

ANIMATION

WORLD

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September 2000



The Future of
Features

Don Bluth Speaks Out,
Summer's Hits and Misses,
Co-Productions
and more.....

Plus: Selling Your Idea and Israel Profiled

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Cover: X. © Clamp Studios. Photo courtesy of Manga Entertainment.

Editor's Notebook

by Heather Kenyon



A success and a failure?

As we begin to walk away from the summer – what has been gained and what has been lost in the ongoing struggle to expand the reach and success of animation? There have been several victories, and several defeats.

As Martin Goodman points out in his article “Summers Sleepers and Keepers” this summer has seen the strong introduction of different styles and genres of animation – something we have long been hoping would happen. Despite mixed reviews and audience reaction, *Dinosaur* took CGI to another level with its maddeningly complex number of composites and digital creations. *Chicken Run* brought stop-motion to the forefront, as it became the highest grossing stop-motion film of all time. The charming tale of Gingers quest for freedom worked perfectly with the animation style,

and Aardman Animations’ craftsmanship surely showed that stop-motion is an attractive and fetching technique when in the hands of masters. Furthermore, there is no doubt that effects are now as integral to most films as film stock and cameras. *A Perfect Storm* featured two of today’s biggest stars, George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg, battling the realistic looking digital foe, water. Another huge success for us has to be the excellent adaptation of *The X-Men* that Brian Singer and 20th Century Fox brought to the screen. As numerous other comic books are lined up to hit the silver screen, we hope they follow *X-Men’s* excellent lead. As Rick DeMott points out in his article, “Super Mutants Everyone Can Relate To: The X-Men,” the producers successfully walked the fine line between fan approval and wide audience exclusion – a true hurdle. This film’s success has already bumped up production on several other effects heavy comic adaptations.

Unfortunately, however, the summer wasn’t all wine and roses. *Titan A.E.* came and went, as did *The Road to El Dorado*. With *Titan A.E.’s* passing so did Fox Feature Animation in Phoenix, a facility opened with much hope and fanfare in 1996. Despite Roger Ebert calling *Titan*, “the *Star Wars* of animation” with three-and-a-half stars out of four, and a respectable opening at 5th in the

competitive summer U.S. box office, the film was quickly dropped from theaters, with little additional promotion or advertising from Fox. As Don Bluth points out in Larry Lauria’s “A Conversation With The New Don Bluth,” Fox has switched its focus to New York-based CGI studio, Blue Sky, a dynamic leader in the field. While DreamWorks remains committed to animation and its state-of-the-art Burbank animation complex, there is an uneasiness that perhaps they too will decide to utilize outside animation studios (Aardman) and PDI, in which they have made recent heavy investments. With *El Dorado’s* less than promising outing...the industry waits with crossed fingers that the new animation giant – one of the last remaining true players in the group that rushed to the animation table in the mid-nineties – sticks to their promise. The saddest aspect of both *Titan A.E.* and *El Dorado’s* fate is...they were not bad films. I thoroughly enjoyed the lively, seemingly spontaneous banter of *El Dorado’s* Miguel and Tulio. Altivo (joining Fox’s Bartok) is a new favorite when it comes to sidekick characters. Some of his reaction shots were hysterical. We come back to my old rant...in fact it is beginning to sound like a mantra...that not only do we need incredibly talented storytellers creating these animated features with singular, strong creative visions, but we also need studio

backing that understands the nuances of animation. I am not blaming the woes of every animation feature on studio executives, but animation is not live-action, and those that truly get a handle on its marketing will be the ones to win – if, and only if, they have the great story and film to back it up. We have already seen this with Warner Bros.' missed opportunity in *The Iron Giant*.

There were also some grey areas this summer as well...Rumors say *Dinosaurs* box office draw wasn't as big as expected, and *Pokemons* popularity appears to be fading fast...this, I am sure some will argue is a good thing! While adults may be puzzled at *Pokemons* hold over children one thing is sure: subconsciously it is expanding their horizons about the styles of animation they will accept on the big screen and that can only be good. *Fantasia/2000* opened the IMAX arena to animation in a stunning debut that has already seen the signing of DreamWorks' much-anticipated *Shrek* for similar treatment. That's one I will be in line to see on the first day! While this is a positive, *Fantasia/2000's* performance on regular theatrical screens was quite lackluster. It seems that the large screen format is indeed carving a unique niche for itself and will become a bigger player in time.

With unemployment in Los Angeles running high, it can at times feel like the sky is falling in, but over all I'd say this summer was more positive than negative. It was the mixed bag of an evolving industry. We still have barriers to overcome. As Amid Amidi points out in his article, "Indie Animated Features: Are They Possible?" distribution remains a huge problem

for feature films not being produced by the majors, and we still face people believing that this summer shows an animation saturation of the market. (A favorite pet peeve of mine, I wonder, why they never say this of live-action?) Is the public telling us that there are too many animated features saturating the market? No, we are just learning that because animation is no longer a special event with only one or two releases a year, we must now play with the big live-action boys on their own terms. (Television primetime animation is also learning this tough lesson.) When the studios set up their animation entities they asked for this, and now, to properly compete and succeed, animation films, and their backing studios, are going to have to make sure they have all their ducks in a row – from story, through marketing and distribution. We have to inspire the average movie-goer to plunk down their money on a movie going experience that happens to be animated vs., the latest live-action fare and that my friends, is proving to be a heck of a challenge.

Until Next Time,
Heather



ANIMATION WORLD NETWORK

5700 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 600
Los Angeles, CA 90036
Phone : 323.634.3400
Fax : 323.634.3350
Email : info@awn.com

ANIMATION WORLD

• MAGAZINE •

editor@awn.com

PUBLISHERS

Ron Diamond, President
Dan Sarto, Chief Operating Officer

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Heather Kenyon

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Rick DeMott

EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATORS

Joan H. Kim
Gregory Singer

CONTRIBUTORS

Amid Amidi
Karl Cohen
Rick DeMott
Janet Ginsburg
Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman
Heather Kenyon
Jacquie Kubin
Larry Lauria
Bob Miller
Dr. William Moritz
Tsvika Oren
Fred Patten
Gerard Raiti

OPERATIONS

Annick Tenenge, General Manager

DESIGN/LAYOUT

Alex Binotapa

WEBMASTERS

Jeremy Keller
Alex Binotapa

ADVERTISING SALES

Jay Stokes

Harvey Shame

Shame on you guys! Regarding your article, "Harvey Entertainment Takes Control" (Kenyon, 5.3):

It is hard to believe the editors of *Animation World Magazine* think the Golden Age of comics was in the 1950s and early 1960s. But, that is not why I am writing...

Harvey was NOT "founded in 1939 in New York City as a comic book company by brothers Alfred, Leon, and Robert Harvey," as your article states.

Harvey was founded in 1940 by Alfred Harvey as "Alfred Harvey Publications." The first comic published was *Pocket Comics No. 1* in spring of 1941, the sister publication was *Fun Parade No. 1*, a collection of gag cartoons. (Do some research and find these books, and you will see who published them for yourself.) This by the way, was during the Golden Age of comics.

These however were not the first comics Alfred Harvey worked on. He entered the business in 1927 when he sold his first cartoons, and by the end of the 1930s was the Managing Editor for Victor Fox at Fox Feature Syndicate, one of the leading comic publishers of the time.

When Alfred Harvey enlisted in the US Army, in 1942, he brought his twin brother Leon Harvey into the business as a partner. I believe this is when "Harvey Features Syndicate" was formed, while the company through its publications became known as "Family Comics" at this time.

By the end of 1945 WWII

had ended, and the company was expanding its successful line of comics which included *Joe Palooka*, *Green Hornet* and *Speed* comics. I believe this is when Robert Harvey became a partner, although my records don't confirm his involvement until 1949.

By 1946 the company had become known as "Harvey Publications" and the Harvey "H" became a fixture on the covers of the comics.

I find, it was not until 1948 the publications became known as "Harvey Comics." This is when I believe the first "Harvey Comics" logo appeared on the comic books.

I would like to clarify that I am not saying that the names of the companies changed (although some may have). There were at least a dozen "Harvey" corporations and partnerships coexisting at different times in Harvey history.

When Harvey stopped producing comics in the early 1980s it was because it had been devastated by lawsuits, period.

One other note of interest: "Harvey" was Alfred Harvey's middle name. Wiernikoff was the original family surname. Soon after changing his name, his parents followed suite, later his brother Leon, and finally Robert.

I also wanted to say that I love *Animation World Magazine*, but this article has really hit a sore spot.

I question if this misinformation came from the current Harvey management. The reason I question the Harvey management as the source is, the same misin-

formation appears on the Harvey Website, even though I have made repeated requests to the Harvey management to fix it. The Harvey site has been completely overhauled at least twice, without even a word of the historical misinformation being changed or fixed. Clearly disrespect by Harvey management, for the founder Alfred Harvey and his family.

No matter who and/or what the source, factual information should be checked and double checked. Otherwise it completely destroys the credibility of all other information.

I am hereby requesting a retraction to your article, which I believe to be damaging to my family.

Thank you,
Alan Harvey
<http://www.sadsack.net>

U.S. Animators Insulted!

From "Scandals, Smokescreens and a Golden Age?: Canadian Animation in the 21st Century" (Robinson, 5.5):

"Right wingers were not alone in their complaints; in the U.S., members of the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union went out in full force this spring to complain about jobs being lost to Canadian companies because of generous tax subsidies. It's always interesting to hear complaints from people within a culture that has generally numbed and overtaken most of the world with its crass disposable culture which has thrived off cheap labour and exploitation. So a few American animators are out of work; welcome to the world the rest of us have been living in for decades."

To exult in the suffering of innocent people is wrong. Chris

Robinson and the rest of you guys should be ashamed of yourselves.

Eric Lurio

More Growing Pains

"Growing Pains" by Martin Goodman (Goodman, 5.4) was a great article, and proved quite thought provoking. What specifically touched me was the sentence, "The best bet for a great animated adult feature just might be an action-adventure flick that would have contained minimal dialogue and wowser SPX if filmed live in the first place." I am a producer at Momentum Animation and I immediately thought, 'That is exactly what we do: action adventure with wowser SPX!' It seems we have the talent here at Momentum, we just need to keep searching for the right people to talk to. If you are interested in the style I am talking about you can download a trailer we made that was used in a music video. The link is <http://www.momentumanimations.com/bardot.mpg>

Thanks,
Tim Flora
Producer, Momentum Animation Studios
157 Eastern Rd, South Melbourne
Victoria 3205
Australia
tim@momentumanimations.com
www.momentumanimations.com

Lanier Proved Insightful

When I saw Chris Lanier's article, "The Aesthetics of Internet Animation," (Lanier, 5.5) featured (as well as his fine character on the cover), I realized that I never "shook his hand" so to speak after winning the same category in the World Wide Internet Animation Competition sponsored by

Shockwave. I attended the ceremony in Hollywood but was never introduced to any of the other competitors except for the *Ruth Truth* group who won the grand prize. So heres to being a good sport and shaking hands, as well as praising Chris Lanier for his lovely work and insightful article on animation and the Web.

Also, keep up the good work AWN. I enjoy it very much.

Best,
Michael Stinson
Creator of Symbolman
<http://www.symbolman.com>

Maybe there's hope for imagination amongst all this technology after all. Continue the good work.

Rose Marie

After having read Chris Lanier's "The Aesthetics of Internet Animation" (Lanier, 5.5), I would like to offer the following:

There is a lot of truth in what Chris writes regarding style and crudeness as it relates to MUCH of what is going on out there. I feel part of the reason for this is that there are large numbers of people who have simply toyed around with the medium, or have been much too influenced by a lot of the crude garbage on TV (I won't mention actual titles but you know who they are), or lastly, and probably the most pertinent reason, is everyone is rushing to the Web as fast as they can get there, much like the gold rush of '49.

I myself am an animator and along with a fellow program-

mer we are working on two series of Flash animations intended for the Web upon their completion. However WE ARE NOT GOING TO SACRIFICE QUALITY because there is so much other cheap, amateurish stuff out there. We both have full time jobs by day, and we work together each night plugging away at these films. Each film is done at 24 fps just like Disney and all art is hand-drawn, scanned in and streamlined for vector based graphics. It is very time consuming but we want our work to stand out among animations as opposed to falling in the sea of mediocrity. John Kricfalusi, creator of *Ren and Stimpy* as well as other huge successes, was quoted as saying recently, "There is too much shit out there," regarding Internet animation. Well when all is said and done, my cohort and I don't intend to fall under that statement. Everyone should take pride in their films no matter how detailed or simple, and quit cranking out garbage just to watch things move with sound. While this does constitute a cartoon it does not justify itself as animation. If you look up the definition of the word you will see it means to give life, not just bandwidth.

Thanks for listening,
S.M. Casper

A Conversation With *The New* Don Bluth

by Larry Luria

A few months ago, I interviewed Fox Feature directors, Gary Goldman and Don Bluth for *Animation World Magazine*. The topic of the conversation was the upcoming release of *Titan, A.E.* Part one, the interview with Gary Goldman was run in the June issue. Part two, the interview with Don Bluth, was never printed because the events which transpired at Fox Feature Animation made the interview irrelevant.

Bill Mechanic, head of the Fox Studio, and the Fox organization parted ways; Fox Feature Animation was shut down; Don Bluth and Gary Goldman were gone; and *Titan, A.E.* (which debuted at number five at the box office in its first weekend of release) was sent into animation oblivion.

The closure of Fox Animation has sent shockwaves throughout the industry. One major newspaper even wrote an



Don smiles for the camera while Mrs. Brisby (*The Secret of NIMH*) relaxes between takes. Courtesy of Don Bluth's Toon Talk.

article inferring that "2D animation was dead" ... or extremely sleepy.

Recently, I tracked down Don Bluth and Gary Goldman at the Bluth Group in Phoenix. I spoke with Don about their future plans.

Larry Luria: Hows everything going?

Don Bluth: I think its going very, very well. For us, its basically finding new ground to plough. What really helps us is the contacts we've made over the years. Right now, I'm kind of excited — more than I've been in a long time.

LL: Is there any particular area you are interested in pursuing — whether its feature animation or the Internet?



Don at work. Courtesy of Don Bluth's Toon Talk.



Titan A.E. © 2000 Twentieth Century Fox.

DB: Its probably a combination. I know we [Gary Goldman] will stay in the feature business. We do have a couple of things we are developing. Foremost, is a *Dragon's Lair* feature — which we have been scripting now for maybe six months. Its a comedy and very funny. So we're pursuing that right now with everything we've got.

LL: Gary Goldman mentioned

something about lessons?

DB: I'm going to go out on the road. I'm going to go to Los Angeles, Chicago and New York starting the first three weeks in November. I'm going to do some seminars out there, but, they're not quite a seminar. They have a lot of stuff in them. It's more like — a little show — like a musical show. I talk about all the things I've learned in animation and things that I think might help other people who are the future of animation. I'm going to do that for three months and see what happens. If it works really well, and I understand what the audience is trying to learn, I will use it as a precursor to go online and do classes on the Internet.



Dragon's Lair. ©1983 Bluth Group Ltd.
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LL: Who would it be directed toward — students in junior high, high school and college?

DB: Yes, students, all of the above. People who are aspiring to be in animation. There will be two Websites, DonBluth.com, and in a few weeks, Toontalk.com. Toontalk is more like the instructional area. It is where we concentrate on the learning experience, the teaching. There will be a room in Toontalk, where, if you join that room — which will cost you a monthly fee — it's the Academy of

Animation. There we will do most of the lessons and show most of what we are doing. Hopefully, we will be able to stream a lot of animation. You can see it live, respond live and ask questions live.

LL: Have you had much feedback regarding *The New York Times* article?

DB: Not a lot.

LL: Have you seen it?

DB: No.

LL: They kind of made it sound like 2D animation was dead. I don't know if you read that...

DB: What do you think? Is it?

LL: Oh no, I don't think it is at all.

DB: Do you know anyone doing it?

LL: Anyone doing what...2D?

DB: Yes, 2D.

LL: Not strictly 2D! I think it's one of those things where you use the right tool for the right job. Sometimes the 3D stuff works really well, but I don't think you get the exaggeration, or at least, I haven't seen the exaggeration in the 3D stuff that you can get with the 2D.

DB: Well you know, when it all comes down to it, it probably has to do with what the audience will pay a ticket to see. What they're willing to pay a ticket to see nowadays, seems to be either Disney — which a lot of it is 2D — or 3D animation. If you look at the history

just recently, the pictures that have been pulling in box office — we're talking about *Antz*, *A Bug's Life*, *Toy Story 1 & 2*, *Dinosaurs*. All those are pulling in money. Talk about the 2D animated films that have been out there, like *Iron Giant*, *Prince Of Egypt*, *Titan*...all the 2D films are not really pulling in the money, so I imagine that is where *The New York Times* is getting the idea.

LL: Well, they really made it sound like a very dire situation for anyone who does 2D animation.

DB: If you were to stand up right now, Larry, at a podium and tell everyone there's a great future in 2D animation — exactly how would you sell your case?

LL: I'd say, if you want to do the 3D stuff, you have to learn the 2D stuff, first.

DB: Correct! But they say, 'I don't want to do the 3D stuff. I want to do the 2D stuff.' Can you build a case?

LL: I actually think — and this may change in the next couple of years depending on the bandwidths of the Internet — that the Internet can be a great place for 2D animation.

DB: That's where I have arrived myself! But that's the only place I can see it for now. Although I think it goes with the trends and eventually 2D will probably swing back and become popular again. Everybody will watch 3D animation until they get tired of it and then they'll say, 'Oh, let's look for something that's a relief from this.' But it's probably going to be a little while.

Right now, we are not on top. 2D is not on top. Its definitely 3D on top! Even if you look at the signs — what did Fox just do? They put their 2D studio out of business and invested — invested a lot of money — building a whole new studio with a three picture deal in New York to do 3D animation.

LL: What do you think of the animation art form today?

DB: A lot of the animation that I see nowadays, in 3D and 2D, is very stiff-looking to me. It doesn't look very fluid and it definitely doesn't have the "soul" in it. It looks like it moves about, but that's the extent of it. I really don't see a great artistry there right now. Maybe this has happened as a reaction to all the studios entering the business. Its turning into an industry instead of an art — where everything is measured in terms of time and money. The artists part somehow got eclipsed in the middle of all of that.



Space Ace. ©1983 Bluth Group Ltd.
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LL: Will the Bluth Group develop other properties besides *Dragon's Lair* and *Space Ace*?

DB: Yes.

LL: You said in *The Times* article, you were bound and determined to do your own characters from now on.



Layout artist Larry Leeker listens while Director/Producer Don Bluth explains some finer points in laying out the scenes for *The Secret Of NIMH*. Courtesy of Don Bluth's Toon Talk.

DB: You know what? The business hasn't worked out that way. I've always tried to protect the employees. To protect them, you really have to give everything away.

And this is definitely true: if you're not in the distribution business, you're not in the motion picture business. And if you think you are going to be an independent animator and go out there and form your own company and be independent — and make money at it — you've got a great realization coming at you.

The only way it could happen is if you get into the distribution business — which could be the NET! You could possibly distribute something on the Net, even a motion picture. If people have the ability to have it streamed to their TV sets, if that happens, you can by-pass the major studios and you can get your own picture distributed...THEN YOU ARE IN THE BUSINESS!! As long as you have to go to the major studios and have to ask them if they will give you a distribution deal to get to the theatres — they will take everything that you have and you will get nothing.

LL: What will you do when your next project is ready to go into pro-

duction? Will the Bluth Group become an independent studio?

DB: It is right now! When we go into production, we will go in under our terms or we won't make the film. We have two projects in the works right now besides *Dragon's Lair*. Both of the parties involved have agreed that if we can't get the distribution deal we want then we will go to the Web. By the time we finish a picture (in two years), the Web will be fully capable for the distribution of feature films.

LL: Are a lot of folks from the former Fox Studio waiting for your projects?

DB: The "folks" — as you put it — are gone.

LL: What will you do?

DB: You just start over. You go out and find young talent who are interested in doing animation, you bring them into the mix and train them. I mean, that's what Gary and I have done most of our careers anyway — is train people. So, you train them, and then you take another shot at making a feature. Only this time, hopefully, you

just don't throw the feature at the studio, you go out a little differently in your distribution process.

Fox laid off three hundred or so of the three hundred-and-eighty people at the studio a full year before *Titan* was released.

LL: So you had about seventy people left, correct?

DB: That's right, there's no way in the world they could have made a feature with seventy people. A year ago everyone should have known that it was over...with Fox it was over.

It's very weird because all the people who make a picture put their hearts into their disks. They work really hard, and they think, "We're really going to make something really wonderful." They tried so hard. Then, the ruthless part of this is, the people who have control of the distribution - that's the ruthless part.

LL: I used to tell my students, don't ever forget that it's a business.

DB: Yes, but they will...

LL: Where do you see yourself in a year?

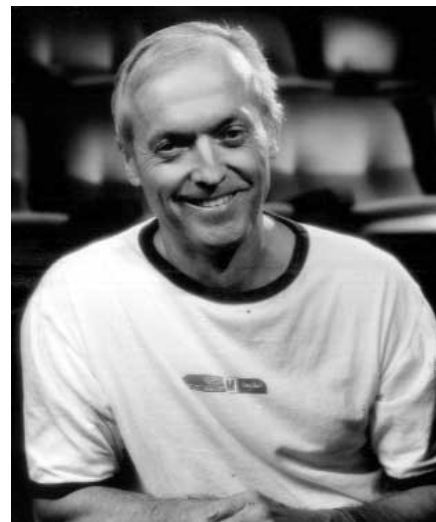
DB: Within a year, funded and building a feature again.

LL: What do you say to the Don Bluth and Gary Goldman fans out there?

DB: I think animation [2D] is here to stay. I don't think it'll go out of fashion entirely. But the only way to stay in the feature animation business — is to be sure that there's a market for it. The only place I know where you can support that market, is probably on the Net. The world will change within the next year and there will be a lot of things going on the Net.

The best thing about animation to me is that it [both 2D and 3D] requires that you find the most exciting ideas and things going on inside of your own self and figure out a way to get those ideas out through an exit portal — through the end of your pencil — so that it makes some sort of statement, so that you're not just animating an assignment within a studio. Lots of times at a studio, a film is made by committee, and the committee endeavor is not very good. Although they say there were two directors on *Titan*, I'd say there were twenty. With that many people, you don't get the best artistic endeavor.

Animation will not go away — but you need to school yourself, educate yourself, and in edu-



Don Bluth.

cating yourself make sure you have something to say.

LL: Thanks for your time Don.

DB: You're welcome.

Join Larry Lauria in his "Animation Tools and Techniques" discussion forum. Go to <http://creativeplanet.com/communitycenter> and click on "Animation Tools and Techniques" under the Animation/Graphics/FX category.

Larry Lauria is an animator/educator with 25 years in the industry. When not working on his current millennium animation project, 2KJ, Larry keeps himself busy working as a freelance animator and classical animation instructor. He can also be found designing animation curricula, or traveling around the world giving animation workshops and master classes. His Website "The Toon Institute" is part of the AWN family.

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



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SUMMER'S Sleepers and Keepers

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman

What do a chicken, a dinosaur, and a hundred-foot high wave all have in common? Filmgoers would have an easier time with this question than any ornithologist, paleontologist or oceanographer who might be looking for the answer: All three were premiere animated stars of the Summer 2000 box office. Filmgoers who are also animation aficionados, however, might be able to answer our riddle in more depth: None of the above were produced through the method of traditional cel animation. This fact alone makes the past year an interesting one for animated feature films, and in this month's column we will discover a few other facts that may hold clues as to how these films will be animated, produced, marketed and finally received by the public in the future. In doing so we will explore the "dos" and "donts" of building a successful animated film based on some of the major offerings of the past year.

Let me begin by averring that animated features will always be with us. The tradition is a long one, and the public seems to support these features with enough dollars to make the effort lucrative. There are now enough skilled animators available to give any studio a decent shot at making a feature film, and we expect to see at least two or three quality efforts per year. In fact, it would be hard to

imagine American cinema bereft of animated features; after all, it was this country that first exploited their mass appeal. The fact that the vast majority of animated features tend to fade well before reaching the \$65 million mark in profits has not deterred any present or future efforts to give us more of them, and at present, broad-banding is not prevalent enough for Web technology to co-opt the form. Unless one counts on audiences to spend seventy-five hours downloading an entire feature film (or believes they will be content to view it in endless five-minute segments), we will continue to file into our local multiplexes to enjoy animated features, silo-sized soft drinks and cavernous tubs of popcorn.

And now, without trailers, commercials, or reminders to place trash in the proper receptacles, let's go to the movies and see what some recent features have to teach us. (All grosses are current through July 21, 2000 due to my deadline structure.)

Dinosaur (Disney Studios)

Current gross: \$133,051,394

What they did right: Paid attention to the fact that virtually every feature completely animated in CGI broke the hundred-million mark. Took their time in developing a project that originally began in 1994. Did all the work in-house at the new TSL (The Secret Lab) digital studio to ensure quality and

continuity. Recognized the selling potential of dinosaurs to a young audience, but shrewdly picked up on those adults who had their appetites to see "real" dinosaurs whetted by *Jurassic Park*. No Broadway numbers. Made over three million hours of computer time show on screen without detracting from character development. Developed tie-ins and ancillary products without the promotional overkill typical of early-nineties Disney.



Two lemurs, the elder Yar and his daughter Plio, from *Dinosaur*.
© Walt Disney Pictures.

What they didn't do right: Characters were fine but the script was a rehash of common Disney themes including a misfit hero with one or more missing parents, comic relief characters with anachronistic speech, a sadistic and arrogant villain who falls to his death (Is this a prerequisite for every Disney villain of late? Do they audition by bungee jumping?), and an all-too familiar romantic subplot. However, one must realize that *Dinosaur* is very much a product of the Disney stable and would strongly bear its stamp. At least we'll probably be

spared *Dinosaurs on Ice*.

What we learned: Digital rules. Between Pixar and Disney proper, one formula for an animated blockbuster has now been firmly established — go CGI and watch the profits fly. Study the past successes of other studios that have used a certain genre and determine how to best embellish upon them. Research the tastes of your target audience and develop a concept that just can't lose. Finally, play within your audiences expectations and don't take any undue risks unless they involve spectacular visual effects; if people expect a Disney story, give 'em a Disney story.



Pokemon. © 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.

Pokemon: The First Movie (Distributed by Warner Bros.)

Current gross: \$85,744,662

What they did right: Managed to get hold of a pre-existing film while the product was at its hottest. Does anyone remember *The Power Rangers* or *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* movies that finally appeared more than a year after most kids had dumped their action figures into the local landfill? Didn't pay a Squirtles worth for the labor-intensive work of an animated feature, guaranteeing almost pure profit. Ditto for publicity; this feature literally sold itself due to the proliferation of product into the pre-teen market.

What they didn't do right: Pulled it before it hit the \$100 million mark. This feature should have stayed in the afternoon matinee market in smaller theaters for another month or two, supported by tournaments.

What we learned: Timing is everything. Develop a film script at the first sign of popularity and job it out to a dozen animation studios need be to get the speed factor. Don't worry about editing or continuity too much; millions will roll in regardless. Kids will hardly pause to consider *mise en scène* or proxemic patterns, and adults are well resigned to opening their wallets on cue. Team Rocket should work half as hard.

Chicken Run (Aardman Animations/DreamWorks SKG)

Current gross: \$84,080,147

What they did right: Used two experienced directors, Nick Park and Peter Lord. Capitalized on the popularity of a previous success, *Wallace and Gromit*. DreamWorks took a strictly hands-off approach and let Park and Lord shape their own vision. Stop-motion process looked fresh and different compared to recent cel and CGI features. Strong script built on cinematic references (prisoner-of-war films) which are not recycled often in American movies. Distinctive, grand musical score which contrasted amusingly with the silly animation (as in the *South Park* feature). Likeable characters backed by strong voice acting.

What they didn't do right: (Only for those who like to quibble.) A few conundrums in the plot. How could the circus, which seemed to value Rocky immensely, shoot him off-course for what seemed to be miles? How could a



**A brand new plan, from *Chicken Run*.
© DreamWorks SKG.**

makeshift flying machine manned by chickens manage to hoist a full-grown human so high into the air for such a distance? Who cares? THEY ESCAPED!

What we learned: There is room out there for a wide range of animated styles and mediums. The three top-grossers above represent CGI, cel and stop-motion respectively. A small studio can flourish creatively under the auspices of a much larger one without the need for a tight leash. This unmistakably British feature, along with *Pikachu* and company, may be sending the strong signal that American audiences will be more receptive to imported animated features in the future. Anybody ready to distribute *Help! I'm A Fish?*

Fantasia/2000 (Disney)

Current gross: \$58,653,569 (IMAX and theater receipts combined)

What they did right: Advanced Walt's original vision sixty years later. Left "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" segment in the film. Showcased the latest digital technology extant, including the overpowering particle generator. Proved in the outstanding "Rhapsody in Blue" segment that, given fifty years, Disney could finally grasp what UPA had been trying to do. Better musical selections than those of the 1940 film, with no radical alterations needed in the scores. No major embarrassment like the "Pastoral" among its

sequences. Benefited from revisionist histories that now judge the original *Fantasia* to be among animation's greatest masterpieces.

What they didn't do right: Weak and distracting host segments. Released it to the general theaters while their other feature *Dinosaur* was still red-hot. Restricted it to IMAX theaters for far too long; even if this was a test run prior to making a bid for IMAX, the experiment cost Disney considerable profits. Some unconvincing animation in the "Pines of Rome" sequence. "Steadfast Tin Soldier" sequence was not even up to Pixar's standards. Production problems and changes in direction tied this feature up in the studio for over a year past the originally planned release date.



"The Firebird Suite," from *Fantasia/2000*. © Walt Disney Pictures.

What we learned: New entertainment formats may be a major draw in the future. An increased number of theaters using IMAX-type technology may be a major showcase for animation. In this case, the format made a good, if not outstanding, feature a special event.

The Road to El Dorado (DreamWorks SKG)

Current gross: \$50,802,661

What they did right: Released the feature in late March, avoiding the summer block-



Miguel and Tulio, from *The Road to El Dorado*. © DreamWorks SKG.

buster/holiday season wars. Used con-artist rascallions as heroes rather than clean-cuts, and a female lead as sharp and crafty as her male foils. Great chemistry between Kevin Kline and Kenneth Branagh. Hired proven success from Disney: ex-animators, ex-screenwriters, and the duo of Elton John and Tim Rice for the tunes.

What they didn't do right: The idea should have been to compete with Disney, not become them. If Katzenberg wants to raid studios, he might try some of the bigger and more successful entities in Europe, Canada and Asia. Despite the film's sassy attitude, too much of *El Dorado* is reminiscent of Disney circa 1994. Oh, and didn't an evil master of sorcery also create a climactic set-piece by turning a massive bunch of stone into a savage attacking animal in that other movie? That one with

the Russian princess in it? Come on, you know which one I mean...

What we learned: Recycling both talent and ideas will only get a studio so far, even if the talent is awesome and the original idea is a sound one. In this case, it got DreamWorks as far as the \$50 million mark, but it could have turned out better. Much.

Titan A.E. (Fox)

Current gross: \$22,004,799

What they did right: Impressive integration of 2D and 3D animation.

What they didn't do right: The Titan Project may have had the power to create a planet, but it ended up sinking a studio. Produced while Fox was already considering personnel cutbacks. Chaotic creative changes while in production backed the film up a year. Bluth and Goldman seemed to be just a step behind the times



Titan A.E. © Twentieth-Century Fox.

on this one. Publicity could have been better. Too many visual and cinematic references to other sci-fi films. Massive market research missed the mark on teen audiences.

What we learned: Nice guys can indeed finish last, and best efforts aren't always rewarded. This film deserved a kinder fate from audiences, but sci-fi animation features (and there haven't been many) may have become obsolete due to VFX breakthroughs in live-action sci-fi films. Besides, one important piece of research was missing: When did sci-fi animated features last score a hit with the moviegoing public? *Heavy Metal?* Even Bluth's first attempt at something like sci-fi, *The Secret of NIMH*, only grossed about \$10 million.

The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle (Universal)

Current gross: \$21,754,375

What they did right: Well, at least they didn't animate Piper Perabo.

What they didn't do right: Sorry, but only Jay Ward, Bill Scott, Lloyd Turner, Chris Hayward and Allan Burns could have pulled this off. Unique Ward humor difficult



The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle.
© Universal Pictures.

to adapt to screen since most of it was verbal and made up for poorly animated visuals in the original series. Original format of "mellodrama" serial at odds with feature-length film concept. Fans of show tend to be fanatic, detail-oriented and tough to please. Highly topical characters probably played much better in 1960s; updating them posed problems. Director Des McAnuff and scriptwriter Ken Lonergan were not animation people.

What we learned: Nostalgia won't always pull them in. Stay true to the original spirit of your source material. When doing revisionist work, check the adaptability of the characters and the series in the first place.

Having reviewed these films, we are now ready to produce our own animated block-

buster. A warning to plagiarists: I'm copyrighted this time!

Chickasaur Run A.E.: The Road to the First Movie 2000

This imaginative film features a herd of CGI-animated dinosaurs who help a desperate flock of stop-motion chickens escape from an evil cadre of cel-animated mutations called the Pokedrej. The escapees flee Earth, escorted by a school of flying space whales who help them reach the planet New El Dorado. There, the chickens and dinosaurs are nearly fleeced of their meager supplies by two slacker con artists, but they all eventually unite against the pursuing Pokedrej, who all fall to their deaths from a great height at films end.

Or, we could just animate a single white mouse (*Stuart Little*, \$140,015,224....)

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

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

“The Animation Flash is my number one contact with what's going on in the world of animation. I often quote whole passages from it in my official reports to DreamWorks.”

-Shelley Page

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Anime Theatrical Features

by Fred Patten

On July 21, Japan's second annual (1999) *Pokémon* theatrical feature was released in America as *Pokémon: The Movie 2000*, placing number 3 in the weekend nationwide box office ratings. Coincidentally the third *Pokémon* feature, *Pocket Monsters: Lord of the Unknown Tower*, hit Japan's theaters on July 8 to also rank number 3 in that country's weekend ratings.

Japanese animation (anime) has exploded into the American consciousness over the past three or four years. There has been animation from Japan in America since the 1960s with movies like *Alakazam the Great* and TV programs like *Astro Boy*, but anime as a distinct cultural genre was not noticed until the 1990s. First came the anime video cult market ("Japanese animation isn't just for kids!") in the early 1990s, available only by mail order and through comic-book specialty bookshops. Then in the mid-'90s



Vampire Hunter D. © Hideyuki Kikuchi/Asahi Sonorama/Vampire Hunter D Production Committee.

came a few adolescent and adult animated sci-fi and fantasy dramatic features like *Akira* and *Vampire Hunter D* on cable TV's Cartoon Network and Sci-Fi Channel, and young teen TV series like *Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball Z*, while anime videos began to appear in general video shops.

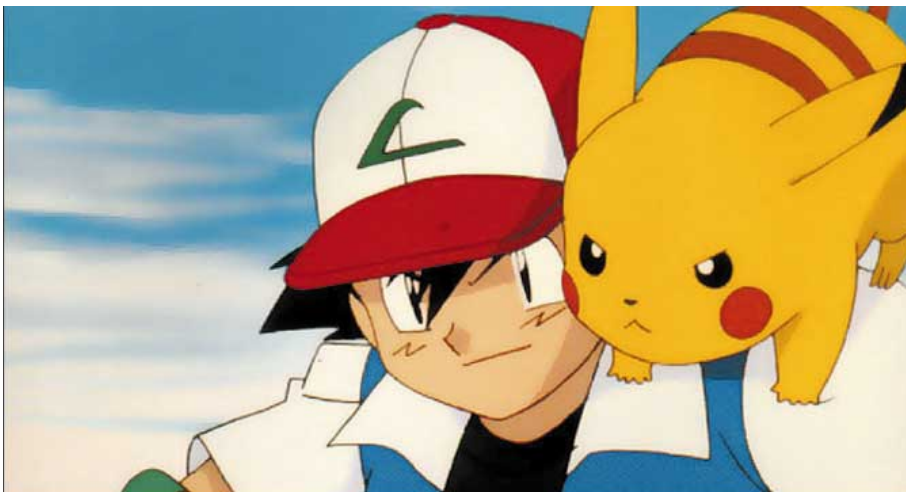
Then *Pokémon* hit America in 1998.

By now most Americans — most American parents whose children watch TV, at least — know that while *Pokémon* may have originated as a Japanese video game, its most visible and popular incarnation is as a TV cartoon

series. They have seen that the *Pokémon* TV series has spun off at least two *Pokémon* theatrical features. The TV industry's dash to cash in on the *Pokémon* mania has resulted in the importation of such similar Japanese TV cartoons as *Digimon*, *Monster Rancher* and *Cardcaptors*. And there are apparently theatrical features of these as well. *Digimon: The Movie* hits America's theaters on October 6. Meanwhile, the kids are bringing home new videos of at least three *Sailor Moon* movies that were theatrical releases in Japan if not here.

A New Question

How popular is theatrical animation in Japan? Can those movies also be popular in America? This is no idle question, especially considering the results of this summer's American theatrical animation releases. Only *Chicken Run* — a British production, but strongly supported by its American distributor, DreamWorks — has been really successful. Most American theatrical animated features so far this year have not earned back their production costs. *Pokémon: The Movie 2000*, released July 21 as I mentioned, had grosses of over \$40,700,000 as of August 13, while 20th Century Fox's *Titan A.E.*, released over a month earlier, only had grosses of \$22,640,000 by that same weekend (statistics from the Internet Movie Database). Will it be more practical for the American movie industry to start importing Japanese animated features in a big way, at much lower produc-



Pokémon. © 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.



**Sailor Moon. © DIC Entertainment.
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tion costs for just dubbing and minor editing, than to continue to support the productions of completely new American animated features?

It is true that there are many more theatrical animated productions in Japan than in America. A few of them certainly warrant serious consideration for the American theatrical market. But on the whole, Japanese productions are not easily transferable to American theatergoers' tastes.

An average of three or four animated theatrical releases appear in Japan every month. These fall into three main categories: 1. Movies based on popular TV/young childrens cartoon series. 2. Original dramatic features for older audiences, usually based upon comic books and sci-fi novels. 3. Foreign imports.

TV animation for children is extremely popular in Japan, even more so than in America. There is also a much greater prevalence of a popular TV cartoon series spinning off a theatrical feature. This is how the *Pokémon*, *Sailor Moon* and *Dragon Ball Z* theatrical features came to be made. However movies of this nature are like the *Star Trek* theatrical features: they are really designed for the fans of the TV series. Movies of this nature will not have much box-office potential until their TV series are

established on American TV. For example, the Japanese TV series *Card Captor Sakura* just began as *Cardcaptors* in June on the Kids' WB! network in the U.S. and Teletoon in Canada. This may make the *Card Captor Sakura: The Movie* feature (August 1999 in Japan) viable as an American theatrical release, if the TV series develops sufficient popularity. Another Japanese TV cartoon series with a theatrical feature in reserve, *Melitantei Conan (Conan, the Great Detective)*, about a boy super-detective, is reportedly in development for the Fox Kids Network.

**Most American
theatrical animated
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The Differences

But not all Japanese TV cartoon series have potential for American release. Two notably frustrating examples are *Doraemon* and *Sore Ike! Anpanman*, both for young children. *Doraemon* is about a blue robot cat, a toy from hundreds of years in the future, which is sent via time travel to a comically clumsy 20th century schoolboy. *Doraemon* began on TV in April 1979; the TV series is up to almost 1,600 episodes to date. There has been a mid-March annual *Doraemon* theatrical feature since 1980. The American movie/TV industry would love to cash in on these. But many of the stories about *Doraemon* the robot-cat and his human owner/playmate,

Nobita, are gentle teaching experiences framed around Japanese ethnic customs (including communal bathing), Japanese holidays, Japanese folk tales and Japanese historical events, which young American children would not understand. *Sore Ike! Anpanman* (roughly *Go Get 'Em, Anpanman!*) is a superhero comedy for young children in which most of the characters are Japanese toys, fairytale characters and anthropomorphized candies and sweets. (Anpan is a sweet pastry.) The weekly TV series began in October 1988; episode #576 aired on August 4, 2000. The annual theatrical features started in 1995; this year's, released on July 29, was *Sore Ike! Anpanman: Ningyo Hime no Namida (Go Get 'Em, Anpanman! Tears of the Mermaid Princess)*. These and others such as *Crayon Shin-chan* add up to a large quantity of Japanese theatrical animated features that would have little American audience appeal.

There is a similar subclass of childrens theatrical features which are blatantly Japanese corporate promotion. Two examples both released in July are the *2000 Nen Natsu Toei Anime Fair (Summer 2000 Toei Animation Fair)* and the *2000 Nen Natsu no Kadokawa Manga Taiko Susumeru (Summer 2000 Kadokawa Cartoon Masterpiece Presentation)*. Toei Animation Co., Ltd. is the largest animation studio in Japan, and one of the largest in the world; both *Dragon Ball Z* and *Sailor Moon* are Toei productions. Kadokawa is a major Japanese publishing company; its childrens book division is comparable to Scholastic Inc. or Golden Press in America. Movies of this type are 80- to 90-minute compilations of

from two to four new featurettes of the company's currently most popular TV cartoons — in Toei's case, its own studio's productions; in Kadokawa's case, licensed TV cartoons based upon its juvenile literary properties. These movies give Japanese children the chance to see their favorite TV cartoon characters in adventures of higher animation quality than the TV series. Often these featurettes are closely tied to the current TV story lines, introducing new characters and subplots to the TV series. The *Digimon* theatrical feature just released in America is actually edited from three *Digimon* featurettes in Toei's Spring and Summer Animation Fairs of the past couple of years. These are popular in Japan; *The Summer 2000 Toei Animation Fair* ranked number 7 overall among its weeks theatrical releases in Japan. But for obvious reasons, they would be meaningless to children outside of Japan.



Digimon. © 2000 Fox Kids.
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Another Demographic

More suitable for American importation are the theatrical features for adolescents and adults. Best-known in America are the features created by master animators Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata, based upon their original stories through their Studio Ghibli since the mid-1980s; but these are a special case. Movies of this type



Akira. © Akira Committee.

are usually romances and dramas based upon popular novels, comic books, TV programs for older viewers, especially popular direct-to-video productions, and video games. *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*, adapted from adult sci-fi novels in comic-art form, are two well-known examples of Japanese popular movies that had limited art-house theatrical releases in America before going to video.

Jin Roh (The Wolf Men), a taut political thriller about the plotting at high governmental levels for jurisdictional control of a new paramilitary police unit, was designed for the art-theater circuit in the first place. It played at international film festivals in Germany, Canada, the U.S. and other nations for a couple of years before its general release in Japan this February. A similar example is *Alexander*, an American-Japanese-Korean co-production of a fantasy based upon the 3rd-century B.C. Macedonian king who conquered most of Western civilization, elevating him to mythic stature similar to the demigod Hercules. This production, with character design by American animator Peter Chung (*Aeon Flux*), has also played at international film festivals. It will be released theatrically in Japan as *Alexander Senki* (roughly *The Military Exploits of Alexander*) in October. In 1985 *Vampire Hunter D*, a low-budget direct-to-video feature based upon the fantasy thriller novels by Hideyuki Kikuchi, proved unexpectedly popular, but dissatisfaction by Kikuchi over



Alexander Senki, a U.S.-Japanese-Korean joint anime-styled production.
© Alexander Committee.

changes in his story held up any movie sequels. The movie has also proven popular as an American anime release since 1992 in art theaters and on video and cable TV. The legal problems in Japan were recently resolved, and a new, high-budget remake of *Vampire Hunter D* is just finishing production, by one of Japan's top anime directors, Yoshiaki Kawajiri, and with lots of CGI enhancement. Any of these would seem to be potential American theatrical releases of at least as much commercial validity as Miramax's release of *Princess Mononoke*.

There are many Japanese popular teen romantic fantasies, roughly comparable to *I Dream of Jeannie* or *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. These usually begin as comic books and graduate to animated TV cartoon series or direct-to-video productions. (The Japanese created their own English abbreviation for these, OAVs for Original Anime Videos, which the American anime market has adapted.) Especially popular titles spin off theatrical sequels. A current example is *Oh! My Goddess: Eternal Ties*, in which the ongoing romance between a shy college student and a virginal young goddess is finally resolved — or is it? Japanese theatrical audiences will find out this autumn. *Oh! My Goddess* is popular among American anime and comics fans through translations of the comic book soap-opera romances by Kosuke Fujishima and the OAVs. But would this popularity extend to a theatrical release of a sequel for a general American audience that is not already familiar with the relationships among its cast? This is why the many Japanese theatrical features of this nature have gone

directly into the same anime video market as the TV episodes and the OAVs.

This also may change with the growth in popularity of anime for older viewers in America. The Japanese animation industry is eager to sell more of its product to America. Take for example the 1996 teen girls' romance TV series *The Vision of Escaflowne*, a 26-episode serial about a high school girl who is transported to a fantasy world. *Escaflowne's* continuing popularity with teens in both Japan and the U.S. through video sales has resulted this year in both an American TV release (Fox Kids Network, premiering in August) and a Japanese theatrical feature, *Escaflowne: A Girl in Gaea* (June release). This movie was also rushed to America for a preview at the Anime Expo 2000 fan convention (10,000 attendance) in Anaheim, California over the July 4th weekend, to help build a popular demand for an American theatrical rather than direct-to-video release. The above-mentioned new *Vampire Hunter D* feature in production was also promoted at Anime Expo 2000 with a theatrical trailer.



Vampire Hunter D 2000. © Hideyuki Kikuchi/Asahi Sonorama/Vampire Hunter D Production Committee.

Another evolutionary development is the increase in international co-productions. The U.S.-Japanese-Korean *Alexander* is designed to be shown as either a TV series or theatrical feature. Its

current theatrical release in Japan may help with its sale in America. A *Final Fantasy* theatrical feature, loosely based upon the Japanese video game series, is currently being publicized in both nations as an expected Japanese summer 2001 theatrical hit. This CGI science-fiction drama is being promoted heavily over the Internet with downloadable trailers and graphics, to excite America's action-adventure movie fans. *Final Fantasy* is a Japanese production being filmed at a studio located in Honolulu, with dialogue being recorded in Los Angeles for release in both countries. This could be the movie that will take Japanese theatrical animation from the art-theater circuit into American general theatrical releases.

Visit this article online to see a clip from *Vampire Hunter D 2000* at: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.06/5.06pages/pattenfeatures.php3>.

Fred Patten has written on anime for fan and professional magazines since the late 1970s.

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

Just the Right Amount of Cheese: The Secrets to Good Live-Action Adaptations of Cartoons

by Gerard Raiti

Cartoons and live-action films are extremely different. Any established movie critic or five-year-old can attest to that. Yet strangely enough, within the last decade studios like Walt Disney, Universal and Warner Bros. have produced a growing niche of live-action adaptations of beloved, nearly iconic cartoons. So in keeping with the new millennium, now is the germane time to ask, "Why sully cartoons by adapting them to live-action?"

For most in the entertainment industry, the answer is twofold: to make money and to entertain audiences. The catalyst and culprit for the recent trend of live-action adaptations is none other than The Dark Knight himself, Batman. Warner Bros.' 1989 film starring Michael Keaton and Jack Nicholson garnered over \$413.2 million worldwide and launched a franchise. *Batman* proved how something as zany and unrealistic as a comic book or a cartoon could effectively be molded into a blockbuster. (Granted, there were earlier live-action Batman movies, not to mention Christopher Reeves' Superman films, but none reached the box-office stature of 1989's *Batman*.)

Unfortunately, the sweet peach that was live-action adaptations quickly became rotten. By



Batman, the dark knight. © Warner Bros.

the early '90s, they were branded as "cheesy" or "B-rated" despite sometimes enormous budgets. The box-office figures generally speak for themselves as far as these adaptations are concerned. For example, consider the domestic totals (in millions courtesy of *Box Office Report*) for the following motley crew of films: *Richie Rich* (\$38.06), *The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas* (\$34.92), *Dudley Do-Right* (<\$10), *The Jungle Book* (\$44.34), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III* (\$42.27), *The Phantom* (<\$10), *Steel* (<\$10) and *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* (\$25).

Contrary to the beliefs of certain individuals at Walt Disney Pictures and Universal Pictures, the cause for these disasters is the greedy expectation of a huge guaranteed box office haul. The studios hope to shepherd viewers

into the cinema by making childhood cartoon characters more "real" by inserting them in a three-dimensional, live-action world. The result is the creation of bad movies. Nevertheless, studios create more lackluster movies than blockbusters in any given year; it is the nature of the industry. Adaptations of cartoons should not be exempt from this trend. Consequently, a few poorly made adaptations should not cause the entire genre to be labeled "cheesy."

What About the Good Movies?

Numerous live-action adaptations have been phenomena. Look no farther than *101 Dalmatians*, *Casper* and *Inspector Gadget*. However, there are also some befuddling statistics. Take the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* franchise for example: The first movie from 1990 raked in \$135.3 million domestically and \$202 million worldwide. Its sequel decreased to \$78.58 million domestically, and the aforementioned third movie plummeted to \$42.27 million domestically — nearly \$100 million shy of the original. So what caused this decline over a four-year period? The primary reason was the waning popularity of the characters; they had been over-marketed and had lost their appeal. However, many movie critics claim the third movie

was “cheesy” — a statement which is clearly erroneous. The third movie used the smartest yet most trite scripting technique imaginable — time-travel. Rather than force the life-size turtles to combat the Shredder again, New Line Cinema sends the Turtles back in time by means of a mystical antique lantern. Time-travel in films is typically the ultimate sophistry to realism, yet when dealing with talking ninja turtles, how can time-travel be the touchstone of cheesiness?



Inspector Gadget deserves a hand.
© Walt Disney Pictures.

Most importantly, while money is an important factor in determining a movie's success, lucrative movies are not necessarily good. Returning to the catalyst Batman, *Batman Forever* and *Batman and Robin* performed well enough in the domestic box-office, making \$184 and \$107.3 million respectively. However, these two Joel Schumacher films are disgraceful. They became more about fluorescent props, endless arrays of vehicles, batsuits, gadgets and a surfeit of sidekicks than about the true Batman mythos — a man tortured by the murder of his parents, waging a battle against death so that no child would again suffer a loss like his. Something noble, serious and perhaps even dark became a “cheesy” means to sell toys.

The most surprisingly suc-

cessful live-action adaptation of a cartoon is Disney's *George of the Jungle* starring Brendan Fraser. The 1997 movie adapts the Jay Ward cartoon, which is fittingly similar to *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*. *George of the Jungle* made \$105.3 million domestically and \$174.3 worldwide. “It was an unanticipated success,” according to Walt Disney Pictures. *George of the Jungle* was a winner not only because girls flocked by the thousands to see Brendan Fraser in a loincloth (as opposed to a certain movie about a sinking ship starring Leonardo somebody), but because the movie was “cheesy.” This is a movie critics worst nightmare: rather than let cheesiness devour the sanctity of a vintage cartoon, Walt Disney Pictures embraced it. The film's narrator acknowledges the wackiness of the movie, and his tongue-and-cheek demeanor is established from the opening credits, which coincidentally overlap a short animated segment.



George of the Jungle was a pleasant surprise for many doubtful critics.
© Walt Disney Pictures.

There is nothing perplexing about *George of the Jungle's* success because it exemplifies what live-action adaptations should be. The enigma regarding the film arrived in 1999 when Brendan Fraser again flaunted the vestments of a Jay Ward character, playing the leading role in Universal Pictures' *Dudley Do-Right*. This movie was a complete

fiscal disaster grossing less than \$10 million domestically. Universal Pictures' attempt to make the next-best-thing to a *George of the Jungle* sequel apparently lacked some “Disney magic.” It had components for a successful sequel; however, it lacked two essential attributes for a good movie, namely a good story and character depth. Hugh Wilson is mostly responsible for this catastrophe being both the writer and the director. Nonetheless, *Dudley Do-Right's* failure is unfathomable. It consequently became the bête noire of my writing this article: How could a movie so poised for success be so pathetic? Shockingly, *Dudley Do-Right* is not alone.

An Expert Opinion

In what is most likely bad luck for Universal Pictures, this year's *The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas* was an incredible disaster compared to its predecessor which earned a whopping \$358.5 million worldwide. This statistic attempts to debunk this entire article. As poor a movie as *Dudley Do-Right* is, *Viva Rock Vegas* is not. So what caused *The Flintstones'* sequel to make \$90 million less domestically than the original? I did not know, so I approached a veritable pundit of movie production who is more than adept at adapting cartoons to live-action films. This is none other than Academy Award-winning producer Bruce Cohen. In addition to winning an Oscar for *American Beauty*, Cohen produced both *Flintstones* movies — one a blockbuster, the other a flop. By dint of this, he is the perfect person to comment on this anomaly.

Gerard Raiti: What was the dif-



Bruce Cohen.

ference between producing the first and second Flintstones movies?

Bruce Cohen: Well, there are lots of differences, but that's intentional. We wanted to make the sequel as different as possible from the original. Then the idea of making a prequel arose — to make the sequel occur before the original, and before even the TV show. So the logical decision was to have a new cast in a place other than Bedrock. This is where *Rock Vegas* came in.

GR: Why was the first Flintstones movie more successful?

BC: That's hard to say. It was probably the novelty of the film. People had never seen Bedrock brought to life before. This was huge! It's always fun for fans to see their childhood characters come to life for the first time.

GR: What originally enticed you to produce the first Flintstones movie?

BC: I've always been a fan. It's a tremendous challenge to undertake. At the same time, it's the perfect opportunity to entertain millions of people. The Flintstones personifies family entertainment.

GR: If you could have changed

anything about *Viva Rock Vegas* that would have made it more successful, what would you have changed and why? Also, did you suspect at anytime it was of a lower caliber than its predecessor?

BC: No, not at all! In fact, everyone involved in [*Viva Rock Vegas*] felt it was better than the original. The only thing I would have changed is the way it was marketed and reviewed. For whatever reason, people never gave the movie a chance. On our end, we tried to make the best sequel possible, and we thought we succeeded. So, no, there's really nothing I would have changed because I'm satisfied with how [*Viva Rock Vegas*] turned out.



The Great Gazoo comes to earth to study the mating rituals of humans in *The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas*. © Universal Pictures.

GR: Why did the international audiences take to *Viva Rock Vegas* more than the Americans?

BC: The international audience is less review dependent. They knew they enjoyed the first film and assumed the second would be equally good. And the new cast was mostly British, which created a lot of hype in England. The international audience is also less cynical.

GR: Now for the crux of what I've been getting at: What makes a good live-action adaptation of a cartoon?

BC: That is a very tricky question because there are many small factors that contribute to a good adaptation. This is because what works in a cartoon does not necessarily work in LA [live-action]. Being faithful [to a cartoon] is not good. It's about finding a balance. The movie needs to be loyal enough to the cartoon for the sake of the fans, but it also needs to do everything that a good live-action movie should. Think about the story arc for a second. The average story for a cartoon is twenty-two minutes. The stories are not designed with enough depth to interest an audience for two hours. More character depth is needed. 2-D versus 3-D takes on an entirely new meaning. The 2-D characters are flat — not just on the paper.

The real challenge is the "real" versus the "unreal." Cartoons don't lend themselves to reality very well. Everyone wears ridiculous costumes; the sets are absurd and larger than life. The challenge is to make it look realistic without taking away from [the cartoons] charm.



How the Grinch Stole Christmas, from director Ron Howard, looks promising. © Universal Pictures.

GR: Why are many live-action adaptations cheesy or poor in quality? Who is to blame — the writers, directors, producers, actors, studios?

BC: The main reason is that many cartoons don't lend themselves to live-action. The stories and characters are not deep enough to sustain a motion picture. In the case of the Flintstones, they were created as a spoof of *The Honeymooners*. It's a cartoon version of a wacky world with two suburban couples. It's relatable to Americans. That's [The Flintstones] appeal.

The studios are responsible for selecting cartoons that are transferable to live-action.

GR: Do you plan to produce other live-action adaptations in the future?

BC: I wouldn't say "no," but probably not. All the good cartoons worth adapting have already been done. At this stage, there would have to be some cartoon I've overlooked, and the story would have to be extraordinarily good.

Who Knows What the Future Holds

Despite several box-office failures, the industry is planning to produce more live-action adaptations of cartoons. This summer's *X-Men* found the balance to which Bruce Cohen referred; it was loyal enough for fans yet substantive enough for general moviegoers. With the success of *X-Men*, Marvel Enterprises has finally received the green light for projects like *Spider-Man*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *Captain America* and *Daredevil*. This is all in addition to the *X-Men* sequel that is already in early development.

Furthermore, this November brings Disney's *102 Dalmatians*, in which Glenn Close reprises her role as Cruella Deville. Next year, Universal Pictures will



X-Men was a successful, faithful adaptation of the comic. © Twentieth Century Fox.

try yet another Hanna-Barbera adaptation in *Josie and the Pussycats*, for which I have low expectations.

The future of live-action adaptations of cartoons looks hazy. There will certainly continue to be a *mélange* of successes and failures. It boils down to Bruce Cohen's belief that most of the suitable cartoons have already been adapted. The good adaptations will be those which have non-cartoon affiliated production crews like *X-Men's* director Bryan Singer.

Despite several box-office failures, the industry is planning to produce more live-action adaptations of cartoons.

In short, an out-of-context phrase from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* always comes to mind when thinking about cartoons and their live-action adaptations. The following

excerpt is from Hamlet's monologue in Act II, Scene 2: "Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed/The very faculties of eyes and ears." Good cartoons have always attempted to mystify the senses through catharsis, introspection or humor. Successful live-action adaptations should follow a similar route. Studios should learn not to adapt a cartoon strictly for monetary or nostalgic reasons; the cause for a live-action adaptation should always be to enhance the cartoons ability to entertain. Any other reason is a disservice to the standard that the vintage cartoon represents.

Gerard Raiti, a resident of Baltimore, has reported on animation, Broadway musicals and comic books for various publications including AnotherUniverse.com and Newsweek.

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

Indie Animated Features: Are They Possible?

by Amid Amidi

For years, theatrical animated features have primarily been in the domain of big studios. Producing a quality animated film requires a significant amount of talent, time and especially money; resources that smaller independent producers usually don't have. But times change, and there are currently more independent animated features being produced than ever before. Falling technology prices and a unique system of production have driven this growth, but the proliferation of these indie films doesn't belie the fact that they face an incredible uphill battle when it comes to finding an audience. Here, we'll examine just how these independent producers are able to challenge the big boys of theatrical animation, and more importantly, do they stand a chance?

The Name of the Game is Co-Production

The traditional means of producing an animated feature is that a major production studio such as Disney, DreamWorks, Fox or Warner Bros. will finance an entire picture, and then release it through their own powerful theatrical distribution channels. Such a film can cost anywhere from \$40 to \$100 million, and beyond. However, with neither the cash flow nor production facilities of these larger studios, more modestly sized operations have been locked out of the theatrical game,



Carnivale. Photo courtesy of TerraGlyph Productions.

until now that is. During the past decade, the smaller studios have finally landed upon the ideal method of producing an animated feature: the international co-production model. Using this model, studios located all over the world combine their resources to create an economically budgeted film ranging anywhere from \$5 to \$20 million. Currently, the majority of these films are coming out of Europe because most governments abroad offer various funding schemes for filmmakers such as subsidies and tax refunds. Even so, producing a feature in such a manner requires a substantial amount of cash equity up front because of the rarity in finding a distributor who will pre-buy a film prior to production.

One particularly busy European studio is five-year-old TerraGlyph Productions, which has grown to become the largest

animation studio in Ireland with over forty-five full-time employees, and another fifteen in their Madrid, Spain studio. They have completed two features recently, *Carnivale* and *Help! I'm a Fish*, and will finish their third feature, *Duck Ugly*, in 2001. "All of the feature productions have been co-productions with other European partners such as A-Film from Denmark, Munich Animation and EIV Film Production from Germany, and Millimages from France," says Gerry Shirren, executive producer of all three features. "Production in this manner is the only conceivable way in which these films could be financed and produced. This is not a disadvantage in that it allows a studio of our size to produce feature films on the scale of the major studios in the U.S. and avoids the necessity to create an unmanageable production facility."



Duck Ugly. Photo courtesy of TerraGlyph Productions.

Steve Walsh, producer of another pan-European co-production, *A Monkey's Tale*, says that twenty-six different sources of finance were needed to produce the \$10 million feature, ranging from broadcasters such as Sky TV in the UK and Canal+ in France to the NRW Film Fund in Germany and Eurimages, the Pan European funding agency. Walsh comments, "Without doubt the main problems with this kind of financing are: the obligation to do a certain quota of the work in each country, and the dilution of creative control. Set against those drawbacks is the fact that films do get made."



Steve Walsh, director of *A Monkey's Tale*.

Ironically, the United States, the country where the most big studio animated features are produced is also the country where the least independent animated

films are made. Due to the lack of government support and the higher wages that artists receive in the States, independent production is something of a rarity, with a notable exception being Tooniversal's recently completed *Marco Polo: Return to Xanadu*. Tooniversal co-produced the film with studios in Slovakia and China, after receiving a substantial financial investment from a film-funding entity called Druzba Film Associates. The studio is currently planning their next feature, *Dinosaurs of the Wild West*. . . *When the West Was Really Wild!*

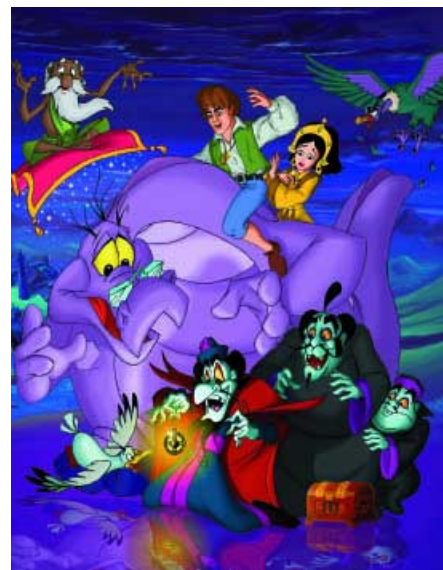


Ron Merk, director of Tooniversal's *Marco Polo*.

The Film's Completed. . . Now What?

"Theatrical distribution is the greatest challenge a producer has to face," says Steve Walsh. This is a sentiment echoed unanimously by producers interviewed for this piece. While filmmakers have discovered a way to produce animated films, distribution is increasingly difficult as today's multiplex cinema chains are dominated by the big studios. Ron Merk, director of *Marco Polo: Return to Xanadu*, believes that the distribution prob-

lem is compounded as "media companies continue to vertically integrate, owning the means of production, distribution and exhibition." He recalls, "When I was first in the film business there were hundreds of distributors, independent theaters, TV stations and buyers. How the independents will survive having no place to sell or show their films is a major obstacle to overcome, and frankly, I'm not sure it's possible given the current state of things." Add to that the high costs associated with marketing and promoting a theatrical feature, and the fact that many distributors are more wary of buying animation than live-action, and it becomes a very tough situation.



Marco Polo: Return to Xanadu.
© 2000 Tooniversal Company.

Still, with the persistence and dedication that these independent producers have shown, a theatrical release is quite possible, if not always on the grand scale of Hollywood releases. "If you look at the financing of *A Monkey's Tale*, the only theatrical distributor who got behind the project was Germany's Jugendfilm, but that contract was cancelled when the



A Monkey's Tale. © Steve Walsh Productions, Les Films du Triangle, Cologne Cartoon, Entertainment Rights Plc, France 3 Cinema.

film was delivered late," explains Walsh. "The fact is that the theatrical market for animated films has been so dominated by Disney (and now other U.S. studios) that there is built-in resistance to non-studio product. The only way this is going to change in most countries is if non-U.S. product does well at the box-office." This past May, the \$10 million-budgeted *A Monkey's Tale* did receive a release in the United Kingdom, which is often considered the most difficult of all European markets, and performed quite respectably despite the fact it didn't play in the large multiplex chains. This bodes well for Harvey Entertainment, who has acquired *A Monkey's Tale* for a U.S. theatrical release in early 2001.

Filmmakers are increasingly adapting conventional gimmicks used by the larger studios to increase their chances of securing quality distributors. For example, the recent motion-capture feature *Sinbad: Beyond the Veil of Mists* produced predominantly in India, featured a celebrity voice cast headlined by Brendan Fraser,

Leonard Nimoy and Mark Hamill. This resulted in the film being picked up for U.S. distribution by Trimark, although it is unclear whether it will receive a theatrical release as originally intended or head directly to video. Tooniversal will produce an accompanying *Marco Polo* TV series that will help generate further awareness in the animated feature as well as open the doors to merchandising deals. The co-producers of *Help! I'm a Fish*



Help! I'm A Fish. Photo courtesy of TerraGlyph Productions.

Fish will release a major soundtrack album featuring top European recording artists and a 26-episode TV series in support of the film.

While a U.S. theatrical release can help propel a film toward success, it is no longer an absolute necessity. *Help! I'm a Fish* has set up theatrical distribution deals all over Europe without first closing a U.S. commitment, something Russell Boland, producer of *Help!* as well as TerraGlyphs two previous features, says, "is to the immense credit of the independent distribution sector in Europe and to the efforts of our sales agents PID/Hanway." Boland continues, "The domination of the English language territories by the U.S. majors makes distribution difficult in these territories and the U.K. is a good example here. However, the success of Pathés release of *Chicken Run* will hopefully give a new confidence to the market there and help the independent sector take some bigger risks with animation. The market in Europe is very receptive to animation. While having a U.S. distribution deal would be great and no doubt makes things easier in other territories, the nature of discussions with U.S. majors, including the slow decision making process with the involvement of marketing, home video and merchandising departments, means the local European deals can be made much faster, if the film is good enough."

Even from the distributors perspective, there is a definite challenge in placing animated features into the current marketplace. Manga Entertainment is a distributor that acquires already produced Japanese animated features and theatrically releases two to three of

these films annually. Manga's recent theatrical releases such as *Perfect Blue* and *X* have each screened in a couple hundred theaters throughout the US and Europe. "Our films are mostly favorable to art house theaters because in most cases, we're launching the films without mainstream public backing," says Marvin Gleicher, President of Manga Worldwide. "You wish that theaters would give some of these independent films a chance to build the word of mouth." Unlike studio pictures which can play for months at a theater, Manga's films only play at each theater for one week or less, making it difficult to build an audience. Additionally, the films are released on a staggered schedule rather than a single opening date throughout the country, thus eliminating any opportunity for a nationwide marketing campaign.



X. © Clamp Studios. Photo courtesy of Manga Entertainment.

Why Bother?

With limited budgets and even more limited distribution, it's a wonder that filmmakers even bother to pursue the independent route, yet such endeavors offer their fair share of rewards as well.

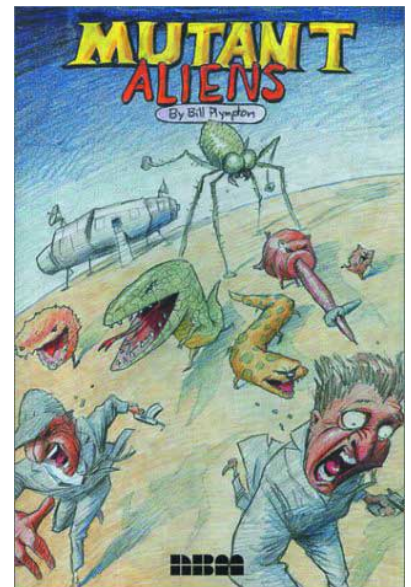
Most obviously, it affords the filmmaker an opportunity to create a film that doesn't necessarily fit into the conventional Hollywood mold. Russell Boland comments, "With the budget restrictions, every dollar has to be on the screen and in fact you have to be inventive in such a way as to make your \$15 million film look like it has the production values of the \$40 million film coming from the major studios. Of course, this will cause creative tensions but nevertheless allows the studio and the creative production team genuine freedom within the limitations of the budget."

In the case of filmmaker Bill Plympton, by producing independently he is able to create extremely unorthodox animated films such as *The Tune* and *I Married A Strange Person*, and still stand a chance of making a profit because of the films' low production costs. Plympton's films don't have to gross \$100 million or spur sequels to be considered a financial success.

"There is less external pressure," Ron Merk points out as another advantage. "Generally time schedules are more flexible when there is no definite release date. You don't have executives breathing down your neck as you push your pencil. Time gives you the opportunity to reflect on your work, make changes, improve character and story."

Only a Matter of Time

While it's unlikely that the independent animated features being produced now will pose a serious threat to the traditional studio fare anytime in the near future, there is no doubt that Hollywood is taking notice of their work. When independent studios like



Bill Plympton's next independent feature, *Mutant Aliens*, is based on his book of the same name available in AWN's online store via www2.awn.com/awnstore.

Pixar and Aardman Animations wanted to try their hands at creating animated features, majors like Disney and DreamWorks quickly stepped in to finance, market and distribute their projects. The end results were *Toy Story* and *Chicken Run*, two high-caliber entries with an independent spirit that were both critical and financial successes. With or without Hollywood's involvement, it definitely looks like independent filmmakers will continue producing unique animated features for many years to come. Now, if only there was a way to see them in theaters. . .

Amid Amidi is the publisher and editor of Animation

Blast Magazine (www.animation-blast.com). He lives in Los Angeles, where he enjoys stealing sand from the local beaches.

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

Pitching Perfect: A Word From Development

by Heather Kenyon

Development executives sit through pitches each and every day and have seen it all — from the dull reading off sheets of paper to action-packed pitches complete with singing dogs, marching bands and Aunt Rosemary singing the national anthem. Everyone knows a great pitch starts with a great series concept, but in addition to that what do the executives from top networks like to see? What makes them cringe and what impresses them? Here they let us know which elements are really important and surprisingly, the bottom line turns out to be pretty casual — professional, but casual. So leave the singing dog at home and take some of their advice:

Kevin Kay

Vice President/Executive Producer,
Development, Nickelodeon

Kevin Kay: I think shorter is better, especially for the first go-rounds. It's more about selling an idea than it is about selling a series, because I think you don't know whether you have a series or not until you really get into the whole bible and the designs and the stories that you're going to tell. But shorter is always better. I'd rather see two pages than twenty. Funny pictures. That's the key to me. There's got to be something that makes me laugh. Something that I can look at right away and it's visually either hysterical or different. That's



Kevin Kay, Vice President/Executive Producer, Development, Nickelodeon.

"I want to see the idea that seems like it might be a little too outrageous or a little too over the top..."
— Kevin Kay

gonna get my attention. Nothing that looks like the other stuff that we do. I think the biggest mistake people make is they say, 'I got the next *Rugrats*.' I already got the *Rugrats*. I'm fine. If I need the next *Rugrats* I'll call up Klasky-Csupo and they'll give me the next one. I've said this before, but I think it sort of hits the nail on the head. That picture you drew on the napkin at the bar last night where you woke up the next morning and you looked at it and you thought, 'What was I thinking? No networks ever going to buy this. I should stop drinking.' Then you put it in the bottom drawer of your desk. That's what I want to



see. I want to see the idea that seems like it might be a little too outrageous or a little too over the top, because that's gonna probably be different than what everyone traditionally walking in the door thinks I want to buy. So, given that, the other thing is tell me a story. We're in the kids business, and the family business is built on good storytelling. So, if somebody comes in and pitches me a story that sort of gets me from A to B to C and lets me know that they know how to tell a story, especially, for a young writer that I don't know or a young artist that I haven't met. If you can come in and tell me a story that's going to capture my attention and keep me riveted or laughing for five minutes, then, I can kind of get the sense that you can do that on TV too. I think that's the key.

Heather Kenyon: How would you want artwork presented?

KK: I think it doesn't really matter. It's different for everybody. It's great to see some character designs and some background designs. Or a key frame, a great scene, that's in the story. The best way and the ultimate would be to come in and tell me the story of your pilot and show me a couple of key frames

that go along with it that show me the characters and what the world's going to look like. But, it doesn't really require that. Some people are not artists and some artists are not good writers. I think it's up to the network or the development executive to be able to have the vision that there's somebody in front of me that has part of the skills and knows how to do enough that we can help them do the things that they can't do. Or that they don't yet have the talent to do. It would be great to see some boards in whatever condition, whether it's the drunken bar napkin, or the big presentation boards. That's great to see, but I think it's different for everybody. The other part is it's also about personality. The best example is when Stephen Hillenburg pitched me *SpongeBob*. He had a whole board. He's an artist and he's a filmmaker. He had boarded out the whole story. That would have been great in and of itself, but he took me through the board playing all the characters himself and doing the voices and singing the songs. And it was hilarious...it was like, 'Wow. This guy is funny. He gets what's funny and he has all the other skills to go along with it, but he understands these characters and he knows this world.' I think that's part of it. You've got to sell yourself.

Jonathan Rosenthal

Vice President, Development, Fox Kids Network

First of all, don't deliberately take a long time — you are pitching a concept for a television show, not a novel. If the person you are pitching responds to your

idea it will be natural to spend a few minutes talking about it, otherwise limit yourself to 10-15 minutes.

Second, figure out who the show is about — who the stories will revolve around and what those characters want. (As well as any weakness that may keep them from attaining their goals.)



Jonathan Rosenthal, Vice President, Development, Fox Kids Network.

Third, don't *ever* just read from your materials. As one of my colleagues here is fond of saying, "If that's what you're going to do, you might as well have just sent it in the mail. I can read." Tell a story (a short one). It should feel like I'm being pitched an episode of a show that already is on the air.

Fourth, do your research. Don't pitch inappropriate things to inappropriate people, even if you are doing so just to get the pitching experience.

As far as having art or something written to leave behind — this is always a plus, but not critical. And as far as written leave behinds go, keep it short and sweet.

Other things I would suggest would be to rehearse the pitch at least a few times, and just to have fun. Best of luck and see you in the conference room.



Linda Simensky, Vice President of Original Programming, Cartoon Network.

Linda Simensky

Vice President of Original Programming, Cartoon Network

When some people ponder pitching to a network, I think they imagine themselves standing in front of huge foam core blowups of their characters, pitching to a boardroom full of serious network executives. When others tell me about the pitches they think we want at the Cartoon Network, they suppose that we want to see wild acting and jumping around. Some people apparently think that we'd like them to come in and read their pitch out loud to us...

"The artist should just be able to come in and tell us about their idea and what they want to do." – Linda Simensky

The truth is none of those is quite the right situation for pitching to Cartoon Network. Sometimes I just tell people not to even call it a pitch, just to come in and show us their artwork and tell us what kind of cartoons they'd like to make. That's how we like to start the development process.

As for what to bring, a person looking to make a cartoon for Cartoon Network should have an overall idea of what the show is about, some characters designs and descriptions, and about four or five story ideas. The material can be rough, there can be several versions of the designs, and there can be Xeroxed pages from sketchbooks. Just these few simple items usually can tell us if the idea is right for us. No need for theme songs, storyboards, scripts or letters of recommendation. The artist should just be able to come in and tell us about their idea and what they want to do.

**“Don’t tell me it
will be hilarious
— convince me!”
— Kim Christianson**

What helps more than anything is if an artist can bring along something that communicates his or her sensibility to us. That intangible sensibility is what makes one show about two dogs seem brilliant, and another show about two dogs seem boring and predictable. Artists have been able to communicate their sensibility through their personal films, Websites, comics, sketchbooks, etc. Even if something has nothing to do with the show being pitched, it's still helpful.

Since we deal almost exclusively with artists, our goal has been to keep the process relaxed and casual. And someday, when we change the name of pitching officially to “just come in and show us your designs and tell us what kind of cartoons you’d like to make,” then everyone will be able to relax a little more.



**Kim Christianson, Vice President,
Programming & Development,
Fox Family Channel.**

Kim Christianson

Vice President, Programming & Development, Fox Family Channel

What I look for in a pitch is clarity and brevity. I love it when the verbal pitch is concise and to-the-point, i.e. a log-line that gives me an instant picture of the kind of show, followed by a brief run-down of main characters and what a typical episode might be about. In order to keep verbal pitches short, this usually means that the person pitching will come with a 7-10 page treatment (leave-behind) that describes the show and main characters. I am always thrilled when a person trusts me to read the material on my own rather than feeling the need to take me through every detail including a long, drawn-out back-story. A pitch that has confidence in its content rather than its packaging also impresses me. It is extremely obvious when the pitch spends too much time trying to wow me with inflated predictions about merchandising possibilities and “break-out hit potential” without the content to back it up. If the show idea is a comedy, the pitch should cite examples of how/why

its funny. Don't tell me it will be hilarious — convince me! If the idea is for an animated series, it is best to have artwork attached, but be careful... Designs can make or break a pitch, so don't come in with the rough drawings you did at home hoping I'll “get the idea.”

John Hardman

Director of Development, Kids WB!

John Hardman: First and foremost, I think the most important thing for us is that we can't accept any unsolicited submissions. All of our submissions have to come through either an entertainment agent or an entertainment attorney who we have a relationship with.

Heather Kenyon: Is there a case where you also have release forms artists could sign?

JH: We do, but our legal affairs department really discourages us from doing that. The exceptions that we make, for example, may be a creator who has ended the relationship with their agent. We may know them, they've had a TV show on the air in the past, so we know they're professional and it's just that they no longer have an agent. Otherwise, I would have to say certainly keeping it brief, focusing on the core concepts, the main characters, their relationships, giving us a sense for the tone, the setting and the breadth of the series is what I'm really looking for. Come in with half a dozen episode ideas so you can talk about how it actually plays out, as opposed to just the conceptual stage. Ideally it would be great if you had a leave-behind of some

sort. That can be anywhere from a couple of pages, a brief overview, to a mini-bible of sorts which might be 10 to 15 pages long where we get all of those key elements that we've already talked about. Artwork isn't necessarily required, so don't feel you need to do that, and don't come in with the music for the main title. While we appreciate the thought and effort that goes into considering merchandising, we're a TV network and we're most concerned with the TV series itself and not the ancillary product. That's a great bonus, but it's a big warning sign to me when somebody comes in and starts pitching me how great the toy is going to be before they pitch me the series.

HK: And if people do have artwork, what sorts of artwork do you like to see? Do you like to see more situations that the characters might find themselves in, or just straight character design?

JH: Both are great. Certainly, the character design is very important and if they were in situational art, you'd still need to see them clearly. A lot of times what happens when they give you a set up, the action is in the forefront and the characters are in back. So you don't really know what the focus is in the series. Is it the characters or is it the explosion? But, also, there has to be a willingness to develop. This is development and changes to the artwork might be requested. They should come in with the knowledge that anything and possibly everything could change as we move forward and they should be open to collaborating with us.

HK: If they do bring in art to their pitch, do you have any preference

whether it's on an 8 1/2 x 11 piece of paper, or a cocktail napkin?

"It's a big warning sign to me when somebody comes in and starts pitching me how great the toy is going to be before they pitch me the series."

— John Hardman

JH: It doesn't concern me. It certainly wouldn't bother me if they Xeroxed that napkin onto an 8 1/2 x 11 leave behind just so I don't lose anything. That way I can put the whole package together in one paperclip and be done with it. I would prefer the artwork to be on 8 1/2 x 11 for those reasons. If you have a big board, what am I going to do with that board? Where am I going to store it? And if I have to return it to you, that's just a further hassle. Having it all so that I can pass it along to the next person to take a look makes it much more convenient if it's in one package. It doesn't have to be bound professionally. A staple in the corner is fine. They don't need to go to the extra effort to get a three-ring binder or spiral bound. Some people have even come in with book binding! Chances are I'm going to have to rip that up to Xerox it for everybody who needs to get a copy. A staple is just as convenient.

HK: So there's a whole production process that people need to be aware of.

JH: Exactly. The thing is you really

appreciate it when they go through that extra effort, but it's just not necessary. For me and for us here, the idea is king. Presentation is secondary. Sure it gives you some extra bonus points if it looks nice and it's spelled correctly, but if you came in with *Pokemon* on one piece of paper with no artwork, we would still look at it very seriously.

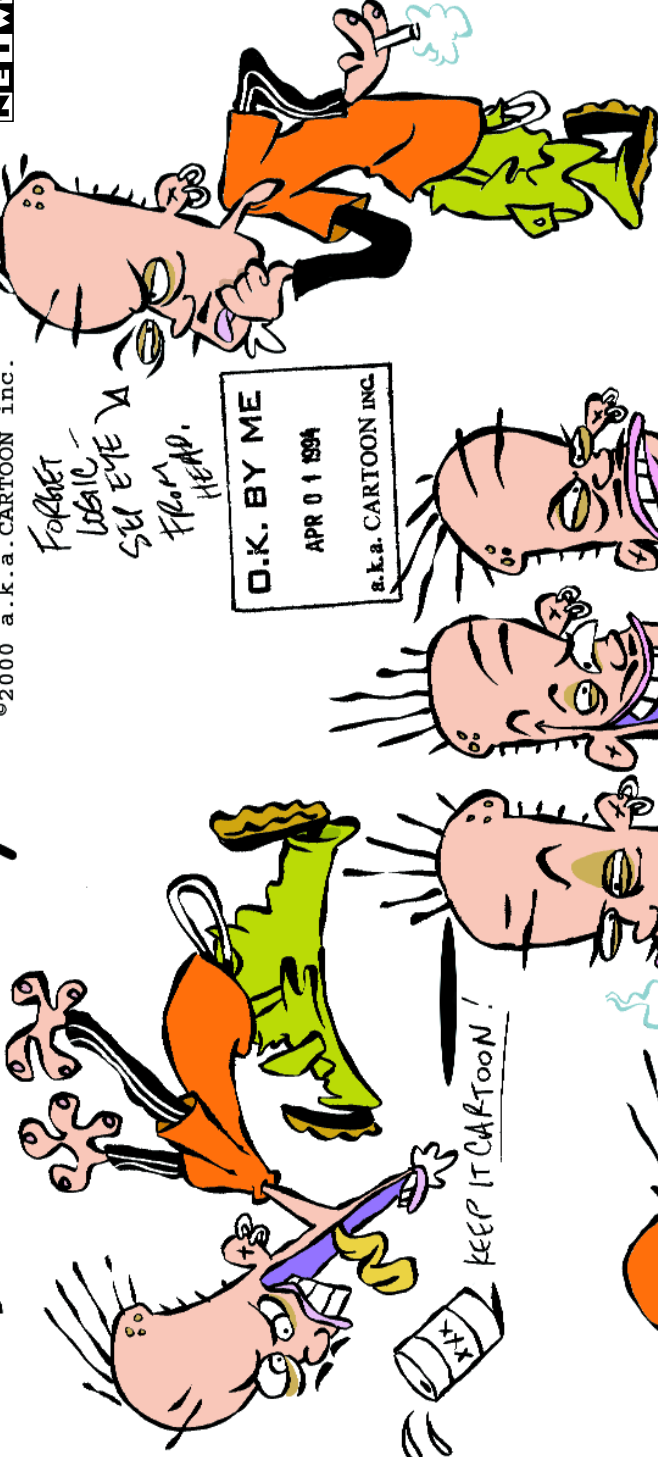
The most important thing is the story, characters and relationship. The other thing that is very important for hopeful creators is to pay attention and study where they're going. Try to watch what's on their air. Understand what their basic philosophy is and don't come in with something that's totally inappropriate for my target audience and demographic. By watching our air you can get a strong sense of the direction that we're headed and the types of series that might be of interest to us. But then, you can also do some additional homework and find out what the target audience is and what the demographic is. If you've got an agent, that agent can certainly do some preliminary checking as well, as to what the needs are as far as genre, and whether we are looking for live-action or only animation.

Heather Kenyon is editor in chief of Animation World Network.

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

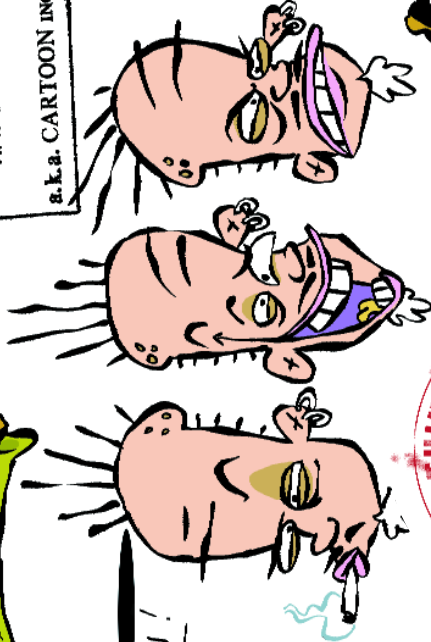
Dan, Dann n Danny

Antonucci's Model Sheet
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DRAWING ATTENTION

— How to Get Your Work Noticed

by Janet Ginsburg

After years of hard work and practice, it's finally time to draw attention to what you've been drawing. So what do you have to do to get your foot in the door? One method is to gain representation — easy enough to do if you're established, but a little more difficult if you're not. Luckily, if you're talented, serious — and patient — it's easier than you think to get your work noticed.

First: Location, Location, Location: If you wanted to be a lobbyist, you'd find a wealth of job opportunities in Washington, D.C. If its animation you're interested in, your place is in Southern California. Of course, its possible to get work in other parts of the country — theres plenty of work for computer animators in Northern California, for example — but as in any field, its important to be where the action is. And as far as animation is concerned, that place is Los Angeles. Other hot spots are the Bay area and New York City. Outside the U.S. there are numerous major animation centers as well, such as Paris, Toronto, Vancouver, London, etc. For instance, if you want to be involved in stop-motion, then you'd better get yourself to Bristol!

Second: Being in the Know: Once you've arrived in town with your portfolio under your arm, you'll have plenty to do before you go knocking on agency doors. The first major task is research — getting the informa-



tion you need to plot your course of action. Its important to be informed about whos who and whats where in your field. There are a number of animation and/or entertainment-themed publications and directories (*Daily Variety*, *Animation World Network*, *The Hollywood Creative Directory*, etc.). Read and reference them. Keeping current won't make you a

better artist or writer, and it won't get you an agent or a deal — but it will help you learn the names and faces you need to know in order to get ahead in your chosen field.

Third: Getting Out There: One of the best ways to secure an agent, according to Animanagements Aaron Berger, "is to have someone who the representative knows and trusts recommend you. Thats the quickest route." If you're just starting out, you probably don't know too many people in the industry — so the importance of networking can't be underestimated. By attending industry conferences and events, you're more likely to meet people who will take an interest in seeing your work. Talk to people who have the jobs you'd like to have, and find out how they got there. And talk to others like yourself, just starting out — you never know where they'll go or who they know. They just might know about opportunities that would interest you.

Beyond the Basics

While having an agent, lawyer or manager negotiate on



The Iron Giant. Courtesy of and © 1999 Warner Bros.



The Powerpuff Girls. © Cartoon Network.

your behalf is certainly desirable, it isn't imperative for a person new to the field — or in many instances, even one with experience. What is resoundingly important is that you focus on honing your skills, breaking into the business on any level, and building a solid reputation.

"It's not necessary for every artist or animator to have an agent negotiate for their salary or position," says Randy Myers, who is repped by John Goldsmith of the Irv Schecter Company. Myers is a character animator/animation director who's worked in animation for more than a decade, on both features (*Iron Giant*, *Quest for Camelot*) and television. He is currently directing episodes of *The Powerpuff Girls* on Cartoon Network. "If someone is just starting out in the industry, it's not important to have an agent. All that should matter is getting work and doing the best you can. If you do that, eventually the bigger deals will come to you — then you should think about finding representation."

Claudia Katz, producer and Senior Vice President at Rough

Draft, concurs that an agent isn't an absolute must for a new talent who's seeking work. "Our hiring process is open to everyone. People drop off portfolios, and based on these portfolios, they are invited to take a test...[We] hire people based on the results of these tests. In fact, having an agent open, an agent isn't providing you any entry you couldn't seek on your own."

In fact, having an agent can occasionally work against a new artist's best interests. "During our first season [working on *Futurama*], an agent for a layout artist who was fresh out of school called to demand a two-year contract with salary and promotion guarantees. This artist's test was borderline, but we were willing to take a chance on him until these demands were made. In this case, his agent cost him the opportunity to find out whether he would have worked out."

The Next Level

While the necessity of pursuing representation when starting out is debatable, the merits of

having a rep who believes strongly in your work as an established talent are much clearer.

Greg Emison has worked as a storyboard artist on shows including *Rugrats*, *Hey Arnold!* and *Cow and Chicken*. He is currently producing two of his own original ideas on the web at stick-yflicks.com. "I had a show optioned by a major network, and needed someone to broker the deal for me," explains Emison. "Getting an agent has allowed me time to concentrate on the creative aspects of my creations and stop worrying about the business end. To get an agent you have to open a few doors of your own at first, but it's worth the ones that are open for you later."

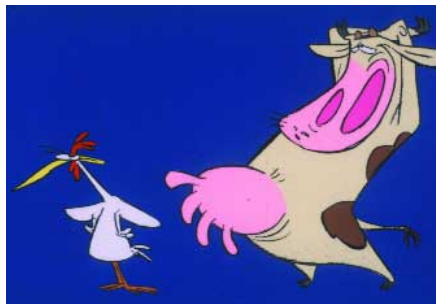
Randy Myers agrees that there are definite benefits to obtaining representation. "Having someone represent me not only opened some new doors for me, but also made it more attractive financially to walk through those doors. I've found that the larger studios tend to give an artist more credibility if they have someone representing them."

When you are ready to seek representation, there are smart and not-so-smart ways to do it. "Sound out people in the business, and get their recommendations," suggests Adam Lane, a creator/producer currently developing a project at Fox Kids. Lane is represented by Aaron Berger at Animagement. "[Aaron] is an invaluable source for professional advice, and a great sounding board for ideas. Make sure your agent has good personal relationships in the business — deals get done that way."

Ultimately, the benefits of seeking representation at the early stages of one's career vary from

artist to artist. It's a highly personal choice, and one should take many factors into consideration when making the decision — but for many inexperienced artists, it can be a bit like putting the cart before the horse. Agents want to represent talented, experienced individuals with solid reputations and work histories. At that point in one's career, representation is naturally easier to find, and generally a lot more useful.

"When a company is signing you to a multi-year contract, I can see an agent or at least a lawyer being quite helpful," says Claudia Katz. "However, at Rough Draft, our budgets are set, and an



Cow and Chicken. © Cartoon Network.

agent isn't going to get [you] any more money [than] someone else...you're getting the same salary as the person next to you, only you're handing over 10%."

"In animation," Katz continues, "good people find good jobs, with or without agents. We are in an industry and a market in which

if you are talented and work hard, you will have no trouble finding work."

Janet Ginsburg is a writer and producer based in Los Angeles. Her work has appeared in VIBE, LA Weekly and on the E! Entertainment Television Network. She fraternizes freely with talented animation types, occasionally collaborates with them, and has several animated projects in the works.

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

Bonus HTML Features

Every on-line (HTML) issue of *Animation World Magazine* contains additional features not found in the download or print Acrobat version, such as QuickTime movies, links to Animation World Network sites, extended articles and special sections. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

- **The Power Behind Atomic Cartoons**

Bob Miller talks with Rob Davies, one of the founders of Vancouver's Atomic Cartoons, which from pre-production to Flash, is making a name for itself. Quicktime clips at: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.06/5.06pages/milleratomic2.php3>

- **Anime Theatrical Features**

Fred Patten offers a glimpse inside the Japanese film scene. Take a look at the *Vampire Hunter D* QuickTime clip at: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.06/5.06pages/pattenfeatures3.php3>

- **Getting Started in Your Home Town**

At Animation World Network we frequently hear from folks who want to start in animation from their hometown. Here are a few featured AWN links to get you started: <http://www.awn.com/schooldir/>, <http://www.awn.com/village/>, <http://www.awn.com/village/associations.php3>, <http://creativeplanet.com/community-center/>

Where The Recruiters Go

by Heather Kenyon

Part of the trick of getting hired is knowing where to be seen by the recruiters. We asked several studios, ranging from many different areas of animation, to reveal where they are most likely to find a new hire. Get networking because across the board...it looks like word of mouth wins by a landslide.



First and foremost when searching for talent I ask around among my colleagues for people they have either worked with before or know of from other studios — that gives me a great starting point. When recruiting from schools I rely on alumni or faculty to give me pointers about the latest crop. I check industry Websites mainly to see where the competition is regarding current recruiting efforts. If a candidate sends me some material but also asks me to check their Website I do try, but I find it rather time-consuming. A CD of their work is preferable.

Shelley Page
Feature Animation European
Representative, DreamWorks, SKG

The two recruitment strategies that work best for us are:

We hear about people from other people who work here.

People hear about us from other people who work here.

It really is that simple!

Word of mouth and personal recommendations are the best way for us to find people. Not only does it open doors faster, but when you are hiring on a recommendation of someone you know and respect, then you have more information about the new person's work (i.e. strengths and weaknesses, etc.).

We do accept resumes cold, and we keep an active resume file, but for the most part it is personal recommendations that are the best for us. Without the personal connection, then we need to see a reel of work that lets us gage the level of the person and we would use that reel to inform our hiring decision.

Ashley Postlewaite
Renegade Animation

- 1) Employee referrals.
- 2) Response to job listings we

have on our companys Website.
3) Response to job listings we have placed on other Internet sites.

The Recruiting Department
Pixar Animation Studios

1. By word of mouth — from current employees, former employees and colleagues in the animation business.
2. From the show reels that are sent in.
3. By meeting people at animation events, like festivals.

Jonas Odell
Filmtecknarna

As for recruitment results, we find festivals and job fairs the best for attracting experienced animation artists. The exposure is great, as we seem to have been a well-kept secret up until the release of *Simba's Pride*.

The other side is identifying local talent through newspaper advertisements, where we recruit talented artists with no animation experience and train them in-house.

Debbie Cramb
Recruitment and Training
Manager, Walt Disney Animation,
Australia

We really try to cultivate relationships with not only the student services and placement heads at great art schools in the U.S. and Canada, but we also try to get to know some of the teachers personally. When we first began the company in 1996, we would teach "Acting for Animators" workshops at the studio, where we would find a lot of great and talented animators.

As we grow, we always try to be creative and fresh in our search for talent — we send our animators to life drawing classes, where they will meet other potential candidates or we will guest lecture on Flash animation at various schools and get to spend some quality time with some potential candidates.

And lastly, outside of buying advertising, we go to a lot of film festivals, conferences and surf to see who is creating fresh and original content.

Andrea Drougas
President, Unbound Studios

1. Job fairs at major animation events.
2. Advertising in the local animation Union newsletter.

3. Recommendations from the current staff, i.e. word of mouth.
4. Internships (non-paying).

Word of mouth is the best method though!

Julie Shevach
Managing Director, Click 3X

The primary way we find talent is from our current staff recommendations. Without exception, every key position has been filled from referrals. We also run ads in regional newspapers for entry level to mid-level talent.

Bill Dennis
Toonz Animation

Essentially, we hire staff for our LA studio through word of mouth. Although we don't solicit resumes, we sure do receive *tons* on a regular basis. Also, the digital side of the business is relatively small and there really are only a handful of places where digital artists can hope to find work. I have developed a friendly rapport with the digital heads of other studios and we often trade info on performance and availability.

As for the studio in the Philippines, our first attempt at hiring was through paid ads. The animation community is small in Manila and soon everyone knew that there was a new studio in town. Also, we resigned ourselves to the fact that there were not going to be many "trained" digital artists and that we would have to pick people based on work ethic and attitude and simply train them.

These methods have worked out well for both studios.

Andrea Romero
Virtual Magic

How Humongous Entertainment would go about hiring an animator...

1. Job listing on AIGAs Website (American Institute of Graphic Artists).
2. Posting through GAG (Graphic Artists Guild).
3. Word of mouth and networking within the design community.

Jen Martin
Humongous Entertainment

Heather Kenyon is editor in chief of Animation World Network.

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

Getting Started in Your Home Town

by Heather Kenyon

Here at Animation World Network we frequently receive desperate e-mails from folks who want to start their animation training prior to attending college or want to test out the animation waters without moving to a major city. While these folks swear that no animation exists for miles, we have been very surprised many times by where animation does exist. I don't claim that animation exists in *every* corner of the globe but here are a few suggestions to try to seek out some animated help in your area. Get ready to e-mail, call and hunt...



Let Your Fingers Do The Walking...

Start with the phone book. Call your local colleges and schools. Do they have any animation courses or do they know of any local workshops and courses? Often times, even if animation isn't included in the official curriculum the art professors might know of

other art teachers or outlets in the area that might offer some opportunities. Also, check out our School Directory online at www.awn.com/schooldir/ for additional animation schools in your area.

Also, try alternative places of education like adult education centers or extension centers, which sometimes offer specialized courses.

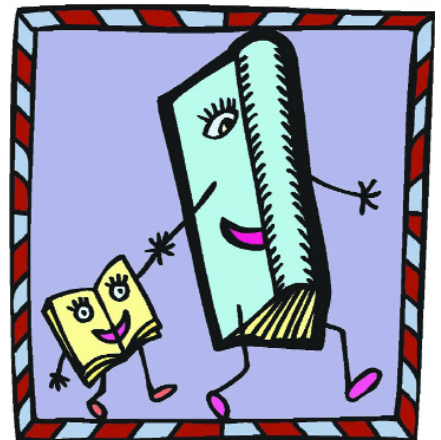
Call your town's Chamber of Commerce or equivalent. They can help you in a number of ways. They will be able to tell you if there is a small animation studio hiding in your town and put you in touch with the city's arts branch. Here again, these folks might know of animation alternatives going on locally or special yearly festivals and events.

The town library is also a good resource. Not only can they hook you up to the systems books and resources regarding animation but they might also know about special events and activities going on that are animation related. Libraries always have bulletin boards and librarians are pretty in tune with local events, groups and government.

Call the local television, public access or cable station. Do they need an intern? It might not be animation directly but if you can start helping out in graphics it is a good place to start. Other related businesses might be: art supply houses, architecture or product design firms and ad agen-

cies. Many design firms use the same 3D software and hardware as animation productions.

Then call businesses that might be closely related to animation. Perhaps an art gallery or comic book store knows about an animation screening that is happening or the art supply store on Main Street might offer some life drawing classes. Who knows? But it is worth a try. Always start your inquiry with a broad question as opposed to a narrow one.



Seek Further...

Did you know there is an ASIFA chapter in Mongolia? And did you know that in Worthington, Ohio there is a studio that has done work for almost every major Hollywood studio and been in the running for Oscars? The most cutting edge CGI feature in production today? Japan? Silicon Valley? No, Honolulu! With a little research you might find that

you are pretty darn close to an animation hub.

Go to Animation Worlds Animation Village (www.awn.com/village) to find a few places to start hunting. In the Associations Directory (www.awn.com/village/associations.php3) for instance, you can find ASIFA-International's Website (asifa.net) and see if there is an ASIFA branch in your area. If there is one relatively close (i.e. an adjacent state, province or country), contact them anyway. They might know someone in your neck of the woods.

Also, check our Career Connections (www2.awn.com/career). You can search for jobs by location and post your resume. You might be able to find a business in your area. Another great resource is Creative Planets animation portal (<http://creativeplanet.com/cp/0,5411,5,00.html>), which is another collection of links and information.

The same goes for festivals. Check our Calendar of Events (www2.awn.com/events) frequently. If there is an event somewhat close by, call. Ask about volunteering. Some festivals, like SIGGRAPH, have whole student volunteer packages that will pay for plane fare and hotels. Not saying every festival has such luxuries but again it is worth a try. There are plenty of students who arrive at the Annecy festival and camp nearby for the week. And maybe while you are talking to the festival director they will mention the great animated short they received from the independent animator living one town over from Ettrick, Wisconsin where you live. Independent animators often need help painting cels, or might at least answer a few of your ques-

tions if you ask nicely. Volunteer for the arts events in your local town. You might meet someone who knows someone, who has a brother-in-law who knows...



Get ready to e-mail, call and hunt...

Do It Yourself...

Finally, you can do it yourself. These days a computer set-up with the proper software to do simple animation is possible. In fact, in an interview with Paul Fierlinger (Issue 4.2, May 1999) he makes the suggestion that instead of paying tuition one should get software and buckle down to do some serious self-learning. While this approach might not be right for everyone it certainly is an option. Plus, you can post animations and get feedback almost immediately thanks to the Web.

You can also jump into discussion forums like the ones on Animation World for help and advice. Our parent company, Creative Planet, has an entire community center ([url: creativeplanet.com/communitycenter](http://url:creativeplanet.com/communitycenter)) complete with many discussion forums. One of the most helpful is Larry Lauria's "Animation Tools and

Techniques." With the Internet one is never completely disconnected. If you post questions here you are sure to get a response from a professional who can actually give you solid advice from experience. You can also meet others and share ideas. The Web is home to many online classes as well and more are always popping up.

The lesson to learn is to be resourceful. To find one lead and follow it to another. An e-mail sent off to an organization might take a few months to get a reply, but in the meantime continue to search and find new roads. While it will take some time, if you search the Internet, read animation sites, and contact the organizations discussed you are sure to become more in tune with the animation community at large.

Have you had success finding animation in your area through a method not discussed here? Please, let us know and we'll include it next time.

Heather Kenyon is editor in chief of Animation World Network.

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Jewish Rabbits

Tsvika Oren Speaks with 3 Prominent Israeli Animators



Tsvika Oren.

Noam Meshulam

As the story goes, several episodes of Nickelodeons '97 *Sniz & Fondue* series were actually broadcast from the Middle East. One can safely assume that all involved were too busy being panicked to make any PR use of the story. The story begins with the Anima Studio in Tel Aviv signing a contract to supply animation services for 13 episodes of the series. Running into difficulties, there was a delay in production and finally the studio closed down. Noam Meshulam, head of Pitchi Poy Studio, in Jaffa, came to the rescue, gathering a team of 60 for nonstop work to redo the first episodes. Completing each episode dangerously near airing time, Meshulam had to drive daringly with the only copy to the main satellite transmitter antenna, Eitanim, way up on top of a mountain near Jerusalem. Somehow he made it on time for all 13 episodes.

According to Meshulam it

was a calculated risk. Financially, he knew, he would at best break even, most likely ending up in the red. Still, pulling it off against all odds would be extremely valuable for the studios reputation. In addition, working internationally has been every Israeli studios dream. These reasons justified the tremendous effort — wild drives up narrow mountainous roads on stormy nights included!

"It proved to be an important step toward our getting into the international animation market," reflects Noam Meshulam. "An arduous process which takes years of marketing your studio, initiating projects, constantly supplying proof of your creativity and recent achievements at important markets such as MIP... Thus, inch by inch, you get in and become recognized, so that when you have a good project to offer you can gain access to the right people".

Noam Meshulam studied animation at Gobelins in Paris,



Noam Meshulam.

under the late Pierre Ayma. After graduating in 1985 he opened a small studio in his father's house in old Jaffa; a beautiful structure which was built in the 19th century and designed to serve as the Italian embassy to the Ottoman Empire. Careful interior changes were made to adapt it to the needs of the major animation studio it now houses. With a core staff of 15 and dozens of experienced artists joining in when there is need, Pitchi Poy Studio is, at



King Solomon. © Pitchi Poy Studio.

long last, treading on solid ground.

The studio is now busy with Israel's 13-minute episode of the international *Animated Tales of the World* series, entitled "King Solomon." Recently they completed the 26-minute TV special *Children of Chelm*, a Canada-Israel co-production likely to be developed into a series.



Anna and David, from *Children of Chelm*.
© Pitchi Poy Studio.

Pitchi Poy's many projects include the developing of two pilots. One is a co-production with TelAd TV and the other is *Dumplings in Space*, an international series, which is scheduled to start production in September. And, naturally, commercials. "Commercials are the main source of income for an animation house here," says Meshulam. "The budget per second is usually \$1,000 to \$2,000. When animation and backgrounds are limited it can drop down to \$500. A studio can manage with such budgets. The problem is one can't count on a regular flow of commercials. That's what makes series work so important. It's a studio's bread and butter."

Hanan Kaminski

Director Hanan Kaminski of the TV Loonland studio, Budapest, regards commercials with more enthusiasm. "It is the only kind of

commissioned work allowing creative adventures. It often gives me an opportunity to work with the most advanced, most expensive talent and equipment. Luckily, I enjoy the pressure. The sleepless nights. The outrageous last minute changes. By paying me a lot of money they get the right to apply mild torture," explains Kaminski.

Nowadays Kaminski can allow himself this light-hearted attitude toward the hardships of making animated commercials in Israel. He enjoys the unique position of being a successful international feature animation director. Living in Tel Aviv, he travels to work on commercial flights. His two features, *The Real Scleriel* (1995) and *Pettson & Findus* (1999), were made in Hungary, Sweden, Belgium, Canada, Estonia and Bulgaria. Recently added to his flight route is the U.K., where he is working with legendary TVC, London-based producer John Coates (*Yellow Submarine*) on *The Fantastic Flying Journey* series.



Yellow Pages advertisement.
© Claytoons Studio.

Hanan Albert Kaminski was born and raised in Belgium, where he joined a socialist Zionist youth movement and moved to a kibbutz in Israel when he turned 18. Graduating Bezalel Academy of Art & Design with a degree from the graphic design department in

1977, he then went to work for IBA national TV. He then received his post-graduate in animation at the Royal Academy, Amsterdam, in 1980. Opening a studio in Jerusalem, he employed up to 10 artists doing commercials, *Sesame Street* segments, TV spots, etc. Later, after moving the studio to Tel Aviv, he pioneered the trend of kids straight to video in Israel by producing musical variety shows by mixing animation and live-action. Over one million copies of these shows have been sold to date.

"In 1985 I started developing a script based on Bashevis-Zinger's stories of Chelm, the town of fools," recounts Kaminski. "In '93 I closed down the studio, put a few drawings I did for Chelm in a big cardboard file and went to do the rounds in Europe, in search of partners and backing for a Chelm feature. What happened next was quite a Cinderella story. In contrast to the sceptic, at times mean, response the project got in Israel, Europe seemed to be eagerly awaiting my arrival. With generous budgets and enthusiastic professionals we got into production and ended up building a studio in Budapest, employing 100 to 300 artists in a Germany-France-Hungary production. Completing the 77 minute feature in '95, the studio was already busy with another feature and a lot of commissioned work."

In '96 Kaminski was invited to co-direct, with veteran director-illustrator Yossi Abolafya, the new animation unit at Bezalel Academy, Jerusalem. Teaching in Israel while working internationally gives Kaminski a special observation post over Israeli animation: "Israel is overflowing with talent. Many creative people are keen on



Yoram Gross, during the 1950s and now.
Photos courtesy of Yoram Gross.

getting into animation. Quite many innovative young artists are testing Internet and computer possibilities. The main obstacle they all face is that of immature — animation wise — clients and commissioning editors. With more knowledgeable ones who understand the medium there is no telling how far Israeli animation artists will get.” This explains Kaminski’s plans to do his next feature, now in development, in Israel.

Yoram Gross

It will not be the first animated feature to be made in Israel however. Yoram Gross, now head of a busy studio in Australia where he has made 14 full-length features and 8 television series to date, made the biblical puppet feature *Joseph the Dreamer* in 1961-62. His studio in Tel Aviv, established in the early ‘50s, was the first animation house in Israel, although films were first shot in Israel in 1897, when in April of that year, the notorious Lumiere

brothers visited from France.

Still, the film industry in Israel was very limited until 1970, when Educational TV and IBA national TV started influencing the local scene. The most dramatic TV influence came after commercial and cable TV started operating in 1993. It gave quite a push to computer graphics, including animation and special effects, as well as video productions. As a result, the last film lab in Israel closed down in 1996. Post-production houses, such as Gravity, which completed Raoul Servais’ *Taxandria*, Broadcast and JCS, all in Tel Aviv, became a central creative force, each developing a strong animation unit relying on Silicon Graphics and Mac computers with the most advanced software. The demand for animation talent has been steadily growing in the last decade. The production of educational CD-Roms, games, multimedia and to supply various Internet needs is on the increase. Tel Aviv’s multimedia and software house Disk-In even opened an animation unit when Dudu Shalita closed down Anima Studio and offered his services. They now do international co-productions of TV specials and series, in addition to commercials.



Joseph the Dreamer. © 1961 Yoram Gross.

There are three art schools which could be considered the major suppliers of trained talent: Bezalel, Jerusalem; WIZO, Haifa;

and Camera Obscura, Tel Aviv. The latter is in a rather peculiar situation. Its Digital Media department offers a 4 year animation program. Yet second year students already get tempting job offers from the industry.



Ashley Lazarus, director and producer, *Rashi: A Light After the Dark Ages.* © Disk-In.

Thirty years ago the only animation training available in Israel was a six month course offered by the late TV Arts College in Tel Aviv. It was a private body taking commercial advantage of the void. Only two of its hundreds of students became professional animators. Then, most of the young animation industry consisted of self taught artists. Prominent among these was, and still is, Roni Oren, director of the Claytoons Studio in Binyamina. Admired as an excellent plasticine animator, he has managed for years to create, almost by himself, at least an hour of full character animation every year. His work consists of many commercials and TV



Roni Oren.

specials, as well as four TV series. The latest of which, *Grabbit the Rabbit*, is a 13 X 8 minute series co-produced with IBA TV. The series premiered last month and has already been bought by more than 20 TV stations worldwide, from Channel 4 in the U.K. and Fox Kids France to Asia TV Hong Kong and Transworld Association, Japan.

His professional track record includes his own studio in Jerusalem, where top international artist Gil Alkabetz started his career in '84. He has had two other studios since. One was for a Danish company owned by a U.K. businessman and the other was in California (1988), doing commercials and TV specials. What he is most excited about now is: "The possibilities offered by easily available electronic means are mind-blowing," says Oren. "I am working now with two Bezalel graduates who every day are doing a 15 to 30 second Flash animation for a commercial Website. Every day a new film! And it is done while we work on a second episode of a cartoon series, do commercials and develop new projects. The

creative independence and efficiency offered by computers makes it possible. We are using Crater's CTP and DPS' Reality/Velocity cards, easily getting a lot of good work done fast in broadcast quality. And this is only the beginning of dynamic computer visuals development, with the Internet still in diapers. True, it is now a hungry monster swallowing everything; not able to discern between good and bad [and with] lots of vulgar, stupid or sloppy stuff. Yet, I expect it will not take long to mature into sophisticated work taking advantage of its unique limitations to create exciting new ways of expression."



Grabbit the Rabbit. © Claytoons Studio.

Another kind of new technology is about to hit Israel — satellite TV is due to start operating soon, already influencing TV programming. Israel is about to get exposed to new channels, including Cartoon Network and Fox Kids, with the latter using Saban International's library. In a way bringing Haim Saban's empire in closer contact with the local scene. "There are no plans yet to get into production in Israel," says Varda Saban of the Israel branch. "Our production facilities are well established and very satisfactory. The only involvement we have with Israeli productions is when we do here promos, merchandizing commercials or sell rights of a property of ours." They may have second thoughts. A delegation of top executives from a giant U.S. corporation has been in Israel in August, checking possibilities. Optimists and dreamers alike will be glad to assure anyone of plenty of promising possibilities in the Promised Land.

Tsvika Oren is a veteran animator, film critic, lecturer and animation missionary. He is also Director of The Animation Center in Tel Aviv and the International Creative Filmmaking festival.

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

Israel's Film Festivals

by Tsvika Oren

A curious phenomenon in Israel is that of an outburst of creativity in the wake of each war. Most noticeably evident in increased numbers of pregnancies and arts events. A few of these events have developed into a tradition of international celebrations. The major ones concerning film take place in the three major cities, situated in a triangle 45 to 90 minutes drive from each other. The international festival in Haifa, up north on the Carmel Mountain, started in 1983. The Jerusalem festival started in 1984. Both are annual and include one or two compilations of animation shorts. Occasionally a couple of animation features are also screened. The annual Creative Filmmaking festival in Tel Aviv is dedicated mainly to animation and started in 1994. Currently it is on hold however, awaiting budget allocation. These festivals do not feature animation in competition. The only competitive festival awarding animation is the student film festival. The following may give an idea of what this unique festival is like:

8th International Student Film Festival, Tel Aviv

The year is 1986. Two graduating students at Tel Aviv University keep bothering everyone with the idea of an international student film festival, to be run by students and focusing on students. Using all of their savings to travel to schools around the

world, they managed to get enough blessings, films, support and visiting students, lecturers and professionals to make the first festival a success. Since then, every two years, the Tel Aviv University film department becomes the festival's headquarters. Its graduates direct and produce the event, while students from all the schools in Tel Aviv host the visiting foreign students. A lively crowd joins the students in a week long celebration of films, workshops, lectures and parties, yielding friendships and working relationships which

will last for years.

This year's festival (May 27 – June 3, 2000) included in its competition some 50 screening hours composed of 164 films, selected by 61 schools from 40 countries. Twenty-two of the films competed in an "Animation and Experimental" category*, which will be separated next festival. The festival represents schools' attitudes rather than a worldview of student creativity. Festival regulations limit participation to members of the international CILECT association, which is an associa-



This year's International Student Film Festival cover.



Gil Kenan's *Shoot the Moon*, with its limited cut-out style of animation, tells the disastrous story of a community forced to build a giant gun in order to shoot the moon. © Gil Kenan.

tion of film schools. Each school is allowed up to 50 minutes of screening time. These rules, however, have a decisive influence on the animation selection as very few art schools join CILECT. Therefore, most film schools prefer sending two impressive 25 minute documentary or fiction films, rather than short animated films.



Matthew Hood's *Hourglass* — a sand animation of the life cycle of a woman confined in glass. © National Film and Television School

An international nine member jury, composed of directors, students and lecturers — none of which involved in animation — selected three films as prize nominees:

- Matthew Hoods *Hourglass*. Made at the NFTS, in Beaconsfield, U.K., this 5 minute film tells the life cycle of a "sand woman" confined in glass, who is running out of

time while having a sandy offspring. The film is an impressive display of computer 3D and 2D animation combined with drawings.

- Gil Kenan's *Shoot the Moon*. From UCLA in the USA, this 5 minute monologue is of a child telling the disastrous history of his community, a kingdom forced to build a giant gun in order to shoot the moon. The film is black and white, limited animation created with cut-outs.

- Aurel Klimt's *The Magic Bell* from Prahaz FAMU in the Czech Republic is a 15 minute fun musical with intentionally sloppy cut-out animation. The film tells the rather wild story of a village made happy by a special bell. When an evil army steals the bell and molds it into a canon, a rescue mission by a little girl and a lost circus elephant succeeds in bringing a happy end. The film was awarded the prize for best animated film.

* Animated films selected by schools for the competition:

- *Like Drowning*, Cath Murphy, 8 minutes. VCA, Melbourne, Australia.
- *Extra Terrestrial*, Ivan Russev, 3

minutes. NATFIZ, Sofia, Bulgaria.

- *Man on the Moon*, Chris Stenner, 7 minutes. FABW, Ludwigsburg, Germany.
- *Silent Saviour*, Ekuba Kyiamah, 5 minutes. NAFTI, Akra, Ghana.
- *It's Your Turn*, Alessia Milo, 6 minutes. SNC, Roma, Italy.
- *The Telephone*, Ekaterina Visnapou, 6 minutes. VGIK, Moscow, Russia.
- *Spirit of Flight*, Soh Wee Lian, 3 minutes. Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore.
- *Hourglass*, Matthew Hood, 5 minutes. NFTS, Beaconsfield, UK.
- *Last Waltz In N.Y.*, Avi Katz, 6 minutes. SVA, N.Y., USA.
- *Shoot the Moon*, Gil Kenan, 5 minutes. UCLA, L.A., USA.
- 3 films from FAMU, Praha, Czech Republic: *F.I.S.H. 073*, Vaclav Svankmajer, 7 minutes; *The Magic Bell*, Aurel Klimt, 15 minutes; *Mumps*, Maria Prochazkova, 7 minutes.
- 2 films from Camera Obscura, Tel Aviv: *Scenario*, Omer Makover, 7 minutes; *These Things Never Happened But Are Always*, Linor Fonseca, 7 minutes.
- 2 from VSMU, Bratislava, Slovak Rep.: *In the Box*, Vladislav Stuhar, 6 minutes; *Doble Voice Invention A-Minor*, Vlado Kral, 2 minutes.
- Plus, 5 films from Bezalel Academy of Art & Design participated in a separate competition for Israeli student films.

Tsvika Oren is a veteran animator, film critic, lecturer and animation missionary. He is also Director of The Animation Center in Tel Aviv and the International Creative Filmmaking festival.

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

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THE POWER BEHIND



© Atomic Cartoons, Inc.

by Bob Miller

What if you were a professional animator and a studio laid you off at a time when other studios were downsizing and job opportunities were scarce? What would you do?

- (1. Quit the business altogether and seek another career.
- (2. Try to find work in a dwindling market.
- (3. Start your own studio.

In the case of Rob Davies, what began as "2" ended up as "3." For years he had worked for other studios; supervising storyboards and layout at Vancouver's Studio B Productions, designing characters for DIC, Warner Bros. and Disney TV, and doing storyboards and directing for Warner Bros. Then when Warners slashed its TV production staff in 1998, Davies was forced to return to Canada, where he teamed with other talented artists to form their own studio, Atomic Cartoons.

"I'm not an expert on survival tactics, but something that I've learned from the Canadian environment is survival," Davies says. "In Canada we've always had adversity and we've always had to scrape to get work, to survive up here. We haven't had the advantage of having large studios to become secure in. We've always had smaller shops scraping by over the years. That lends itself

to the situation that we all found ourselves in.

"Now I feel like I'm back to where I started, because there wasn't a big boom when I started in animation. That helps all of us at Atomic, 'cause we know what it's like to have to beg and borrow to survive.

"With the downsizing that's going on, a lot of people have ended out on the street. Artists are now going to have to somehow band together and do it for themselves, because there's no corporate umbrella to protect them. They have to get together and pull off what we're trying to do, and start their own shops."

Davies recalls, "I could have come home and worked freelance but thought, 'There's no real power in doing that.' The power is getting together with like-minded individuals. One freelancer can pull off a board here and there, but what if four freelancers got together? What if 20 freelancers got together? Pretty soon you have a studio. Now, with the Internet, it allows people who band together and have the same sensibilities to produce their own content.



Rob Davies.

"It's easier said than done. But if you're willing to put in the time and the energy that it requires, you *can* do it. That's exciting. It's a positive that's being squeezed out of a negative situation.

"I say that to anybody," Davies says. "Get out there and give it a try. If you got nothin' to lose, go for it."

Davies' Background

Born in Vancouver in 1968, Davies grew up in Canada and Mexico, drawing ever since he could hold a pencil. "Drawing seemed to be the only thing I could do with any success," he says. "The bottom line is, I can't do anything else."

According to Davies, the animation industry in Vancouver was very small, with just a few houses doing commercials and cel painting. He "warmed up" his pencil by doing posters and T-shirt designs, then landed his first animation job at Gordon Stanfield Animation. There, he did production layouts for *Beetlejuice: The Animated Series*. When layout supervisor Blair Peters joined Chris Bartleman to start Studio B, Davies joined them along with Trevor Bentley and Olaf Miller (who would become Davies' partners in forming Atomic Cartoons).

Davies worked at Studio B for six years, developing his skills as a storyboard artist and director. He briefly worked in West Berlin (behind the Iron Curtain during the Cold War years) at Hahn Film on the feature *Asterix Comes to America*. Davies returned to Canada to art-direct the series



Olaf Miller.

Action Man, then render character designs and storyboards for DIC's *Street Sharks* and Disney's *The Mighty Ducks* series.

"I had a lot of good years at Studio B," Davies recalls. "They were good guys. I learned a lot and hopefully contributed to their studio. But I reached the point where I needed a change. And I wanted to get out of the Vancouver scene. It's a good scene, but it's small. And I just wanted to go down to L.A. to the animation hub and see what it was all about."



Trevor Bentley.

Fortunately for Davies, Warners offered him the opportunity to work on *Pinky & the Brain* as a storyboard artist.

"Every kid who likes animation grows up with Warner Bros.' shield stamped on their head," he says, "so I had to test those waters. I had a chance to work there and I couldn't turn it down."

Eventually Davies was promoted to directing the show and its follow-up series, *Pinky, Elmyra & the Brain*. His work would later be recognized with an Emmy nomination in 1999, and an Emmy win in 2000. But the series was not renewed, and in 1998, Warner Bros. began downsizing its crews throughout its TV animation division.

"The decimation of talent at Warner Bros. was a clear-cut," Davies says. "Somebody came through with a chainsaw and cut all the trees down. I was one of the trees.

"I had ten days to get out of the States literally because of my work visa. They said, 'Here is your pink slip; you're out of here.' I did-

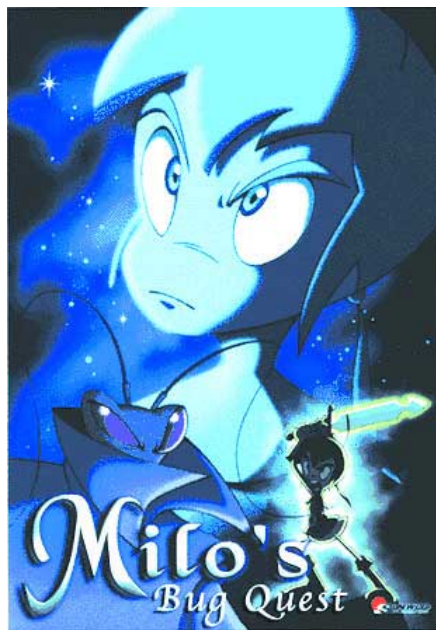
n't have a lot of time to think about things.

"So I was forced to come home and overnight make a career decision on what to do. I directed at Warner Bros. I go back to Vancouver. Now what do I do?

"I thought I could freelance and do boards and go back to Studio B. I don't know if I would've gotten a chance to direct. I like to think that I would have. I didn't know what to do at that point in my life.

"As luck would have it, I got a call from Jae Moh, the executive producer at Sunwoo. He called me at home -- he had gotten my name from a mutual friend, John Kafka -- and said, 'I need a studio in Canada to do 26 episodes of a show for us, *Milo's Bug Quest*. Could you recommend any studios?'

"I said, 'Sure, I worked for Studio B for years. Why don't you guys try them?'



Milo's Bug Quest. © Sunwoo Entertainment Group.

Choosing Another Route

"My feeling was if Studio B takes the show, maybe I'll have a chance to go home and direct on

the show at Studio B. Studio B, at the time, had three of their own shows in production, and they just didn't have the capacity at that time to take on another 26-



Mauro Casalese.

episode series. Sunwoo was left without anybody, so I just phoned Jae up and said, 'We'll put a crew together for you and do the 26 episodes of *Milo*.'

Davies teamed with his old friends Olaf Miller and Trevor Bentley, who were art directors at Studio B, specializing in background and set design. A fourth partner, Mauro Casalese, was an animator and character designer, whose credits include *The Ren & Stimpy Show* and *Woody Woodpecker*. Together they formed Atomic Cartoons in early 1999.

"Everything fell into place, despite the awkward situation I was in," Davies says. "I think just the four of us alone when we started the *Milo* show were a strong team. Now we're surrounded by a lot of talent. At the present time I'd say we've got 25 other people working with us. So we surround ourselves with a lot of good, ambitious talent to support us. That's what our company is based on.

"Sunwoo was a very good company to work with. We helped each other in that situation. They helped our studio grow and we helped them get a show done," Davies says.

Once *Milo's Bug Quest* was finished, Atomic pursued other projects. Phil Roman offered them pre-production work on a 44-minute Christmas special based on the song *Grandma Got Run Over*

by a Reindeer, produced by Fred Rappaport. They also rendered storyboards for *Courage, the Cowardly Dog* for Stretch Films and *Molly O* for Sunbow Productions. Atomic also worked with Danny Antonushi on a.k.a. CARTOON's *Ed, Edd, n' Eddy*.

Film Roman provided Atomic the opportunity to do five months of production layout on *The Oblongs*. During that time, the studio expanded its staff and had to move to a larger space.

In late 1999 the staff was joined by producer Samantha Daley, who had previously produced *Ed, Edd n' Eddy*.

"We were able to get an experienced producer who's also a very good people person," Davies says. "The four partners can now concentrate on the creative side of things a little bit more, while she deals with clients and staff. It worked out really well for us."



Samantha Daley.

tional animation and Flash.

Says Davies, "We contacted Honkworm in Seattle and they came up here for a visit. They liked some of the ideas that we had. One idea was *Dog in a Box with Two Wheels*. It was just a sketch of the dog. They wrote a script around it. They came back to us and we're co-developing and co-producing the series.

"They contribute with the script and the final edit, and they also share in the directing of the show. We do everything from script to boarding and design, right to [almost] final edit. They do the final tweaks to it, and put the voice tracks and music to it. So it's a real 50-50 effort.



Dog in a Box with Two Wheels.
© Honkworm/Atomic Cartoons.

"It's worked out really well," Davies says. "We've got a ten-show deal for the Internet. I believe we're the first studio in western Canada to get our own Internet series, so, that's pretty happy for us."

On other internet projects, Atomic has done animation for *Sticky Flicks*, *The Romp*, and *Mondo Media*.

"Now that we've gotten into Flash," Davies says, "we can actually take a script and make a full cartoon for a client right from scratch. So Flash has allowed us to take our skills and push it one step further, where the cartoon isn't being sent overseas to be animat-

ed. We can actually keep some of the animation in North America.

"That's another exciting thing about Flash -- Everything doesn't get sent away. We've got a lot of animators that have come from Disney and DreamWorks and commercial backgrounds in our studio that are now getting the opportunity to animate again. A lot of stuff that we do in production and layout allows us to do key posing, [but] now we get to animate again," Davies says.

Staying Competitive

"There's a lot of originality and a real hunger in our studio to get out there and compete, and bring the work to a higher level because the industry is competitive. We're up to the challenge. So a client that comes to us gets a real strong 'artistic hunger.' We're really aggressive that way. We want to do the best job possible.

"We'll work night and day, 24 hours a day. We've got the night shift going. We work on the weekends. Whatever it takes. I hope that comes across. We're pushing real hard to be competitive, and to produce a higher quality of cartoon."

Atomic is a "full pre-production" house, offering its clients "full-service fright from the script," Davies says. This includes traditional and Flash animation, as well as designs, storyboards, layouts, mouth positions, exposure sheet timing and design/background color.

Although Atomic is a small operation, Davies sees that as an advantage. "We're not executive top-heavy in our company," he says. "We're right in the trenches with everybody. Our overhead is standard. I don't think there's a lot of mismanagement and waste. If



Dog in a Box with Two Wheels.
© Honkworm/Atomic Cartoons.

Welcome to Flash

In October 1999, the studio opened its own website, www.atomiccartoons.com, to offer its services both in conven-

there's any money being wasted, we see it right away. That allows us to be cost-efficient, as well.

"But that shouldn't be the prime motivator for anybody coming to us," Davies says. "When a client comes to us, they should expect that they're going to get the experience that we have in producing cartoons.

"The four partners each have over a decade of experience.



From left to right: Olaf Miller, Mauro Casalesse, Rob Davies and Trevor Bentley.

"We have a lot of artistic pride in our studio. That's what separates us from a lot of places. We're not driven solely by money. We're driven first by the content, being that we're an artist-run studio. So the content is the number one motivator. And then the paychecks," Davies says.

Keeping the Spark

As for individual artists seeking opportunity in today's climate of studio downsizing, what advice does Rob Davies have to offer?

"When you get out of school, or first get into animation, everybody's got that creative spark. The world is your oyster. You're going to take on the world. Nothing can stop you. You've got that drive and ambition. You're willing to do whatever it takes," Davies says.

"Then you've been in the industry for awhile, and you've gotten complacent. You're comfortable. You're in your cubicle and you've been there for ten years, and this is your position and not a

care in the world -- until it gets taken away from you. Suddenly you're right back to where you started. And, the spark's gone.

"People are going to have to start rekindling that spark -- that same thing that got them to succeed and got them into the industry in the first place. People are going to have to reach down and get that spark back, and go, 'OK. I'd forgotten, but I'm an artist and I'm a creator. I have a talent and a desire, and I'm going to have to start using that desire right now, because nobody's there supporting me with a regular paycheck any more.'

"Maybe the Internet's not the answer, but this creative spark is a symbol of what people can accomplish on their own, something that artists may have forgotten (being part of a big company or having the union support for many years). They'd forgotten what it's like to make their own cartoons, to get together with their friends in a basement somewhere, and make their own comic book or their own cartoon.



Producer Samantha Daley
- work, work, work.

"We're forced to get the creative spark back. The marketplace isn't the same as it was before. We can't just sit back and have people knock on our doors and say, 'Here's a cartload of work for you.' That's not happening any more.

"We've got to generate our own make-work program. To keep people energized. To keep them

excited about what they do for a living, instead of sitting at home with no job complaining about it. We've got to keep that drive going and it's not easy for anybody to do that."

At Atomic Cartoons, Davies says, "We're trying to get some good service jobs. We're trying to do the best job possible with them. Then when we can squeeze out an hour here or a couple hours there, we're trying to do our own cartoons, as well, to keep that spark going.

"That's our prime motivation right now, is to:

(1. keep the paychecks coming in, but

(2. do something for ourselves, and not just for somebody else. Because that's not working any more."

See some QuickTime clips of Atomic Cartoons' work at: <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.06/5.06pages/milleratomic.php3>.

Bob Miller is an animation professional who has written extensively about the industry for Starlog, Comics Scene, Animation Magazine, Animato!, Animation Planet, Comics Buyers Guide and APATOONS. He served on the first season of Courage, the Cowardly Dog as storyboard supervisor and is currently working at Film Roman storyboarding episodes of The Simpsons.

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

Making Money Online: Game Creators

by Jacquie Kubin

Adaboy(www.adaboy.com) has teamed up with gaming Web sites to create a new revenue stream for game creators — advertising dollars. Working within the gaming environment, Adaboy technologists use patented Targeted Message Technology (TMT) to put ads into the texture, or face, of online games.

Located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Adaboy is relatively new to the Internet space with the September 1999 release of the proprietary TMT platform. Still in the early stages of growth, the company has so far brought advertisers to only a handful of games, but it is actively working on agreements with developers and entertainment destinations, such as online malls and gaming sites.

The company is unique in that it promotes a win-win situation for all parties involved, particularly the game developer looking to establish a name, and the advertiser looking for a specific audience.

"Traditionally, smaller and independent game developers have had a hard time making a living as the game goes to the shelf and then is sold for a limited period of time," says Barbara Pearson, Director of Marketing, Adaboy, Inc. "Adaboy gives the online game developer a revenue stream that goes beyond play-value, providing ongoing revenue for the creator."

Guaranteed Target

Advertisers investigating this new broadcast arena might be surprised to learn that forty-eight percent of online gamers, according to Forrester Research, are women; and more than 60% of that number are between the ages of 25 and 44. For advertisers, Adaboy-enabled games work as a targeted vehicle, sending specific messages — such as GNC Vitamins for Women — to this fast growing online group while showing other product ads to youth, male and teenage players.



An example of ads tailored to the user in an online card game. All photos courtesy of Adaboy, Inc.

This is accomplished when a user signs up for free games from the Adaboy Web site or Adaboy host gaming sites like Free Play USA (www.freeplayusa.com), Real Games Free (www.realgamesfree.com), Best Womens Game Site (www.real-freegames.com) and the College Free Stuff site (www.college-freestuff.com). The Targeted Message Technology is triggered when those users create an ID and

password, providing their gender, zip code and birth date. The sign-in process also requests, but does not require, a player's name and e-mail address and provides enlistees the opportunity to request only family safe games and to either ban or accept tobacco, liquor or adult in nature ads.



An advertisement incorporated into the gaming environment of *The Matrix*.

"We refer to each game player as a qualified lead," says Pearson. "We target the advertising based on gender and sex, not by the game. Two people — one male, one female, but each playing *Matrix* — are going to see different ads."

This type of delivery channel is extremely effective in that the advertisement cost is based on the number of qualified views by a targeted audience demographic. Adaboy claims that advertisers are not charged just on views, but views by individuals meeting specific demographics. In addition, Adaboy provides post-delivery authentication reports including viewer breakouts, and length and frequency analyses allowing the advertisers to know which games their demographic plays most.

As with other Internet companies paving new ground, Adaboy has yet to establish a firm cost per thousand or commission structure but initial plans called for a \$40-per-thousand-views charge to the advertiser. Those dollars are



Never a solitary moment when it comes to marketing.

then divided between the game creator, the "host" Website and Adaboy, who expects to take approximately 20% depending on the quality and life expectancy of the game.

"For game developers, both the shareware and retail earnings models can be less than reliable and highly seasonal," says Pearson. "When games are Adaboy-enabled, the developers receive part of the advertising revenue every time a game is played, thereby producing an ongoing revenue stream."

Check It Out

Taking the games for a test run, I ran into problems with both *The Matrix* and the children's *Look and Listen* games. *Solitaire* from Free Play USA, and *Poker* from CardFun (www.cardfun.com) however, loaded easily.

Opening my first solitaire game, an ad for Fuenth Coffee (www.fuenthcoffee.com) hovered unobtrusively over the left hand side of the playing table. Two games later that ad changed to

Interscope Technologies (www.dfdis.com), which provides Internet Solutions for Pathologists. Following the game, I was given the opportunity to view the sponsors of the advertisements including (in addition to those mentioned) Tickets.com, Star Gate Internet Service, e-spotmarket.com, Heinz foods, Commer Builder.com, Boston Market, Carrier.com, GNC Vitamins for Women and College Inn Soups.



Billboards virtually everywhere.

Hoping to make Adaboy-enabled games the pastime of choice for online gamers, the site plans to offer high-scorer programs, giveaways, sweepstakes and prizes.

At present, the company is

searching for sites to carry Adaboy-enabled games, including action games that could, for example, show a player a real advertisement on the side of a tunnel in a racing game. Not only does this make the game more real to life, it also provides a landmark for the player without being a distracting element.

In addition to negotiations with a known teenage girls site, the company also hopes to place Adaboy advertising messages within well-branded game sites and popular virtual mall destinations.

"Behind the scenes we are a young company working to establish relationships with branded game companies," explains Pearson. "In a way it is a bit like the chicken and the egg, they want to see the success, which we are experiencing, before committing."

Adaboy is looking for new, original games in which to embed their Targeted Message Technology. Game developers interested in an alliance with Adaboy should contact Neil Morrow at neil@adaboy.com.

Jacque Kubin, a Washington, DC-based freelance journalist, enjoys writing about the electronic entertainment and edutainment mediums, including the Internet. She is a frequent contributor to the Washington Times and Krause Publication magazines. She has won the 1998 Certificate of Award granted by the Metropolitan Area Mass Media Committee of the American Association of University Women.

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

STRAIGHT FROM THE MOOSE'S MOUTH

book review by Karl Cohen

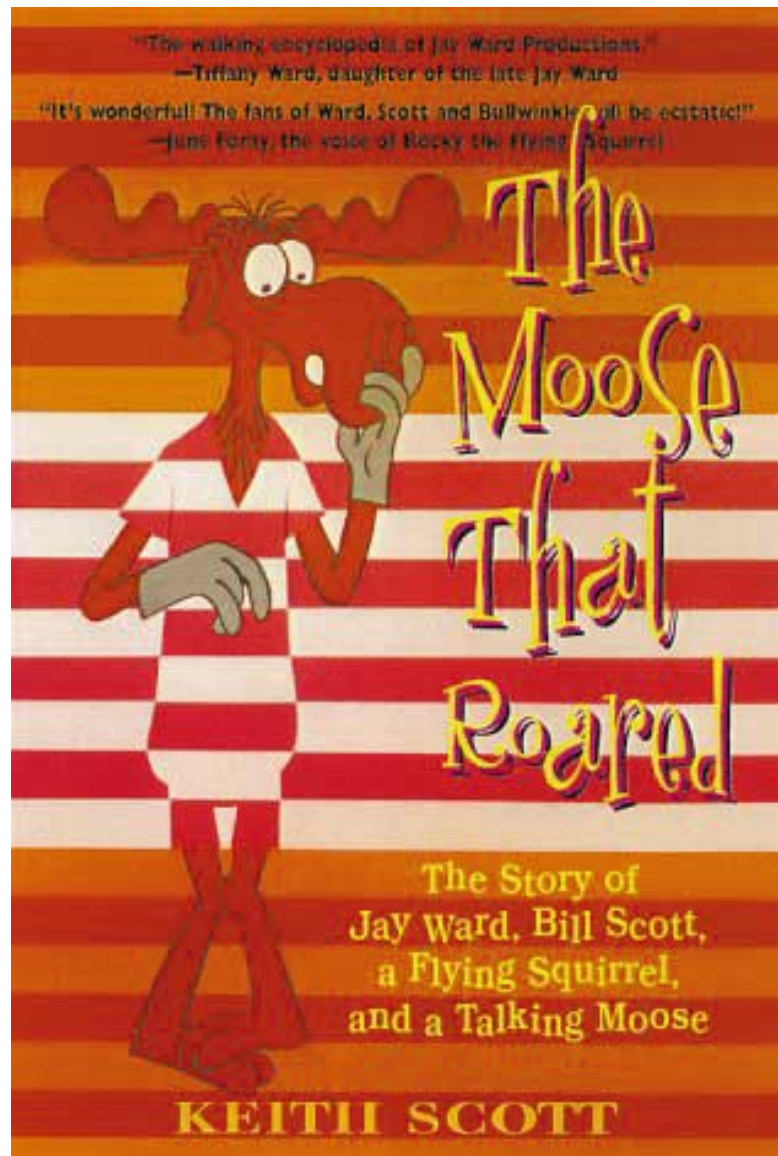
Well-researched books about animation are rarely published, but fortunately two outstanding volumes have come out recently. Michael Barrier's *Hollywood Cartoons* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1999) is an exceptional contribution to our understanding of the development of theatrical animation, and now Keith Scott's *The Moose That Roared* honors people who pioneered limited animation made for television. Fortunately J. Ward's studio produced some of the funniest TV cartoons ever made, so the book is not only an authoritative account, it is also a delight to read.

Scott's book bears almost no resemblance to a coffee table book about Rocky and Bullwinkle that was published in 1996. The first book barely mentioned some of Jay Ward's productions and omitted others completely. It filled up the pages with illustrations, trivia and plot details. It only mentioned Bill Scott (not related to Keith Scott, the author of the book) three or four times even though he was Ward's co-producer, head writer, the voices of Bullwinkle and other characters, and did a thousand other things for the studio. It also failed to explain that much of the show was produced in Mexico, making it the first animated "run-away" production. The show was made

outside the U.S. to reduce labor costs and that resulted in numerous mistakes, headaches and other problems.

The 1996 book was simplis-

tic and focused on Ward and his most famous show. It never mentioned Alex Anderson, the man who created Rocky, Bullwinkle, Crusader Rabbit, Dudley Do-Right



More moose for your money: 480 pages from veteran voice artist and animation historian Keith Scott. © 2000, St. Martin's Press.

and other characters. Ward was a producer with a business degree from Harvard. It was Anderson, Ward's partner and life-long friend, who conceived and developed a form of animation that could be made within the financial constraints of television. Working together they pioneered limited animation. In 1950, *Crusader Rabbit* became their first show to be broadcast on a regular basis. I consider the development of limited animation a major development, yet the author of the 1996 book saw no reason to mention it.

Newer is Better

The new publication is a concise history. After a brief overview and introduction, the book provides a detailed chronological account of the life and times of J. Ward, his associates, their work, fun, follies and a few major blunders. While it is lovingly written by a life-long fan who became the world's foremost scholar on the studio, it is honest, insightful and sometimes unflattering. It is so thorough, it not only provides detailed information about the studio's major accomplishments, it also covers unsold pilots, the production of commercials, wacky publicity stunts, biographical information about everybody involved with the production, problems with contracts, networks, agencies, labor and censors, plus a great deal more that you probably didn't expect to find in a book about people making humorous cartoons.

The book provides the longest and best account of the Ward-Anderson collaborations including some of the problems they faced trying to get *Crusader Rabbit* aired. NBC approved the proposal for the project in 1948,

but in 1949 they decided not to go ahead with their plans to make it a network show. Jerry Fairbanks, who had a 5-year exclusive distribution deal with NBC, decided to release the 5-minute program on a station-by-station basis. It took another year before *Crusader Rabbit* aired anywhere on a regular basis. Production stopped after 195 episodes (1951) and the studio eventually closed.

In 1957 William Hanna (without Joe Barbera) joined Mike Lah, Don Driscoll and Don MacNamara to form a company to continue production of the show. They were not told that there was an ongoing legal battle over the rights to it. The rights had become available when Jerry Fairbanks went bankrupt. Hanna and his associates had started production when they were informed Ward did not own all the rights to the show. The litigation not only ended the project, it resulted in Ward and Anderson being forced to sell their interests in the show to Shull Bonsall who had purchased Fairbanks' rights.

The text also covers Ward's later productions including *George of the Jungle*, *Super Chicken*, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Hoppity Hopper*, *Tom Slick*...

The story of Ward's next project, one that starred a moose and squirrel, is just as carefully recounted. It covers everything from the development of the

shows concept to the almost instant success of the show when it first aired November 19, 1959. There is also excellent coverage of other parts of the program including *Peabody's Improbable History* and *Fractured Fairy Tales* (*Aesops and Son* replaced *Fractured Fairy Tales* for one season).



Author Keith Scott and his cartoon crony, Bullwinkle J. Moose. Photo courtesy of Keith Scott.

Details, Details, Details

Anyone fascinated with the industry should enjoy the account of how *Rocky and his Friends* ended up being animated in Mexico (the original plan called for the production to go to Japan). The show's first production budget was miniscule compared to the cost of a Hanna-Barbera production from the same time. Keith Scott interviewed the Americans who oversaw the production in Mexico and their accounts explain the numerous problems that resulted. His detailed account even hints at an under-the-table deal that resulted in the show going to Mexico in the first place. (Apparently people with the show's ad agency and/or sponsor owned shares in the Mexican facility.)

The text also covers Ward's later productions including *George of the Jungle*, *Super Chicken*, *Dudley Do-Right*, *Hoppity Hopper*, *Tom Slick*, *Fractured Flickers*, numerous commercials and much more. As the

story unfolds you also get a delightful picture of the good times at Jay Ward Productions. There are accounts of zany parties and publicity stunts, surprise company outings to unusual places and other unexpected moments. Anderson, who had gone into advertising, occasionally reappears as do several other life-long friends of Ward.

Trivia fans will enjoy much of the information in the text. My favorite "stupid" fact is that when Action for Children's Television (ACT) pressured TV into adopting politically correct guidelines/censorship in 1977, Cap'n Crunch, a 500-year-old pirate, could no longer wear a sword. One fact overlooked by the author is: who sang the *George of the Jungle* song? He gives us the names of the composer and song writer, but not Donnie Brooks, who sang, "George, George, George of the Jungle, watch out for that tree." (I saw him sing it at a county fair in the 1980s.) The book also explains why several non-Ward productions were once included with *Rocky and Bullwinkle* episodes on TV. This led fans to believe *Underdog*, *Tennessee Tuxedo*, *King Leonardo and His Short Subjects*, *Go Go Gophers*, *Commander McBrag*, etc., were produced by J. Ward Productions. They were actually made by Total Television, a company owned by Peter Piech. Piech also had an interest in the distribution of Ward products on TV.

As I read the text I kept noticing that the book didn't give a clear picture as to what Ward was like as a person. Scott saved this complex subject for the next to the last chapter. His account of who Ward was is an excellent piece of research. He quotes

extensively from those who best knew the man and he reveals uncomfortable incidents that help explain this man's unusual psyche. The statements sometimes contradict each other, but the confusion helps explain who this wonderful man was.

As the story unfolds you also get a delightful picture of the good times at Jay Ward Productions.

Proof is in the Pudding

When I finished reading the book I wondered how accurate it was so I called two people who worked closely with Ward. Alex Anderson said, "It was pretty much the way I remembered it." Lucille Bliss, the voice of Crusader Rabbit, enjoyed the book and said Scott came close to guessing her age when he writes "circa 1927." Bliss said the date is wrong, "but I can live with it." (June Foray, the voice of Rocky, like Bliss never reveals her age. Scott made no attempt to guess it.) Bliss felt Scott simplified the complex history of Crusader and that he didn't fully capture the negative personality of the man who ended up with the rights to the show. She was also surprised at how much he knew about her, yet they had never met or talked on the phone.

My only negative criticism of the book is minor. It would have been better had there been a few well-placed footnotes. Scott was not present when most of the events in the book took place, so footnotes would have been useful. Scott identifies in the text the

person he is quoting, but he does not say how he obtained information not in quotes. Had there been footnotes, Bliss would have known from where the information about her came.

We are fortunate that St. Martin's press was willing to publish Scott's account of the studio. It is an exceptional contribution to our knowledge of early TV animation, a subject ignored by most authors. Fortunately Scott got to interview almost everyone connected with the studio (several of the key figures are no longer alive) and is an excellent writer.

The Moose That Roared: The Story of Jay Ward, Bill Scott, A Flying Squirrel and a Talking Moose, by Keith Scott. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. Approximately 460 pages with 35 or 40 black and white illustrations. ISBN: 0312199228 (hardbound \$27.95).

Karl Cohen is President of ASIFA-San Francisco. His first book, Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators, is published by McFarland Publishers. He also teaches animation history at San Francisco State University.

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

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- JoeCartoon.com Wins Best Animation Site At NetAwards
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Business

- Stan Lee Teams With Venture Soft To Tackle Asia
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, August 15, 2000
- Eyetronics Opens In Los Angeles
- Creative Planet Rounds Up Another \$38M In Financing
- Animation Stock Ticker For Wednesday, August 9, 2000
- Lions Gate Set To Purchase Harvey
- netGuru Expands Into Animation
- SGI & Intergraph Form Strategic Alliance
- 3dfx Interactive Merges With GigaPixel
- Cinar Sale Next Possible Option In Light Of Delisting
- Go Is Gone, Walt Disney Internet Group In Rainbow Studios Acquires Motional Realms
- China Slashes Cartoon Imports' Airtime
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, August 1, 2000
- Pulse and Exmachina Sign Distribution Deal
- New Tinkerbell Inc. Sues Disney Over Fairy Rights
- Prima's Widow Sues Disney
- Sony In The Red, PlayStation 2 & New Accounting Rules Are Factors
- Vivendi, Canal + & Seagram Merger Approved In France
- Avid Second Quarter Revenues See Some Increase
- Animation Stock Ticker For Wednesday, July 26, 2000
- Amid Talks With Nasdaq, Cinar Sued Again
- Intel & Macromedia Partner To Bring 3D Graphics To Shockwave Player
- Macromedia Revenue Up 85% Over Last Quarter
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Call for Entries

- San Luis Obispo Festival Spots Short Talent!
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Commercials

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- Eyeball Dances With New PBS Series Open
- hey! Animates Musical DVD For Arista Records
- ATTIK Animates Preview Of Sony's Digital Network Recorder
- Class-Key Chew-Po's Voltaire Heats Up PopTarts Ad
- Sony's Walkman Invades Ring Of Fire
- Eyeball Says Presto For Nike
- Curious Production Of The Bob Clampett Show Open
- Wild Brain Passes The Test For Sony Music
- TOPIX/Mad Dog Sets Stunts For Clearnet Mike
- Ring of Fire Rises To The Challenge For Suntrust
- Spontaneous Combustion Ideal For Estee Lauder
- hey! Raps Bumpers & Opens For The History Channel
- Ring Of Fire Lights Up Unisys Commercials
- Spontaneous Combustion Spruces Up Aube Cosmetics Ads
- Eyeball Flows With Forum Credit Union Spot
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Education

- Rocky Mountain College Of Art & Design Adds Animation
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Video

- Franklin Feature Hits Home Video
- Slingshot Shoots Brilliant Net Shorts On DVD
- Heavy Metal Two-Pack Arrives On Video
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Events

- NFB Is Holding An Open House
 - ASIFA General Assembly Held In North America For The First Time
 - Plymptons New Film To Screen At Ottawa
 - Cartoon Forum Brings European Grace To Co-Productions
 - MIPCOM: The Hub For Television Buyers And Sellers
 - VFX 2000 Takes Place In A Growing Hot Spot For Special Effects
 - AnimeOnline Festival Animates The Web In September
 - Festival of New Film Isn't Your Mother's Kind Of Film Fest
 - SAS Conference Tackles The Technological Topics Of The Future
 - F/X Guru Douglas Trumbull Speaks At Windows On The World
 - Hollywood Shorts Celebrates The Art Of Animated Shorts
 - Don't Miss Ottawa 2000: North America's Premiere Event
 - Breakthrough Conference Centers On Marketing For Top Demographic
 - Matita Film Festival 2000 Features A Retrospective Of Yuri Norstein
 - Golden Marble Awards Honors Kid At Heart Advertising
 - SPIFF Shines With Shorts From Around The World
 - Star Wars Exhibit Comes To Chicago
 - Cartoonists Union Presents A Free Portfolio Lecture
 - Spike & Mikes Sick & Twisted Fest Invades Southern California
 - Atomic Sushi Serves Up Raw Anime Art
 - Rushes Soho Festival Quickens Shorts Recognition
 - MadCat Fest Sinks Its Claws Into Top Women Filmmakers
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Films

- The Cell Captures The Top Spot At The US Box Office
 - Batman Beyond Descends Into Theatres
 - X-Men Scribe Brought Onto Pitch Black 2 & Hulk
 - Disney To Restore The Thief And The Cobbler To Original Version
 - Groening Confirms Plans For A Simpsons Feature
 - Harvey Acquires Monkey Tale Feature
 - Hollow Man Barely Beats Out Cowboys To Remain #1
 - Mission & Patriot Still Strong At The International Box Office
 - The Movie Star Is Dead! CGI Actress To Star In Pacino Drama
 - Monsters, Inc.'s Voice Cast Announced
 - A Hollow Box Office Sees Cowboys Ride Into #1
 - Revolution Pimps Out Flash-Animated Feature
 - Cartoonist Breathed Brings Next Book To The Screen
 - Patriot Wins The Battle For International Box Office Supremacy
 - Hollow Man Far From Invisible At The Box Office
 - Perfect Storm Shakes Up The International Box Office
 - Nutty Klumps Up The US Box Office Charts
 - Disney's New Hawaiian Feature Goes Into Production
 - Lucasfilm To Make Anime Flick
 - Mission & Storm X-cite The International Box Office
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In Passing

- Disney Animator and Game Pioneer, Gene Portwood Jr. Passes
 - Eyvind Earle, Disney Artist & Painter Passes
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Internet and Interactive

- Toon In: Web Animation Guide For Friday, August 18, 2000
 - Bluth & Goldman Announce Next Move!
 - Chuck Jones To Create Original Webseries
 - Toon In: Web Animation Guide For Friday, August 11, 2000
 - AniVision Transports Net Players Into College Football Games
 - Shockwave Rolls Out Shockmachine 2.0
 - Toon In: Web Animation Guide For Friday, August 4, 2000
 - Mondo Media To Distribute Honkworm's Fishbar
 - Studios USA To Syndie Brilliant Digital Xena
 - Harvey Characters Coming To ThinkBox's Kid Portal
 - DEN's Last Minute Fire Sale Puts Them In Hot Seat
 - Toon In: Web Animation Guide For Monday, July 31, 2000
 - Adam Sandler and MediaTrip To Create Shnorff.com
 - Toon In: Web Animation Guide For Tuesday, July 25, 2000
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People

- Cinar Founders Refuse To Leave
 - Winder Winds Up VP At Fox Animation
 - Cinar Founders Fired
 - DAA To Represent ID4 & Total Recall F/X Supervisors
 - Smarterville Appoints Peter Doctorow As CEO
 - Zdenka Deitchova To Head Kratky Film
 - Entertainment Vet Shields At AtomFilms
 - Honkworm Moves To Vancouver With New Prexy
 - Rhythm & Hues Adds Scribe To Staff & 3D Kroyer Pic
 - Four Top Level Changes At Alias|Wavefront
 - Rhinoceros Raises Digital CG & Design Artist Staff By Five
 - face2face Adds New Directors Of Business Development & Marketing
 - Jedi Producer Joins Board At Cornerstone Animation
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Television

- Sammy Sacked After Two Episodes
 - The PJs Makes WB Debut During Olympics
 - TOPIX/Mad Dog Brings Home The HDTV Prodigal Son
 - Tale For Expo 2000
 - Filmtecknarna Animates Madonna
 - Nelvana Nets Two New Series
 - Sammy Stumbles Out Of The Starting Blocks
 - Nickelodeon Reaches Record High Ratings
 - Mattel Interactive To Turn Oregon Trail Into TV Movie
 - Showtime Nets Yet-To-Be-Aired Icebox Webtoon
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Next Issue's Highlights

Holiday Product and Licensing and Merchandising, October 2000

It is already October and time to start predicting which toy will be this Holiday seasons' Furby. Martin Goodman is back with a look at what Santa will – and will not – have in his sack this Yuletide. Co-director Robert Ramirez of DreamWorks' first animated feature-length direct to video *Joseph: King of Dreams* is going to write on his experience. AWNs Rick DeMott is going to look at *The Powerpuff Girls* phenomenon and the building of a franchise. Who are the brains behind the marketing of *Pokemon* in America? Meet 4Kids, the company most recently called the "Fastest-Growing Company in America" by *Forbes Magazine*. Brett Rogers explores. So, what comes first – the successful show or the licensing and merchandising deal? Michael Hurwicz studies this modern day "chicken vs. the egg" question. Finally, Michael Mallory reveals some forgotten advertising studios. Think you know everything about animation history? You'll want to read this one...

We are also going to have a focus on Bulgarian animation and a profile of Rene Joudin by Chris Robinson. Glenn Vilppu is back, as is Lee Dannacher with her Web company profile. Jacquie Kubin is taking Humongous by storm to learn about the newest and latest in childrens software. We also have book and event reviews so come on back next month for another informative and fun issue.

Upcoming Editorial Calendar

Licensing and Merchandising	October 2000
Television	November 2000
Location-based Entertainment	December 2000
The Year In Review	January 2001