continues to evolve as well, because every new perspective and fresh animator who works with it brings something new to the table. There are also multicultural influences in 2D animation that were not present as late as the 1980s; a good example is the stylistic crossover in American animation due to the influx of anime over the past two decades.

Why 2D and 3D animation cannot exist in the same marketplace is, at bottom, a ridiculous question. I have maintained in past columns, and continue to maintain, that if a film is well written, produced with care, is artistically consistent and speaks to its audience with some degree of sophistication, that film will succeed no matter what the medium may be.

I will be happy to tell you the exact date when traditional animation will die. It will die on the day that human beings no longer wish to pick up a pencil and convert their observations, fantasies and imaginations into exquisite drawings that strike a universal chord in the deep collective unconscious of humankind. It will die on the day that we cease to be amazed by drawings that move about in similitude to life itself, laughing, crying, loving and hating in ways so recognizable to us that we cannot help but be moved by them.

It will die when we cease to appreciate art and the process of art: an act that ineluctably binds creator to creation through the touch of instrument to paper. From the days of ochre smeared on the walls of primordial caves to the abstractions of modern art this act has captivated us — and so it always will.

The current debate over 2D's demise, which has been raging endlessly in every major animation publication since Nemo hatched out of his egg, is sensationalist and ultimately needless. When the future of animation is decided by moguls, studio heads and bean counters of every stripe we do not really have a debate. Only the artisans should have the right to decide if 2D shall never be used again, and to date, it does not seem as if that is going to happen anytime soon.

At the 2003 "Pitch Party" sponsored by *Animation Magazine*, aspiring creators presented their hot ideas to a number of expert panelists; a sample of each pitch was published in the August 2003 issue. To this writer's eye it seemed that about 80 of the ideas presented looked to be in traditionally drawn format, and less than 20 of them seemed to be CGI. Weren't these ideas pitched by the hot new generation of animators currently being trained to wireframe their way to fame and fortune? Why so many pitches in decrepit 2D?

3D animation holds sway for now, however, and for as long as it does I propose a task for all the light benders and shade modelers of the world. Suppose CGI is used to slay the nastiest and most odious dragon in the animated world: live-action animated features. These misbegotten progeny of misguided moguls have stained the memory of too many beloved characters and series already. **LAAFs**, as I've been calling them for some time, can finally be eliminated! Instead of making films using inappropriate actors and actresses to portray animated characters, or sticking them alongside CGI creations, why not just go the whole hog (sorry, Porky) and do homage to cartoon stars in nothing but CGI?

For the wizards of 3D there is no character that can't be recreated from Gertie to Tennessee Tuxedo; what do we need live actors for? Imagine a *Flintstones* movie, for example, in which the original model sheets are the template and not John Goodman; with backgrounds that come to life in 3D animation and not colored Styrofoam; where the beloved characters of yore look exactly like themselves — only richer, better and more alive than they've ever looked on TV. If, as demonstrated a few seasons ago, *The Simpsons* can be created in CGI then why not give them a feature film in that format?

It amazes me, in fact, that nobody has ever done animated revisionism using CGI to date. Some might call the *Scooby-Doo*, and *Rocky and Bullwinkle* movies

an accomplishment, but both were saddled by live actors to no great result (*Jimmy Neutron* does not count; he was created in CGI and simply carried over to feature format). Kick the fleshies out, I say, and fire up the Pentiums instead.

How much more could it cost than the breathtaking sums spent on *Sinbad* and *Treasure Planet*, losses so stunning that 2D animation has been made to walk the plank at their respective studios? In fact, I have a proposal for a certain animation studio that has the perfect project sitting right in its own vaults. Charles Solomon in his excellent book, *The Disney That Never Was*, re-



LAAFs like *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *Scooby Doo* cry out for animated revisionism. *Rocky and Bullwinkle*: © Universal Pictures; *Scooby Doo*: © Warner Bros. No other uses are permitted without the prior written consent of owner. Use of the material in violation of the foregoing may result in civil and/or criminal penalties.

veals the details of a proposed feature starring the studio's three biggest properties.

*Morgan's Ghost* was originally scripted by Dick Creedon and Al Perkins back in October of 1936 and some 800 storyboards were developed for a film that would have starred Mickey, Donald, and Goofy in a rollicking tale of pirates, ghosts and treasure. The project eventually turned into a comic book produced by Carl Barks and Jack Hannah; only Donald survived the cut, joined by his nephews. The story, renamed *Donald Duck Finds Pirate Gold* was published in 1942 and is one of the most sought-after collectibles in the field. Disney has already proven that it can resurrect its Big Three, and no one has really seen these timeless characters in full CGI. As long as 3D can do the job and present these characters in lieu of a LAAF, I'm certainly all for it.

This piece is in no way a plea for 2D to be recognized as animation's "true" form or a condemnation of 3D animation; it is rather a plea to stop the madness, the heady rush to judgment that one form of animation that has served us well for many decades and been the vehicle for some of the most stunning entertainment ever seen is doomed, finished and obsolete. This "debate"

should not be cast as a fight, a competition or a manifest destiny that states one type of animation must relegate another to extinction; there should be, rather, recognition that 3D animation is simply another style and a much-welcomed variant in a proud and popular art. There need be no debate at all.

*Has it really been four years since I've joined the great people at Animation World Network? While I typically thank that illustrious staff each and every year, I would like on this anniversary to thank you, my readership. If you did not want to read my monthly columns, they would not appear here, and I am truly grateful. Your praise and debate, your consensus and disagreements, your compliments and even your digs have all been equally valuable and enjoyable for me. I look forward to providing another year of commentary and reading your responses. ■*

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

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# FUTURA

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



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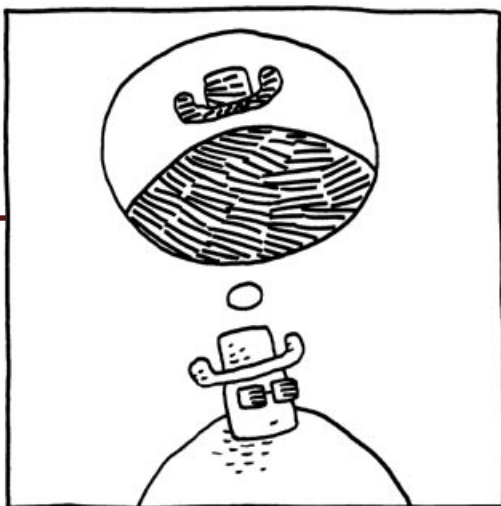


Illustration by [Andreas Hykade](#).  
Courtesy of Chris J. Robinson.

HYKADE

ANIMATION PIMP

## Finally... a RANT.

WHAT IS THE POINT OF THESE REVIEWS BEYOND BEING 1,500 WORD ADVERTISEMENTS FOR A FESTIVAL?

*by Chris J. Robinson*

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

LET'S BE CLEAR ABOUT THIS ONE: IT'S RELATIVELY trivial and contrary to what some of you pugs who think all Pimp columns are rants, this one IS a RANT. My turkey? Festival reviews. You know... you see them on AWN or on the ASIFA Website or in ASIFA newsletters or in that Korean mag. Animation (Animation Magazine doesn't even bother w/ festival content). Enough of them, OK?

These reviews are, in general, useless, lazy, so obviously a take work for hire to see my name in print even though I've never been to a festival before and didn't go to half the events. These love letters are getting us nowhere. They don't help the readers, they don't help the filmmakers and they don't help festival organizers. Why is it like this? OK well first off... most of the reviewers are guests of the festival they're reviewing. They sometimes get travel and hotel, passes and meal tickets covered by the festival. Do you REALLY believe that these folks are going to give a whole-heartedly subjective POV? Who wants to risk not being invited back to a fest?

Two, what they write is usually just cut and pasted from the festival's own pr material, a grocery list of ac-

tivities. See... it's not all that possible to attend EVERY event at a festival so the poor reviewer, already feeling guilty about the fee, hotel, pass and free event snacks, feels they've got to cover the whole shebang even if they didn't attend and what we get is a bland description of the event they didn't attend under the guise that they did attend. "Trois perspective." Every animation magazine/ newsletter is guilty of this and, YES, I understand WHY. No one has a budget ala BIG newspapers to send a reviewer to cover an animation festival so they must rely on people they know or people they know who know someone who might be going to said festival. The problem is that in some cases they hire inexperienced people — now hold up. I realize that that can be a boon w/ the right person because its good to get the distant/outsider take on our little insular world — but unfortunately most times we don't get the 'right' people so the perspective can be naïve and quite limited.

How are they going to know if, for example, Zagreb is any better or worse if they've never been there before? Maybe that doesn't matter? I dunno. I think it does, Zagreb has a long, rich history. Their organizers are quite passionate and active in the animation world. They

travel to festivals, meet filmmakers, generally do what they can do make an interesting festival. You don't see that effort with a lot of festivals anymore.

(The following is a digression). There are so many damn festivals now being organized by people who have no interest, no connection, no awareness of festival history or culture and are solely creating an event so that they can promote their companies, shallow TV pilots and, heck, maybe they'll find some Dickens's kids to exploit along the way.

Reminds me. (Digression #2) I just read a nasty piece in a Toronto paper about the Montreal World Film Festival (big live-action event). Some lady was moaning about the fact that only the public came to the festival AND, get this, that the festival showed too many films by people she'd never heard of. Umm... lady... the VERY point of having festivals in the first place was to showcase neglected, overlooked filmmakers who had few avenues for exhibition to a WIDER audience.

Animation festivals need to remember this. We are not here to lick the toe jam of industry. We exist to introduce new works by new/old voices to new/old viewers. The industry already has exhibition spaces called, umm, the television or the cinema. The industry should be kissing festival toe because w/o festival films, they'd have no one to steal styles from (fortunately, concepts are safe).

My point? The same as always... don't close the door to the past. Festivals have a history, had a reason for coming into being and you, as a reviewer/attendee/entrant should be aware of such things. And this is precisely why festival reviews need to be a little bit more w/ it. Or maybe you don't care about such stuff...if not, well, bully for you.

Four, rarely do they (reviewers) talk w/ other folks or even organizers. If I were to gripe about the ticket system in Annecy, the terrible opening ceremony at Fantoche this year, or the sometimes stupid projection in Ottawa, I'd first approach a festival rep and say, hey man, how come your ticket system is lousy? What's with that loser slam poet on opening night? Then they can give you some explanation and you can take it from there. Better still... just because you hated the ticket system, maybe others liked it. I'm not saying u need to be more critical necessarily.

Fest. organizers (except me) are not consciously trying to be evil so why attack them in print, but at the same time, if there are some fundamental problems people are having at festival, the festival people need to hear this of course. And, hey just because YOU had a poor time because you lack basic social functions or didn't like one to two programs doesn't mean that it was a bad festival or program. Ask other people. Even if you liked it, ask the

programmer why they chose what they chose. Ask other attendees what they thought of the tepid student competition. Also be aware of cultural context.

I read reviews by people saying... WHY didn't they do this? Why didn't they do that? Well... kids... festivals do not exist on equal playing fields. Ottawa doesn't get anywhere near the state support that Euro. Fests like Annecy or Zagreb or even Holland get and so sometimes we (for example) have to make decisions based on those economic realities. And this is where experience goes are a pain in the ass. They go to Annecy or Hiroshima, let's say, and are treated in one way, maybe they get meal tickets or there are a lot of parties (i.e. free grub) and then they start expecting doggie bags everywhere. Hell...we even get people who call us asking if there are any parties...they don't apparently care about the films (this stems from 1996 when studios dumped a truckload of money at festivals resulting in an orgy of parties).

Point, again, is that you cannot employ the same sweeping critical standards/expectations to all festivals. Why would you? This was the problem with ASIFA festivals of the past. Everyone looked the same. What's the point then?

Not to contradict myself but there are also dangers when experienced people are reviewing. Take Pat Raine Webb's Annecy 02 review in AWN for example. Pat (a former ASIFA board member) is a good person, goes to animation festivals every year. Problem is that she goes to the same ones all the time and has a particular fondness for Zagreb (perhaps connected with the free hotel and passes that Zagreb provided ASIFA board members w/ for many years). On the whole, Pat's review is fine. She briefly talks about some highlights from competition, but it's the last few lines that got my goat.

"If you want lots of action and don't mind crowds and queuing and more screenings then one human being can handle, then Annecy is the festival for you. But if you want to find the true spirit of animation you have to go to Zagreb!"

I've nothing against Zagreb, "nothing angst Pat," but it irks me that she makes this GRAND SWEEPING statement about Zagreb w/o EVER ONCE visiting, not just Ottawa... but more importantly, Holland, Fantoche, Anima Mundi or even Tough Eye (granted a young festival). And why hasn't Pat visited these festivals? Because they didn't pander to ASIFA board members? Pat's a respected figure and it's asinine to make such a myopic statement. Maybe I'm overreacting, but the downside of the ASIFA system that existed for so many years (and Ottawa was one of the big beneficiaries of it) is that other festivals who did not seek out ASIFA approval got neglected, pushed aside, ignored.

Holland has been around since 1985 and I'd argue that it's FAR more relevant and true to the spirit of animation (whatever the fug that means) than Zagreb is today. And let's not forget Stuttgart, a very underrated, well programmed German anifest. A fest that was largely ignored by ASIFA as well.

Do festivals even need these reviews? They're written right after the event. Sure I can throw it in the reports that we sent to the government funders, but do people actually use these reviews to guide them the next time the festival comes round in a year or two (that's a question)? Oh and I guess a glowing review earns the reviewer some points w/ the festival organizers.

But really... given that most of these reviews are so sort of superficial, are they really helping the festival improve itself? If not, then what is the point of these reviews beyond being 1,500-word advertisements for a festival? Magazines need to re-think why it is that they are reviewing a festival and what it is they are trying to convey through these reviews. Meantime... kids... at least write honestly.

One road is to give us an honest reflection of your experience at the festival. I mean you can't properly sum up the whole experience of the event so at least give us yours... and that doesn't mean what you saw...but everything... give us the whole kit baby... the hangover, breakfast, what was on Croatian TV? Do they still have hardcore porn for free there? What about the local liquor? Is masturbation more exciting in a foreign country? Did you screw around? Was it your first festival? Were you shy? Did you stay by yourself, maybe only going to screenings because you didn't know anyone? Give us the truth man.

How was the flight? Did the festival peeps meet u at the airport? Did you spend a whole day just sitting round the Bonlieu shooting the breeze w/friends and colleagues? What about the city? Did you check out the thermal pool in Baden? Walk along the river? Festivals are not just about films. They are social and cultural experiences, a chance to meet new people and gab about life. All these things are part of a festival experience.

Or make it gossipy... a sort of Michael Musto type thing about star sightings, who was being a bitch to whom, who was stumbling drunk. (OK, I know animation is so humble and down to earth that there really is no star system... but hey... let's create one...) "Who was that young girl linking arms with [Oscar Grillo](#)?" "What was said during that tense conversation between Kucia and Schwizgebel?" "Does Griffin really have a foot fetish?" "That Dutch festival director was drunk BEFORE breakfast, again." "Did you see that Estonian animator getting it on with that Swiss lamb? No, really, I mean a lamb." Now this approach wouldn't be overly useful perhaps but it would sure as heckles be entertaining.

Or hey...say you ain't into that stuff cause you didn't do much but see films, exhibitions and attend panel discussions. Man, you're dull; you're probably an academic. Ok then... still... I know an academic sort, crazy kook, who wrote what initially seemed like a bizarre, nothing to do w/ Ottawa review of Ottawa. Part of the problem was language. English ain't his first. Anyhow... after I re-read the text for the 5th time I realized he'd written quite a thoughtful little piece that expanded beyond the Ottawa festival and embraced the whole of animation. What did the films shown at Ottawa say about the current situation in animation? And he went on to theorize about this, quite passionately, even getting into comparisons between animation and other arts (imagine that!) I didn't agree w/ his takes on stuff... too turn of the century, elitist romantic for me... sort of guy who believes there is REAL art and NOT REAL art. Yeah... OK... buddy.

Anyway... what I did like was how he attempted to examine the festival on a larger socio-cultural blah blah level. Animation was taken out of its self-imposed cage and introduced to the real world (OK... maybe not 'real'... or here or now... but at least ANOTHER world). AWN commissioned this review, but in the end they didn't print it because the writing was not very clear or comprehensible in places and it would require an intense and hefty amount of time to re-work this piece into shape. It's too bad, cause I think that overall it was one of the VERY VERY few useful/meaningful festival analyses.

AWN has published its share of gimp reviews (e.g. check out Kelly Neall's review of the Tough Eye 2003 festival. Has she even seen an animation film before?). Worse still... check out the blowings (book and festival reviews) of that SUPERSTAR of animation scholars, Giannalberto Bendazzi. This guy is a show baby. He gushes about EVERYTHING he writes about w/o actually giving you any evidence? Look... that Cartoon encyclopedia is fine and dandy buddy... but umm... it does not warrant these incessantly hollow dribbles. It's time to start earning your keep and cease with the wanna please everyone hallmark drippings.

At the same time though, AWN has also published some of the more innovative festival reviews. In 2001, AWN asked animator and all round good guy, Chris Lanier, to write about his experiences as a competition filmmaker at Sundance. Lanier wrote a thoughtful, intelligent sketchbook/diary piece about his experience. Or check out Don Duga's wordless review of the ASIFA East Awards told entirely through sketches. Not a big fan of the sketches per se but I sure do like the idea. AWN has also composed photo scrapbooks of festivals. These are perhaps not as effective but it does give you some visual sense of the environment.

Perhaps AWN's finest moment was Dan Sarto's

review of SAFO 99. In it he writes about the festival's director:

*"Chris is no stranger to controversy; he can be outspoken, and his straightforward manner doesn't always sit well with some of the crusty veterans on today's animation scene. One thing, however, is clear to me — he knows animation, and he knows how to put on a dynamite festival."* What's not to like about those four lines of poetry?

Some other standouts reviewers are Czech writers like Stanislav Ulmer. You can find some of his reviews on <http://asifa.net>. He often provides a very thoughtful, in-depth analysis of a set of films that stood out for him at a festival.

What are some other ways to improve reviews? Maybe mags should invite a quartet of people from diff. backgrounds to contribute their POVs on a festival or just set up a festival forum discussion group where people can chat about what they saw, what they liked/disliked, problems, etc... Actually that'd be a damn good idea.... Maybe even invite a festival dir. to do a chat w/ people so he/she can get their feedback directly. Then again... I've tried this a few times on the AWN café and

Animation Nation and I find that when you actually turn things around and ask people what it is that they want from a festival, they haven't the faintest idea. How can a festival be good/bad if you don't know what the heck you want from it?

OK... well... s'bout it. A pretty insignificant and maybe insular rant, although I dunno... if you're in animation and don't care about animation festivals then maybe there's a problem w/you... or them.

RIP K.D.

Just had a limited glimpse.

Saw a feisty, sarcastic, bitchy gal who was always real.

You were true to yourself and others.

No bullshit.

That's what matters.

Take care. ■

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**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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*Bert & Harry Piel* almost stirred up a controversy as *Aryan Bert*. The series of commercials won Deitch his second NY Art Directors Club Gold Medal in 1953.

BOOK EXCERPT

## UPA: Back to the Future — Part 2

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 [UPA: Back to the Future — Part 1](#) from the beginning.

**W**E DID THE FIRST COMMERCIALS EVER WITH Saul Steinberg, working with him personally. I was dazzled at the chance to visit my cartoon idol in his wondrous clock and rocking chair filled apartment. The spots were for Jell-O Instant Pudding, of all things, but they won me my first New York Art Director's Club Gold Medal.

Our biggest commercial success was in the long series of *Bert & Harry Piel* beer spots. The beer was dreadful, but the commercials boosted its sales phenomenally. (When Piel's finally switched to another ad campaign, the company quickly collapsed!) The characters and dialog were actually created by Young & Rubicam writer, Ed Graham, and were voiced by the phenomenal Bob Elliot and Ray Goulding, Bob & Ray, but my design and direction of the series won me my second NY Art Directors' Club Gold Medal and a lot of career points. The most hilarious fall-out was from the original name of the series, *Harry & Bert*. A woman viewer wrote a scathing letter to the Piel's Beer company, castigating them in a fierce diatribe for their "fascist advertising campaign about *Aryan Bert!*" The company flipped out, and were demanding we immediately cancel the series, until we saved the situation and our hides by simply reversing the order of the names to *Bert & Harry*.

Producing the first animated version of the NBC color peacock, in those days long before any sort of digi-

OUR TV COMMERCIALS WERE THE FIRST EVER SHOWN AT THE NEW YORK MUSEUM OF MODERN ART. I SUPPOSE THAT MOMA SHOW WAS OUR GREATEST MOMENT — ACTUALLY A MONTH-LONG-MOMENT.



The most run TV spot of all is the NBC color peacock, which Deitch animated in the '50s. © 2003 NBC, Inc. All rights reserved.

tal enhancement, we tried every which way to achieve the required maximum color brilliance on film. I went shopping in a theatrical supply house and got some color gels of the kind used over Broadway stage lights. Using the bottom lights of our Acme animation stand, normally for shooting pencil tests, and working with our experienced photographer cameraman, Wardell Gaynor, we achieved a stained glass window effect, which did the trick. There was no easy computer coloring in those days! The animated NBC peacock, only five seconds long, was probably the most run TV shot of all. It was shown at the beginning of every color broadcast for years. "*The following program is brought to you in living color!*" I assigned an unknown but brilliant young composer, Irwin "Bud" Bazelon to write the NBC color musical theme. The royalties made Bud a rich man and a lifelong friend.

Then we did the original opening titles for Alistair Cook's landmark *Omnibus* show, and we had to devise in-camera tricks to get the drama needed for that. The *Omnibus* opening won me my third New York Art Directors Club Gold Medal.

I am especially proud of two of my UPA-NY films, produced in 1952-3, both now obscure to the point of invisibility. One was a custom made 2-reeler for The American Heart Association, called *Pump Trouble*. My good friend, writer Bill Bernal, the same who first brought me to UPA in Hollywood, helped me with the story, for which we cribbed some ideas from *Citizen Kane*. Cliff Roberts did the design, and Grim Natwick and Duane Crowther were the animators.

As it was to be my first longer film project, and a chance to show my stuff, I went all out to get just the right people onto the project. Through a talent agency we sent out a call for the best voice actors in New York, and soon our waiting room was full of voice men and women. The most unlikely looking was a young stand up comic and illusionist who was then doing nearly all the voices on the *Howdy Doody Show*. That already put him down in my estimation. But I gave him a chance. After going over the story with him, I asked which of the eight

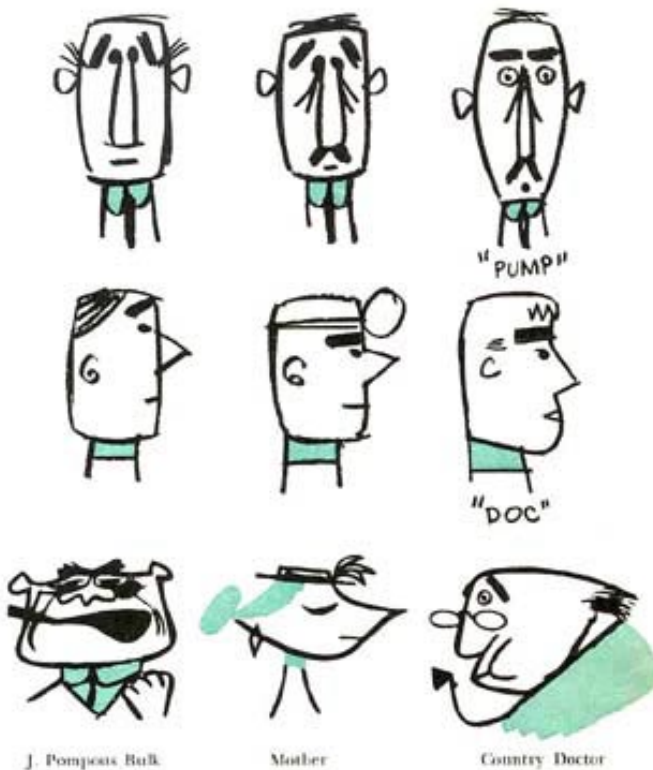
characters he thought he could do. He then tried one after the other, including the women parts. He was Allen Swift, and he actually performed all eight voices. After hearing him, I sent all of the other applicants home. Allen not only did all of the voices for *Pump Trouble*, but for countless other of my films over the years, and became my closest personal friend. I am happy to say he still is.

Incidentally, the only voice on the *Howdy Doody Show* that Allen did not do was that of Howdy himself. "Buffalo Bob" Smith said no one could do Howdy but himself. But Smith had a heart attack, and there was no Howdy voice for the next day's show! Allen took a recording home of Smith's highly personalized Howdy Doody voice, and studied it overnight. He went on as Howdy in the next show, and continued to do it, along with all the other voices, for a year while Bob Smith was convalescing. No viewer ever noticed the difference!

Dynamic music was created for *Pump Trouble*, by the then blazing Spanish composer, Carlos Surinach, who later performed it as a concert piece. The film was a big success for the Heart folks and for me at that time. I probably have the only surviving 16mm print, which I keep on a heart-lung machine.

From the Allen Swift connection, the Kagan Corp., producers of the phenomenally successful NBC *Howdy Doody Show*, gave us an assignment to do a test film about Howdy. It was a chance to do my first purely entertainment cartoon. My best buddy Bill Bernal and I worked up a story we called, *Howdy Doody and His Magic Hat*. It was designed by Cliff Roberts, and animated, (paper cut-out style), by Duane Crowther. We reveled in the opportunity; while at the same time did everything possible to make our film look as different as possible from what we all considered to be a grotesquely ugly puppet and an unspeakably cornball kid show. Cliff, Duane and I gleefully subverted it and went all out to make it a true UPA film.

Kagan accepted the result coolly, but we were proud of it, and I still am, though I haven't seen it in



Cliff Roberts models for *Pump Trouble* (1952).

years. (My later producer Bill Snyder lost my only print.) I will recount the storyline here from distant memory, in the slim hope that one of you might have a clue as to where a copy could be obtained.

*A gaudy cowboy, wearing a bejeweled 10-gallon white hat is riding a bucking bronco. Howdy is watching with admiration. If he only had that hat, he could ride a bronco too. Suddenly a gust of wind blows the hat off the cowboy's head. Howdy chases after it. The hat swirls off into a deep forest. It lands on a dejected eagle's head, and instantly, the eagle is transformed into our national symbol. Then the hat blows off again and lands on a sleepy lion's head, and he is transformed into a heraldic icon, etc. The hat finally lands on Howdy's head, and he is now full of confidence. He rides the bronco, but again the wind blows away the hat. Can he do it without the Magic Hat? He does it.*

The film surfaced once on UPA's pioneering color TV serial, *The Boing-Boing Show*, and then sank from sight forever. I would give hugs and kisses, and a good deal more substantial to anyone who could come up with a print of that one, my first entertainment cartoon! In 30 years of trying, I have been unable to track it down.

It is devastating to me, as I write this, that Bill Bernal, Grim Natwick, Bud Bazelon, Duane Crowther, Cliff Roberts and others are gone. All of them did so much to make me look good.

Our TV commercials were the first ever shown at the New York Museum of Modern Art. I suppose that MOMA show was our greatest moment — actually a month-long-moment. It was in 1954 when the museum, just down the block from our Fifth Avenue and 53rd Street studio, presented the month-long series of screenings of our films. Steve of course showed up for the opening, and gave me a glorious introduction. So all was splendid.

Introducing each daily screening was a kinescope film of the nationwide CBS-TV show, *Let's Take a Trip*, which was a visit to our UPA-NY studio. I was the "guide" on the show that featured Sonny Fox and two tykes named Pud & Ginger. That "kinnie" is another lost film I would love to see again. (MOMA has staged shows of my films twice more, the latest was in 1996, titled *A Tribute to Gene Deitch and Rembrandt Films*, but of course the one in 1954 was the one that put us on the map.)

We rode high in New York, but yet slid the financial slopes. Steve continuously siphoned our TV commercial profits to support the artistic efforts of the Hollywood studio, and we were entirely dependent on UPA-Hollywood for our rent and paychecks. We had to lock ourselves in the office every payday, hoping to God we'd receive the checks before the staff would beat the door down. What we did receive were almost daily peptalks from Steve on the flexible Dictaphone belts, which came in the mail. No e-mail in those days either, but we got lots of vocal advice from Steve on those belts!

Fred Crippen, who was brought in by Cliff, was a fabulously funny guy on paper, but had a difficult time expressing himself verbally. When he got excited about something, he became almost inarticulate. During one of the many frustrating long-distance phone calls to Steve Bosustow, Fred became increasingly agitated, flailing toward the telephone, blurting out syllables, and wanting me to let him get in his two-cents worth. It was so hilarious, that I attempted to jot down Fred's half of the exchange as closely as possible:

"Look, Steve... I mean you gotta... there's a... I mean, Man, how much?... When are we?... Look, this place... All of us... I mean, we're all... It's gotta... Christ, Man... you know... Christ!..."

Oh shit!" He hung up, still heatedly cursing under his breath. "I guess I told him!" he said.

Somehow, we survived. Of course, no one outside the studio knew anything except of our roaring success. We were at the corner of 53rd and Fifth, with a Fifth Avenue address. (The building went down a few years later, supplanted by the shiny 666 5th Avenue Building.)

The UPA idyll came to an end under the pressure of Senator Joe McCarthy. I had survived at JHO, but John Hubley was squeezed out of the Burbank studio. Steve did little to save him. In the studio I idolized, originally built on left-wing camaraderie, there was less honor than at the JHO temple of the right. I was depressed. My illusions about UPA faded.

Hub went on to set up Storyboard, Inc. When my idol took me out to lunch and invited me to join him, I felt it was my greatest moment. He who had so easily let me go to "try my own wings," in 1949, was now calling me back to his nest in 1954. So I left UPA once again, this time for good. But six months later the dream was shattered again. Hub really didn't let me do anything. He did everything himself. I got the feeling that he had hired me away from UPA just to get revenge against Steve Bosustow, who he felt had fed him to the red-baiting wolves.

But there was no going back. I took up an offer from Robert Lawrence, who ran a large all around commercial studio in New York. It was good money,

but it wasn't UPA. Then, after only a few weeks, the biggest door of all opened for me, and through it walked a man named Newt Schwin. He was sent by CBS television to find me and make the offer I could not refuse!

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

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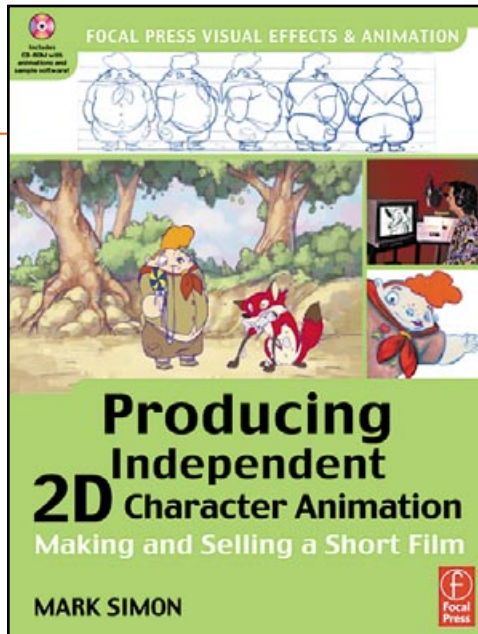
**GENE DEITCH** is one of the last surviving members of the original Hollywood UPA studio of 1946 and the instigator of the CBS-Terrytoon "renaissance" of 1956-1958. He was also: animation department chief of the Detroit [Jam Handy Organization](#), 1949-1951; creative chief of UPA-New York, 1951-1954;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

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### **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: *Digital Ink & Painting*

by Mark Simon

*This is the eighth 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.*

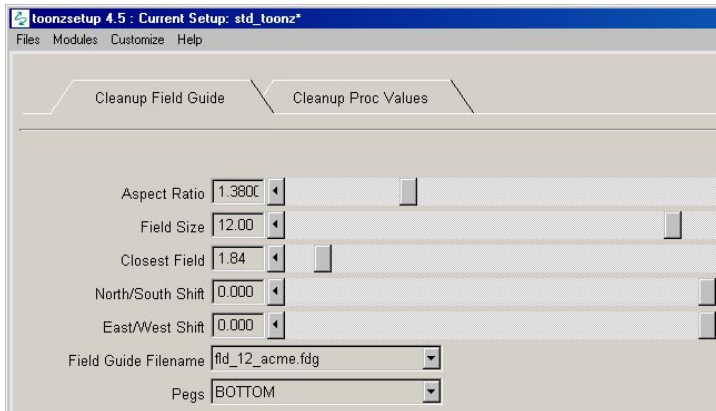


**[Figure 1]** Notice that the lowest layer (left) of art is slightly darker than the top layer (right). This is due to the slight pigment in each cel. In the digital world, this loss of light is no longer an issue.

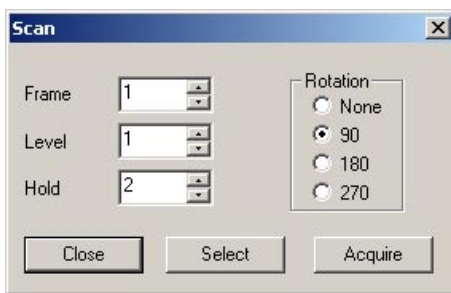
**Y**EARS AGO OUR ONLY OPTION FOR PAINTING ANIMATION drawings was to trace the drawings with ink onto clear plastic celluloid sheets, or cels. Then the colors were painted, one at a time, onto the back of each cel. The cels were then stacked on racks to dry and took up a great deal of space. As clear as the cels are, they can only be stacked to six or seven levels due to a slightly increased loss of light and color with each layer (Figure 1).

Then **digital ink-and-paint** came along and offered us a quicker way to paint the drawings. We can now keep the quality of the pencil drawing in the final work, and we are no longer limited in how many levels we may composite (layers of art and effects stacked together to form one complete frame).

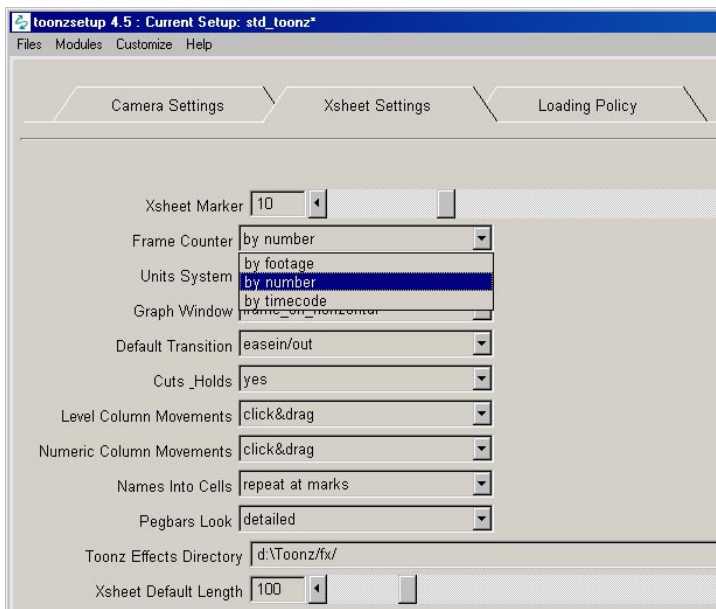
Digital ink-and-paint is the computerized version of finalizing animation art using scanning, instead of inking, for each pencil drawing, and digitally coloring instead of hand-painting each cel. With all the ink-and-paint programs now available we are able to drop fill (single-click paint an entire enclosed area) or use a digital paintbrush to fill colors into our characters.



**[Figure 2]** Parameter set-up window in Toonz allows you to adjust many settings for each scene.



**[Figure 3]** Another set-up window in Toonz that allows you to adjust the field size and positioning as well as how the software should automatically clean up the scanned art.



**[Figure 4]** Digicel scanning interface with a 'hold' set to 2 frames for each drawing.

We can change the line color, fix problems in the original art, move and scale the layers of our animation, build a custom palette and export the final art in a number of different video and sequential still image formats. They also all offer dope sheet interfaces for keeping track of scenes.

There are only a few major differences between the available ink-and-paint programs. The biggest differences may be found in the varying interfaces of each software, how user-friendly they are, project management features, camera and compositing capabilities, and whether artwork is kept as bitmap images or converted to vector images. Vector images have much smaller file sizes, are resolution independent, and can be scaled to any size with no loss of quality, but they can lose some of the subtlety of the original penciled line.)

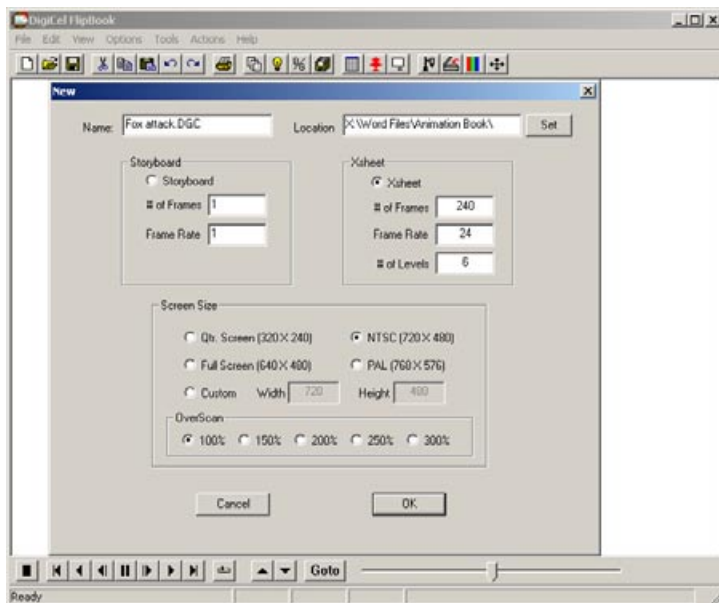
The different processes within ink-and-paint software are broken into sections called modules. A number of the more expensive software programs allow you to purchase and install only certain modules, which helps keep the cost down for a large production. A person doing digital painting will probably not need camera or compositing modules, so only certain modules need to be purchased, and these can be spread out among many computers.

Each of the digital ink-and-paint programs labels its modules differently, but the main modules are usually pencil testing, scanning, ink-and-paint, camera, compositing, project managing, rendering and others.

To start the ink-and-paint process, a number of parameters need to be set for each scene. Every ink-and-paint program allows you to adjust different parameters, some with very few options and others with a great many options. Different parameters may include:

- How far you can zoom in on a scene.
- How many frames the scene is.
- How many levels of animation will be needed.
- How the dope sheet should be set up.
- What direction the scanned images need to be rotated.
- What color palettes to use.
- What the screen aspect ratio should be.
- How light or dark the scanned lines should look.
- And many other parameters. (See Figures 2 and 3.)

THEN DIGITAL INK-AND-PAINT CAME ALONG AND OFFERED US A QUICKER WAY TO PAINT THE DRAWINGS.



**[Figure 5]** Digicel ink-and-paint set-up window.

Once you have set up each scene, you may either scan the drawings directly into the program or import the scans you have already saved. If your drawings were numbered in the format the software reads, the imported images will end up in the proper frame and layer on the ink-and-paint dope sheet. For instance, a file named L3F005 will be imported onto Level 3, Frame 5. Even if your software doesn't understand this file format, the naming procedure keeps it clear to the operator where the image needs to go.

When you are scanning directly into the ink-and-paint program, you will have the opportunity to adjust all the settings, and preset how the art will be imported and to what level and frame. For example, you may set the software to automatically hold the artwork on 2s (one drawing for every 2 frames), as in Figure 4. You may always change the settings if your numbering changes at any time during a scene.

As you set up a scene, be sure to indicate when you need to zoom in and by how much. This informs the program to scan at a higher resolution so that by the time you zoom into the art you won't lose any quality. Every ink-and-paint program handles this information differently. In AXA, you need to change the input DPI settings for different zooms. In Digicel, you may set the scene to be 100% (12 field), 150% (for zooming in 3 fields tighter), 200%, 250% or 300% for the largest zoom (Figure 5).

You have a couple of options when you scan images. You may scan them as black-and-white files that have aliasing (a stair-stepped effect on the edge of angled and curved lines), scan them as grey-tone files that retain the density of your original, or scan them as hand-colored images. Each method has its benefits.

In the case of pencil lines, for instance, which tend to vary in contrast, a black-and-white scan converts all the lines to a solid black. When importing these images the ink-and-paint program then processes them to give the lines an even, anti-aliased edge on both sides. The lines then have an even tone to them.

The grey-tone scans, on the other hand, have a livelier feel to them. The lights and darks of the pencil line are maintained. However, a lot of extraneous markings and smudges are also more likely to scan. Cleaning each image and painting thus takes much longer.

Once the artwork is in the program, you may copy and paste the cels that are repeated within each

scene. The software will automatically update all copies of each piece of art when any one copy has changes made to it. In other words, if the drawing on frame 1 is repeated on frames 9 and 15, you only have to fix or paint frame 1 and the other frames are updated automatically. You may check your revised scene any time by playing it within your software.

*The remaining chapter covers the painting process, editing your digital dope sheet, setting up your color palettes, using color models, painting tips, using onion skin features, auto fill, changing line color and more. To learn about other topics, check out Producing Independent 2D Character Animation, published by Focal Press. It can be purchased at any bookstore or [online](#). ■*

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

**MARK SIMON** founded and owns A&S Animation, Inc., an award-winning cel animation house in Florida, which develops and produces character animation for commercials, TV, training videos and the Web. He also owns Animatics & Storyboards, Inc., the largest storyboard house in the southern United States, which has provided work to more than 1,200 productions. Mark's accomplishments include owning an award-winning advertising firm, being a syndicated cartoonist, production designer 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.

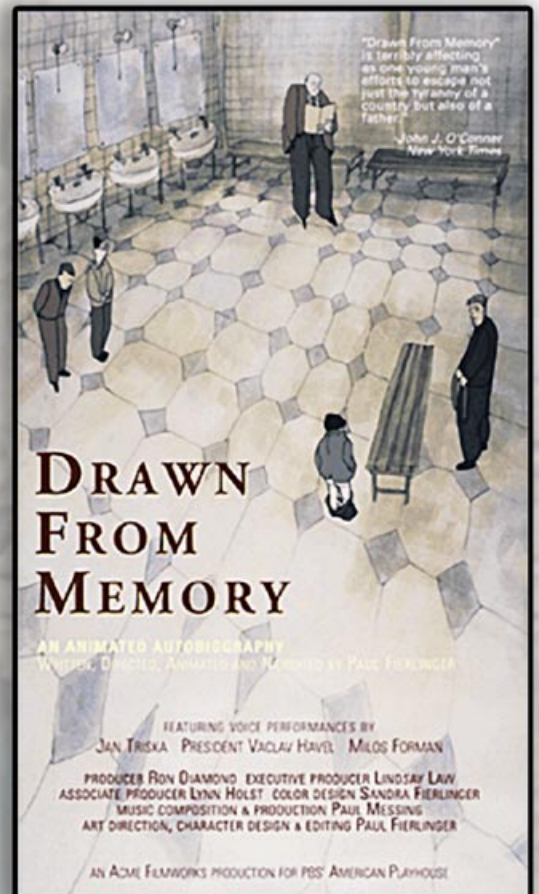
## Paul Fierlinger's DRAWN FROM MEMORY Now Available on Video!

"Drawn From Memory is an extraordinary reminiscence about an improbable but true life, rendered in pen-and-ink images as whimsical as those of James Thurber and words as piercing as those of



Milan Kundera. The work, which could be called The Movie of Laughter and Forgiveness, uses the lighthearted medium of animation to heartbreaking effect."

—Carrie Rickey  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

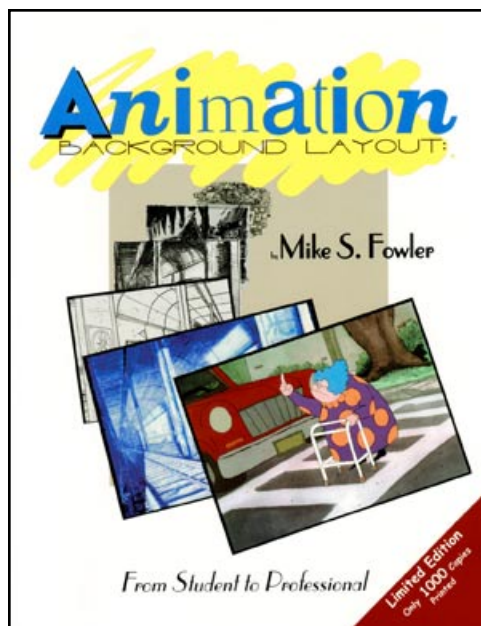


<http://www.awn.com/awnstore/acme/drawn.html>

LAYOUT SUPPORT

# Animation Layout: Graticule, Field Guide and Labeling

by Mike S. Fowler



All images are from *Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional* by Mike S. Fowler. Reprinted with permission. © Mike S. Fowler 2002.

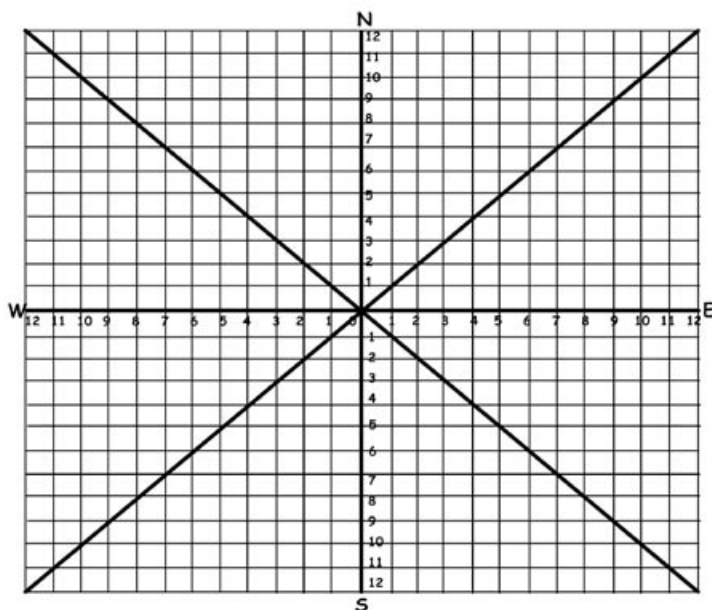
This month AWN continues a series of excerpts from *Animation Background Layout: From Student to Professional* author Mike S. Fowler has especially adapted his book for our readers. In this essential and educational easy-to-follow guide, Mike, an animation layout artist, supervisor and college instructor 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.

**W**HAT IS A GRATICULE? MANY STUDENTS AND people in the industry mistakenly call this the field guide. The graticule is based on a grid system that has a ratio aspect of 1:3/4. Horizontal measurements are blocked in inch sections, while vertical measurements are blocked in three-fourths of an inch. Why? This is the size and settings of most television and theatrical movies. (Widescreen and all its variations are based on a similar measurement)

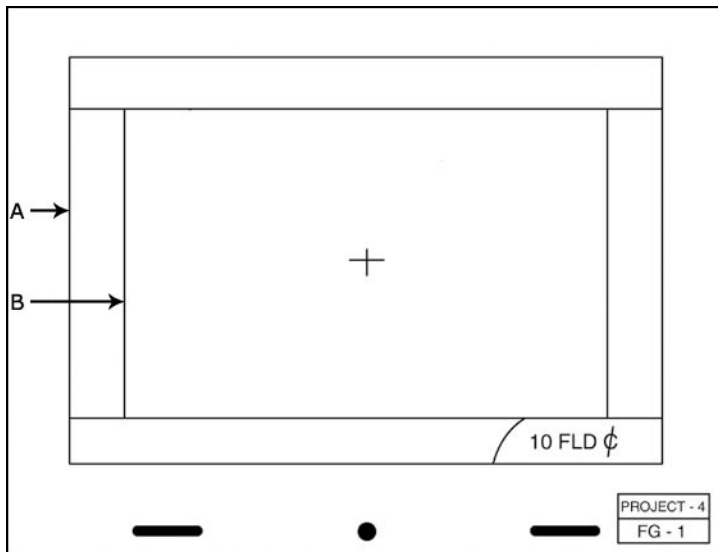
Several different types of graticules can be purchased through animation suppliers with different qualities. I suggest spending the extra money to buy a professional quality graticule that will last a long time over the cheaper student guides available. Both work equally well, but the more durable of the two will last.

## WHAT IS IT FOR?

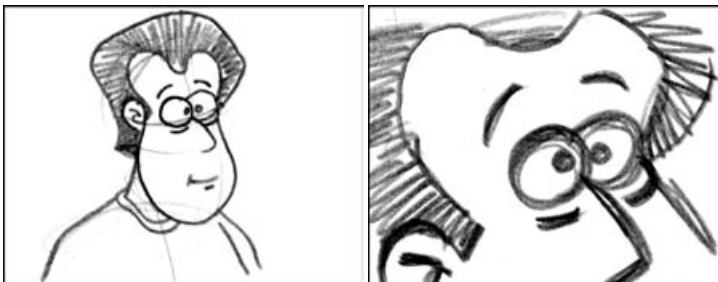
The grid system of the graticule is used to accurately create field guides in the [layout](#) department. These field guides are what the camera will see in the scene. The graticule grid system can be purchased at a 12 Field (FLD) maximum, a 16 FLD maximum and at a 32 FLD maximum sizes. There are larger units but they are rarely used in traditionally drawn layouts.



This is an example of a typical 12 Field Graticule.



**A** Field guides are created for each scene of the show using the graticule to explain how much of the artwork environment the camera will see.  
**B** There are two portions to the field guide. The outer line shows the field while the inner line shows the television cut off. This will be explained later in the chapter.



## FIELD GUIDES

Field guides are created for each scene of the show using the graticule to explain how much of the artwork environment the camera will see.

There are two portions to the field guide. The outer line shows the field size while the inner line shows the television cut off. This will be explained later in this chapter.

The field guide contains other scene information about the where the field guide center is, levels to use, hook-up notes and even character pose positions. The reason for different sizes of field guides is to maintain consistent line weight and production time.

Here are two examples.

If the scenes were all drawn at 12 FLD and then we cut to the same drawing only closer, the line would appear thicker to the viewer.

Try looking at the edge of a book page from two feet away. Now move within six inches of the edge. Note the difference in what can be seen?

The line quality of an animated show has to be consistent throughout. Any line weight change, as previously illustrated, the viewer would stop viewing the animation story and concentrate on the individual images. Not a good thing.

Time is the other reason. The layout artist must consider the animator who receives the scene next. It would be a waste of time to draw a close up shot of a face at a 12 FLD when the same shot could be easily drawn at a 9 FLD.

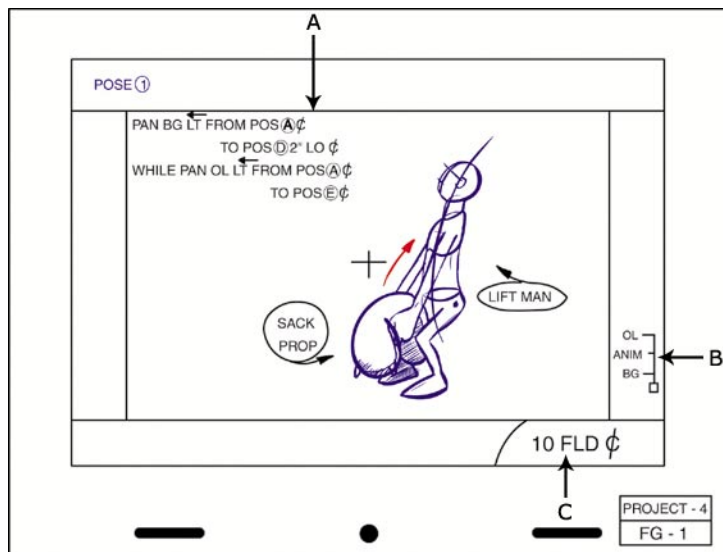
The larger the drawing field size, the more pencil mileage must be done to complete it. The reality is, time is money for the layout artist and the animator.

Layout labeling must clearly show all required elements of the scene. In the next example I have included the first pose and camera pan directions. Further information on camera moves is explained in the chapter on Camera Moves.

One important factor in labeling that is standard in most animation studios is the use of only CAPITAL LETTERS. This is for ease of readability. There is nothing worse than a beautiful layout package that has printing so illegible it could be best described as chicken scratch. If you are not accustomed to printing in only capital letters, start now.

Try to block all of your letters similar to that of the architecture or draftsman print.

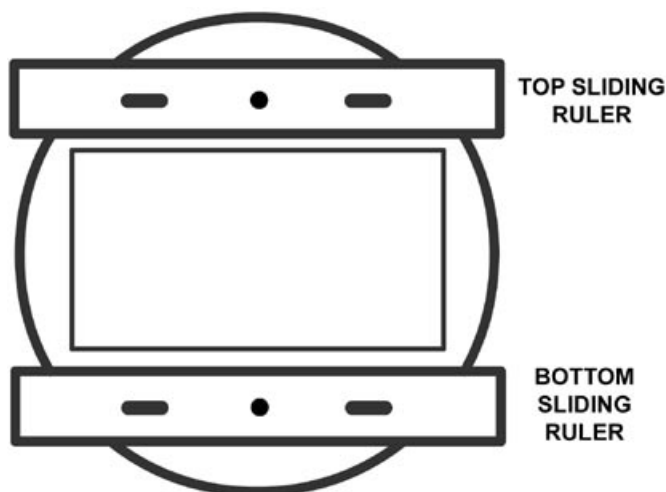
**NOTE:** If your supervisor cannot read your name, what are the chances that the production coordinator can read it? By the way, most studio production coordinators are also the people responsible for completing your pay sheets. Think about it.



**A** Camera Information must be present for all camera moves and must contain: What is happening? What is moving? Where does it start and where does it end? This information is placed in the upper left-hand corner **INSIDE** the television cut off box.

**B** Level Sketch

**C** In the same color as the field guide color, clearly number the **FIELD SIZE** followed by **FLD**, then the position of the field guide.



In the above example, the paper is placed on the bottom peg bar.

Camera Information must be present for all camera moves and must contain: What is happening? What is moving? Where does it start and where does it end? This information is placed in the upper left hand corner **INSIDE** the television cut off box.

In the same color as the field guide color, clearly number the **FIELD SIZE** followed by "FLD," then the position of the field guide.

The example left is: **10 FLD 0**

Meaning it is a 10 field and the field guide is centered at 0,0 on the graticule.

The 0,0 is not required.

Another example is: **8 FLD 3W 2N**

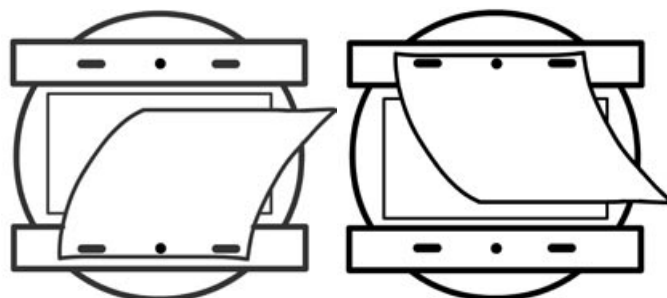
Meaning this is an 8 field. The center of the field guide is three lines west from zero and two lines north from zero on the graticule.

## LEVEL SKETCH

The level sketch is used in various forms, in different studios, but the purpose is to show the compositor where the artwork is pegged and in what order the levels must be shot under the camera, from the bottom, working up. Level sketches are normally in **BLACK**.

To best understand what a level sketch is, and where it came from let us look at an animation disk. As seen in this diagram, there are two sliding rulers with square and round pegs.

With the disk lined up so that the rulers/peg bars are horizontal, one is now on the top and one is on the bottom.



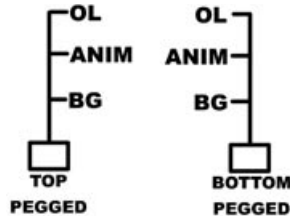
**Bottom pegged (left)** is when a sheet of animation paper is placed on the bottom pegs. **Top pegged** is when a sheet of animation paper is placed on the top pegs.

Carefully lay your animation disk flat on a table and look at the edge so both ends of the rulers/peg bars can be seen. Using the same positions, top and bottom, this is how the level sketch was created.

As production time decreased and speed increased, the level sketch was reduced to a square with a vertical line running straight out from the top. In the level sketch examples below, the order of elements is the same. The difference is that one is top pegged and the other is bottom pegged.

### How do we know which is top pegged and which is bottom pegged?

The direction of the level words in relation to the line will tell us. If necessary, the letters TP and BP can be added for extra clarity.



### TV CUT OFF

Television cut off is the portion of the field guide known as the safety zone. From the storyboard, the layout artist draws the animation poses and background elements to visually fit and work well within this safety area. Great effort is placed on keeping elements and poses from straddling the TV cut off or being just visible near it. Either it is in the picture, or it is out. The rest of the background elements, outside of the cut off area, are drawn to the paint line. (See the chapter on Background Layout Elements and Camera Moves.)

Shown below is a standard boxed safety zone/TV cut off. The safety margin can be summed up as: 7 field and under one field block wide, 8 field 1 1/4 field wide, 9 and 10 fields 1 1/2 fields wide, 11 field 1 3/4 fields, and 12 field 2 fields wide.

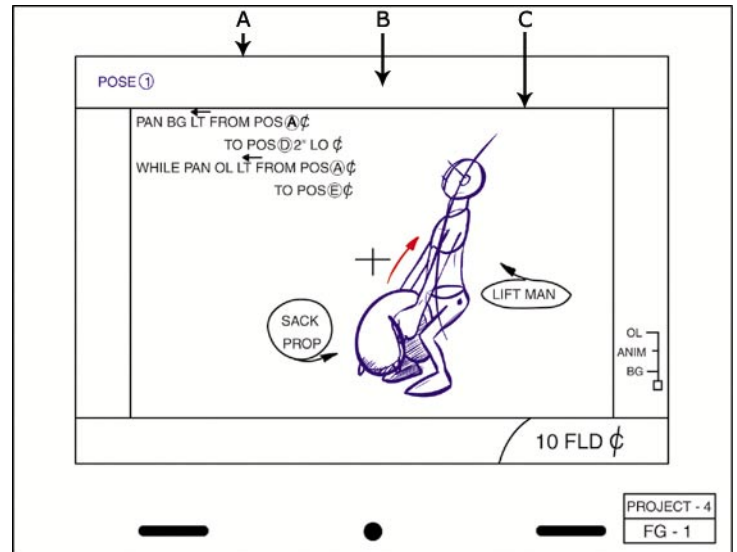
See image at top right.

| A FIELD SIZE | B CUT OFF | C SAFETY FIELD |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| 7 FLD        | 1 FLD     | 6 FLD          |
| 8 FLD        | 1 1/4 FLD | 6 3/4 FLD      |
| 9 FLD        | 1 1/2 FLD | 7 1/2 FLD      |
| 10 FLD       | 1 1/2 FLD | 8 1/2 FLD      |
| 11 FLD       | 1 3/4 FLD | 9 1/4 FLD      |
| 12 FLD       | 2 FLD     | 10 FLD         |

More than one field guide may be required within a scene. To differentiate between them, the layout field guides are colored in order from BLACK, to RED, then BLUE, then repeat as necessary starting again with BLACK.

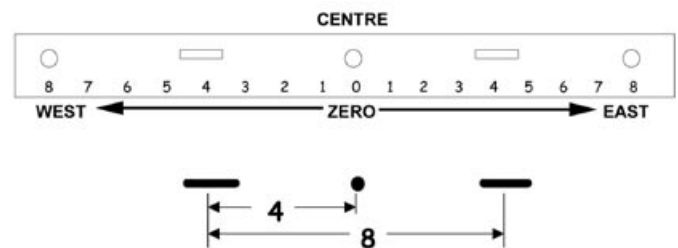
### PEG BAR

As explained in the level sketch section, the animation paper is secured by way of three pegs: a square, a round then a square peg. When the paper is secured to these pegs, the term "registered" is used. If the paper were loose, the measurements would be guesswork and far from being exact.



### What are all of the numbers on the peg bar? Can I use a regular ruler to measure my work?

The animation peg bar ruler is measured in 20ths of an inch. Every half an inch, is divided into 10 parts. A typical ruler measures in 16ths, or 32nds of an inch. Why not metric? Some studios do, but most utilize the 20th of an inch measurement. This is why you can not use a standard ruler to measure or calculate layout movements.

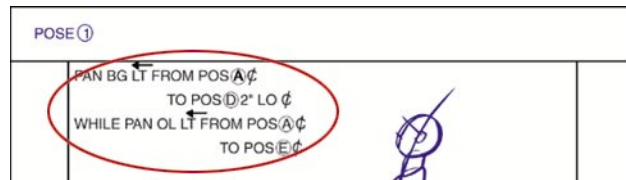


The peg bar ruler has one additional unique way of measuring inches. Starting at zero at the center round peg, the numbers increase (1, 2, 3, 4...) on the right side. Also starting at zero at the same round peg, the numbers increase (1, 2, 3, 4...) on the left side. This allows measurements west or east of zero to be easily explained.

From a square peg to a round peg, the distance is four inches. From a square peg to another square peg is eight inches.

## CAMERA INFORMATION

Within the top left-hand corner of the field guide, all camera direction must be labeled.



Within the top left-hand corner of the field guide, all camera direction must be labeled.

There are different terms and directions used, but the format is generally the same at each studio.

In all CAPITAL LETTERS the information consists of:

- The type of camera move;
- The element to move (BG, OL/UL, OL, ANIM);
- The direction of move: LT (Left) or RT (Right);
- The word FROM followed by the peg position circled with center ④ or inch from nearest start peg POS;
- The word TO followed by the peg position circled with center ④ or inch from nearest end peg POS;
- To explain other moves use: WHILE, THEN or DURING.

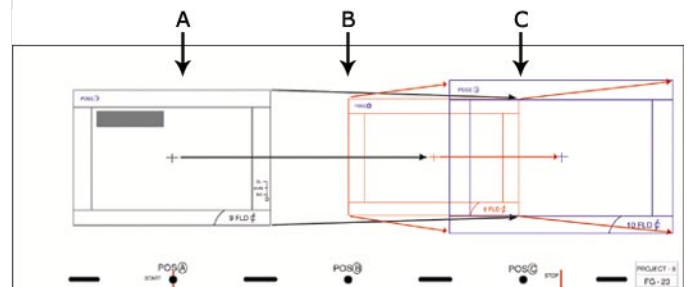
## PAN DETAILS

A pan is long piece of artwork that has more than one 12 FLD page in length. As stated earlier, the camera can move anywhere north, east, west and south, provided the field guide being used can fit completely within the one 12 FLD sheet.

A pan allows the camera to move the field guide north and south. For movement east and west, the artwork must now move, not the camera. Labeling in the field box does not show E or W in the field size. To move east or west, the pan must rely on the pegs, and the peg bar ruler, to measure the distance needed. This is covered later in this chapter.

Camera directions for a pan movement must be documented on the first field guide in the top left hand corner. The information shows what direction the pan will move, where it starts and where it ends. (See previous page for more details)

## PAN/CAMERA DIRECTIONS



- A** First FG is BLACK pencil — BLACK lines
- B** Second FG is RED — RED lines
- C** Third FG is BLUE — BLUE lines (not shown)

NOTE: the use of different field guides and colors. Whenever a new field size is required or position of the field changes, a new field guide must be created. In the above example the field guide changes three times.

A single field sheet of animation paper has three holes, (square, round and square). Pan paper continues this pattern to the papers end, with a new round peg followed by a square peg. It does not matter if it is a horizontal, vertical or diagonal pan, the labeling of each of the round peg holes is the same.

In order from left to right, the round peg hole is labeled with CAPITAL letters starting POS A, B, C, D... until the pan is complete. Even if the pan is top pegged, the naming of the round peg holes start with an A on the left side of the paper. The peg letter following POS is always circled to avoid confusion with other information labeled on the pan paper.



This is an example of top peg labeling. Note the position of where the POS is placed. Never write over, or allow division by the peg hole, as crucial information can be lost when adding peg reinforcements or when photocopied. Peg reinforcements are designed to protect the peg hole from being ripped or worn during normal production. Most studios require them on all artwork; it is not an optional item!

As seen in the previous pan examples, the other segment of information required is a start and an end position.

The start and stop information of a pan is very useful to do exactly what the name suggests, start and stop.

In black pencil, on the left side of the red center line, the word START, or STOP is printed. The red center line is created by drawing a vertical line from the center

crosshairs of a field guide, to the bottom of the page. Only an inch is drawn at the page edge. A field guide positioned directly over the round peg will have the red center line drawn through the round peg hole.

When the START or STOP position line does not line up with a round registration peg (center of the field), measurement must be taken from the peg bar ruler and labeled in the CAMERA DIRECTION area of the field guide.

In this example below, the STOP line is not on the round peg hole at POS C. Using the peg bar ruler, (not a regular ruler), we can find the distance the STOP line is from the round peg.



Transferring this information to the field guide is written as:

**POS C 1.5" ¢ or POS C 1 1/2" ¢**

The problem with how the information above is written, is we do not know which side of the round peg hole it is on? If we were to simply look at the line, you would logically state that it is on the right of POS C wrong.

Most of the animation work completed today is compiled on various computer programs. The animation and layout levels are scanned into the system then adjusted as required to make the animation work. Using a traditional production method of shooting (photographed one frame at a time under a camera), the artwork would move along the peg bar, not the camera.

Let us use the same example with the STOP position at one and a half inches away from POS C. We have learned that POS C is a round center peg. To get to the full image at the STOP position, we must move the artwork left, while the camera remains in place. This STOP position is a new center; the round peg hole at POS C is the original center. Therefore POS C is one and a half inches left of the new center STOP position.

The label acronym would read as LO¢, (left of center) of the closet round PEG hole, POS C. Transferring this information to the field guide it would be correctly written as:

**POS C 1.5" LO¢ or POS C 1 1/2" LO¢**

For many students this section of layout can be painfully difficult to grasp. I primarily attribute this to how it is taught. I prefer to keep the explanation of this simple. When this was first introduced to me, honestly I was confused. There appeared to be no reason why it was done this way, it just was. It was not until a few years

later that I was provided a trick to help understand.

The trick was: Look at where the line is in relation to the closest round peg hole. If it looked like it was on the right think of the opposite. If it looked like it was on the left, think of the opposite. My students agree that this method works!



NOTE: A pan uses a directional sentence such as POS C 1 1/2" LO¢. When writing the field size in the field guide, only the field number and direction N or S can be used. There is no use of east or west in the field guide.

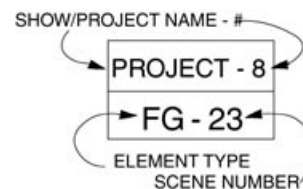
### ARTWORK INFORMATION BOX

The bottom right corner of any layout page is an information box. Be it a circle, a box, or a line separating the details, the information that is found is fairly standard. It states the PRODUCTION NAME, SHOW NUMBER, SCENE NUMBER and ELEMENT TYPE.

Some show names are not always possible to print it all in such a small box, so abbreviations are commonly used. A few examples of this that come to mind are shows I have worked on, such as Nelvana's *Bob and Margaret*, which was shortened to BM, and Nelvana's *Maggie and the Ferocious Beast*, which was reduced to MFB. It just makes sense for the production time.

Many animation schools modify this box format to suit their own grading requirements. Production Name is replaced with Project, Show Number is replaced with Assignment Number. Even in the animation industry, the variations are endless. Whatever the difference, the information shown, describes what each particular drawing is, and what it is used for.

Below is an example of an animation college version of the information box. The top line explains what the show's name is and what episode it is. The second line describes what element is and what the scene number is.



NOTE: Get familiar with field guides now. It does not matter what position you have in the animation industry; animation, layout, storyboard, director or cameraman; an understanding of what field guides are and how field guides are labeled, is essential.

## ADDITIONAL POSES

All layout poses are drawn in blue. Most studios prefer that all construction lines be shown, while other studios want the poses taken to a cleaned-up state. Either way, the layout artist is creating a suggested guide for the animator.

Field guides often have the first suggested animation pose drawn directly on them. When a storyboard shows more than one panel, more pages need to be added. For poses two and onward, the additional sheets must be labeled to clearly show what pose number it is.

The POSE number on the field guide, and subsequent ANIM drawings, correspond to the storyboard pose number of the current scene. Depending on the studio, the layout artist may add, or remove, poses to sell the action clearly. The label of the information box changes from FG to ANIM. This tells the animator that this level is to be used for animation.

On the previous pages we saw how to label the field guide and other technical information. I have reprinted the first field guide for you to look at how the pose was labeled. In the top left-hand corner there is a label of POSE 1. This tells the animator that on the field guide, which is the first pose of the scene.

Here is an example of a second layout pose. The field guide has not changed size, or position, so it is not necessary to redraw the pose on this page — only corner marks are required to show the television cut off edge. If the field guide had changed size or position, a new field guide would have to be created using the appropriate color: black, then red, then blue.

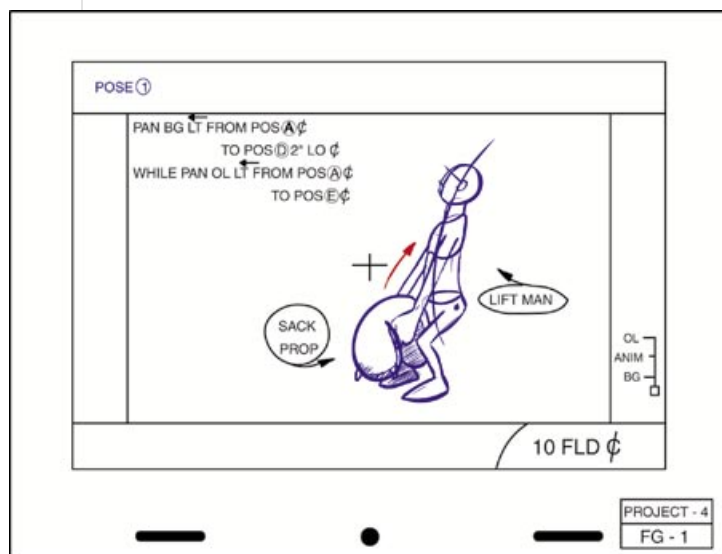
The numbering of the pose changes to correspond to the panel number of the storyboard. The format is: POSE followed by the # circled all in BLUE.

To call attention to movement, red arrows are drawn near the pose or action. They are primarily used as a guide for the animator.

Another feature of all layout poses is the naming of characters and props. The purpose of these labels is to help the animator quickly find the exact model and prop sheets to animate on model. The names are listed in BLACK directly on the page clear from the artwork. ■

*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 Oct. 19, 2003 at 3:00 pm. His book will be on sale throughout 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.

ANALOGY &amp; ANIMATION

# A Special Relationship

## Part 1 — Show & Tell



WHY ARE SO MANY FILM IDEAS SO HARD TO DEVELOP? We struggle and struggle, twisting the material this way and that, trying to bring it to life, all to no avail. So why do these ideas just lie there? Something essential seems to be lacking, but what?

The missing ingredient is often a simple but surprisingly powerful one: analogy. When an idea is supported by a strong analogy it's so full of life it seems to leap off the page. Not only that, but, guided by the analogy, such ideas are easier to develop.

In this series of articles we will look at the special role analogy plays in animation: how it works with the principles of animation writing; how it supports character and plot; how it helps to focus every element of the film toward communicating an idea. We will also examine how analogies are created and try our hand at creating some ourselves.

You walk into an art gallery and find yourself confronted with two wall hangings. One is an unframed metal grid rendered in gray and black. Behind it is the artist's dissertation about the meaning of the piece: something about the risk of pretentiousness in modern art. The second is an almost identical grid set roughly in an ornate gold frame. Upon closer examination, you realize that the frame has just been propped there temporarily and what you are inspecting so carefully is a heating duct. Strangely you still find this second "piece" more compelling than the first.

What just happened here? The idea behind the first piece, as explained in the dissertation, is interesting enough, so why does the second one seem more engaging? Silly as it is, the framed heating duct

**THE “SHOW ME” APPROACH USES SUCH ELEMENTS AS CONTRAST, ACTION AND INDIRECT LANGUAGE TO COMMUNICATE IN A MANNER THAT ENGAGES OUR SENSES AND INVOLVES BOTH THINKING AND FEELING.**

actually communicates a pretty complex idea about the nature of art in the modern world, about context and function and relative value. In other words, it inadvertently deals with the same subject matter as the official piece of art.

So the difference between the two is not what is being communicated but how the communication is being achieved. The first piece tells you its message through its dissertation. Would you have understood what it was about without the written explanation? Maybe, but maybe not. The second piece communicates on its own terms, without any additional information. In essence, it shows you the information.

So show me, don't tell me. This is an expression we use a lot in animation. The “show me” approach uses such elements as contrast, action and indirect language to communicate in a manner that engages our senses and involves both thinking and feeling. As such, it is a very powerful form of communication.

Any one of the above elements is a discussion in its own right. Such discussions often focus on performance. However, there is another element in the “show me” vocabulary that not only enhances performance but, more importantly, can be used to build the platform which will support that performance. Tucked away under the surface of much successful art and storytelling, we discover the foundation of the “show me” approach in the form of a seemingly simple tool: analogy.

The dictionary defines analogy as an agreement or a likeness in certain respects, a correspondence. Obviously, this is too broad a description for our purposes. What about the analogies we had to write in high school: she's light as a feather; the silence was as thick as a fast food milk shake — that sort of thing? “A something is like a something” is the basic formula. However, what we need here is a core analogy, which can serve as the root of communication. So what exactly do we need to compare?

To create a core analogy, we need to discover a correspondence between two elements: a theme and a vehicle through which we will communicate that theme. The nature of that correspondence is quite specific. The theme and the vehicle must share certain characteristics but with a key difference: the theme expresses the characteristics abstractly or figuratively while the vehicle expresses them physi-

cally or literally. This is our analogy equation.

So how does this lead to communication? Let's try saying this in a different way: the vehicle expresses, in physical form, the same qualities as the abstract theme. In this way, the vehicle translates the theme into a physical form, which allows it to be given physical expression. Once the theme material has been given physical expression, it can be demonstrated visually, aurally and through movement. So through analogy, the theme can now be expressed in the “show me” language of art.

Now let's watch the translation process in action. The process can start with either part, so let's begin with the theme. What if you were commissioned to do a piece about “determination?” How would you go about finding a way to communicate this quality? Let's see how the process of creating an analogy helps to solve this problem.

First we need to break down the theme into its component parts. We're looking for a way to describe the theme that gives it a physical presence. So determination could be described as “persistence in the face of difficulty.” Persistence could be shown as an action and difficulty could be shown as a resistance to that action. So our equation becomes:

$$\text{Determination} = \text{Persistent Action} + \text{Resistance}$$

Now we have something we can illustrate, for example, a dog pulling (persistent action) on a leash (resistance) or a child begging for a treat from her mother. Notice that the nature of both the persistence and the resistance varies between the two examples yet both communicate determination.

Of course, there are many ways you could illustrate this equation. See if you can think of some. There are also other ways to do the breakdown. You could, for example, reverse the formula so that it becomes “resistance in the face of difficulty.” How about “The Tortoise and the Hare?” The tortoise illustrates persistence (how?) but what kind of difficulty does the hare represent?

To further illustrate these points, let's go back to our art gallery. Can we now see how the properties of a heating duct could create an interesting analogy for the idea of pretentiousness? Could there be a better vehicle than one that is literally full of hot air?

So this equation becomes:

Pretentiousness = being full of hot air (here we tap into the wonderful world of figures of speech) = a heating duct.

What else is full of hot air? How about a hot air balloon? A head is shaped like a balloon so how about a pretentious man whose head fills up with hot air whenever he starts speaking? Notice that, in this example, we have added an additional analogy (a head is like a balloon) and then tied it back to the main theme.

Here's another word for pretentiousness: floweriness. Which brings to mind, of course, flowers. So how about a garden in which one flower is obsessed with being more flowery than its fellow plants?

In the reverse process, we begin with an analysis of the vehicle. Try this for the garden or the man with a head full of hot air. Can you match them with other themes?

Note that there is always more than one way to translate any given theme or vehicle. The key is in the accuracy first of the breakdown and then in the match between the characteristics of the theme and the vehicle.

What else should we keep in mind when developing a core analogy? In a good match, the shared characteristics will provide insight into the theme. To achieve this, we have to now consider our audience. Does the theme have relevance for its intended audience? Is the audience familiar (consciously or subconsciously) with the relevant properties of the vehicle? Essentially, we are using analogy to create symbols and symbols can work on a private or a public level.

Our own lives are full of private symbols: a token given in childhood by an influential person, a special song or a piece of knowledge that is not widely known. These things have meaning to the individual, but they do not automatically have meaning to the audience at large.

On the other hand, there is a vast range of common knowledge to be found within any defined group of people. The audience brings its whole life with them when they look at a painting or watch a film. Within that material, there are many elements that can be successfully harnessed to an analogy because we can count on them to be understood by everyone.

So part of our job is to distinguish between private and public symbols and use them accordingly. Public symbols give us the advantage of immediate identification. Private symbols can be made into public ones through effective communication, but they demand more explanation. A film like *Adaptation* takes ob-

scure but fascinating information about orchids and builds it into an effective analogy, while a film like *A Bug's Life* works with the knowledge we all have about insects.

It also helps to understand how the various properties of different media interact with analogy. Every medium has specific attributes, which can be harnessed towards more effective communication. If we look at our analogies for pretentiousness we might notice that the heating duct works well as a static image while the man with a head full of hot air is an idea that implies movement. A static analogy might work better in painting or sculpture while one that lends itself to movement might be more suitable for dance or animation.

Finally, we need to be aware that in arriving at a potential analogy, we move from a general theme to a specific illustration of that theme. Each specific illustration has its own characteristics. From these characteristics flow specific ideas, which can be used to guide the development of a project from its foundation to completion. Think about the hot air man versus the ostentatious flower. You could use each of these analogies as the basis for a story about pretension but what different stories they would be.

Analogy can make the internal, external; the abstract, concrete and the invisible, visible. That's powerful magic, indeed. And in narrowing down ideas to a specific form, analogy begins the process of building a world, which can contain a story and generate a performance. This gives analogy a special relationship to animation. Animators need to build alternative worlds with all their rules and create performances that go beyond dialogue. In this, analogy is a guide par excellence. In the next article we will look, in detail, at how analogy marries with the special properties of animation, and not only helps develop a "show me" performance, but provides the planks for the stage as well.

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**ELLEN BESEN** studied animation at Sheridan in the early 1970s. Since then she has directed award-winning films both independently and for the NFB, worked as a film programmer and journalist, taught storytelling and animation filmmaking at Sheridan and given story workshops at many institutions and festivals, including the Ottawa International Animation Festival. She is the director of The Zachary Schwartz Institute for Animation Filmmaking, an online school that specializes in storytelling and writing for animation.

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CAREER COACH

# Unemployment Insurance

*by Pamela Kleibrink Thompson*



**I**N OCTOBER, WE CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN — A TIME when we can masquerade as a ghost, devil or witch. Here's how to make sure your employer and colleagues don't think of you as a monster the rest of the year.

Leave your monstrous ego at the door. Become known as a person who is easy to get along with, dependable and delivers quality work on time, all the time and you'll have an easier time getting more work. Don't act like a beast. Nobody wants to work with a troublemaker. Though work hours can be brutal around a deadline, maintain a positive attitude and be as accommodating as you can. Do your best at all times and you'll brew a solid reputation which is better than a magic power for getting more work.

Don't be a phantom at the office. Be visible. Make your presence felt and contribute ideas and help solve problems. Be at work when it counts. No one will appreciate your solo midnight haunts at the office. Your employer won't appreciate the long hours you put in if he or she never sees you on the job. Have the same hours as your supervisor and be available for meetings.

If your co-workers are burning the midnight oil to meet an important deadline, be as obsessed as they are about delivering your work. Call on your supernatural powers and work like a demon to get the project done.

When you are between jobs, don't freak out if you are out of work for a spell. Sometimes it takes a long time to find work. Take the long-term view. There is no magic formula for career success. Recognize that it will take lots of work to get work.

Don't be a time vampire. Don't suck the life out of your contacts and connections. Be friendly, but brief on the phone as well as in e-mail. Realize that time is valuable and get to your point as quickly as possible. Try not to drive your connections batty.

### MEETINGS THAT ARE A TREAT

The trick to running a good meeting is to have a planned agenda and stick to it. Start on time; don't wait for latecomers. It isn't fair to those who have made your meeting a priority and who are there on time. If you have them wait for others to show, it indicates that you don't feel the time is valuable of those who are already there.

Create an action list after the meeting and distribute it to all attendees and others who are affected but who couldn't attend.

Scare up job leads by networking. Go to industry related events. Things don't happen overnight like magic, but steadily building your network and keeping those relationships alive will help you in the long run. Conjure up ways to get your work seen by entering it in screenings of professional organizations and festivals.

Creating a Website could help you market your work to the world but make sure it doesn't spook viewers by taking an eternity to download. Don't expect that your emailed attachments will be opened. Many people fear computer viruses more than the boogeyman.

Bone up on animation history and techniques through books, industry Websites, magazines and classes. Continue to improve your skills and marketing materials.

Don't listen to pessimists who say that animation is dead. Haunt the theaters when they show animated fare.

Carve out time to work on your own project. If you have a great idea for a film, make it, don't take it to your grave.

With your career at stake, these tricks will ensure that your co-workers and employer consider it a treat to work with you. ■

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**PAMELA KLEIBRINK THOMPSON** *is a recruiter, hiring strategist and career coach. She is recruiting artists for a visual effects film being produced in Los Angeles.*

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## AWN'S ONLINECHAT IS NOW LIVE!

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

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



Projects from the U.K. and France still dominate Cartoon Forum. On the bottom, participants view pilot projects over breakfast. Courtesy of Cartoon Forum.

ITALIA CONCETTO

## Cartoon Forum 2003: Co-Production Paradise

by Bob Swain and Ron Diamond

ONE OF THE FEW PEOPLE TO HAVE ATTENDED ALL 14 editions of [Cartoon Forum](#) so far, Bob Swain was in Varese, Italy, in September 2003 to check out the European projects most likely to make it through the co-production system and into full production.

Organized under the umbrella of the European Media program and moving on from country to country each year, the event was originally set up to encourage a stronger European animation sector, increase the number of co-production partnerships and encourage a faster investment cycle. And it has proven to be a big success — with some 30 to 40% of projects pitched since 1990 having been produced.

It's not a market as such, as the gathering is open only to producers whose projects have been selected for presentation and to invited investors. These buyers attend a series of 40-minute pitches — 81 of them this year, over a three-day period in four meeting rooms, seeking a total investment of €280M.

Overall, standards were high — although there is still a surprising number of poor projects that make it so far. Sadly, these are mostly from less economically developed countries. Although the dream is of a powerful Europe-wide industry, the truth is that this is a business still dominated by a few major countries. The U.K. and France are the two most powerful — with the U.K. consistently winning out on creativity.

In terms of attendance, this year's most popular project was *Village People* from The Illuminated Film Company. Essentially a British sitcom meets *The Simpsons*, it has been carefully designed to appeal to a family audience. Producer Iain Harvey is looking to make an initial series of 26 half-hours with a budget of €213,000 per half-hour.



Family project *Village People* (top) proved to be popular with the Forum's attendees. The visually challenged kung fu fighter of *Skunk* (center) charmed many viewers. The producers of *Fairy Mary* (bottom), a CGI project developed for preschoolers made their pitch at Cartoon Forum this year. *Village People* © The Illuminated Film Co. 2003. *Skunk* © Cartoon Saloon. *Fairy Mary* © 2STV Ltd.



Close behind in terms of numbers in the room — but also one of the most talked about projects of the Forum — was *Skunk*, from Irish animation house [Cartoon Saloon](#). Based on a beautiful Oriental design, it tells the story of a short-sighted skunk Kung Fu fighter. Cartoon Saloon may not be that well-known yet but the project works well — and it managed to beat many of the bigger names to the draw. Aimed at kids 6-12, producer Paul Young plans a series of 26 episodes of 13-minutes.

But the most universally praised project of the entire Forum was Tiger Aspect's *Charlie and Lola*, a charming 26x10 preschool series. In a crowded market, this is the one pre-school series most likely to succeed. Based on a popular series of books by Lauren Child and with Kitty Taylor slated to direct, it successfully enters the fantastic world of young children whilst also hitting all the right buttons for parents. Unusually, many of the broadcasters in the room were prepared to go public in their expressions of interest. The proposed budget is €3.3M.

Aardman Animations was continuing in its bid for world animation domination with its first move into children's television series since the classic *Morph*. The 52x13 3D computer animation *Chop Socky Chooks* is based on a gang of Kung Fu chickens (animators are obviously set to follow in Quentin Tarantino's footsteps with martial arts looking like being one of the year's big trends). Development has been undertaken in collaboration with Cartoon Network. As Aardman's first ever CGI series, producer Miles Bullough and director Sergio Delfino explained the plan is to handle all design and pre-production work in the UK, with volume animation being outsourced to other studios around the world. The budget is €380,000 per half hour.

London CGI house Skaramoosh was also presenting plans for a 3D series — *Swashbucklers*. The 26x11 series is based on a series of 18 popular comic pirate books by Marc Richards. The budget is €270,000 per half hour.

Icelandic CGI company CA0Z presented plans for a half-hour special featuring an impressive array of voice talent, including Monty Python's Terry Jones and singers Björk and Damon Albarn of Blur. *Anna And The Moods* is based on a story and music commissioned by the British Arts Council and featuring a collaboration between the Brodsky Quartet, Icelandic poet Sjórn and

composer Julin Nott (who was responsible for the music of Aardman's *Wallace and Gromit* films as well as many successful movies).

Of the other CGI projects on show, the most interesting was *Fairy Mary* from Two Sides TV and created at London animation facility The Hive by director Nathan Laud. The pre-school format presents the world of two young fairies and a pixie, all homemade and living on a shelf in a child's bedroom. In the style of *Toy Story*, they only come to life and get into scrapes once they have been left on their own. Producer Catherine Robins is looking for a budget of €2.5 million to make the 26x5 series.

A new name with a hot project was Peter Dodd of Mummysboy Productions. A veteran of the commercial sector and of series work with both Cosgrove Hall and Egmont Imagination, Dodd has developed his own stop-frame series *DreamMakers*. Aimed at a 6-9 audience, it's about the antics of bedbugs, tooth fairies and jumping sheep in a tin pot studio, trying to film dreams and beam them into the heads of young children. Former Cosgrove Hall managing director Iain Pelling is on board as exec producer. The budget is €10-11,000 per minute for a 26x13 series.

Another stop-frame project was *The Christmas Bunny*, a 50-minute special from Living Doll in Cardiff. Producer Jackie Edwards and director Tracy Spottiswoode have created a beautiful story about Truffly the Easter Bunny, who gets mixed up with the Christmas decorations and is determined to make it to the top of the tree. Welsh broadcaster S4C has already put up €400,000 of the €1.7 million budget.

TV-Loonland's offering this time came in the shape of the highly original *Sam Hamwich, Superhero Sandwich*. The 52x11 series will tell the story of a flying ham sandwich and his sidekick Chip Sideorder as they take on the likes of evil Dr Broccoli and Gina Fettucine!

*Angelo* was jointly presented by Karsten Kiilerich of Denmark's A Film, Ralph Christians from Magma Films in Ireland and Matthias Walter of NDF in Germany — all successful animation producers in their own right as well as having strong co-production track records. The show tells the story of a 12-year-old nerd and his wild and fun-loving guardian angel. The 26x22 series has a budget of €6M and is aimed at a 8-12 audience.

One of the most exciting bits of news at the Forum was the return of Pesky's *The Amazing ADRENALINI!* Brothers. Already stars of a series of two-and-a-half minute shorts on CBBC, Nickelodeon and channels around the world, the most fearless stunt performers of all time are preparing to team up once again for 26 expanded 11-minute shows. David Hodgson and the Pesky team even set up a live satellite link with Xan, Adi and Enk in an effort to raise the €200-230,000 per half-



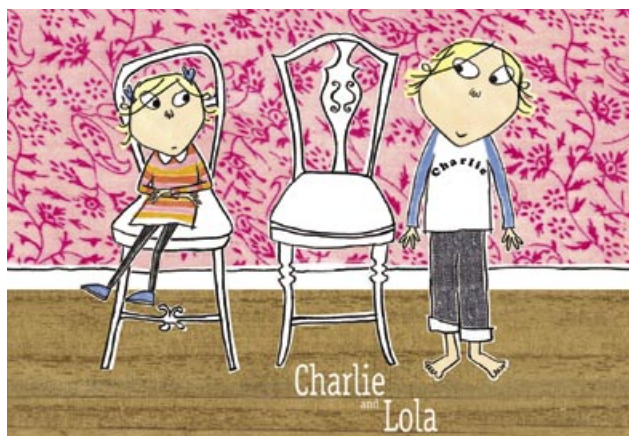
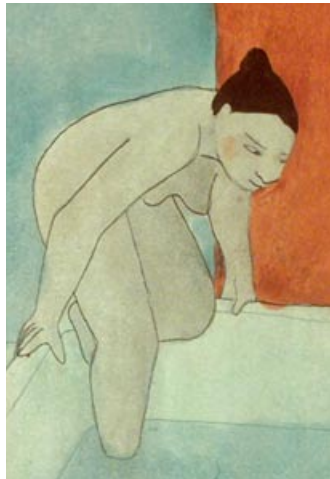
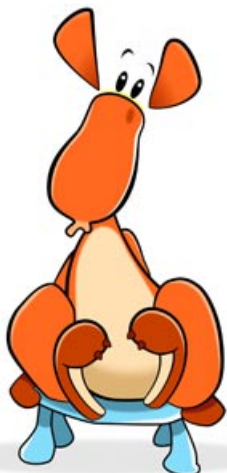
Former Cosgrove Hall vets developed the stop-frame series *DreamMakers* (top). Three companies from Denmark, Ireland and Germany banded together to present *Angelo* (bottom). *DreamMakers* image and characters © Peter Dodd 2003. *Angelo* © A Film/nDF/Magma Films.

hour needed to make the series.

Cartoon Forum regulars Sirlol Prods. were on hand with *Holly's Helpline*, a 26x11 stop-frame pre-school series about an agony aunt for the animal kingdom. A quarter of the €2.8 million budget has already been secured from Welsh broadcaster S4C.

Elephant Prods. presented a recreation of a classic British animation series from the 1980s. *Willo The Wisp*, is set to be directed by Bobbie Spargo, daughter of original creator Nick Spargo. Plans are for an initial series of 13 five-minute episodes.

*The Trials of an Orange Aardvark* was a charming concept created by Iranian writer Behzad Farahat and



Remake project *Willo The Wisp* (top) is to be directed by the original creator's daughter. *The Trials of an Orange Aardvark* (middle left) might wind up as a set of interstitials. *Sans Queue Ni Tête* (middle right) was received the Cartoon D'Or award. *Charlie and Lola* (bottom) generated good word-of-mouth at the Forum. *Willo The Wisp* © Elephant Productions Ltd. and Spargo Productions 2003. *Orange Aardvark* © 2003 Spider Eye Ltd. *Sans Queue Ni Tête* © Sandra Desmazières. *Charlie and Lola* © Tiger Aspect Productions.

presented by Morgan Francis of British studio Spider Eye. Pitched as a 26x5 series at €4,275 a minute, broadcasters in the room said it's future was more likely to be as a shorter package of amusing interstitials.

The number of adult-themed shows presented at Cartoon Forum has significantly fallen over the past few years as it becomes clear that this is a particularly difficult part of the market. While there are a few adult slots available, the chances of pulling them together as a European co-production are slim. One of the few aiming to buck the odds this year was Atomic Arts with the extremely adult *Animal Pharm*. A CGI sitcom, it tells the story of a group of animals in a psychiatric hospital which has secretly become a pharmaceutical testing center! Producer Sean O'Kelly is hoping to raise €2.2 million in order to make 13 half hours.

The 2003 Cartoon d'Or was awarded during the closing night ceremony to Sandra Desmazières for her first short film, *Sans Queue Ni Tête*. It had already received the Prize Gaston Roche at the Espinho Festival 2002. Produced in the framework of ENSAD (Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs), the film, made of animated painting, relates a nonsensical and absurd day where boredom and routine mingle. The Cartoon d'Or winner receives €15,000 from MEDIA as a pre-production aid to begin a more ambitious project like a feature film or a TV special.

So, another Cartoon Forum complete — some projects set to become future classics and others unlikely to reach production. But the concept of European co-production continues to make the most of available talent and markets. Wise producers will already be marking their diaries for Cartoon Forum Number 15 — September 22-26, 2004 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. ■

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Writer, adventurer and all-round party animal, **BOB SWAIN** has danced his way through the animation scene for the best part of 20 year. Scriptwriting and script editing make up his current staple diet.

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Additional reporting and photography was done by **RON DIAMOND**, the co-founder and co-publisher of Animation World Network. He also serves as exec produce/ founder of Los Angeles-based Acme Filmworks, an animation commercial production company.

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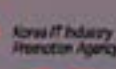
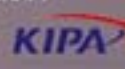
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# New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

ANIME 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.

## **Fruits Basket. V.1, A Great Transformation? V.2, What Becomes of Snow? V.3, Puddles of Memories. V.4, The Clearing Sky.**

TV series (26 episodes), 2001. Director: Akitaro Daichi. V.1-2, six episodes/123 minutes; v.3-4, seven episodes/143 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: FUNimation Productions, Ltd.

In one of the informative DVD extras, Director Daichi discusses the problems of crafting an anime adaptation of an extremely popular prize-winning current girls' romantic fantasy (by Natsuki Takaya). The TV serialization must have a satisfactory conclusion that does not contradict or conflict with the still ongoing manga story. The *Fruits Basket* anime got high marks from the manga's fans for succeeding at this.

Tohru Honda, 16, is entering high school under traumatic circumstances. Her widowed mother has just been killed in an accident. Through freakish circumstances, Tohru becomes the live-in housekeeper of young novelist Shigure Sohma and his two teen cousins Yuki and Kyo who are classmates of hers. The Sohmas are a wealthy but reclusive family. Shigure, Yuki and Kyo are the only three who live outside the clan's walled estate and associate with the public. Tohru learns that the Sohmas are victims of a bizarre curse — when one of them is embraced by someone of the opposite gen-



16-year-old Tohru Honda becomes the housekeeper to a family cursed to live as animals from the Oriental zodiac in *Fruits Basket*.

der, they transform into an animal of the Oriental zodiac. Shigure is a dog and Yuki is a rat.

Kyo is a cat, which is not a member of the zodiac because when it was established by Buddha, the rat tricked the cat into disqualifying itself. As a result, the hot-tempered Kyo is in constant rivalry with Yuki, who accuses Kyo of using an ancient legend to excuse himself of responsibility for his own failings. As the series progresses, Tohru meets other Sohma family members and sees how their animal personas have affected their personalities.

This fantasy element seems like a humorous gloss to catch the attention of anime and manga fans. The underlying plot is the more serious romance melodrama of the innocent heroine who becomes involved with an ancient family with a mysterious secret. Tohru gradually realizes that Kyo's explosive temper and Yuki's sometimes-haughty manners both hide the insecurity of teens attempting to live like normal people while hiding their embarrassingly freak-

ish abnormalities (among other things, they lose their clothing when they transform). Early episodes are full of humorous accidents in which Tohru must frantically help the boys hide from their classmates until they can return to human form and get dressed, despite the social danger to herself of being found associating with nude boys.

The transformations gradually fade from the story, to be replaced by more normal high school social elements. Tohru's warm, caring personality helps Yuki and Kyo develop self-confidence. This encourages other young members of the Sohma clan to abandon their traditional seclusion, which Tohru feels is a positive step. But it causes her to be regarded as a dangerous rival by the old-fashioned family head, who is used to enforcing his authority with dangerous violence. Most of the episodes are light-hearted enough that the three-episode finale is a grim shocker (but there is a happy ending, to blend back in with Takaya's continuing comic-book serial).

**Please, Teacher! V.1, Hot for Teacher. V.2, Meet the In-Laws. V.3, The Honeymoon's Over. V.4, Hello Again.**

TV series (12 episodes), 2002. Director: Yasunori Ide. V.1, four episodes/100 minutes; V.2-4, three episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

Adolescent boys notoriously want their high school fantasy-comedies more raunchy than the girls do. *Please, Teacher!* (*Onegai Teacher!*), a 12-episode TV series (January 10 through March 28, 2002; animated by Daume) is age-rated 16+ for risque innuendo, but it actually blends TV sitcom "misunderstandings" with a tender true-love romantic plot suitable for mid-teens of both genders.

Kei Kusanagi has just moved in with his doctor uncle in a rural Japanese town, and entered its high school as a freshman. Kei looks like a frail 15. His new schoolmates know his uncle is treating him, but they do not know he is actually 18 and suffering from a rare disorder that has retarded his growth. Since Kei does not want to be treated as a freak, the school administration allows him to pose as a real 15-year-old.

Kei accidentally discovers that his school's knockout-gorgeous new teacher, Mizuho Kazami, is actually a rookie agent of the Galaxy Federation observing Earth's civilization. Since humans are not supposed to know of the aliens, Mizuho is required to keep Kei under closer observation than a normal homeroom teacher-student relationship. They have to become husband and wife! Kei's uncle and the school principal are dismayed by the "marriage," but



Young looking Kei gets to live out a teenage boy's fantasy in *Please, Teacher!*

since Kei is 18, it's legal. However, since Kei is pretending to be 15, the principal insists that they maintain a regular teacher-student relationship in public for propriety's sake.

The early episodes emphasize the risque humor. Kei is in the dream situation of every male mid-teen whose developing hormones are excited by a really sexy young teacher, but his nerdy personality makes him too embarrassed to take advantage of it. Mizuho's spaceship's malfunctioning teleportation device keeps transporting him, her or both into compromis-

ing situations. Kei's close school pals, two boys and three girls, keep dropping in on either him (to socialize) or her (for help with lessons), forcing one or the other to hide that they are living together now.

As the school year goes by, the episodes become more serious romantic dramas. Kei and Mizuho are both shy young people (she is about 21) trying to work out their own relationships. Kei's school pals begin pairing off (with some adolescent fumbings about how far they should go), and the openness of their romances emphasizes Kei's and Mizuho's pain of living a lie. Koishi, a sweet girl, is falling in love with Kei.

Kei likes her, and does not know how to politely discourage her. Should he? Mizuho now trusts him enough to release him from close watch.

Should they give up their secret marriage so she can concentrate on her galactic observation assignment, while Kei and Koishi can develop a normal romance? Or have Kei and Mizuho come to really love each other? Episodes 8 through 12 turn into a serious romantic soap opera, although the final episode made for the DVD set ends the series with an overload of screwball lewd sci-fi humor as Kei's alien nymphomaniac mother-in-law comes to Earth for a visit.

**Rune Soldier. V.1, Enter the Klutz. V.2, Adventure for Dummies. V.3, A True Champion. V.4, Monsters and Mayhem. V.5, Fists of Folly. V.6, Louie Punch.**

TV series (24 episodes), 2001. Director: Yoshitaka Koyama. V.1-6, four episodes/100 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

Ryo Mizuno is best known to anime and fantasy-role-playing fans as the creator of the mega-popular *Record of Lodoss War* games and the dramatic novels based upon them, which have been animated as both a TV series and several OAV features. But Mizuno also writes FRP comedy. *Rune Soldier* (*Mahou Senshi Liui* or *Louie the Magician Warrior*) was a 24-episode adaptation (April 3 through September 18, 2001; animated by the J.C. Staff studio) from Mizuno's manga serial (drawn by Mamoru Yokota) for Japan's *Monthly Dragon Magazine* and *Dragon Jr. Magazine* for gamers.

In a blatantly stereotypical sword-&-sorcery world, three women are trying to break into the macho profession of adventuring, monster fighting and treasure seeking: Genie the brawny warrior, Melissa the priestess of Mylee the god of battle and tomboyish Merrill the young thief. They need a magician to complete their group. But none of the scholarly magicians (particularly the women magicians) want to participate in anything as earthy and physical as adventuring.

The best they can find is Louie, a student at the Magicians' Guild who is on the verge of flunking out. Louie is the adopted son of the Guild Headmaster and is expected to follow the same career, but he has a college jock personality and would rather be a warrior than a wizard. When facing monsters or villains, Louie gets carried away with battle fever and uses his wand as a club to start brawling, rather than casting a spell from a safe distance.

Despite his flaws, Louie is good-natured, and his irritating tendency to treat the three women as "just guys" like him is better than the condescension they get from all the other male adventurers. Melissa is horri-



Three women and a man are the adventurous, magical *Rune Soldiers*.

fied to receive a revelation from Mylee that Louie is a destined Hero whom she must serve. The three reluctantly adopt him into their team, more as a servant than an equal until he learns to use common sense and take advantage of his magical training instead of rushing at every adversary from zombies to giant slugs to sea serpents to punch them out.

The episodes are a pleasant blend of action and humor with witty dialogue, which build up the personalities of the main and supporting characters. Melissa becomes desperate to educate Louie into becoming a courtly Hero, while he continues to blunder his way to victories that work but lack dignity. The first 15 episodes are independent, but they surreptitiously add bits of information about the Kingdom of Ohfun. This starts building around episode #16 into a plot by traitors among the nobility and the Magicians' Guild to overthrow the King.

Although the plotters find it difficult to take Louie

seriously, a revelation that he is a destined Hero cannot be ignored. Louie and his companions suddenly find themselves fighting assassins in the guise of friends in addition to the obvious monsters and villains they are used to. *Rune Soldier* is good fun for FRP gamers and fans of adventure fantasy.

### **X. V.1-V.8.**

*TV series (24 episodes), 2001-2002. Director: Yoshiaki Kawajiri. V.1, four episodes/95 minutes; V.2-8, three episodes/75 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.*

X (the TV series) is the latest and most detailed anime adaptation of the adult manga serial by the four-woman artistic team CLAMP. A blend of sci-fi, mythology and mysticism, X tells of the secret battle between seven "Dragons of Heaven" who want to preserve the world including humanity, and seven "Dragons of Earth" who believe that humans are destroying the planet and must be exterminated. These 14 warriors are a mix of ancient priests and seers, scientists and technicians, and youths who do not yet know

they are the reincarnations of powerful supernatural warriors.

The story is heavy on moody psychosexual overtones and Oriental and Judeo-Christian themes (yinyang, the Tarot, the Kabbalah), leading to the apocalyptic Last Battle as predicted by Nostradamus (the 1999 date is now being downplayed since we are past that year).

CLAMP's X manga has been running serially in *Asuka* magazine for more than a decade. Viz Comics is publishing the U.S. edition. X was first animated in 1993 as a 25-minute music video, X2 [*X squared*]. A theatrical feature followed in 1996, but the

story was too complex by then to fit into one movie, so it concentrated upon the Last Battle alone. Reviews agreed that the direction by Taro Rin was spectacular, but it was non-stop bloody action that was incomprehensible to anyone not familiar with the manga.

The long-awaited TV series, animated by the Madhouse studio, is a fuller adaptation of the manga. Direc-

tor Kawajiri explains, in a DVD extra, that it includes all the favorite dramatic scenes, but has otherwise been re-plotted to add some new elements and focus upon the cast in different ways. It began with X: *An Omen*, a 20-minute direct-to-video teaser released August 25, 2001 (on the first DVD as Episode 0), followed by 24 episodes of X on the WOWOW satellite channel Wednesdays at 6:30 pm, October 3, 2001 through March 27, 2002.

Astronomers and occultists observe a shift in the stars, which the latter realize foretell the imminent battle for the end of the world. Adolescent Shinto temple acolytes are told they are among this generation's Dragons of Heaven "Seals", and must go to Tokyo to defend humanity against their Dragons of Earth "Angel" counterparts. Fuma and Kotori Monou, two high schoolers, are delighted to learn that their childhood friend, Kamui Shirou, who left six years ago, is moving back to Tokyo. They are shocked when Kamui turns out to have become bitter and sullen.

Violent supernatural events begin happening around them including a deadly attack upon their father. Kamui is the key Dragon; he can join either the Seals or the Angels. But the battle has already resulted in the death of his mother, and he resents having the "burden of destiny" thrust upon him.

X is so complex that the first DVD includes a 24-page character guide booklet. There are 18 distinct main characters. Anime character designer Yoshinori Kanemori enhances CLAMP's attractive art style. The Madhouse studio was also working on sequences for the American *The Animatrix* while X was in production, and its influence can be seen in the replacement of the Angels' traditional Oriental "shadow demon" supernatural assassins by modern *Men in Black* clones. In fact, X's basic plot of a secret war for the fate of unsuspecting humanity is close enough to *The Matrix* that it should be popular with its fans.



**X is the latest anime offering from the CLAMP team.**



Two rookie Tokyo policewomen must fight terrorists in *You're Under Arrest!*

### **You're Under Arrest!: The Motion Picture.**

TV special feature, 1999. Director: Junji Nishimura. 90 minutes. Price & format: DVD bilingual \$29.98. Distributor: A.D.V. Films.

*You're Under Arrest! (Taiho Shichauzo)* began as the second most popular manga creation of Kosuke Fujishima (*Oh! My Goddess*). Brash Natsumi Tsujimoto and demure Miyuki Kobayakawa are two rookie policewomen assigned as an Odd-Couple team at the Traffic Control Department of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police's Bokuto Station. The series gained popularity as a charismatic soap opera about the adventures and romances among the detectives and staff of the Bokuto station, with Natsumi and Miyuki originally to be little more than meter maids in their "pet" Honda Today police car (a "micromini" model not imported into the U.S. because it is so tiny) but somehow always ending up in the midst of the action.

*YUA* was first animated as a four-episode OAV series in 1994, then as a 47-episode TV series in 1996, and most recently as an April 1999 Tuesday-Friday daily TV 20-episode mini-series (six minutes each) plus this 90-minute TV special *Taiho Shichauzo: The Movie*, broadcast on April 24, 1999, animated by Studio Deen.

Miyuki and Natsumi return to Bokuto Station after a year's training among other Tokyo police divisions to broaden their capabilities, just in time for an apparent terrorist assault on the metropolis. Mysterious tips lead the police to hidden caches of automatic weapons; computer hackers sabotage Tokyo's automated traffic lights and telephone system, paralyzing the city; bridges are blown up. Bokuto Station is totally mobilized along with all others, but it quickly becomes an unnatural center of the action — so much so that Police HQ

suspects a tie-in between the terrorists and a Bokuto detective who disappeared two years earlier.

Bokuto's popular chief is relieved of his command and the staff falls under suspicion. Miyuki as a computer expert, Natsumi as an anti-terrorist expert and the rest of the cast well-known to *YUA* fans — grumpy but good-hearted Superintendent Arizuka, gruffly fatherly Inspector Tokuno, workaholic Ass't Inspector Kinoshita, ditzy female staff supervisor Nikaido and several others — must surreptitiously fight their own HQ superiors to clear themselves and find the secret behind the real terrorists.

The mystery is suspensefully and believably developed. An exciting finale was wanted, and while the action is plausibly motivated and well choreographed, it goes over the top into an *Assault on Precinct 13*-type attack on Bokuto Station followed by a *Speed*-type pursuit of the escaping villains. "You will believe that a mini-police car can operate on land — at sea — and in the air!"

Some fans grumbled about the suddenly extremely noticeable limited animation during this action climax, although professional animators may be more forgiving for what the Studio Deen staff accomplished with a TV animation production budget. *YUA* fans were not disappointed, and the movie is self-contained enough to be enjoyable to fans of police action TV series not familiar with the previous *YUA* stories. ■

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

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FILM REVIEWS

# Fresh from the Festivals:

## October 2003's Film Reviews

by Greg Singer



Henry's Garden © 2002 Simplistic Pictures.

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:

**Henry's Garden** (2002), 8 min., directed by Moon Seun, USA. Info: Kevin Geiger, Simplistic Pictures, 2340 Overland Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064. Tel.: 310-234-1176. Email: kevin@simplisticpictures.com. Web: www.simplisticpictures.com.

**The Polar Bears** (2003), 16 min., directed by Pierre Coffin, France. Email: info@passion-pictures.com. Web: www.passion-pictures.com.

**Terra** (2003), 7 min., directed by Aristomenis Tsirbas, USA. Info: Dane Smith, MeniThings, 7408 Lexington St., West Hollywood, CA 90046. Tel.: 323-969-8039. Email: dane@menithings.com.

**Eat Your Peas** (2003), 2 min., directed by Paul Hargrave, USA. Email: phargrave@att.net. Web: www.255zerozero.com.

**Love is a Bullet in the Heart** (2002), 3 min., directed by Diego Alvarez, Columbia. Tel./Fax: (571) 410-3405. Email: lepixma@hotmail.com.



*Henry's Garden* is destroyed by a tire attack.  
© 2002 Simplistic Pictures.

### HENRY'S GARDEN

Movies are not generally described as gentle, but, if they were, *Henry's Garden* would be among them. Director Moon Seun and producer Kevin Geiger wanted to allow the movie some room to breathe; some time for the story to unfold, and for its mood to settle in. Its unhurried motion and hopeful emotion are a rarity for audiences who are more accustomed to the frenetic, flailing action of what passes for stories these days.

*Henry's Garden* begins with the titular character, a gentle giant, delighting among the soft, muted colors, sunshine and breeze of his garden. Henry smells a daisy with deep appreciation. An automobile tire then wanders into the garden, and Henry considers it with the same innocent, welcoming curiosity as he does his flower. The tire doesn't seem as delicate and pretty — and, though a tire by any other name, it certainly doesn't smell as sweet. Henry tosses it aside. Soon, more tires roll by, until a "stampede" of them plows through, knocking down fences and ruining his garden. The

whole area is flattened and devastated.

As Henry realizes that his flower has died, an entire city storms around him. He dejectedly sulks through the lonely, stony cloister of high-rise buildings and alleyways. Henry picks up a passing tire with frustration, and through its central hole he sees a rainbow in the sky, a window of hope through the bleakness. As he walks toward the sunlight breaking through the clouds, he comes across a handful of daisies growing out of the pavement. Even here, beneath the sorrowful memory of once what was, amid the clumsy onslaught of overbearing city, life endures.

Henry smiles, plants a daisy on his bald head, and continues on. The movie concludes with a quotation: "Nature is unforgiving; she will not agree to withdraw her flowers, her music, her scents or her rays of light before the abominations of man." — Victor Hugo.

In crafting a performance for Henry, a language of posture and movement that was empathetic, the animation was appropriately understated. According to its creators, the aesthetic aim of the movie was not realism or caricature, but rather a stylized naturalism. The look-and-feel of *Henry's Garden* was inspired by black and white films such as *Metropolis* and *Frankenstein*, along with the illustrations of artists such as Lisbeth Zwerger.

*Henry's Garden* was created using Alias Maya, Adobe Photoshop and Premiere, Fractal Design Painter and Right Hemisphere Deep Paint 3D. The short film has been making the rounds on the festival circuit, having already played at venues in Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Italy, Germany, Korea, Australia and the United States. Included among its honors are the Best Animation Award at the Great Lakes Film Festival (2002), Beecher Digital Art Competition (2003) and San Diego Asian Film Festival (2003); as well as the Spirit of Moondance Award at the Moondance Film Festival (2003).

An animated feature treatment of *Henry's Garden*, called *A Green Winter*, is in the works.

### THE POLAR BEARS

*The Polar Bears* is solid, cuddly, good young-fashioned 3D cartoony animation. Four paws up.

Commissioned by BBC Television for the half-hour sketch comedy show *Lenny Henry in Pieces*, the seven short films were visualized by director Pierre Coffin of Passion Pictures in London (the same studio whose blokes brought us the Gorillaz music videos), and animated by production house and post facility MacGuff Ligne in Paris. Each episode is a couple of minutes of uncomplicated, quintessential British humor, glimpsing into the family life of four polar bears living in a concrete

enclosure as an exhibit at the zoo.

In one short, *Captive Breeding Programme*, mother bear Cynthia is trying to convince her son Shane that life in the wild is not all that it's cracked up to be. For example, when hunting fish, sometimes wild polar bears have to swim under the ice. It's hard for Shane's insular experience to imagine this. Why would someone go ice swimming when fish live under rocks and in buckets? Cynthia appeals to Uncle Ian to wise the boy up. Ian ruminates, "Life in the arctic is overrated. Except for the sex, of course... One night stands, where the arctic night would last for months..." Despite Cynthia's shooshing, life in the

wild is certainly not like the zoo's captive breeding program. Gary, the father polar bear, heatedly reminds Cynthia of the smile on her face when she got back from San Diego. Remarking on Shane, he laments, "Look at 'im... he looks nuthin' like me!" Cynthia answers, "Well, he's not fat and impotent, if that's what you mean."

In a second short, *Gary's Fall*, Gary is playing soccer and, true to the episode's title, he falls into a pit where he breaks his arms. With his arms stretched wide, held in casts, his family can't resist taunting him. "How big was that fish?" "Tell us again, how far away were you from saving that goal?" Gary expresses his gladness that his suffering is so amusing. "Do you want a hug?" Cynthia offers. Gary grumpily declines. "Awww, you say that... but look at your body language." After the casts are off, Gary enthusiastically and rambunctiously returns to his soccer game. Unnaturally, he falls again, this time breaking his legs.

*The Polar Bears* shorts were shown at **SIGGRAPH's Electronic Theatre 2003**. The computer animation was



***The Polar Bears* presents uncomplicated, British family humor.**  
© 2003 British Broadcasting Corp.

completed over seven months using Maya and proprietary MGLR (MacGuff Ligne Rendering) software.



**Mala is forced to curb her curiosity in *Terra*.**  
© 2003 MeniThings Productions.

## TERRA

*Terra* is a 3D computer film from director Aristomenis (Meni) Tsribas and producer Dane Smith. The story's protagonist, Mala, is a young female, tadpole-like character who seeks to understand a mysterious object newly looming in the sky. She has crafted a spy-glass to peer into the heavens, but no one believes her when she suggests that there may be life among the stars. Mala's father asks her to surrender her "viewing machine," assuring her that there are only supernatural beings above. According to the wishes of the elders, Mala's father implores her not to "offend the new god."

Unable to defer to her father's wishes, and unwilling to forfeit her need to understand, Mala flees from the sanctions of her community to see more clearly the object nearing their world. As a new day dawns, she discovers with dread that there is some sort of spacecraft positioning itself in orbit, armed to the hilt with weaponry, pointing towards their civilization. As the craft rotates into full view, we see the emblem of a red-white-and-blue flag bearing almost 400 stars, denoting, presumably, the ongoing conquest of the United States of Armageddon.

With respect to its beautiful environments, and its whimsical burtonesque contraptions, *Terra* stands on firm ground. The short film was created using Light-Wave 3D over the course of three months. *Terra* was supported by Fox Searchlab, a mentoring program of Fox Searchlight Pictures for emerging filmmakers.

*Terra* has won awards for Best Animation at the 2003 Palm Springs International Short Film Festival, as well as the Radio Television Hong Kong Film Festival (2003). The film also received an award for Best Original Score (kudos to composer Matt Messina) at the One Reel Short Film Festival in Seattle (2003).



Give peas a chance. [Eat Your Peas](#). © 2003 Paul Hargrave.

### EAT YOUR PEAS

*Eat Your Peas* only takes two minutes to consume. Directed as the senior thesis of Paul Hargrave (Ringling School of Art and Design), the short flick comes across with punkish charm, combining green-tinted 3D computer animation with 2D graphic designs. Some of the backgrounds look like flat fanzine art, with the wah-wah of dialogue ballooning onto screen like handwritten text cut from a notepad. Late in the story, the little boy-turned-monster even pushes away from himself the textual scream of his mother, before hurling his peas (literally and figuratively).

The story itself is pretty simple. A young boy is confronted with a plate of peas, as he contends with the dilemma of whether to trust his own judgment ("yuck") or the exhortations of his mother ("eat your peas ... just one bite").

The boy manages to eat one spoonful, dutifully, but the peas sicken him to his stomach. In this case, the boy very much embodies the adage that we are what we eat, for during the night the peas plunder his insides and infiltrate his DNA. When he wakes in the morning, the boy is alarmed to see that he has mutated into a monster pea-plant. But when his mother calls him to the breakfast table for more of her cooking, the boy attacks her with the newfound mischief to "eat your parents."

In the triumph of imagination, there are times when listening to the little voice inside one's head prevails over listening to the voice of authority. Inspired by the work of designers like Todd Mueller and Jeremy Hollister, and taking cue from commercial motion graphics and [music videos](#), Hargrave's short film is cleverly appealing in its simplicity.

Created with Maya, Shake, Deep Paint 3D, Adobe Photoshop, Painter and Premiere, *Eat Your Peas* screened at SIGGRAPH's Electronic Theatre 2003. It also won the First Prize in *Animation Magazine's* First Annual Student Short Film Awards.

### EL AMOR ES UNA BALA EN EL CORAZÓN (LOVE IS A BULLET IN THE HEART)

Young Colombian animator Diego Alvarez draws on paper. He works in Flash. He even rotoscopes. More importantly, he describes his filmic influences as David Lynch, David Lynch and David Lynch.

His latest short film, *Love is a Bullet in the Heart*, was in fact born from the dialogue of a David Lynch movie. In *Blue Velvet*, Frank (Dennis Hopper) says to Jeffrey (Kyle MacLachlan): "Don't be a good neighbor to her. I'll send you a love letter straight from my heart, fucker! You know what a love letter is? It's a bullet from a fucking gun, fucker!"

Alvarez began with the idea of "love is a bullet in the heart," and built up imagery from there. He describes his short film as a stray bullet that changes the romantic destiny of five people and a gorilla.

Let us set the scene...

A guy is admiring a television through a store window; the alluring, flickering TV screen promises, "And much more!" A boy and girl are chatting online in



David Lynch-ing dovetails with Flash. [Love is a Bullet in the Heart](#). © 2002 Diego Alvarez.

neighboring high-rise buildings. Two chess pieces stand next to one another, forever frozen apart. A kid is ogling a rifle on display on the wall. A man makes

faces at a gorilla through the bars of the animal's cage. A bungee jumper plummets with just enough precision in his cord to kiss the earth before ascending again.

Then — the kid takes the rifle from the wall and fires off a single shot. With cool effect, the bullet races down a length of hallway and splinters through the glass window.

The bullet strikes a drainpipe, which falls to form a bridge between the high-rise buildings separating the boy and girl. The bullet shatters the store window, allowing the man to coddle the television in his arms and to adore the woman on screen with tender kisses. The bullet grazes one of the two chess pieces, nudging them into contact. The bullet cuts through the bungee cord, bringing the jumper and earth together in clear indication that love, indeed, hurts. The bullet rips through the hand of a clown, causing the entertainer to fall against a lever that opens the gorilla's

cage; the animal and his teasing observer come face to face. Lastly, the bullet pierces the breast of a passing dove, and enters its beating heart.

Alvarez is amused that when his movie first played in Colombia, no one seemed to relate to it. Now that it has been nominated and received some attention at international film festivals, people say to him, "Oh, I really like your film, I perfectly understand it."

*Love is a Bullet in the Heart* has played at the Bit Film Festival in Germany (2003) and the Seoul International Cartoon & Animation Festival (2003); it won Second Place at the Notodo Film Festival in Spain (2002). ■

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

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