

ANIMATION

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The Next Big Drive: **Gaming Transforms Itself Again**

Plus, Stan Lee Media's Meltdown,
Boomerang, Charlie Adler and more

Table of Contents

FEBRUARY 2001

VOL. 5 No. 11

FEBRUARY 2001

4 Editor's Notebook

Am I ready for this?

5 Letters: editor@awn.com

GAMING

7 The Next Big Drive: Gaming Transforms Itself Again

Jacque Kubin delves into gaming. From its history to its future, she discusses the brink that gaming is getting ready to leap, and yes, film industry, you should be looking over your shoulder...

13 What's A Digital Media Futurist?

Upon seeing Joan Van Tassel's title, Heather Kenyon decides to investigate just what a digital media futurist is and what she has to say about this supposed digital future of ours.

19 A One Stop Digital Shop: Data Design Interactive and Artworld UK

Paul Younghusband visits Data Design Interactive and Artworld UK to reveal how they are going beyond gaming by leveraging their digital assets across many outlets.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES

22 Heroes Wanted: Stan Lee Media Struggles to Stay Afloat

How could one of the most promising Internet animation companies come to such a crashing defeat? Brett D. Rogers investigates the unraveling of Stan Lee Media and the growing chorus crying foul.

27 My Generation?

While Turner Broadcasting System's Boomerang is titled to draw the Baby Boom generation is seems that maybe they've missed the spot marked X. Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman explains.

31 The Animation Pimp

What's wrong with *Ring of Fire* and *Night of the Carrots*? The Animation Pimp sees nothing offensive here; this month Chris Robinson takes on a few feminist nay-sayers.

STUDENT CORNER

33 Sketching on Location: Texture as Planes in Space

Renowned drawing instructor Glenn Vilppu continues with his fifth installment discussing how to use texture to create depth and perspective while sketching on location.

INTERNET COMPANY PROFILE

35 eKIDS: Everyone Wants a Piece of the PIE

SilverTech isn't just eKIDS. Forging into the realm of secure Web transactions, the company is just beginning by conquering the sensitive kids online issue that has foiled many others. Gregory Singer reports.

TELEVISION

40 I Call On Charlie Adler

Will Ryan pays a visit to the super-kinetic Charlie Adler, one of the industry's foremost voice actors and directors.

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Table of Contents

FEBRUARY 2001

VOL. 5 No. 11

FILMS/VIDEOS

44 Fresh from the Festivals: February 2001's Film Reviews

Maureen Furniss reviews short films: *Daddy and I*, a collective Korean student film, *Hein?! by Mauricio Vidal*, Renan de Moraes and Sergio Yamasaki, *Au Premier Dimanche d'Août (A Summer Night Rendez-Vous)*, directed by Florence Mialhe, *Film S Djevojicicom (Film with a Girl)*, directed by Daniel Suljic and Bob Godfrey's *Millenium - The Musical*.

48 New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

Fred Patten reviews the latest anime releases including: *Jubei-chan, the Ninja Girl*, *Tenamonya Voyagers*, *Phantom Quest Corp. Perfect Collection*, *Gasaraki* and *Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure*.

EVENTS

53 The Eighth Trip to the Holland Animation Film Festival: Scenes from Utrecht

Visit the most recent Holland Animation Film Festival. AWN's Ron Diamond attended and brought back photos of festival participants and the lovely city of Utrecht.

BOOKS

54 Animation Scriptwriting: The Writer's Road Map

Rick DeMott takes a look at *Animation Scriptwriting*, the latest how to book on scribing, revealing that this road map might not lead everyone to fame and fortune.

SOFTWARE

56 pmG: An Artistic Answer to 3D Animation

After amassing rave reviews and hit projects in just one year, it is time to visit the project: messiah Group, creators of 3D animation's newest leading software package, that was created from the ground up to fill both studio production and animators' artistic needs.

58 The New messiah's Details

Project: messiah 1.5 is about to expand into messiah: studio, a new modular and innovative approach to animation. Mike Amron investigates.

NEWS

61 Animation World News

Sci-Tech Oscar Goes To Pixar, Chicken Run Lays A Golden Globe Nom, Plympton's Mutant Aliens Premieres At The Sundance Film Festival, Crouching Tiger Director To Take On The Hulk, CTV Gains Star Wars Rights, FCC Approves AOL/Time Warner Merger, Film Roman Dropped From Nasdaq and much more.

63 Next Issue's Highlights

18 This Month's Contributors

Cover: In-your-face graphics combine with NFL emotion to create the future of football gaming. EA Sports' *Madden NFL 2001* for Playstation, Playstation 2 and Nintendo 64. © Electronic Arts, Inc. All rights reserved.

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Editor's Notebook

by Heather Kenyon

Am I ready for this?

While I am very eager for the upcoming super-connected world to arrive, I do have to ask myself, "Am I ready for this?" I have had my cel phone for about two years but still haven't stored any numbers in it. In fact, all the advertising that I get in the mail says I should have upgraded two times by now. I bought an answering machine after months of delay only to have it sit in a box for another month before I hooked the thing up. I don't even want to tell you about my telephone debacle. In a state of technology euphoria I bought a phone that does more things than I can even tell you and for that I paid quite a hefty price. Now, months later I have only ever picked the thing up and dialed. I haven't used one special feature. Therefore, I realize I should have just gone to the local electronics store and bought a standard old phone. Of course, now my window of opportunity for returning my "personal communication center" has long passed so I might as well keep the darn thing and hope that one day I have time to read the 100-page booklet with which it came. This booklet probably tells me I didn't really ever need to buy that answering machine, and by the time I figure it all out, I'll be getting cards in the mail about upgrading my "pcc" as well. I should have just

mastered my cel phone and stuck with that across the board. I won't even begin to tell you all the different places I have numbers and addresses stored because that ranges between several computers and programs to random pieces of paper, including one crucial paper plate.

Currently being "connected" takes some time and effort, but we are told that one day, we will have one communication device that will do anything and everything for us. It will contain our personal phone book, and be a pager, cel phone and communicator (think *Star Trek*) all in one. This device will be Web connected at all times and probably about the size of a wrist watch. Lost and need directions? You will have an instant mapping service at your fingertips. Bored on a train? Then how about a few games? Need to catch up with some people? Just select how you wish to communicate with them.

The same will go for your home. One device resembling a cross between your television and computer will deliver programming and entertainment upon demand and amazing, interactive, immersive environments that will be the evolution of the current gaming industry. As Joan Van Tassel discusses in "What's A Digital Media Futurist?" this day will come. But what is even more fascinating to think about is what we can't yet even imagine, that will

arrive on our doorsteps in the future, neatly packaged as "the next best thing," and all contributing to the growing global digital network of communication. Information will never be lost (as Dr. Toon touches upon in his article this month), properties will be leveraged across all forms of media easily (as Artworld UK is already doing) and our entertainment opportunities and access to knowledge will be almost infinite. The digital world, as Ms. Van Tassel says, will be as large as the real world. How the technological players will make this happen and how the ripples of economic impact will play out over the next fifty to one hundred years are all to be seen. What is known, is that this is happening as we speak. Slowly, but surely, all of the pieces needed for this new media world are taking shape. Business-wise some will lose and some will win, but all of us will dramatically change how we do basic daily tasks.

I am sure that the book that comes with these devices will be 300 pages long. But, in the meantime, before these new age gadgets arrive, all we can try to do is stay as current as possible and keep our eye on the long run picture. I am sure, one day, someone will say, "Here, Kenyon." And then, I swear, I'll be organized.

Until Next Time,
Heather

Choosing A School

This is just a little feedback on the article "Choosing An Animation School" (Lauria, 5.02). In my opinion that was a very good article. I am trying to decide whether or not to go all out with my dreams of animation and that article really gives me something to work with.

Thanks and keep up the good work,
Josh Heyer

Spare Us

To whom it may concern, but mainly Michael Jenkinson:

I am a firm believer in anti-racism and strongly believe that those who are talented should be given credit and praise, no matter what race, religion or creed they are. In your case, however, you have not only fulfilled the reverse racist role, but have made yourself examples of what this country should not pay attention to.

I was first introduced to you and your company by *Animation World Magazine* that had an article, "Urban Entertainment: Siting A Skyline Across the Net" (Dannacher, 5.09). I read the interview and was left with an extremely bad taste in my mouth. I had to see how and why this magazine could spoon feed garbage to not only me, but the whole world. I decided to write the magazine and explain why I felt their choice in content was unacceptable and also explained why. I then decided to visit your Website.

I was not surprised to find, that before I actually visited your Website, my letter to the magazine was justified. Your content was even more than I had imagined. A black man with a gold chain around his neck in bed with a white, long blond haired woman. Original? Not really. Pure black Warhol! ... and yes ... I said black not African American, due to your content, representation and street thug content within your scripts. Hasn't society had enough of "ghetto behavior?" I can't believe any educated African American would appreciate to stand by your content and be proud of his/her association with that aspect. I simply say, "Grow up and represent something to be proud of black America!"

Now you must be thinking... "What a jerk!" or "Who does this guy think he is?" or maybe, "Let's get that mutha!" Actually, I grew up in Carbondale, Illinois in a predominantly black school, fighting every day for a decent education, which I later received after I left Illinois. I learned many of the black social aspects growing up in that environment and have much to say about our cultural differences, but I will not. I can only hope my children do not experience and suffer some of those life lessons that I have experienced and now live with deep in my heart.

Your company is as distasteful as it gets and relies upon the shock treatment attempting to destroy the neural fiber of society's creative mind. It is very unclassy

and to me smelled like African-American street ghetto spirit. Is it something to be proud of? I don't know, but I certainly lived it, breathed it, and detested it during my schooling in Southern Illinois. I was embarrassed to say the least. I realized later in life that the social things that came out of me were plastic and not really made up of the substance that could produce anything artistic. In other words, I was not true to myself.

It was later that I discovered myself, after moving to a socially and nourishing environment that looked at everyone as a talented individual. There, I began to draw things I could have never done while in my previous life-sucking environment. Was it dreamland I found? Maybe not, but I was lucky to have the opportunity to live in that community. I guess I blossomed to be who I really was and not what the street tried to raise me to be.

I suppose if I were an African American, you would be taking this letter to heart, but since I am not an African American, I will not go into the details of my past, so enough about me. I wanted to make a few things in my letter clear.

I guess my reason for this letter is not out of anger, hate or anything racist, but to let you know how I feel about the business, art and entertainment you are promoting. It is, in my belief, what is polluting the most vulnerable in our world today. There seems to be a thrill with the black culture in contaminating the qual-

ity and originality of life. Not all of us would agree that opening the pages to black/urban comedy is really all that funny or entertaining, because it's not!

As many of us grew up with comic book heroes, we were very influenced by that genre of media. Don't think for a moment that it isn't as influential as many may believe, because I feel it is and hope your common sense would agree with me. Remember Fat Albert, Deathlok, Spawn, Cage, Storm, Black Lightning, Black Panther, Falcon and Captain Marvel? These were all black characters that influenced many, even myself. The street humor there was done in a style that had no offensive racial material. It was classic and will remain a true testament to its times. If you wish to be a voice in the crowd, do it just as tastefully, unlike your content now.

I know that I am only one voice in the crowd, but if my weak yell is heard by you and contemplated for a few moments, then my message has hopefully been of use to you. I am familiar with the way controversy works in providing ammunition for interest and eventually popularity, so I won't bow down to it. I only wish that society didn't scab its knees in doing just that.

In conclusion, your Website has given credit to those who once carried spray cans, guns and other socially disturbing weapons, the artistic software they need to now litter and deface the Internet. Maybe that's a step in the right direction, but learn to use the tools more wisely. Discover those black artists that provide more positive content and show exceptional intellectuality than what you seem to have now. Maybe you should teach your so called "creative

crew" how to screen better material than what you have now, or possibly fire everyone and start over with a new creative department. One that can "represent" a little better. My hope is that this enlightens someone out there to shine better than the candy wrappers and over kicked tin cans lying on the saddened streets of our inner-city. Let's make the world a better place, not just a crappy race.

Thank you for your ear,
Duane

Hooray for the Web Animation Guide

I just wanted to thank you personally for the honor of choosing *Joe Paradise* as your #1 "Rick's Picks! – Best of 2000." I was totally shocked when I ran across the list last week. Your review was extremely flattering and I truly appreciate all your observations of the inner workings of the show. It's great to know that all the blood and sweat that goes into making *Joe* is paying off! Thanks again for all your support.

Roque Ballesteros
Creator/Director of *Joe Paradise*
www.wildbrain.com



My favorite AWN feature is the *Web Animation Guide* (<http://www2.awn.com/web-guide/index.php3>). I don't have cable, and there's so little animation on network TV these days that appeals to me, that the only way I can get my animation "fix" is Web cartoons. I seem to share similar interests with the individual who writes the column, so it helps me to decide what I want to spend my time waiting for my slow

modem connection to download. It's a very handy guide to have for someone like me, and I really appreciate AWN making it available.

My only wish is that Rick would at least mention some of the voice talents involved in the cartoons. That's often a deciding factor in what I choose to download because of my interest in voice actors. And the voice talents (particularly on icebox.com) are often one of the few redeeming qualities of lesser-quality Web cartoons.

Thanks for your time,
Craig Crumpton
Assistant Editor "Gookie" for
<http://www.toonzone.net>
Editor "Voiceroy" for
<http://zip.to/thevault>
The Voice Actors Ultimate Links Treasury.
Exclusively at Netscape's Open Directory <http://dmoz.org>

Editor's Note: Rick DeMott, our Associate Editor and official Web Animation Guide writer, has heard your call and is going to try to include more voice actors in the Guide. Thank you for the useful comment.

The Next Big Drive: Gaming Transforms Itself Again

by Jacquie Kubin

Video gaming is undergoing some drastic changes. The once niche industry is poised to become a leading entertainment option in living rooms around the world.

"The new generation of video game consoles are more than just game players," explains Doug Lowenstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association. "They have the potential to become the center of the home entertainment universe, rolling games, Internet access and DVD movies into a single set top unit at an affordable price."

Whether they are learning from their children or from the media, general consumers are becoming more aware of game consoles as an entertainment option. According to PC Data, located in Reston, Virginia, one out of three home Internet users plans to purchase one of the next generation game consoles. The



Douglas Lowenstein, President
Interactive Digital Software Association.
Photo courtesy of BSMG Worldwide.



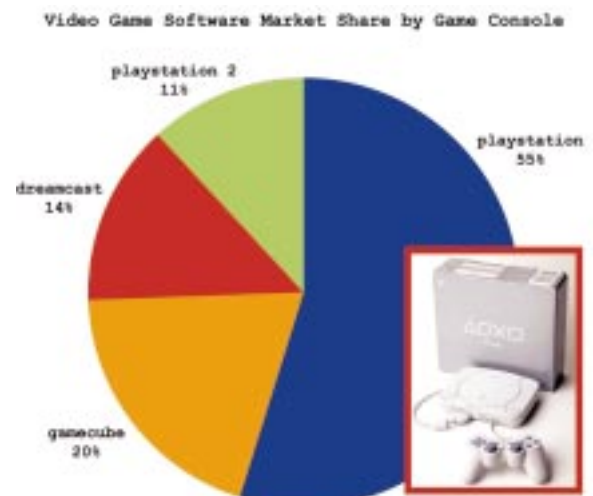
Screen shots of *Madden NFL 2001*'s player profiles. © Electronic Arts.

reported leading preference at the time of study (June, 2000) was the Playstation 2 with the Sega Dreamcast receiving 22.4%, Nintendo Game Cube 17.2% and Xbox 11.9% of consumer loyalty. Out of 1,500 persons surveyed, the propelling interest for 75% of respondents was the lure of online gaming.

"The social aspect of this medium is going to cause the most dramatic change with the biggest zeitgeist being the ability for players to partake in multi-player story worlds," says Celia Pearce, Research Associate, Annenberg Center for Communication, University of Southern California (www.annenberg.edu). "Consider that television watchers will have the option of either watching sitcom re-runs or joining in on an engaging, fun game with family or friends who are living in other areas of the world. When that becomes available on the tel-

evision set for less than \$300 there is going to be a major consumer conversion."

On-line gaming via the PC is already a reported entertainment choice for almost 15 million U.S. households in year 2000. Where the real escalation in on-



Information courtesy of PC Data.

line gaming will be is in the connected console market with Forrester Research predicting it will grow from 5 million households during this year, 2001, to more than 50 million within five years.



**All-Star Kobe Bryant, left, plays the self-titled basketball video game *Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside*. Nintendo launched the game Monday, April 27, 1998.
Photo courtesy of Newscom.com, Feature Photo Service.**

The 'connected console' is the familiar living room unit which now allows interaction with others through the Internet.

Game console manufacturers, Sega, Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft, are competing to create this gaming platform that will combine game software and interactive on-line game play becoming what is termed a 'broadband entertainment hub.'

Broadband because these miniature 'super-computers' will include the components that allow them to network interactive gaming, television/cable broadcast and the Internet together. These new consoles, with either 128-bit or DVD format processors, contain enough horsepower to provide film quality images and hard drives able to store downloaded content, like on-demand movies, that will be available when the consumer wants to watch them.

The new game consoles will also be changing the game development community comprised of both first party, those groups owned and directed by the game console manufacturer,

and third party, independent groups who create games for console play, developers.

Video gaming is changing, but how broad its future success is will surely hinge on its ability to be all things to all people. Or at least offer something to each member of the family.

And Then There Were Four

Through the ups and downs of the game industry, game system consoles have come and gone.

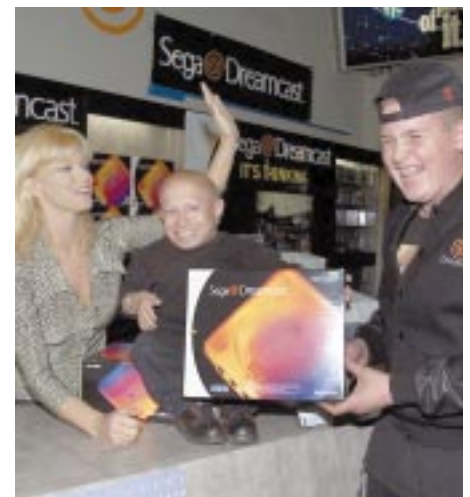
Pre-historic systems, the Atari, Mattel's Intellivision, Coleco Industries Colecovision and Magnavox's Odyssey 2 had all but disappeared when Nintendo of Japan entered into the fray releasing the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) in 1995.

The 8-bit NES revitalized a home gaming market that had grown lackluster because of the limitations of game play. With an 8-bit machine that worked at a speed of 1.70 MHz and was capable of displaying 16 colors at one time, developers began to see new creative opportunities. But the quest was on to make a better

gaming system that allowed game developers more opportunity to create experiences that would hold gamer loyalty.

The next step came with the release of the first 16-bit systems, the Sega Genesis and the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES), until the industry exploded once again when the new machines, the Sega Saturn, Nintendo 64 and Sony Playstation were released in the mid 1990s.

And though other developers tried to introduce new platforms, including the Apple Pippin and 3DO, the N64, Saturn and Playstation emerged as the dominant platforms vying for consumer loyalty while enticing game developers to create properties that could become franchise hits for them.



**Fifteen-year-old Ryan Ontiveras, right, of San Jose accepts the first Sega Dreamcast from actress Donna D'Errico and actor Verne Troyer at Software Etc. in San Jose, Calif., just after midnight on Thursday morning, September 9, 1999.
Photo courtesy of Newscom.com, WirePix via Feature Photo Service.**

Fast forward to the 1999 release of the Sega Dreamcast, the first step on the road to the 128-bit game featuring a game console so powerful that it provided enhanced characterizations with movie-like visual and audio com-

ponents.

For holiday 2000, Sony created an unfulfilled consumer demand with the Playstation 2, a system that allows game players to operate Sony's library collections of more than 800 games developed for Playstation (1) and that also serves as a DVD movie player. Playstation 2 also featured a 128-bit 'emotion chip' processor that promises superior game play.

"As a gamer, I wanted the immediate gratification of the Dreamcast as did almost 4 million other gamers, which is a huge number of consoles for Sega to have sold," says Ken Soohoo, President and CEO Planet Web. "On the other hand, I also want the Playstation 2 because it gives me a lot of bang for the buck in that I can play my existing library of Playstation games on it and I get the DVD player. So while there are not a lot of new Playstation 2 games that are taking advantage of the technology yet, it is a purchase for the future that I want to have."



Ken Soohoo, co-founder, president and CEO of Planet Web. Photo courtesy of Planet Web.

Not expected to be on retailer shelves until this fall, Nintendo plans to follow up the N64 with the Game Cube console, which will interact with the Game Boy Advance hand held sys-

tem. Though little data is available for the Game Cube, it is reported to be using an IBM Gekko processor as its microprocessor unit, which will integrate the power of a PC central processing unit into a custom, game-centric chip. The theory behind this being that it will be easier for game developers to create games for this system, enlarging the number of third party developers creating software for the console, helping Nintendo to gain a large piece of console and software sales.



Nintendo plans to follow up the N64 with the Game Boy Advance hand held system which will interact with the Game Cube console. © Nintendo of America, Inc. All rights reserved.

"The key factor that will separate the systems is the level of engaging, challenging and amusing software (games) that are offered," says Perrin Kaplan, director of corporate affairs, Nintendo of America. "Nintendo's 'next-gen' library for both the GameCube and Game Boy Advanced will be built with solid, challenging titles. Pokémon is a classic example of this."

The biggest tilt to the console wars may be Microsoft's proposed fall release of the Xbox. New to the game console business, but with years of consumer PC applications behind them, Microsoft is releasing a system with a streamlined architecture based on Direct X 8.0, allowing designers to create on a platform specifically designed to make develop-

ment and coding as straightforward as possible.

The Microsoft Xbox has been busy forging relationships with developers including Oddworld Inhabitants, creators of *Abe's Oddworld*, *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*, designed for the Playstation, and now for the Xbox, *Munch's Oddysey*.

After many months of development, the company switched platforms from the Playstation 2 to the Xbox. "We have chosen to develop games for the Xbox because it's clearly the most powerful console with the technology and raw horsepower needed to take the Oddworld franchise to the next level," says Lorne Lanning, Oddworld president and co-founder. "It has the most friendly development environment and points toward a future of standardization which is a tremendous breath of fresh air for the console industry."



Perrin Kaplan, director of corporate affairs, Nintendo of America. Photo courtesy of Nintendo of America, Inc.

With Great Power, Comes Great Responsibility

Since 1994 the video gaming industry has released in excess of 7,000 individual titles that are as varied as the movies released by Hollywood each year. And the

number of titles will grow exponentially with the new systems.

The difference in the games is that they will now be a part of a broader entertainment choice, more of an end to end experience that will deliver quality interactive content to the consumer. But without intelligent, engaging games to play the game console will not find its way to the family living room coffee table.

"The console systems have moved toward offering more than just game play content thus insuring their positions as a family entertainment option," explains Kevin Sullivan, VP Sales and Marketing, AgeTec, Inc. "But, the console will reside in the living room and the game development company must strive to offer games that contain taste, style and content that the whole family can enjoy."

Developers are being given the ability to create games that are visually, and audibly, superior through consoles with remarkable computer power. With that ability, the game developers should be looking at an audience that is

expanding beyond the typical gamer who is often characterized as an 18-35 year old adolescent male.

"The biggest driving force behind acceptance of the networked console will be bringing women, and families, to the platform," Pearce says. "And that will happen when games with content for women, children and families to play together becomes more readily available."

Presently the videogame industry does offer great diversification. Of the more than 215 million video games sold in 1999, *Pokémon* titles for Nintendo sold more than 12 million copies alone, though the year's biggest title was *Donkey Kong 64*, selling 1.4 million games for a reported \$86.4 million.

Third party developer, Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. has created a diverse series of family titles from *Allstar Baseball* to Mary Kate and Ashley Olson adventure titles. Electronic Arts, Inc. develops games with instantly recognizable celebrity titles like *John Madden NFL* and *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2000/2001*.

The clear victor in both software and hardware sales, however, for year 2000 was Playstation who remained victorious with 49.3 percent of overall software revenue and 50.9 percent of video game software unit sales.

Nintendo 64 captured 36 percent of software revenue and 24.9 percent of video game software unit sales.

The gaming industry's best hope for living room acceptance may well lie in being able to lure consumers to the game community where they will pay to partake in live, multi-player games instead of watching network or cable television reruns.

This will make gaming a direct competitive force against Hollywood's silver and television screens as interactive videogames strive to eclipse the passive viewing of movies and sit-coms as one of consumer's leading entertainment choices.



Nintendo 64 system console and game controllers. © Nintendo of America, Inc. All rights reserved.

Gaming Versus Hollywood

For 1999, the gap between box office receipts and VGI sales has narrowed to a scant \$1.3 billion when comparing Hollywood's 1999 gross box office receipts of \$7.4 billion and the VGI's industry sales of \$6.1 billion.

"Over the last five years, video games have been the fastest growing segment of the entertainment industry," says Lowenstein. "Between 1995-1999 alone, sales grew more than 100%, from \$3 billion to \$6 billion. All signals point to annualized average growths over the next five years of 15-20%."

Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones was the quintessential explorer, thrill seeker and risk taker – and a huge movie franchise for Paramount Pictures. The studio may be replacing Indy with a new tough-as-nails action hero when they release *Tomb Raider* later this year starring Angelina Jolie as the video game inspired femme fatale,



Celia Pearce, research associate for the USC Annenberg Center for Communication and Interactive Track Head of Production for the USC School of Cinema-Television. Photo courtesy of Celia Pearce.



Lara Croft, played by Angelina Jolie, stands in the High Council Chamber in a scene from the anticipated live-action film *Tomb Raider*, based on the popular video game of the same title. Photo courtesy of Newscom.com, Feature Photo Service.



During a press conference in New York August 19, 1997, actresses Maud Adams, left, and Grace Jones, both of whom starred in James Bond films, play the Nintendo game *Goldeneye 007*. Photo courtesy of Newscom.com, Feature Photo Service.

Lara Croft.

As a franchise, *Tomb Raider* got its start in 1994 when game developer Eidos Interactive released her onto un-expecting male gamers everywhere. The dainty heroine was an instant success and her game life has already been sequeled three times with *Tomb Raider II*, *Tomb Raider III: Adventures of Lara Croft* and *Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation*. Through these action/adventure games, players have helped her to climb over, swim under and tunnel through natural and unnatural obstacles and deathtraps in her quest for treasure.

And one would have to believe that Paramount expects Lara and Angelina to be as successful a franchise as Indy and Harrison was for them. They have already signed the star for two additional Lara Croft theatrical release movies.

But this is a two way entertainment street. Major studios, such as Disney, Universal and Fox have all developed divisions that oversee the development, marketing and promotion of movie branded games. Other movie studio owned properties, such as the Warner Bros. Looney Tunes, are turned into vidgames by third party developers like Infogrames Entertainment, which has also turned hot television properties like *Dragonball Z* to the interactive game world.

As gaming gains ground on Hollywood, the demand for quality game developers will increase, as will the need for talented producers, directors, story-writers, script developers and animators.

With new game consoles will come new games and consumers can expect to see hun-

dreds of new titles over the coming years giving the animator many more career path options within an opportunity filled industry. An industry which is attractive to many because of the perception that it is an industry that inspires individual creativity while lacking some of the traditional, often frustrating, Hollywood baggage.



After many months of development, the Oddworld franchise switched platforms from the Playstation 2 to the Xbox.
© Oddworld Inhabitants.

"The game entertainment expansion simply gives animators many more options throughout their career paths," says Oddworld's Lanning. "Not that long ago, if you were an animator you either worked on Saturday morning shows or you worked on feature films. Game animation has greatly expanded the traditional industries, creating an entire new industry of opportunity."

One thing that stays consistent from genre to genre is that game animation requires that animators have all the classic skills in their toolbox. The ability to draw and animate, add lighting and texturing are talents that cannot necessarily be learned. However, the technical aspects of getting a drawing from paper to game machines can be learned.

"The most valuable people are the ones that have nurtured their classic talents, have persevered through technological limi-

tations and ultimately manifest great work in spite of technological shackles," Lanning says. "Many of the most talented animators coming out of schools today are also gamers and they are heading straight to the game industry. For computer animators, nobody who's hiring cares if they worked on games, movies or TV. The determining factor is the quality of their work. If their animation is great, it will be great for any industry."

At the end of the game, the final story is that gaming is a valid commercial medium that will not be discounted by academia, the mainstream media or the entertainment industry for long.

A bit of on-line surfing shows that almost every game and console developer has some on-line interactivity element already, with all of them promising more as the next gen platforms and broadband entertainment delivery options expand.

Gaming has been with us, in one way or another, for a very long time, and according to Pearce, it's not liable to go away anytime soon. "Just like rock 'n' roll, which was similarly discounted, it is a cultural force that will not go away and is going to become



Top selling console game, Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2. © Activision, Inc.
All rights reserved.

increasingly important as broadband entertainment grows."



Inspired from the popular Pokémon franchise, Nintendo's N64 unit called Pikachu Nintendo 64. Photo courtesy of Newscom.com, Feature Photo Service.

To view more in-depth specs and information on gaming consoles visit us online! (<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/kubingaming.php3>)

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.

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What's A Digital Media Futurist?

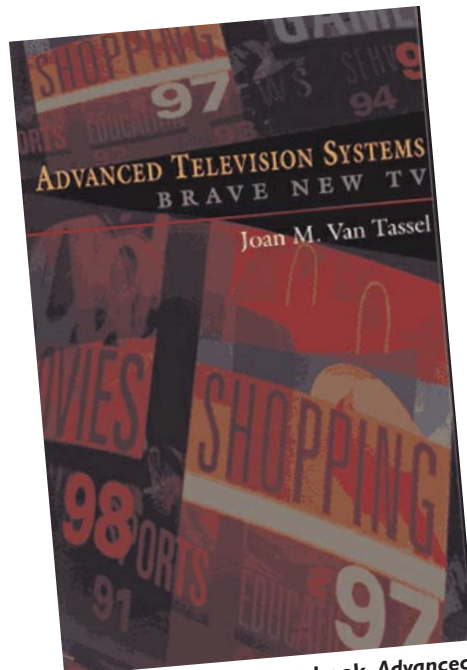
by Heather Kenyon

While going through some notes from E3, I came across a title that fascinated me: digital media futurist. "What on earth is a digital media futurist?" I thought. The answer is Joan Van Tassel, an author and teacher who has worked for every major university in Southern California, including such leaders as the University of Southern California (USC) and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). She has followed up her first book, *Advanced Television Systems: Brave New TV*, with *Digital TV Over Broadband: Harvesting Bandwidth*, which hit bookshelves with its second edition since being published in 1999.

Expecting a very serious technophile, I was surprised when Ms. Van Tassel turned out to be vivacious and talkative as she imparted to me, her sort of wonder about what the future is going to hold.

HK: What I am really interested in is this day when our television, computer and phone are one. But before I get into questions about how gaming fits into this new world, I wonder if you could explain your background and study in this realm?

JVT: I was a documentary television producer. I worked on *Real People* and did a couple of pieces for *20/20* and PBS. We did about

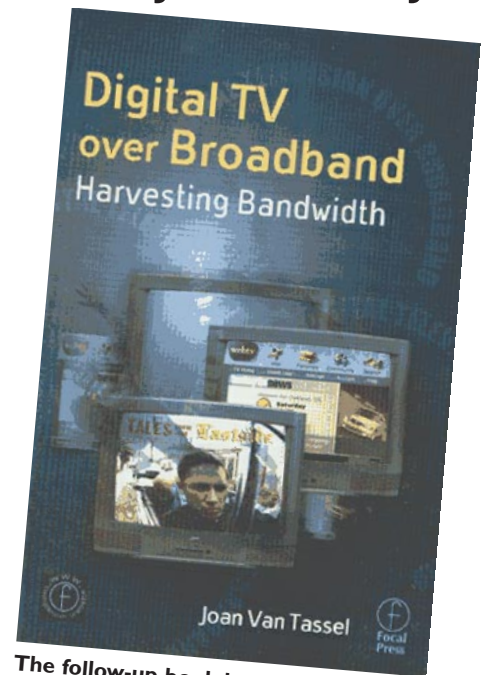


Joan Van Tassel's First book, *Advanced Television Systems: Brave New TV*.

40 documentary pieces over a ten year period. Then I went back to graduate school and I thought I was going to walk under great trees thinking great thoughts about television, but it turned out that I had signed up to a grad school that specialized in new media, which in 1983 I had never heard of.

HK: What grad school was that?

JVT: The Annenberg School of Communications at USC. I thought it was going to be like the Annenberg School in Pennsylvania, but no it wasn't. Everybody had computers on their desks. I remember in 1984 when this young professor hauled in this huge suitcase and put it on the



The follow-up book by Joan Van Tassel, *Digital TV Over Broadband: Harvesting Bandwidth*.

desk and said, "This is a portable computer." Everyone in the audience gasped.

HK: Wow, now they are three pounds.

JVT: In those days you had to walk over to the computer department to pick up your output. We worked on a mainframe and sent it to the output for printing. I wasn't very interested in technology, but I worked with a Ph.D. student on an interactive video disk. In those days you didn't have digital video processes — you couldn't encode or decode it — so we put analog video on a video disk which you could digitally control. I did my Ph.D. dissertation on comparing linear video with interactive

video to cancer patients using material explaining the side effects of cancer treatment. I took the same material, using exactly the same footage and did different kinds of interactives. We categorized different types of interactives and placed them in the video footage. People had the illusion that they could do something different, in fact they couldn't, but it looked like they could. That was very exploratory. I had about 50 subjects and really found some differences in how people reacted to interactive material. I think the most interesting one is that people who had the interactive presentation were more likely to seek a second opinion. I didn't even write that up in my dissertation because I didn't really have any theoretical support for it, but it stayed in my mind. Since then I've thought that it's really because in an interactive mode you are more in a decision making mode, period. That carries over into how you imagine you would act in the future.

HK: Did you think that it would make them feel less like victims and more empowered by finding information and asking questions in this format?

JVT: I didn't even think of that. You know, we didn't have the Internet then, so I didn't have a framework for it and that's why I didn't look to support it particularly in theory. Therefore I couldn't really write it up, but that was the conclusion that I reached, yes.

HK: So you just put it out there saying, 'I wonder how they will react to this different, interactive stimuli?'

JVT: I did have some things that I

did test that I would say really supported some of the research, which is that people in the interactive group actually experienced more emotions and a wider range of emotions. Consequently their intellectual grasp of the material suffered a little bit because they could go back over things and really deepen their emotional response to it. Let me tell you, side effects is a very emotional thing for a cancer patient. You are going to be sick. You are going to lose your hair. Nobody wants to hear this. Part of the question was, "Could you use an interactive device, like a computer, especially if it had video material, in place of a person?" Which initially sounds horrible, but consider this, would you rather have a well produced piece or a nurse practitioner at 4:00 p.m., who has already told eight people the effects of cancer treatment? That person has been through a lot and so at the end of the day they may forget to tell you things. They have had their own emotional experiences that day.

HK: So these pieces that you produced, they had video and then they also had...I am just trying to figure how it worked...how it was interactive.

JVT: The video pieces were the same. The people who saw linear video, that's all they saw; all the pieces put together. But in the interactive conditions I broke them up in different ways. It looked like TV.

HK: If you had a question could you go more into that area and then skip other areas?

JVT: You couldn't skip, but it looked like you did.

HK: Were they interacting with the other patients as well?

JVT: No. When I got out of grad school I went back to television. I started teaching but I wasn't able to stay there because I realized that the students' world was going to be changed within ten years of their graduating. I couldn't stand the idea of not equipping them for it. I became more and more tilted toward digital media. Gradually it took over, and here I am, totally digitized.

HK: How do you spend your time now? I know that you've been at Pepperdine and at UCLA. Do you do special seminars?

JVT: I do at UCLA. I taught as a faculty member at Pepperdine, but I stopped because of my full-time writing. I wanted to write more because at the Annenberg school, I was given this vision of the new communications of the world and I will tell you how I thought of it: it is global, high definition, interactive, two way communication networks.

HK: Which is where we are heading very quickly.

JVT: I have a 50-year timeline. It's not so much high definition as it is variable bit rates. So it's a variable definition depending on what your needs are and what the infrastructure permits. For instance, you are not going to have broadband wireless everywhere anytime soon.

HK: But pieces and chunks will eventually come together.

JVT: They are already here! A really completed global network is

what I consider the work of the 21st Century. This is what we are doing.

HK: In *The Industry Standard*, they had pictures of underwater cable that was laid a year ago versus this year and it was just incredible! From these threads to these chunks of red. We are building a whole new infrastructure. How do you think gaming, or what gaming is going to evolve into, is going to fit into this new structure?

JVT: I started out like everybody else on consoles. Then in about 1987, I went online to things like MUOOS, Multi User Object Oriented Spaces. They weren't so game oriented. They were more like chat rooms where you imagined the space that you were in. It was a sort of collectively designed space. MUOOS was very much the forerunner to things like Ultima. You got to be an immortal by designing an area. You came into the central square and it would be a kingdom of some kind. A lot of them had this medieval idea to them. There were usually multiple kinds of points and you chose the kind of player that you were. At any given time you could alter your communication between whisper, talk and shout. You could talk to one person, to only the people on your team or to everyone in that location, which was shouting. You used words in little pointy brackets to indicate, 'Joan curtseys,' or 'Joan waves.' I went on a few times and then a guy contacted me and I got on his team. You could be a warrior, magician, etc. There were things written into the game so you had to sleep and eat, which means you had to stop

what you were doing and go take care of business. If you didn't you ran out of what were called "mana" points. There were three kinds of points to get: money, killing points to get weapons, and then there were mana points, which were power points. If you ran out of power points then you couldn't go anywhere and had to sit out a whole round. You can see all these elements coming together now in the online, multi-player games.

My general belief about this

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is that there will always be a market for fictional entertainment and that games are the template for what will be in the interactive environment. So far we have about 30 years of interactive entertainment development. The only successful ones that I have really seen are games. One thing that has not migrated has been traditional drama/comedy type programming. But where you do see it is in games like Ultima.

Ultima was developed out of MUOOS. It is an online game that takes place in a sort of vaguely medieval space. A player is born into Ultima pretty much like you were born into the world: naked, crying and alone. You have to accumulate an identity and it takes a long time. It also costs \$10 a month. The more time you spend the easier your identity will

become. You buy property, you build a house and you take on an occupation. There is actually quite a conflict between the settlers and the soldiers so to speak. The same conflict if you had a house in Woodland Hills and people were always starting wars. It's really very funny. Pretty much the users keep the story moving; 90% of the story is moved by the players. But they have a staff of writers and if they begin to feel there needs to be some big event then they will stage it. Or they have celebrities come on who play characters. It's starting to take on some of the characteristics; the attention to detail, individual environments, the use of writers to quote 'move the story along.'

I think some people have been looking at the wrong format. Look at DEN and the most recent crop of failures. What was their template? TV. TV is not natively interactive and isn't going to work. Games have a native interaction to them. No matter how fast or slow, they just do, so they fit the interactive environment really well. We are going to see many, many, many more ways of doing games that are collaborative, dramatic environments; fantasy environments.

HK: So when your TV/computer et. al. is one, you might have the option of watching TV or a movie as we know it today, or interacting in one of these environments?

JVT: Yes. Who wouldn't want to have a big, beautiful game that's 8 x 10 while you're leaning on the couch eating grapes with your horizontally and vertically fixed air mouse? It probably won't work for twitch games very well though.

HK: That's one thing we have

been discussing in the magazine, is that gaming is becoming a much wider realm. People used to only think of twitch games, but actually a lot of games that are currently being sold are for kids, family titles. Are you saying that in this new world, that trend is going to continue even more?

JVT: I do think so but the genre that I think holds the most promise is role playing games.

HK: Shows like *Friends* and *Cheers*: folks watch them because they are a group of people they like. It's almost like spending time with them. You want to see what is going to happen next.

JVT: That is something that is called terra social interaction and it's the tendency for people watching television to identify with characters as though they were real people and as though they were talking to them.

HK: It seems like in these environments you get to know the other players, so you are having that same experience but instead of watching it, you are immersed in it.

JVT: Yes, and besides that in many ways you may interact with both the character and the person. If you get to like a character, the two of you can go off-line, exchange email, meet and even get married. It is also possible to have friendships with a person's character that you would never know in regular life. You might not even like them but like that particular inclination of them.

HK: Everybody out there is waiting for *Star Trek's* Holodeck to

become a reality. Do you have any thoughts on this?

JVT: Well, it's kind of interesting. Okay, we have the world. Let's just call that for now "reality." The three dimensional and four dimensional world of stuff. Now we have a network, it's the doubled world. It goes back to the Greeks with their myths. There's nothing original about this, as kind of a collective conscious and that is really what we've created on the Net. We keep making this a more and more real example or real copy of the world. It gets more and more detailed. If you can't find something on the Net, it's really frustrating. You have a sense that, 'It has to be there somewhere. I am just not able to find it.' Probably you are right. You don't have the right combination of search engines to get to it. The world, like our real world, has become bigger than anyone can know. That is what the Holodeck is. This is when the other world becomes as big as, maybe bigger, than the real world. Since the imagined world needs both that world and the resources of the real world to make it. Then it's probably bigger than the real world.

I will take this a step further — there will be no popular film that does not have an interactive extension. There will always be the desire to sit around the campfire and listen to a story, why would that change? But when you have people who are fully engaged interactively as well, they are going to want to recreate that experience whenever they want it. Plus, they are not going to want to watch the same movie twice, or three times or four times or even the sequel forever. They are going to want to be able to do things in

that world, so if companies don't create that, then the users will.

HK: For instance, *The Phantom Menace*: LucasArts came out with a pod racing flight simulator game. Would these types of elements now be integrated into the film? So that if you wanted to take a break from the film and pod race with all those characters you could and then you could rejoin watching the film?

JVT: There's that kind of interactively, but I am thinking more along the idea of this sustained immersive environment. So there's going to be the *Phantom Menace* world that you can belong to.

HK: And you can go in and investigate all the different planets and live in those areas...

JVT: ...and reinvent those characters so that you can be someone's cousin. I think the next group of users is absolutely going to demand the ability to engage in an immersive environment that is responsive to them. They don't have to change the characters that they have invented, but those characters need to populate that world and some extension of those characters need to be able to respond to users in some way.

HK: That is going to be a lot of work for a lot of people.

JVT: It is. Although users do so much of it themselves, it is going to be a lot of work for a lot of people. I think that there will be big environments and small environments.

HK: And some might continue on and on and on very strong, where

some worlds might be popular for a little bit and then ebb as the movie becomes less popular.

JVT: Exactly. I think too that people have not really, in the game world, capitalized at all on email, but they will. You are not necessarily going to have to go to a place. Elements of games will come to you, and they should.

HK: How will that work?

JVT: Well it depends on how broadband the deal is. The work space is already pretty broadband. Characters can interact among each other using email. If I were running a game, I would certainly be notifying people of things that were going on in the environment, if they wanted. If there is going to be an attack, you want to know so you can come and pick up your pitchfork. You could be emailed with graphics of your 'house' going up in flames. They could notify you on your cell phone. There is a lot of cross media engagement that could be occurring that is not that expensive to do and players could opt in and out. There's a source of private amusement that they might enjoy. You could really link this game into someone's life. You could send them Christmas greetings from the characters in the game, for example. And that's just off the top of my head.

HK: What do you think the time frame on this is?

JVT: As soon as people think of it and start doing it, it's ready to go.

HK: And the sort of watching these immersive communities or fantasy communities on your tele-

vision?

JVT: There is a little bit of work here. In my opinion it's somewhere in a 15 to 20 year horizon. It's ten years at the soonest. There are some standards to work out. Basically what would have to happen is, you would have to have a communications gateway into your house and a communications center that allows you to port material to whatever device you want, where you want it.

HK: What do you think the biggest technological hurdle is at this point?

JVT: Standards. But that's not the biggest barrier. The biggest barrier is the business game. What are the relationships among the players? That's the real unsettling part. Everybody wants to make the biggest dollar. Some of those relationships are in place, but everybody argues and more time is spent on that. Nobody starts out by saying, 'Okay, I'll take 2%.' Everybody starts out at 50%. There's a lot of players and some of them are not going to make it. Like the equipment people, I don't see that they are going to be able to stay in the game.

HK: Do you see the telecommunications giants as being the real winners? They are the ones that control the pipeline.

JVT: No, I don't. Again, I'm using a 50 year timeline, so I have a different take on it. In the near term sure, they are the winners. But I think that wireless communication is really going to challenge them and broadband satellite.

HK: So who do you see as the

main players in this kind of new world? Obviously you have the people designing the games.

JVT: Yeah, they have a really good future. The content people do. If you have a hit, you have a hit. When you get it right, you get it big. The delivery people are the near term winners — actually the infrastructure people underlying the delivery people — until the network is extended to its economical end points, which is probably well short of a global broadband network. Still, there is a lot of work that needs to happen. There is some technology work that needs to happen, like bandwidth trading.

HK: What is that, bandwidth trading?

JVT: It's kind of like the way you envision the electrical grid and moving electricity to wherever you need it. It doesn't really work like that but it should, and you think that it does. We need a grid like that for bandwidth. It doesn't really exist for a lot of reasons. GTE's network is GTE's network and Quest's is Quest's. They do trade around a bit but there's no center. Los Angeles is in some ways, as they are developing these telephone hotels, so that's kind of the precursor to bandwidth trading. The interconnects need to be developed before you can really move around bandwidths. There is actually something called the BTO, the Bandwidth Trading Office, and people are starting to work on it and figure out how to do it. In the next five to ten years, we are going to see it. Large amounts of digital assets will be able to be moved and you won't know how. You'll just get a 'bit bill.'

HK: So there's still a lot of system building that is going to handle this world that's coming?

JVT: Yes, there really is. Those submarine cables: when this system is in place, you are going to be able to push material across the networks easily. Right now it's a nightmare. You have to hire somebody to tell you how to get material from here to Tokyo or worse Osaka. Like Carson City to Osaka? If you are not in a major place then you have to hire a company to tell you how to do that. We have specialists in that arena. It should be easy and everyone knows that you should be able to run material over a network and somebody gets paid for it. There's a settlements process that's not here yet.

HK: It is like electricity; a distributor is buying electricity from a company and you, the consumer, don't even know it. You turn a switch and it works. You don't know how, you just get a bill. Well, everywhere except California right now, but it is the same principal applied to bandwidth.

JVT: That's where we are, in this very fundamental working out of the distribution of bandwidth. We aren't even at the content part yet and we are not going to be there for a while. In the meantime there's all this richness of experiment.

HK: What do you think is the most exciting or interesting thing going on right now leading up to this?

JVT: The most interesting thing to me is the amazing speed with which it becomes second nature. But, the most exciting thing is the

opportunity for relationships with people. People can really find the other people who offer what it is they need in their life to grow and be satisfied. That's really thrilling.

Advanced Television Systems: Brave New TV, by Joan Van Tassel. Woburn, Massachusetts: Butterworth-Heinemann Publishers Ltd., 1996. 336 pages. ISBN: 0240802438 (\$46.95)

Digital TV Over Broadband: Harvesting Bandwidth, by Joan Van Tassel, Woburn, Massachusetts: Focal Press, 2000, 2nd edition. 370 pages. ISBN: 0240803574 (\$47.95)

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A One Stop Digital Shop:

Data Design Interactive and Artworld UK

by Paul Younghusband

For around 18 years Birmingham-based Data Design Interactive has been churning out top-notch games for some of the industry's most prestigious publishers. Working for Sony, Millennium, PSS, Psygnosis, Ocean and Infogrames on projects such as *Pegasus Bridge*, *ROBOCOD*, *Rise of the Robots* and *Water World* to name a few, Data Design has earned a reputation as one of the UK's top games developers. Their experience developing for the Spectrum, Amstrad, Amiga, Game Boy, PC, Sega Megadrive and, of course, the Playstation, put them in the perfect position to take advantage of the games industry's soaring popularity. But as we found out, the folks at Data Design have more than video games on their mind...



Two scenes from WW2, the upcoming game being developed by Artworld UK.
© Artworld UK.

Expanding Horizons

When Lego Media International approached Data Design to create their *Lego Rock Raiders* game the company knew that they would require a dedicated animation team. "That's when we set up Artworld UK, our sister company," says Rob Dorney, Head of Art Department. "We have a very good working environment here – Data Design handles the game code, and Artworld handles

the graphics and animation."

And they "handle" it very well indeed. For the last four years Artworld has been producing some of the best game and game-related animation in the UK. But they haven't just stuck with game animation — the company has a wide range of TV commercials, Websites and even comic books that they've produced as a result of their astounding animation for

games. "We've built up a great relationship with Lego Media," says Dorney, "in total we must have competed more than 8 projects for them."

Building a Company with Lego Bricks

Artworld's work with the Lego brand has established them as a force to be reckoned with. After they completed the anima-

tion for the *Lego Rock Raiders* game, Lego was so impressed that they commissioned Artworld to create the animation for the television commercial too. Then the work started flooding in: *Lego Racers*, *Lego Alpha Team*, *Lego Creator*, Legoland introduction animation, Lego motion simulator rides, Lego comics and more. "Lego were so impressed with our work that they actually asked us to help design some of the actual Lego sets that were going to go on sale," Dorney recalls. "It was really great to see our work in plastic on the shelves at Toys R Us."



When Lego Media International approached Data Design to create their *Lego Rock Raiders* game, the company set up Artworld UK, a sister company, to handle the graphics and animation.
© Artworld UK.

So why does international toy giant Lego keep coming back to Artworld? "I think it's because they trust us with their intellectual properties," explains Dorney. "Their brand is the core of their business — it's the key to their success. Everyone knows Lego. They feel that we portray their brand in a way that works for them. The character that we put into the

characters and the way we tell stories about them obviously works. We seem to be on the same wavelength. We know what they want. And we get it right the first time."

Taking Animation Beyond Plastic Bricks

Artworld's work with Lego has led to them producing animation for other game developers too. In an astounding sequence created for the upcoming game *WW2*, Artworld recreated the D-Day landings in 3D. "That type of work is particularly challenging," Dorney states. "It's amazing how complex a sequence like that is. If you watch *Saving Private Ryan*, which features a similar scene, you'll see that everyone in the scene is doing something — everywhere you look someone is being shot, or a mine is exploding. We had to recreate that nightma-



Background scenes developed for the *Lego Rock Raiders* game. © Artworld UK.

rish sense of busyness...and we had to do it in 6 weeks with only 11 people." And what's more, Artworld has yet to make use of motion-capture in a project. Using ingenious bits of programming the scene is pulled off with amazing believability.

The Digital Bridge

Because the work that Artworld does is 3D, they can use the fact technology to apply this 3D to Lego's different types of projects while cutting costs and maximizing efficiency. "It's really quite simple," Dorney says. "We can use the same 3D models and textures in a number of projects. We just build high-resolution models to start with and downgrade them for use in the games. We then use the higher quality models for the print and TV work." This way Artworld can apply their work to a variety of outlets for maximum return — and the fact that their sister company, Data Design, is a games company takes this one step further. Not only can the two companies provide excellent games complete with top quality animation, but they can do the packaging, the TV commercial and even the Website.

"We're really interested in doing more Websites," Dorney confesses. "We've done Web work for Kinder Surprise, Gubble and Hot Foot. We're very excited about the Macromedia Flash format and are really pushing it to see how far we can go. It's great to take our 3D and animation and make use of the same tools and techniques to create work for a different medium. We've done a lot of animation and 3D graphics for comics and packaging — creating interactive Internet solutions seems like a natural extension of that work."



From concept art, storyboarding, Website design, animation, audio production, comic book illustration and static art, Artworld UK's gallery of work continues to expand. © Artworld UK.

TV series for Winchester Television," Dorney reveals. "And I'm sure you'll see a Playstation 2 title from us next year too." And more Lego projects? Predictably, Dorney is being secretive. But it's clear that when Lego does decide to create another game, TV commercial or even another motion simulator ride, they'll know where to go. Straight up the M5 and into Birmingham city center. I'm sure someone there will be able to help them!

Paul Youngusband is editor-in-chief of Visual Magic Magazine, a publication focusing on the 3D graphics and digital effects industries.

You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet

Despite Data Design's 18 years in business, and Artworld's 4 years providing graphics and ani-

mation, it is clear that both are set for bigger and better things. As for what those things are, they're keeping very quiet. "We're doing a

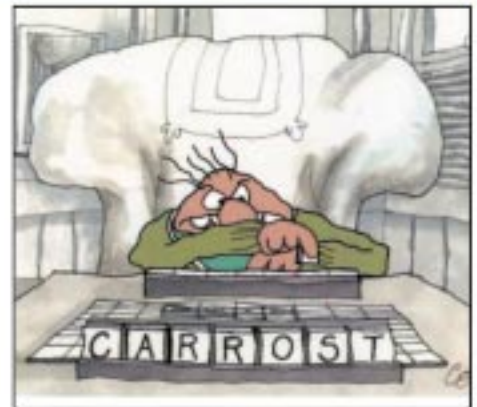
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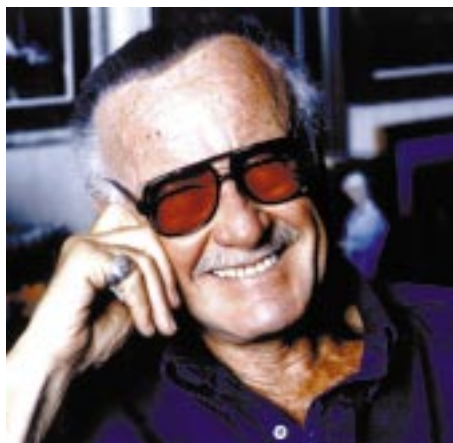
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Heroes Wanted:

Stan Lee Media Struggles to Stay Afloat

by Brett D. Rogers



Stan Lee, action-adventure creator extraordinaire. © Stan Lee Media.

Less than two years ago, Stan Lee Media rose from the ashes of a bankrupt Marvel, where comic legend Stan Lee created characters such as Spider-Man, the Incredible Hulk and the X-Men. With the creative force of Lee providing guidance, Stan Lee Media quickly earned widespread praise for its innovation in online animation. The company developed a loyal audience for its new characters and attracted high-profile clients like the Backstreet Boys for its animation services. With the wind of a dot-com boom at its back, the company even found itself able to hire away talent from major studios like Disney, attracting animators looking for the creative freedom and energetic environment associated with an Internet start-up. Soon after the launch of its stanlee.net Website in February 2000, Stan Lee Media's market capitalization was well over \$300 million, about

\$100 million more than Marvel Enterprises, where Stan Lee still serves as chairman emeritus.

Like many Internet-related companies, however, Stan Lee Media's perceived success did not accurately reflect conditions behind the scenes. Although the company's stock managed to remain comparatively stable through much of the dot-com stock bubble burst in 2000, Stan Lee Media was running out of money at a blistering pace. While taking in just over \$1 million in revenue in its short history, the company tore through over \$20 million in cash.

**In February 2000,
Stan Lee Media's
market capitalization
was well over
\$300 million...**

In Stan Lee's comics, when trouble strikes you can always depend on Spider-Man or another familiar hero to save the day. Unfortunately, it's not that easy for his namesake company, which must depend on a different sort of superhero, the high-risk investor.

Putting The Players In Place

In November, it seemed as if Stan Lee Media had found its champion. A bridge financing deal was reached to provide enough



Stan Lee Media's heroes from their first Webseries, 7th Portal. © Stan Lee Media.

backing for the company to continue operating. Along with the deal came a qualification, however. If the company's stock price dropped below a dollar, the financing agreement would not move forward.

The events of the following weeks defy explanation. In the face of the positive financing news, Stan Lee Media's stock price plummeted down from about \$8, smashing through the \$1 mark on unusually high trading volume, as short-sellers apparently found reward in the carnage.

On December 15, with its stockholders still reeling, Stan Lee Media announced that the plunge scuttled the company's badly needed financing, forcing it to suspend operations and lay off



Ken Williams, President and CEO of Stan Lee Media. © Stan Lee Media.

nearly all of its 140 employees.

In a press release, Ken Williams, President and CEO of Stan Lee Media, expressed a glimmer of hope in saying, "We still believe in the fundamentals of our business plan and are proud of the work we have accomplished to date... In the coming weeks we will be focusing on exploring the full range of strategic alternatives available to us in order to maximize shareholder value."

Since learning of the company's shutdown, angry stockholders have directed their ire toward Stan Lee Media insiders. A prime target is Peter F. Paul, a long-time friend of Stan Lee and co-founder of Stan Lee Media who had served as a consultant to the company since its inception. According to Securities and Exchange



Peter F. Paul, a long-time friend of Stan Lee and co-founder of Stan Lee Media. © Stan Lee Media.

Commission filings, Paul reported his intention to sell through PFP Family Holdings, his family trust company, over 400,000 shares of Stan Lee Media stock in its final 20 days of trading. A sale of that size in the midst of Stan Lee Media's meltdown would yield estimated proceeds of over \$635,000 for PFP, with those sales representing almost 8% of the stock's trading volume over that period.

When Stan Lee Media's stock price made its final plunge to 13 cents on December 18, NASDAQ halted trading of the company's shares. Shortly after, the Securities and Exchange Commission opened an informal inquiry into the trading of the company's stock "by certain individuals and entities."

Stan Lee Media's total remaining value in terms of market capitalization is only about \$1.69 million.

Seven Stan Lee Media insiders, including Devendra Mishra, president of the company's international unit, filed to sell approximately \$2.1 million worth of stock in the company's final 20 days of trading. As of press time, with trading in the company's stock still halted, Stan Lee Media's total remaining value in terms of market capitalization is only about \$1.69 million.

The Rules and Regs

Stock sales by insiders of a publicly traded company are common, legal occurrences when properly completed. However, a company insider may be in violation of the Securities Exchange Act

if he or she buys or sells stock in a company while in possession of non-public information that would be considered important to a reasonable investor. An insider who knows material, non-public information about a company has two choices: either disclose the information to the public, or refrain from trading. Additionally, if an insider who holds more than 10% of a corporation's stock buys and then sells within a six month period, he or she must repay all of the profits realized to the company.



A scene from Stan Lee Media's popular Webseries, 7th Portal. © Stan Lee Media.

Violating insider trading laws can result in a wide range of punishments, including criminal liability, civil penalties and private suits. A person who has been harmed by illegal insider trading has the right to bring a private civil suit against the insider for damages.

While at this stage there is no indication that any insiders at Stan Lee Media violated federal securities law, it is likely that the unusual timing and size of insider sales of the company's stock will be an issue the SEC examines in its investigation.

In a release announcing the SEC probe, Stan Lee Media reported that it had terminated the employment of Stephen Gordon, executive vice president of opera-

tions, as well as Peter F. Paul. In addition, the company had uncovered "evidence of possible misuse of company funds by former members of its management team."

Moreover, the company will not comment about the existence of any connection between the discharge of Paul and Gordon, the SEC inquiry and the internal investigation.

A Thickening Plot

What went wrong? What led to the discord between Paul, Gordon and Stan Lee Media's management? What made a company co-founder contribute to the downfall of Stan Lee Media's financing package by declaring his intention to dump a portion of his shares at such a vulnerable time? The answers remain unclear.

What went wrong?

In a statement to Dow Jones Newswire, Paul defended his actions, saying he "never intended to sell any stock," and that the shares sold were liquidated as security for a loan. Paul also criticized the methods used by Stan Lee Media to raise money, saying they made the company's stock vulnerable to short-selling by investors.

Regardless of the reason for Paul's trades, Stan Lee Media's flurry of insider sales certainly had a negative impact on the stock's price. Insider sales are a valuable and frequently used tool in assessing the health of a company and the sustainability of that company's stock price. Investors who watched the company's co-founder and second largest shareholder, along with a company officer and five other insiders, sell



7th Portal's Conjure Man, a character whose magical powers, telekinesis and empathetic abilities, ensures the popularity of Stan Lee Media's Webseries.
© Stan Lee Media.

heavily into weakness in Stan Lee Media's share price must have thought twice about holding onto their own shares.

As more details surrounding the Stan Lee Media nose-dive are uncovered, Paul is likely to remain at the center of controversy. Last August, as Paul organized a massive campaign fundraiser for Hillary Rodham Clinton, the *Washington Post* exposed Paul as a convicted felon who two decades ago served three years in prison and had his license to practice law suspended after he was convicted of cocaine possession and attempting to defraud the Cuban government of almost \$9 million.

A Slight Hope?

While Rick Madden, Stan Lee Media's general counsel, told Dow Jones Newswire that Paul's criminal past did "not directly" contribute to his termination, Williams stated that Paul was "very definitely [fired] for cause," and is "certain-

ly a target" of the company's internal investigation.

It is particularly important that the company claims the dismissal of Paul was "for cause." A March 2000 SEC filing made by the company states that if Paraversal, the company through which Paul provided consulting services to Stan Lee Media, was terminated for "any reason other than for cause or for death and disability, Paraversal will be entitled to a lump sum payment of \$1,000,000."

Paul's employment agreement with Stan Lee Media defines "cause" as "(a) willful and repeated failure to comply with the lawful directions of the Board of Directors; (b) gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of Consultant's duties to the Company; or (c) conviction of any act of fraud against, or misappropriation of material property belonging to the Company, conviction of any criminal statute constituting a misdemeanor involving

moral turpitude or conviction of a felony, chronic alcoholism or drug addiction."

Stan Lee Media was just beginning to develop a core audience when the strange events of November and December 2000 pulled the plug. The popularity of its *7th Portal* franchise earned the company a movie deal and a promising 3-D amusement park ride. Unless favorable financing is secured, Stan Lee Media's ambitious plan to use the Internet as a springboard for its creations into the more profitable areas of licensing and merchandising will remain untested.

Williams, speaking by telephone with AWN, says there are still "good prospects" for his company and that he and the remain-



Stan Lee amongst the many characters he has created. © Stan Lee Media.

ing core executive group, "continue to actively pursue" deals to resurrect the company. Beyond that,

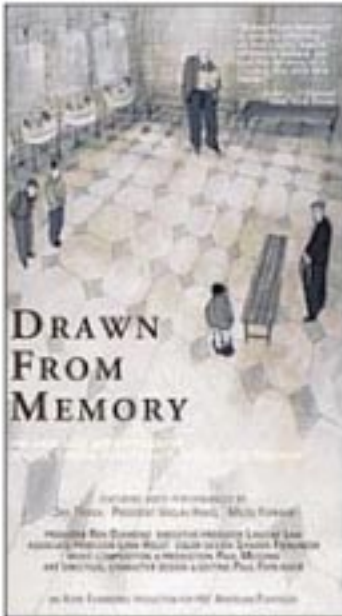
Williams declined to comment, citing the sensitive nature of his company's efforts to emerge from recent events.

In the coming months, while the rest of the online animation industry watches events unfold with intense interest, we'll find out if there will be any new adventures for Stan Lee Media, or if the last panel of this Lee creation has already been inked with a final "The End."

Brett Rogers is a freelance writer and law student based in Baltimore.

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

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--Carrie Rickey
The Philadelphia Inquirer



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MY GENERATION?

by Martin "Dr. Toon" Goodman



The first true star to emerge from Hanna-Barbera Productions was Huckleberry Hound, who began in 1958 sponsored by Kellogg's cereals and syndicated by Screen Gems. In 1960, the blue hound went on to win the first Emmy Award ever given to an animated program. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

"Don't want to end up a cartoon in a cartoon graveyard..."

- Paul Simon © 1986 BMI Music

Memories from a sixth-grade history class: I recall seeing pictures of pale, pitted figurines that resembled malformed gingerbread men iced with dirt. My textbook informed me that these objects were "fertility statues," created to ensure fecund livestock and bountiful crops. At least that was the prevailing theory; they might have actually been the Sumerian equivalent of fuzzy dice, pet rocks or action figures. After some 5,000 years, who really knew? This conjecture led to the only interesting homework assignment I ever had in elementary school: "If archaeologists were to dig up our classroom 5,000 years from now, what assumptions might they make about the artifacts they find?" That was a challenging question in 1965, but answering it in 2001 is simple: They wouldn't need to

BOOMERANG DIFFERED FROM ITS "SISTER" BY OFFERING VINTAGE CARTOONS.

make any assumptions at all.

Assuming no nuclear conflagrations, environmental disasters, world-cleansing global pandemics or invasions by the Drej, the record of the past should be easy to read. Current technology has been able to preserve civilization through the use of increasingly sophisticated devices, and at least the past fifty years of cultural history are available to all mankind on CD-ROM, DVD and other formats. Frequently this historical record reappears in digitally remastered form, looking and sounding better than ever. This is no sci-fi fancy: source material will be preserved in ways yet unforeseen and

it is conceivable that audiences a thousand years from now will be able to view an original episode of *Rocky and His Friends* with full understanding of the cultural context. Sure, the show may seem a bit weird and unworldly but hardly indecipherable, since it will never have disappeared. These audiences will contain historians and academics, but also fans who will recognize many of the show's nuances.



Celebrating the cartoon stars of the Hanna-Barbera library, the 24-hour classic cartoon network arranges its weekly schedule into four different programming categories designated by character, half-hour series, year (television season) and action-adventure genre. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

Old Is New: Boomerang

Which brings us to April 1, 2000 and the premiere of Turner Broadcasting System's newest offering, Boomerang. A companion channel to the highly successful Cartoon Network, Boomerang differed from its "sister" by offering vintage cartoons. The title suggested the "baby boom" generation born between 1946 and 1964 who were ostensibly the original audience for these cartoons, and the fact that the cartoons had returned to their cultural owners and caretakers. Boomerang first cut a deal with EchoStar satellite service and then hit it big with DirecTV soon thereafter. In an interview with *ign* (March 27, 2000), Cartoon Network president Betty Cohen noted that while, "Cartoon Network's phenomenal audience



Inside his laboratory, Dexter believes that every day is a great day for science, but not for sister Dee Dee. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

growth with older kids and younger adults is increasingly driven by our aggressive ramp-up of original programming and contemporary acquisitions...our research and consumer feedback tells us we still have enormous opportunity to serve baby boomer parents with more of the classic favorites they grew up with. Boomerang will give them the chance to share those favorites with their kids."

Noble sentiments indeed. Economical ones as well. Research and consumer feedback have neither ensured success nor averted disaster in the world of TV programming, and the Cartoon Network execs are likely aware of that fact. Boomerang may, in fact, have a secondary and even tertiary purpose. Cartoon Network has two important goals that mitigate against older toons dominating its programming. CN must ensure a steady dose of progressive and original programming. They must also develop the intensive marketing that is inseparable from toons that slip their restrictive time blocks

and enter the mainstream's profitable secondary markets. To these ends, Cartoon Network has dedicated its prime viewing hours to original programming. Their phenomenally lucrative Friday evening block (7:30pm-11pm) was a key factor in gaining the economic leverage needed for program expansion. CN is one of (ad-supported) cable TV's highest rated networks, and advertising revenue exploded 40% over 1998-99 levels, partly due to this block's popularity with viewers.

Some original projects, such as *Ed, Edd n Eddy*, are passable. Other programs like *Cow and Chicken* or *Dexter's Laboratory* have a steady following. Still other programs, primarily *The Powerpuff Girls*, have slipped the leash and are on the eventual way to classic status. Cartoon Network continues to develop its own shows and will do so for the foreseeable future; Cohen and company have made a \$350 million commitment to original programming, and at this time there are reportedly 25 animated shorts

in sundry stages of development. Each one has the potential to develop into a series within the next two years. Add to that the commitment that CN is making to anime (*Gundam Wing* and *Techni Muyo* are now on the scene in addition to CN's other imports), and there is far less time available for Hanna-Barbera leftovers such as *Amazing Chan* and *the Chan Clan*.

Wait...Who's Watching What?

Still, how can one let a library spanning forty years of Saturday morning animation lie fallow? Adults make up 35% of CN's viewing audience, and its viewership spends an average of seven hours per week "tooned" in to the station. The average viewer is 81% more likely to have *four or more television sets* in the home than non-viewers. This suggests that there is certainly enough time, TV sets and adults to go around for the vintage toons, but I find myself puzzled by a couple of other statistics, and these deserve examination since they left me



Shaping up to be a classic, *The Powerpuff Girls* have worked over audiences creating their own powerful niche. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

wondering at which audience the Boomerang network is truly aimed.

ONE CONCLUSION WE COULD DRAW IS THAT BOOMERS ARE OVERRATED AS A VIEWING AUDIENCE FOR ANIMATED CARTOON SHOWS.

As noted earlier, Boomers represent people born in the years 1946-1964 (ages 35-53). If we add five years to these birth dates to reflect more accurately the times in their lives when Boomers were first addicted to cartoons, the range of programming would reflect the years 1951-1969. Demographic studies suggest that the typical head of the household among CN's audience is in the 25-34 age range, which suggests birth dates ranging from 1967-1976. If we were to apply the same five-year rule, the range of programming would represent something like 1972-1981. This range more accurately reflects the prevalent programming on Boomerang. In an interview with *L.A. Life* on April 1, 2000, Boomerang senior VP Mark Norman suggested that the network would be concentrating on the years between 1963 and 1976. If the viewership of Boomerang, as Ms. Cohen suggests, is sharing the beloved cartoons of their youth with their

own progeny (allowing time for their children to hit the age of five), who is that viewership? According to an article in *Marketing Click* (3/99), "More children's television is viewed in households with GenX parents and kids under 12 than those with Boomer parents, according to Mediabank Research Inc. GenX households were almost twice as likely to have tuned in to the Cartoon Network during a recent six month period than Boomer households..."

Therefore, one conclusion we could draw is that Boomers are overrated as a viewing audience for animated cartoon shows. Another conclusion we might reach is that Boomerang, while it *does* show cartoons pre-dating 1967, may not be completely intended for the baby boomers and their kids after all. At the time that most of Boomerang's current fare was playing on Saturday morning, true Boomers were sweating out recessions or lurching towards yup-dom; *Jabberjaw*

was the last thing on their minds. Boomerang seems more a strategy to attract GenXers and their offspring, who also cross over to CN for the newer and hipper toons. Thus, CN and Boomerang team up for the tastiest pieces of the demographic pie. Boomerang also serves the purpose of clearing the decks for CN's original programs while maintaining the original network's 35% adult viewing base and fully utilizing Turner's colossal cartoon library.

Curious-er and Curious-er

Fortunately for CN, the cartoons made during this period are "hot," gaining the endorsement of GenXers such as Timothy and Kevin Burke, who sent these programs a cuddly love letter with their book *Saturday Morning Fever*. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, many of these cartoons exemplify how standardization, poor quality, minuscule financing and fuss-budget "consultants" with pro-social agendas can drain animation of all its magic



The Flintstones, network television's first primetime animated series, was originally produced by Hanna-Barbera Studios for ABC-TV from 1960-1966 and is now showing on Boomerang.TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

and wonder. For better or worse, Boomerang is a historical record of a well-defined generation's favorite cartoons...but possibly not the generation described by Betty Cohen or suggested by the network's title.

I find this more curious than problematic, and I respect the right of Turner Broadcasting, or Cartoon Network, to call their new entity whatever they wish. It is amusing, however, to see true boomer cartoons such as *Tom and Jerry* and *Rocky and His Friends*, or the offerings of the *Acme Hour*, playing on Cartoon Network at the same time that Boomerang is broadcasting *Sealab 2020* and *Yogi's Space Race*. My only real quibble is that Boomerang does not seem to be part of the basic cable package and must be purchased either separately or through a package upgrade. It seems to me that Turner is charging people for the wrong network. Speaking as a genuine

boomer born in 1956, I think that Cartoon Network has the more desirable lineup. I would pay extra to see Mo Willem's frenetic assault on the "fourth wall" that he calls *Sheep in the Big City*. I would dig up a few more shekels to watch John R. Dilworth and *Courage the Cowardly Dog* carry out their minimalist revision of the American horror genre. I would pop a few more pennies to enjoy the lively animation and snappy dialogue of the underrated *Mike, Lu and Og* show. And I would bust my piggy bank to see the City of Townsville eternally protected by *The Powerpuff Girls*. But shelling out dough to view *The Cattanooga Cats*, *The Funky Phantom* or *Speed Buggy*? With all due respect, someone would have to pay me.

Ah, but I am only one humble journalist soon to be lost to the flow of history. Boomerang is, at least, part of the process that assures no cartoon ever goes to



Another facet of the new Cartoon Network lineup, *Sheep in the Big City* is a heart-warming tale of a farm animal's attempt at making it in a new town. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

the cartoon graveyard. Thanks to this network's current efforts, it is possible that 5,000 years from now future historians, cultural archaeologists and animation fanatics can all sit down together and watch *Help! It's the Hair Bear Bunch!* without questioning whether this was an example of animal worship, tribal ritual or archetypal epic. Figuring out what era of audiences it was aimed at, however, might be a different story since the matter is evidently not clear among the Turner networks themselves.

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.



Cartoon Network's popular award-winning series, *Courage the Cowardly Dog*. TM & © 2001 Cartoon Network. An AOL Time Warner Company. All Rights Reserved.

Monthly provocative, drunken, idiotic ramblings from the North...



Illustration by Andreas Hykade.
Courtesy of Chris Robinson.

"Long Live Tits"

by Chris Robinson

Yo, yo, yo ladies.
Da pimp is here
makin' wit da mouth.
Ya know what I am sayin'.

Been hearin' some yappin'
'bout couple o' films:
Ring of Fire
and *Night of the Carrots*.

Seems you honeys be
thinkin' they be crappin' on ya all.
Making da ladies look bad.
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Dat makes da pimp mad.
He don't like no rain from da
honeys.
Less it involves cork poppin'.
Rather be mackin' than yappin'.
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Okay...y'all listen up.
Carrots got a few ladies:
that salivin' elevator button,
a big titty waitress,
a yappin' German egg
and da fat kid's mom.

Don't understand da problem
ladies.
All da men be biscuit arsed smack
offs.
They be huddled away in rooms
with nothin' but fantasies.
What u see of da ladies is nuttin'

but views through the eyes of
cave men.
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Seems dat feminism gone so far
dat no one be 'llowed to say shit
'bout no woman.
Don't seem right if ya ask me.
'Sides...how many fuggin'
German speakin' sister eggs do ya
know?
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Da imagined, desired world ya all
are dreamin' of, don't exist.
Not sayin' it shouldn't — cause da
pimp got nuttin' but lovin' for all
ya sweets —
but ya all be dreamin'. Dis here
film be showin' da world for what
it is, not what it should be.
Da man all be IDIOTS. Don't hear
da men 'plainin'.
'Sides...there be stupid MEN and
stupid WOMEN.
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Main man Diego don't do nuttin'.
Bloody fool dat's all.
Time ya hardboileds stop confusin'
your reality with da others.
Ain't no one reality ladies and be
time ya stop tinkin' 'cause just ain't
so.
Ya know what I'm sayin'.

As with the *Fire* film.
From da get go, this guy Hykade is
da BOMB.



Ring of Fire directed by Andreas Hykade. © Gambit.

'Side the Uke and Estonian, he is king of da cartoons right now. Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Okay...da film. Listen up. Two guys headin' to some fuggin' Fellini with Dante world o' bends. Is it hell? Dunno...seems plenty nice ta me. These two fellas just be trying to bone and get their groove on. Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Turns out though that da man we be callin' HERO, ain't nothin' but a low-down lady beatin' mutha' fuggah. Da man we usually be laffin' at á la Walter Brennan be da real man. He be lookin' fo' da love like Chef, not Ike. Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Man who be treatin' da ladies right get himself some love and some bustin'.

'Gain not sure what da problem is. Some dancing women. Some chicks waxin' on each other messin' with da tongues. A chick munching another. Why sex be sexism? Merely a view within the minds of two lost souls. Ya know what I'm sayin'.

Ya all need to open up... Some pages of dat dead bald French guy's book *The History of Sexuality*. No pictures. Won't be gettin' ya off. But damn if it don't help all ya repressed folks understand da ways of sexuality. Ya know what I'm saying.

If sexism be defined as the objectification or oppression of a gender by another gender,



Night of the Carrots directed by Priit Parn. © EESTI Joonisfilm.

then don't see how these 2 films fit.

If anyone bein' objects it's da crack-ers.

They ill defined, fugged up crea-tures.

Sure...the waitress, egg and eleva-tor button be re/op-pressed.

But shit, if ya axe me, everyone be messed up.

Ya know what I'm sayin'?

Hottie Animator o' da month

Ain't none of you. All that bitchin' 'bout two good films...forget about it. Instead da honour goes to a nice slice of Korean.

The Animation Pimp is brought to you by AAA Ladies From Shanghai, servicing the sexual needs of the animation community since August 1999.

Visit us online at:

<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue/5.11/5.11pages/5.11animpimp.php3> to download and view QuickTime movie clips of each of these films!

Join Chris online in The Animation Café at <http://www.creativeplanet.com/communitycenter/>, a sort of anarchistic forum (or variety show if that sounds better) for debates, criticism and commentary about any and all aspects of animation, especially the art of animation (whatever that means).

Chris Robinson is a writer, festival director, programmer, junky and doesn't give a shit about you. His hobbies include horseback riding, pudpulling, canoeing and goat thumping.

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



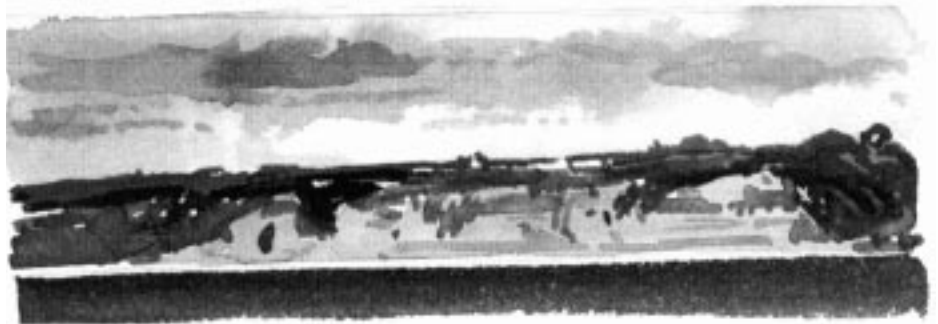
Sketching on Location: Texture as Planes in Space

by Glenn Vilppu

This is the fifth in a new series of bi-monthly articles about sketching on location. The articles are based on my *Sketching on Location Manual*. The manual was developed as a series of lessons that I use on my guided sketching tours of Europe, and that I use as material in my regular drawing classes. As such the lessons can be part of a regular course or can be used by individual students as a practical learning guide. In the last chapter we worked on "Light and Dark Patterns." If you have not seen the previous lessons starting in the June 2000 issue of *Animation World Magazine*, it is recommended that you do. The lessons are progressive and expand on basic ideas. It is suggested that you start from the beginning for a better understanding of my approach. If you really want to start at the beginning open with the lessons based on the *Vilppu Drawing Manual*.

Bringing in Texture

Another widely used way of separating elements and organizing your picture is through the use of textures. The basic principle we have been using is that contrast applied to planes organizes the elements of the picture. The use of textures serves the same function. Pierre Bonnard is a good example of an artist who consistently used them as a way of organizing his paintings and draw-



All drawings in this article are by and © Glenn Vilppu.

ings. A texture can be the fluffiness of a cloud, the gravel of a walkway, the variety of shapes of leaves, or the peeling of paint on a wall. We don't have to make up textures for they are all around us. Every good gardener employs this concept in organizing how the flowers in his or her garden will look, one against another, and as a whole. Photographic books are full of artists' depictions of one texture against another.

In drawing we make deliberate contrasting marks to show clear differences. While the subject itself gives us the direction to take, at other times, it may be necessary to create arbitrary marks with our

pencil or pen to clarify an object's place in space.

In looking at the examples, notice the variety of textures used. The use of contrasts or differences is a fundamental element of artistic expression. Reducing your picture to a series of stripes, each different in size, texture, quality of color and value is an incredibly useful tool in picture making. Consistently looking for these contrasts will also give you much more enjoyment and appreciation for what you see.

While doing these drawings, I applied many of the ideas we have discussed in the previous chapters, particularly the alterna-



tion of darks and lights in the planes stepping back into the picture. It is not necessary to see this dark and light pattern as just a product of shadows. Pushing the differences between one plane and another is the important thing.

More examples are avail-

able online at:

<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/5.11vilppu.php3>.

Glenn Vilppu first wrote for *Animation World Magazine* in the June 1997 issue, "Never Underestimate the Power of Life

Drawing." His drawing manuals and video tapes may be purchased in the Animation World Store.

Glenn Vilppu teaches figure drawing at the American Animation Institute, the Masters program of the UCLA Animation Dept., Walt Disney Feature Animation and Warner Bros. Feature Animation, and has been sent to teach artists at Disney TV studios in Japan, Canada and the Philippines. Vilppu has also worked in the animation industry for 18 years as a layout, storyboard and presentation artist. His drawing manual and video tapes are being used worldwide as course materials for animation students.

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

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Never before available!!!

Glenn Vilppu's drawing techniques manual and video tapes, used worldwide as course material for animation students.



eKIDS: Everyone Wants a Piece of the PIE

by Gregory Singer

When folks think of cartoons and animation, almost universally we think of kids. Once in my wanderings I came across a T-shirt on a toddler which read: "I am not a target audience." However quaint or poignant such a message may be, the fact remains that animation and children are closely associated — if not always in our marketing schemata, then certainly in our collective cultural imagination.

The "eKIDS Internet" is the fledgling and ambitious enterprise of SilverTech, Inc., and it aims to be, as it explains self-promotionally, "The place where kids click with kids."



El St. John, founder and CEO. In her first endeavor using PIE technology, she created eKIDS Internet, the world's first private Internet network for kids featuring its own browser and search engine. Photo courtesy of and © SilverTech Inc.

Founded in 1997 by former telecommunications executive El St. John, San Francisco-based SilverTech officially and globally



What you'll find on eKIDS Internet's main page. © SilverTech Inc.

launched its operations in February 2000. At the gleeful age of 67, El St. John has an extensive and varied background, from runway modeling and race car driving, to advertising, marketing and documentary filmmaking. At technology conferences and meetings — standing out among the stereotypically youthful, predominantly male crowd — St. John offers a compelling and unique vision among founders of Internet startups. St. John has, first and foremost, a passion for kids, and she wants to create a place for children to be safe and secure as they experience the online world. St. John says, "There must be a way for people to take advantage of the ease, accessibility and convenience of the Internet within a safe, protected microcosm."

During the past three years, in collaboration with her husband, a physicist at Intel Corporation, St. John has devoted her energy and resources to pioneering this effort, in developing her company's patented Private Internet Engine (PIE).

Greg Boegner, Vice President of Business Development for SilverTech, and a former media producer for NASA's Johnson Space Center, explains, "This is proprietary technology that uses encryption from end to end; it starts where the connection meets a user's computer, encrypts the lines all the way into our servers, where there is layer upon layer of firewalls."



Greg Boegner, Vice President, Business Development, is responsible for identifying and acquiring content for eKIDS Internet, representing the company at various trade shows and conferences, as well as leading marketing, advertising and public relations efforts, and business affairs. Photo courtesy of and © SilverTech Inc.

St. John adds, "The PIE technology provides a service which is flexible and virtually impenetrable, offering the primary benefits of the Internet without the public risks." In creating safe and secure online environments, the technology can be applied to other industries and businesses; military, legal and medical profes-



View the Flash animation game, *It's Fishy* featured on eKIDS Internet and created by Bevin Stone.
© SilverTech Inc.



eKIDS' Flash animation game, *The Nasty Mariachi vs. The Evil Cucarachas*, created by Rogelio Ramirez and Steve Medoff. © SilverTech Inc.

sions, as well as government, financial and educational institutions.

SilverTech must have hit upon the right electronic nerve, because they have already raised \$10 million in seed money from angel investors, and received substantial pecuniary and hardware investments from such companies as Hewlett-Packard and Cisco, which provides all of their servers and networking infrastructure. Other strategic partnerships have been established with AboveNet, Ask Jeeves and Headbone Interactive.

Easy as PIE

The eKIDS network, therefore, is the inaugural effort of SilverTech's PIE technology. Install their software on your computer, register and you're tapped in. It's that simple.

In one click, you're stuffing your face with low-res graphics games and participating in fart jokes, and in the next click you are reading about the basal plane and crystallography of snowflakes. In its current incarnation, eKIDS tries to cater to the interests of youngsters ranging in ages from 4 to 19. So you can imagine what kind of juggling act this entails. But amidst

its rough outlines, gems of ideas are slowly realized. Kids can learn how to cook, tune up a car, take care of a pony, make a simple camera, or stretch a canvas for oil painting...

Julie Garrard, creative director of the original animation and games on eKIDS (ages 4-12), says, "What we're trying to do is have something that's educational and fun, but also have stuff that encourages kids to do things that aren't necessarily on the computer." Garrard, a self-described *enfant terrible*, adds, "You gotta make them think and then want

to go out and do stuff for themselves."

Currently, with almost thirty sections or "e-centers" to explore, there's no lack of encouragement or inspiration for kids. Garrard's department, in the last six months, has already made over 100 games, cartoons and activities to complement the e-centers. Once a month, kids can talk with the eKIDS animators in the chat rooms to share ideas on what future games and toons they may like to see.

There is, for example, a poetry mic — a take on the paper-and-pencil *Mad Libs* game of yore, where kids can choose from dialogue that is then read, in a very bad French accent, by an animated character.

Commenting on one of her favorite recent creations for the network, *Requiem for a Turkey*, Garrard notes, "One of the reasons this stuff works so well for kids is we're not coming from a normal adult perspective on it. We're trying to be silly, irreverent and not talk down to kids."

The eKIDS animators, with a median age of 25, all come from backgrounds in traditional, cel animation. As Garrard explains, unlike other studios where production



Julie Garrard, creative director of eKIDS oversees the creation and production of original animation and games on eKIDS Internet. Photo courtesy of and © SilverTech Inc.

may center around a client's properties, the eKIDS animators are given a fairly "long leash" to create what they want. Occasionally they are reigned back in, but for the most part they have the freedom and creativity to produce the content as they like. The general feeling and consensus is that, if the animators are not having fun, the kids won't be having fun.

Delving through the network, you continue to come across, like an echo, all of the familiar sights and sounds of the larger World Wide Web; everything from music, magic and martial arts to learning origami and yoga to banking, traveling and even practicing your technique as a video editor. During the next turn, you find yourself back again among the playful pedantry of your youth: squishing cockroaches, pampering Santa with peckish kisses and back-scratching candy canes and setting characters on fire with lightning bolts.

In total, El St. John intends for the eKIDS Internet to be a self-contained, friendly, kid-only zone. It sprawls all over the place, affording children not only the opportunity to peer their heads into the museums of the world (exposing them to the breadth of human history and geography), but also encourages them to participate; to submit, for profile and exhibition, their own creations and ingenuities be it drawings, music or otherwise.

Having a Finger in the PIE

With activities and games fashioned after everything from punk mosh pits to playing dress-up with beauty products, what else distinguishes or differentiates eKIDS from such other online destinations as Nick, Disney, Rumpus

or ThinkBox?

While it is initially suggested that the eKIDS service will cost \$12 per month, it is essentially a free Internet network, so long as kids keep recommending it to others. The first six months are offered for free, and subsequent six-month "subscriptions" are also free, for every child one may refer to the site. SilverTech generates its revenue through corporations and sponsorship sales, and the \$12 price tag is meant for kids to understand the value of the network, not to preclude anyone from being able to participate in it. Ideally, St. John wants all kids to have access to the site; she doesn't want it to become an elitist kind of service for affluent kids.

SilverTech is drawing the attention of parents and children...through an intensive promotional and marketing campaign.

The basic idea is that eKIDS is selling to parents. It is offering them the peace of mind that their kids can maneuver in an online environment without being exposed to any inappropriate material, either intentionally or accidentally, and without the fret or threat of them being exposed to predatory behavior. Online destinations for children are generally and primarily entertainment-based, whereas eKIDS seeks to emulate an entire Internet — the

whole shebang — complete with communication (email and chat), education, entertainment, news, and a kid-friendly browser and search engine (which already boasts at least 140,000 Websites cached on its server).

SilverTech is drawing the attention of parents and children to their eKIDS Internet through an intensive promotional and marketing campaign. In free parenting publications — mostly in the Northeast right now, in such areas as Massachusetts, New York and Minnesota — SilverTech is offering free CDs to register for the service. Radio Disney, syndicated around the U.S., is running ad spots for eKIDS. At special events in metropolitan areas (zoos even!) free discs are also being handed out. The eKIDS Internet is sponsoring the *Pokemon Live* stage show which debuted last September at Radio City Music Hall, and is now touring North America. There has been a back-to-school promotion with Hewlett-Packard, Office Depot and Staples this past fall as well. And an in-school, online safety promotion has also been set up. eKIDS created a "homework folder" with information for both kids and parents on how to be safe using the World Wide Web; again, there is a free CD included with each promotional folder. In all, there will be roughly 12 million discs in circulation by this March.

The Square Route of PIE

Having recently returned from a media conference in London, business development executive Boegner speaks comfortably and confidently of SilverTech's future position in the growing global marketplace. While their first efforts have been in establishing a safe, sequestered environ-

ment for children's education and entertainment, SilverTech is poised to be a leader in bringing confidentiality and security to the vastly expanding online universe. Other businesses and professions are seeing the benefit of such tailor-made, safe havens for exchanging and sharing information, and European media and telecom companies are eager to jump on the opportunities the Internet may provide, particularly with respect to children.



The Flash animation game, *Moshpit* featured on eKIDS Internet and created by Rogelio Ramirez. © SilverTech Inc.

Boegner admits that the eKIDS network is going through its growing pains now — that the content is somewhat limited and rudimentary and the idea of creating an entire, private Internet is daunting. But, as the saying goes, one has to start somewhere, and the eKIDS Internet, if nothing else, does hint at the potential of the PIE technology. Undoubtedly, as the service becomes more popular, SilverTech will have increasing resources to develop, acquire and Web-enable their content, as, for example, they recently have done with Artisan's *Tangerine Bear* and UNICEF's *Meena* series.

Soon children in France, Germany and the United Kingdom will also come online with their own e-centers, and kids from around the world, who do not necessarily share a common language, will be able to

communicate with one another directly, through software translation applications.

SilverTech is poised to be a leader in bringing confidentiality and security to the vastly expanding online universe.

In the coming months, eKIDS itself (ages 4-12) will spin off into separate Internet engines, "eTeens" (ages 8-13) and "24-7 Edge" (ages 14-18).

As the World Wide Web continues to evolve and thrive, the climate of concern for the protection of information also grows. As El St. John explains, "Those 'public streets' are not where everyone wants to do business, especially when commercial interests and privacy issues are at stake." People

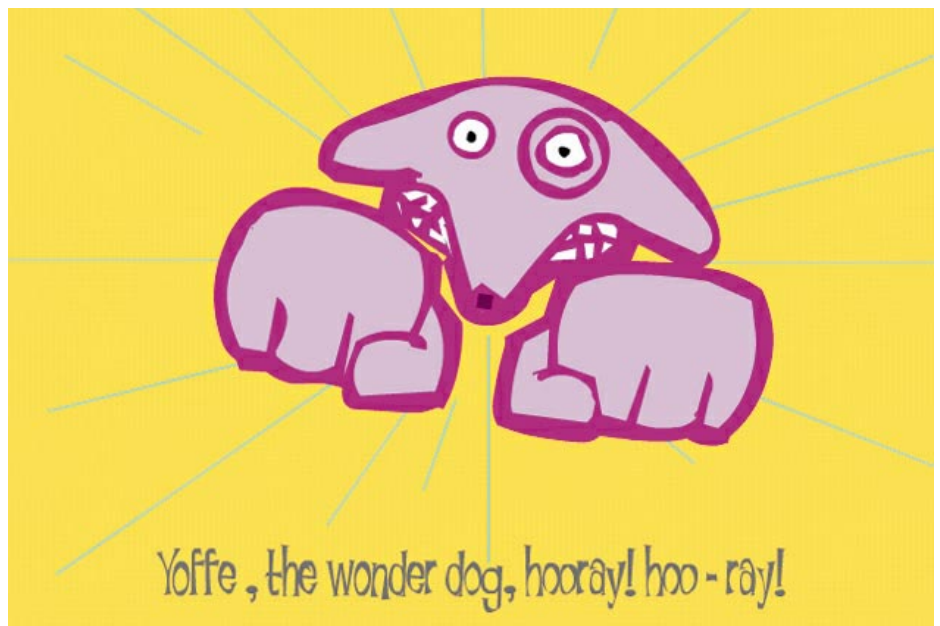
want to feel more secure in their online activities. In short order, SilverTech will be providing full, online resources for researching materials, holding client information confidential and mediating other Internet-based enterprises. We can look forward to such PIEs as eLawyer, eMedical, eShipping, eDistributor (a private network for selling electrical parts), and eEducation (a private network for distance learning).

There is nothing "pie in the sky" about it. SilverTech means business.

Check us out online at <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/singerekids.php3> to see sample Flash animations!

Gregory Singer is a freelance writer and amateur scientist, in feverish midnight pursuit of a cure for the common pun.

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



Yoffe the wonder dog saves the day in a Flash animated short created by O.J. San Felipe and Steve Medoff featured on eKIDS Internet. © SilverTech Inc.



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I Call On CHARLIE ADLER

by Will Ryan

Driving up to Charlie Adler's rustic Calabasas home last November, I was thinking I hadn't seen Charlie in perhaps three, maybe five years.

Back when we used to audition a lot for voice work in Hollywood we'd bump into each other frequently. We were also Glo-Friends together on a less-than-memorable series of the same name. I believe that we battled the forces of evil together as part of the same G.I. Joe platoon. I also have a vague recollection of the two of us portraying random Smurfs in a now-abandoned recording studio in the back of the now-abandoned Hanna-Barbera building on Cahuenga.

But when I finally saw Charlie standing in his driveway, I realized it must have been more like nine or ten years since we'd

actually seen each other. Each of us had some undeniably gray hairs on our respective heads and we'd both gained a few pounds. Luckily for Charlie, his were all muscle and tattoo.



Annie Award nominee Charlie Adler is one of the most sought after voice actors and directors in the entertainment business. Photo courtesy of Cartoon Network.

When I first met Charlie, he was fresh off a road show tour reprising his star turn from a hit Broadway show. He had begun applying his talents to an audience of one microphone at a time. Less applause. Less travel. More money. Maybe.

'Maybe' turned out to be a decided 'yes' for Charlie, whose restless creative energy would seem to prevent him from ever accepting 'no' as an answer. So let's sit down in a nice comfortable chair in his oak-paneled living room and catch up with a few of the multiple personalities of the energetic Mr. Adler.

Will Ryan: So, Charlie. When you

first came to Hollywood you had just left the world of theater?

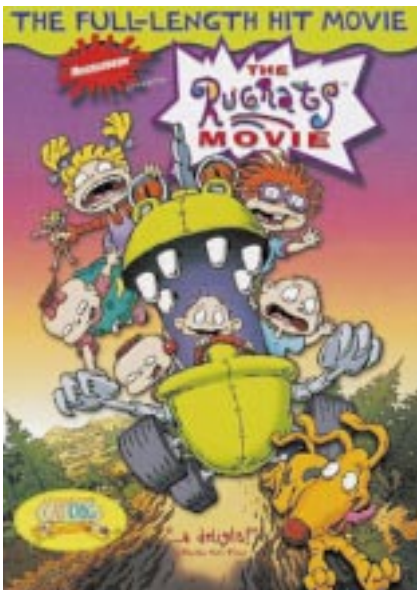
Charlie Adler: Yeah.

WR: What made you decide to settle here?

CA: Well, I actually moved out here 'cause — at the time I was in New York. I did *Torch Song Trilogy* on Broadway in the Harvey Fierstein role, and then did the national tour. When I left to do the national tour I thought, 'I'm going to get out of New York for a while, finish the tour, move to L.A. and see if I can get a TV series.' And I did. Got the Red Foxx show and never hated anything more in my life than television at that time. It just was dull for me.

WR: Five days of waiting around for a few minutes of shooting.

CA: Yeah! I gotta do something. I didn't feel used. I was kind of embarrassed. It wasn't what I thought it was gonna be. It's funny how you spend your whole life going, 'God, I just want to be in a TV show and have a parking space.' Then I got it and it was just so not what I wanted to do. Now, at 44 years old, I probably would re-think that whole thing because now I know how to wait around, but then it was so wrong for me. I was 27, and I had committed to live here. What I didn't expect was to have animation grab me and it did. It just literally did, it just grabbed me.



Rugrats: The Movie was a huge success for Nickelodeon and Adler.

© 2000 Viacom International Inc./ Nickelodeon. All rights reserved.



Adler voice directed Susan Sarandon, Debbie Reynolds and John Lithgow in *Rugrats in Paris*. TM & © 2000 Paramount Pictures and Viacom International Inc. All rights reserved.

WR: Was it your agent Arlene who did all this literal grabbing?

CA: My agent in New York was Harry Abrams, which is how I got *Torch Song Trilogy* and their affiliate office [in Hollywood] was Abrams, Rubiloff and Lawrence and I went and met the on camera agent. At that time I was very hot commercially and had on the air probably about, at any given time, 8 national spots. That's when I passed for white and worked with the Antichrist. So I was working all the time.

WR: It seems to me you used to enjoy McDonald's and Coca-Cola.

CA: Yeah, I did. Actually, I was vegetarian when I was doing the McDonald's commercials. I had a big spit bucket. Anyway, so I met with the on-camera agent and in New York you're considered an actor. You do a voice-over, you do it on camera, then I would do a soap opera for a week, then I'd go to the theater every night and do a play for eight months and then afterwards go out and sing.

WR: Just like London.

CA: Yeah, you're a craftsman.

WR: You do all these different things.



Adler currently stars in the prime-time Emmy nominated series and international hit *Cow & Chicken* as the voice of Cow, Chicken and The Red Guy. © Cartoon Network.

CA: Right, exactly. It's like London so you're considered an artist and so there are no rules about that. When I came out here and Mark (Pearlstein), the then agent at Abrams, said, 'Well, we're gonna sign you for on camera.' I said, 'Well, great,' and then I said, 'Do you guys do a lot of voice-over?' 'Cause I do a ton,' and at that time I was doing anywhere from 7-15 radio spots a week and here — by the way I think I've maybe done

15 radio spots in my entire career in Los Angeles — they just do not get it. I make everybody very nervous. But New York got me, which is why it's so odd.

WR: Is it possible you actually have energy and so does New York, do you think?

CA: Yes, my energy was very off putting. But it is in life and I don't expect to go to the prom nor do I want to be invited to every prom. It's fine by me.

WR: I'll keep that in mind.

CA: I'd absolutely consider your prom. So Mark made it very clear to me that you do not, when you sign with an agency out here, sign across the boards and I said, 'Well, I have to be represented for voice.' He said, 'You have to meet that department separately.' And I said, 'No, I do not, it's all or nothing. Buh-bye.' He said, 'Wait right here!' So I had never been particularly clever in business.

WR: You mean to say, you had a certain amount of leverage and you didn't realize it at the time?

CA: I don't know if I was even aware of the fact that I had leverage. I just think it annoyed me. I think it was that visceral and I'm that immediate. It just pissed me off is what it did and five minutes later I was down in the voice-over department and I met Arlene Thornton and (Ginny McSwain), who was then the agent there, who totally had no interest in me whatsoever.

WR: So it wasn't love at first sight?

CA: You know, the re-telling of the

story is how it was instant love but it wasn't. That first meeting was very difficult and it was, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, come on back in a week. Do you have any tapes?' And I said, 'No, I didn't need a tape in New York, I just work. I don't have a tape.' Well, what do you do? I had done one animated thing in New York. I did two of the specials, *My Little Pony I* and *My Little Pony II*, and that was it. Spike the Baby Dragon is my career. Hello! So I didn't have any tapes of that nor did I have any voice tapes.

WR: But, of course you were there in person. With your actual mouth.

CA: Right. So they said, 'Come back in a week and we'll make a tape,' and I didn't know what the hell to make so I ended up — luckily, I had done a lot of improv in New York and a lot of improv in life and a lot of character work and so I just threw together — they said five minutes, I did twelve minutes — but I did it wearing this fine hat and sunglasses and with my back to them 'cause I was too embarrassed.

WR: Your back to them? You, of the theatre?!

CA: I didn't want anybody to look at me, which really, honest to God is true. Now they remind me what a retard I was. I just absolutely would not be looked at. I was so embarrassed.

WR: We pause now to conjure up this mental image. Okay. So that was your audition and then you had representation?

CA: And then I auditioned and then they got me a general audition at Hanna-Barbara. Then I was flown up to San Francisco to do

an on camera commercial for Beck's Beer and I was up in San Francisco and got off the plane and checked my voicemail and there's a message from Arlene that said that I had been hired to replace Joey Kamen as a Smurf. They had killed off one generation and they were turning them in to the babies. So they turn on the Tidy Bowl. So I did that. That was my first animation job out here was *Smurfs*.



The Wild Thornberries with Tim Curry, is yet another Nickelodeon series directed by Charlie Adler. © 2000 Viacom International Inc./ Nickelodeon. All Rights reserved.

WR: What was your awareness of animation prior to working in it?

CA: Not a lot, not a lot. I mean, like everybody else I had stuff that I loved and I certainly loved all the — my favorite stuff didn't have voices. My favorite thing was the Road Runner. That always just made me pee in my pants. I loved that. Let's see, do I not want to see it or do I want to take a dump? Hmm. That's a weird expression. So my favorite characters probably were Tweety Bird. I loved Tweety Bird and I loved Krazy Kat.

WR: The comic strip?

CA: It was a cartoon. They turned it into a cartoon. Yes and I was wild for Krazy Kat.

WR: And I'm just wild about

Herriman. Charlie, you've made the transition from acting to directing, a very logical transition, but keeping your feet in both ponds, so to speak.

CA: The direction thing has been great. I would go out of my mind if that's all I did, as I found I was going out of my mind just doing animation voices. I mean there's a glass ceiling in this world that we inhabit and I'm not really particularly interested in any of — any limitations, which is why I started painting and which is why I probably will be doing other things too. I mean four years ago I co-wrote a show for myself, which won a Dramalogue, which has now been scripted for a screenplay. And we have some people attached to it and that's still something I want to do down the road as a writer. Whether I'm in it or not as an actor or a director is at this moment immaterial but you start to lose your mind if you buy into the boxes that you're put in. So, very luckily for me, even the stuff I'm directing has a lot of diversity which is great for me.

WR: You mentioned that you recently directed Jane Goodall. That's kind of...how in the world did that come about? Tell me the story.

CA: Oh my God. Well I'm directing this series, *The Wild Thornberries*, which is with Tim Curry and a great cast. I've been with them something like 90 episodes and they wrote a script that was very pro-animal rights. I am totally about that, and probably if I didn't do this I would have an animal shelter and be a perfectly happy man. They had Dr. Goodall —

WR: I observe you have a dog on your lap at this very moment.

CA: And a peacock in the driveway. And a feral cat in the backyard. We got the beat now. Anyway, she played herself and it was a spiritual experience for me. It sounds so hokey to say that but there are some people on earth who are so potent and so inspirational and so remarkable and exemplary in the life that they have created and in what they manage to pass out. She's one of them. She absolutely rattled my cage.



Charlie also directs Rocket Power, a Nickelodeon project telling the story of four friends who are addicted to action and extreme sports. © 2000 Viacom International Inc./ Nickelodeon. All Rights reserved.

WR: Which is pretty rare for her — she's usually spotted in the wild, you know.

CA: You asked me something earlier, before we started rolling tape.

WR: You mean, what you would do if you could do anything in the world?

CA: Yeah. I just thought of what I would do in life if I had a magic wand.

WR: Does it involve tutus?

CA: It involves tutus and a can of Wesson oil, black light and a Jimi Hendrix poster. I think I would travel my ass off. I would probably

have an animal shelter. I probably would spend my life being politically active and being ridiculous about what I committed myself to do. I would paint, I would sculpt, I would write and I don't think I'd ever act again as long as I lived. I don't think it would have anything to do with show business if I had the option. If I could turn the clock back — and I love my life but there's one thing in me that isn't sung — I would love to have been a doctor or a veterinarian or both.

WR: You're working toward a degree right now.

CA: Naturopathy. Homeopathy.

WR: Which is related?

CA: It is. Actually, I want people to look at my paintings.

WR: Oh yeah. What's the Website?

CA: I'm on Artnet.com and you just pull up my name. They have a directory of artists and you pull up my name.

WR: (They're terrific.) Now when did you start painting, by the way?

CA: It'll be just a year.

WR: That's very surprising.

CA: I'm having a good time.

WR: That's great. Unfortunately, these words are being preserved so you can't take anything back. With that in mind, do you have any final words in self-defense?

CA: I saw the best refrigerator magnet — tells you where I shop — and it said, 'I have no idea what I'm doing out of bed' and for the

last two weeks that's been my motto. 'Charlie,' I go, 'I have no idea what I'm doing out of bed.'



Charlie has over 100 regular characters in over 80 animated series, features and specials. Photo courtesy of Cartoon Network.

WR: Well, let me sign off here before you hop back in.

For more articles about voice-overs, acting and casting visit the Animation World Magazine Archives to get an array of past articles using a keyword search.

Will Ryan won an Annie Award for the series Elmo Aardvark: Outer Space Detective! in November. Co-produced by Renegade Animation and Snappytoons Amusement Company, it will soon be distributed by Mondo Media. He was recently nominated for a Writer's Guild Award and an Emmy for his work with Jim Henson Productions. His new book, Unsung Songs of the American People, will be published in November by Oxnard University Press.

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

Fresh from the Festivals:

February 2001's Film Reviews

by Maureen Furniss

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

This Month:

Daddy and I (1999), 7 min., directed by Eun-su Kim, Jye-jung Kim, You-jin Jung, Dong-jae Lee, Kyung-hwa Lee, Mi-sun Park, Song-hee Lee, Korea. Info: Song-hee Lee, 142-16 Sadang 2 dong Dongjak ku Seoul, Korea. E-mail: anilab@netian.com.

Hein?! (What?!, 1999), 2 min., directed by Mauricio Vidal, Renan de Moraes and Sergio Yamasaki, Brazil. Estúdio Consequência de Animação, Rua Cosmo Velho, 318 / 1006 Rio de Janeiro - RJ, 22241 - 090 Brazil. Tel/Fax: 55 21 527 5510. E-mail: studio@consequencia.com. URL: www.consequencia.com.

cia.com.

Au Premier Dimanche d'Août (A Summer Night Rendez-Vous, 2000), 11.5 min, directed by Florence Mialhe, France. Info: Caroline Lebrun, Les Films de l'Arlequin, 23 rue Meslay 75003 Paris, France. Tel: 0033 14277 2055.

Film S Djevojicicom (Film with a Girl, 2000) 8.5 min., directed by Daniel Suljic, Croatia. Info: Goran Bkula, Zagreb Film, Vaska 70, HR-10000 Zagreb, Croatia. Tel: 385-1-4558-417. Fax: 385-1-4557-068. E-mail: zagreb-film@zg.tel.hr.

Millenium - The Musical (1999), 24 min., directed by Bob Godfrey, England. Info: Bob Godfrey, Mikey Hayes, Bob Godfrey Films Ltd. Tel: 0207 278 5711. Fax: 0207 278 6809.

Don't forget to visit us online at: <http://www.awn.com/mag> to download and view clips of each film!

Daddy and I

Daddy and I is interesting to discuss both in terms of its subject matter and the way in which it was made. The subject of the film, which is about a man who sexually molests his young daughter, is depicted largely through suggestion, without dialogue. During the violent act, the film

takes its viewer into the mind of the child as she struggles to escape physically and mentally from what is taking place.



Daddy and I, directed by Eun-su Kim, Jye-jung Kim, You-jin Jung, Dong-jae Lee, Kyung-hwa Lee, Mi-sun Park and Song-hee Lee. © Kaywon School of Art and Design.

The 7-minute computer-generated work was made as a graduation film in the Department of Animation, Kaywon School of Art of Design. On the one hand, it is surprising that the film comes from students, since its message is relatively subtle in its delivery. From my experience, students often take emotional topics or angst-ridden scenarios as the focus in their work; in most cases, though, they have not yet developed the skills to render these subjects delicately. I am guessing that the fact that the film was made as a team effort, with not one but seven directors, probably aided in this respect. I have often counseled students to work in teams, to gain objectivity and the skills of others to supplement their own. I am also guessing that the group directorial effort — which was done as a practical solution to the shortage of equipment and space in the animation program — helped these students develop the kind of balance often lacking in single-student works. They worked together to create the small amount of rotoscoping used, in



Hein?! (What?!), directed by Mauricio Vidal, Renan de Moraes and Sergio Yamasaki. © Estúdio Consequência.



Florence Mialhe's Au Premier Dimanche d'Août (A Summer Night Rendez-Vous). © Les Film de l'Arlequin.

addition to 2D animation, created through the use of Adobe Photoshop 5.0 and After Effects 4.0 for digital painting and composition. An Avid was used for editing and final output.

The student directors say that some people found their concept, a father molesting his daughter, somewhat unbelievable (unfortunately, I suppose, it's not that hard for me to believe). As a result, they tried to instill a sense of realism by using a true news story on television and creating background textures with the text of actual newspaper articles. On a television, the father watches a rotoscoped image of a popular Korean actress who herself fell from grace after a kind of sexual attack; when a video showing her in a private situation was widely distributed, she went into seclusion. Adding another layer to the story is its opening music, an adaptation of a popular children's song, which goes, "At the flower garden which Daddy and I make together, Sun plays and Touch-me-nots are in full bloom . . ."

What?!

From Brazil comes another computer-generated short created by a group directing effort. *What?!*

was created by Mauricio Vidal, Renan de Moraes and Sergio Yamasaki, as part of a demo reel for their new production house, Consequência, which was the first computer animation studio in Rio de Janeiro. The 2-minute short tells of a wheel-chair-bound grandma named Dona Mariana (Mrs. Mariana), who takes revenge on a purse-snatcher. It was created using 3D Studio Max 2.5 for animation, Adobe Photoshop 5.0 for textures and Adobe After Effects for compositing. The made-for-television short is without dialogue. They worked in conjunction with Mauricio Barros, a Brazilian musician, to create the film's soundtracks, while well-known director Cesar Coelho provided encouragement for the project.

The humor of *What?!* is largely developed around the grandma's super-charged wheel-chair, which is armed with all kinds of technical devices and weapons, but even Dona Mariana's false teeth come in handy when she is in pursuit of the criminal. She is a high-tech, feisty attacker, far from the stereotype of a helpless old lady. *What?!* has proven popular among a variety of audiences, winning the popular vote in the 1999 Anima Mundi festival held in

Brazil and numerous other prizes. The short was acquired for broadcast by France's Canal + and has inspired sequels, including *Roubada! (The Steal!, 2000)*, which again features the relentless granny chasing down a deserving young punk.

Each of the film's three directors received college degrees from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and have been employed by TV Globo, though Vidal now teaches at Estácio de Sá University in Rio de Janeiro.

A Summer Night Rendez-vous

Lacking dialogue and being structured thematically around a dance taking place in a village, this film faces a challenge: how to sustain the viewer's interest for over eleven minutes. It does so through its skillful combination of visuals and music, which are both varied and seamlessly interwoven. This combination works well to not only create a cohesiveness in the work, but also to maintain interest in the continually evolving visual and aural imagery. The result is a lovely film that comments on human nature, courtship and community.

Director Florence Mialhe created her images using dry pas-



**Film *S Djevojicom (Film with a Girl)*, directed by Daniel Suljic.
© Zagreb Film.**



Legend Bob Godfrey's *Millenium - The Musical*. © Channel 4.

tels, working directly under the camera. This technique lends itself to metamorphic transitions, which help provide fluidity to the parents and children, lovers, friends, and even a pair of dogs, who keep time with the waltzes, tangos and rock music being played at a dance on a warm summer night. The soundtrack for the film, which includes laughter and voices, was recorded during an actual dance. Music was composed by Denis Colin.

Mialhe was born in Paris and qualified from the National Superior School of Decorative Arts. She works as a painter and illustrator and has been featured in a series of exhibitions. Her previous films, all of which were made with pastels under the camera, include *Hammam* (1991), *Scheherazade* (1995) and *The Story of a Prince Who Became a One-eyed Beggar* (1996). These award-winning films have appeared in festivals worldwide.

Film with a Girl

In *Film with a Girl*, director Daniel Suljic tells the story of a young girl who confronts many situations in the course of her day, some frustrating and some a little

scary. Using the technique of oil on glass, he creates a sketchy, child-like drawing in black and white, which is effective in telling the story of the spunky character. Though Suljic doesn't go so far as to develop the personality of the girl, he certainly creates an individual that is full of energy and a certain charm. The part I like best is where she bops a dopey boy on the head after he is unresponsive; other instances, where she is offered drugs, for example, are a little heavy handed, but would seem to get a clear message across to kids. Later, the girl is rescued by an Elvis-like figure, an action I think contributes to the film's success (I've never seen a film including 'the King' that I didn't like!).

A variety of Croatian artists contributed to the realization of the eight-minute film, including animator Stjepan Bartolic, editor Bajko I. Hromalic and musician Tomislave Babic. Suljic not only directed the film, but served as animator and writer as well. Born in Zagreb, he studied at the School of the Applied Arts and the Zagreb Academy of Arts before graduating from the Hochschule fur Angewandte Kunst in Vienna in

1997. He is a successful musician and created a number of other animated works while he was a student. *Film with a Girl*, which is without dialogue, is distributed by Zagreb Film.

Millenium - The Musical

Animation director Bob Godfrey is a legendary figure within the British animation industry, having established a studio in London, Biographic Films, in the mid-1950s, with partners and later branching off on his own. Over the years, he has created a number of irreverent short works, including *Kama Sutra Rides Again* (1971), which captures his off-beat humor, often developed around sexual content. That film was created in conjunction with scriptwriter Stan Hayward, whom he worked with on several occasions. Some of his other films have been biographical, such as, *Great*, a half-hour production on engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1975) and a fifteen-minute work on Margaret Thatcher (1999).

In *Millenium - The Musical*, Godfrey takes on the challenge of telling the last one thousand years of English history within a twenty-two minute short. To do so, he

combines traditional cel animation techniques with stills and a bit of live-action footage; post-production was digital. The film was commissioned by Channel 4 Television in the United Kingdom on a very tight schedule. Although he had been thinking of doing the project as a ninety-minute feature for ten years, when he received approval for a shorter version, he had only twenty-two weeks in which to complete it. Working without a storyboard, he created a spontaneous feeling in the work, which employs a variety of stylized limited animation techniques.

At times, the film's lyrics are difficult to understand — at least for a Yank like me — because of a strong English accent and relatively fast pacing. I also think that the narrative frame, which involves a

town crier who tells the history of England on stage before a somewhat frantic modern-day producer, could have been reduced a bit in favor of the actual events being told (they focus mainly on political rulers, wars, disease and inventions). However, I realize that the film is as much about Bob Godfrey's own brand of humor as the actual telling of British history, so concessions should be made. Using music and humor as a means of enlivening history is, in the long run, a good choice. The Bubonic plague is so much more interesting when it is described by singing skeletons. The ruthlessness of Richard III makes more of an impact when a chorus sings, "What a very tricky chap, that Richard!" in a lively way. With more pre-planning, timing could have

been tightened a bit. However, to have accomplished the film at all on such a tight schedule reflects Godfrey's skills and experience as a well-seasoned animation director. Aiding him in his effort was writer Colin Pearson and composer Rowland Lee, both of England.

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New from Japan: Anime Film Reviews

by Fred Patten

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

Jubei-chan, the Ninja Girl: Secret of the Lovely Eyepatch. V.1, A Legend Reborn. V.2, Basic Ninja Training. V.3, Heart of Steel. V.4, Final Showdown!

TV series, 1999. Director/Script: Akitaroh Daichi. V.1, 4 episodes, 100 minutes. V.2 - V.4, 3 episodes each, 75 minutes each. Price & format: \$19.98 each dubbed video; \$29.98 bilingual DVD. Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

Jubei Yagyu (1606-1650) was a skilled samurai and personal swordmaster to the Shogun's court whose successes over his rivals were rumored to be due as much to assassination and political intrigue as to unbeatable swordsmanship. In this wacky 13-episode fantasy series (April 6 - June 28, 1999 on Japanese TV), the dying Jubei (who was one-eyed) entrusts

his "lovely eyepatch" with the mystic powers of his Yagyu-Shinkage school of dueling to a young faithful retainer, Koinosuke, to give to his destined successor. Koinosuke searches Japan for over 300 years, and is dumbfounded when the heir turns out to be Jiyu

Nanohana (nicknamed Jubei), a bubbly young teen who has just moved with her father to a small town and entered high school. Jiyu is only interested in modern young girl stuff and tries to refuse the eyepatch. But the town was the center of the Ryujoji-Shinkage school, one of Jubei's suppressed rivals. The supernatural confirmation of Jiyu as Jubei's heir draws the Ryujoji spirits to seek their revenge. Jiyu is challenged to duels to the death by possessed schoolteachers (the screen switch-



Jubei-chan, the Ninja Girl, is about an eighth grade girl who becomes the new incarnation of Jubei Yagyu, the greatest swordsman in all of Japan. © Bandai Entertainment.

es from standard TV-cartoon format to letterboxed to simulate a dramatic battle in a theatrical samurai feature). Shiro Ryujoji, a handsome senior who is his clan's modern heir, finds himself torn between love for Jiyu and a compulsion to duel Jubei. The series begins as pure zany slapstick humor, but slowly evolves toward a serious message about living for the present and future without obsessing on past wrongs. A single scene may mix attractively designed main characters, goofily drawn comedy-relief characters (a deadly ninja wears Mouse Ears over his traditional black costume), and scrawled characters with dialogue like, "Oh, Hell! We're drawn so badly that you know we're gonna get wiped out almost immediately." A middle episode is an unexpected completely serious three-hanky tearjerker. The bizarre blend permits many imaginative new ways to take advantage of limited animation. But *Jubei-chan* will leave most non-Japanese viewers completely confused over the distinction between samurai and ninja. Animation production by Madhouse.

Tenamonya Voyagers.

OAV series (4 episodes), 1999. Director: Akiyuki Shinobu. 100 minutes. Price & format: \$29.98 DVD (the first American anime DVD-only release). Distributor: Bandai Entertainment.

This is a good example of the pros and cons of Original Anime Video series. "Rated 13 Up;" in this case an adolescent space comedy. In the distant future the whole galaxy is settled by mankind. Ayako Hanabishi, a naive new teacher, and Wakana Nanamiya, a student on an athlet-

ic scholarship, are two young women stranded on the planet Meldonia when their school closes. They just want to get home to Earth, a backwater planet on the other side of the galaxy. They meet Paraila, another student wanting to get to Earth, who suggests they pool their resources and travel together. But she is really Space Trash Paraila, a boss of an interstellar crime syndicate who is on the run after her takeover coup failed. Both the mob's assassins and Tatsue Yokoyama, the trigger-happy head of the Organized Crime Unit of the Space Federation Police, are after her. Paraila's attempt to blend in with the demure schoolteacher and her ward immediately fails. The group



Sci-fi comedy mixed in with giant robot action equals the *Tenamonya Voyagers*.
© Bandai Entertainment.

quickly turns into a humorously squabbling Odd Trio hopping from planet to planet ahead of their adversaries, trying to reach Earth by getting a spaceship, legally or otherwise. Their schemes (such as entering a battle contest on a gambling world) usually get the girls into extremely scanty costumes, with Tetsue hot on their heels with giant robots, rayguns and similar heavy artillery. For girls, *Tenamonya Voyagers* offers a dynamic female cast with which to identify. For boys, it offers more T&A than will be found in TV or theatrical productions, plus plenty of *Star Wars*-style space battles (all bloodless). BUT (spoiler) there is no resolution. The final episode ends on a cliffhanger with the girls still far from Earth. No reason is given, but you can bet these four direct-to-video episodes failed to sell and the rest of the planned series was cancelled — like too many other unresolved anime "movies" released in America from failed OAV series because their licenses were cheap. Too bad, because these four episodes are high-spirited and really funny (a beautifully-designed sleek futuristic train has the sound effects of an old steam locomotive); worth the price despite the lack of a conclusion. An additional bonus is the opening credits music by Hiroshi Miyagawa (best-known in America for his music for the 1970s *Star Blazers*); a peppy ragtime march that would have fit a 1930s naval review. Animation production by Studio Pierrot.

Phantom Quest Corp. Perfect Collection.

OAV series (4 episodes), 1994. Series development: Mami Watanabe. Directors: Koichi Chigira (#1), Morio Asaka (#2, #4),

Takuji Endo (#3). 120 minutes. Price & format: \$14.98 DVD. Distributor: Pioneer.

This humorous supernatural thriller, roughly a cross between *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, demonstrates the allure of mixing familiar Western popular mythological elements with their exotic counterparts from the East. Ayaka Kisaragi comes from an ancient family of demon-fighting Shinto priests. Because her personality is too flamboyant to fit a religious vocation, she has set up a commercial ghost-busting business, Phantom Quest Corporation, aided by a few regular outside consultants such



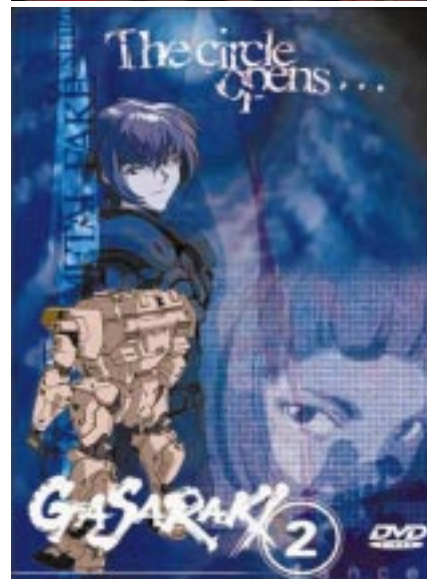
Ayaka Kisaragi heads Phantom Quest Corporation, a company that specializes in dealing with supernatural disturbances.
© Pioneer.

as Madame Suimei, a European-style fortune-teller, and Rokkon, an Oriental exorcist (lots of Buddhist, Taoist and Shinto chants and slapping demons in the face with printed prayers). She is also helped by friendly police detective Karino who lets her know when some mysterious crime involves the paranormal. In the first of four half-hour episodes, a series of night-time slayings of beautiful virgins is clearly the work of a vampire. Ayaka discovers a hidden fight between two vampires, a "good" one who is able to control his addiction to blood, and Dracula himself who was brought to Tokyo when a collector of international art treasures bought his coffin in Transylvania. Ayaka and the good vampire team up to rid Japan of the deadly predator. The other three "Incident Files" similarly keep the audience guessing whether the supernatural element will be beneficent, malign or both. Ayaka is irresponsible when not on a case, and there are running gags at the end of each episode about the scramble between Mamoru, her young secretary who needs their client's payment to pay their bills, and Ayaka, who wants to go on a shopping binge or an all-night drunken karaoke spree. (The opening credits theme song, a nice bit of cocktail-lounge blues by Junichi Kanezaki, is repeated on the DVD as a music video without the overlaid credits.) The stories are slight but quick-paced with witty dialogue, and much of their appeal is due to the interplay of the main casts' likeable personalities. The main complaint is that there is no plot progress among the four episodes, which could be watched in almost any order, and no real conclusion. Animation production by Madhouse.

Gasaraki. V.1, The Summoning. V.2, The Circle Opens... V.3, Betrayal.

TV series, 1998-1999. Chief Director: Ryosuke Takahashi. V.1, 4 episodes, 100 minutes. V.2 - V.8, 3 episodes each, 75 minutes. Price & format: \$19.98 each dubbed video; \$29.98 bilingual DVD. Distributor: A. D. Vision Films.

The Sunrise Studio gained a reputation for dramatic "giant robot" science-fiction anime starting with its *Mobile Suit Gundam*



Sunrise Studios' *Gasaraki* was written by Takahashi and Hajime Yatate, with a screenplay by Toru Nozaki.
© AD Vision Films.

series in 1979. Takahashi, one of Sunrise's top directors in this genre (*Dougram*, *Votoms*, *Gundam 0083*), has returned with *Gasaraki*, a 25-episode TV serial (October 4, 1998 - March 28, 1999), that is unusual in its very near-future setting. The story opens with an extremely realistic military test of a Tactical Armor (TA) battle suit. As plot elements slowly fall into place, we realize that the test is being performed by the Japanese Self Defense Force on an experimental prototype developed by Gowa Digital Systems, a Japanese-owned powerful multi-national corporation. Meanwhile an international situation modeled upon Operation Desert Storm (complete with "SNN" newscasts) is developing between the U.S.-dominated United Nations and "Belgistan" (Iraq). The Gowa family sees this as an opportunity to field-test the TA suits. They pull strings to have the JSSDF unit testing their suits included with the multi-national force sent into Belgistan, officially

as observers since the Japanese Constitution forbids the Self Defense Force to engage in warfare, but with secret orders to station in a combat zone. But the U.N. forces are almost wiped out by hitherto-unknown similar TA suits operated by a clandestine international organization that has been supporting the Belgistan government. This is barely the beginning of the plot, which involves the maneuvering of the Gowa family and their mysterious Symbol rivals to control the international weapons market, Gowa's attempt to subvert the Japanese government, and the internal machinations among both Gowa and the Symbol group. And this is before the story gets overtly "science-fictional!" There is a hero, Yushiro, the "good" member of the Gowa family, but he spends most of the first seven episodes in a daze; understandable, since he was apparently killed nine years earlier... The main problem with *Gasaraki* (unless you consider

complex plots a problem) is that the characters and military hardware are in a very realistic art design, which makes the limited TV animation painfully obvious. Still, this Sunrise program (written by Takahashi and Hajime Yatate, with screenplay by Toru Nozaki) will be a winner with fans of realistic high-tech science-fiction and military action.

Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure. V.1, Visions. V.2, Student Housing. V.3, Artifacts. V.4, One Vision.

TV series, 1999. Director: Katsutoshi Akiyama. V.1 & V.4, 4 episodes, 100 minutes. V.2 & V.3, 3 episodes, 75 minutes. Price & format: \$24.98 each dubbed or subtitled video; \$29.98 bilingual DVD. Distributor: Pioneer Entertainment.

"From the Creators of *Tenchi Muyo!*" the blurb screams. And it shows. A.I.C. and Pioneer launched two of Japan's major anime hits of the 1990s, *Tenchi Muyo!* and *El-Hazard, the Magnificent World*, both being teen sci-fi comedies about a shy high school Earth boy chased by a bevy of cute otherworldly gals. (*Tenchi Muyo!* is currently popular on The Cartoon Network's *Toonami* lineup.) *Dual!* rehashes that formula, adding a parody of the ultra-serious *Evangelion* (another '90s anime fan favorite, with giant robots), in a scenario of alternate universes. Kazuki Yotsuga is a fan of giant robots (like most teens), but he actually sees visions of them overlapping the real world. Prof. Sanada, a mad scientist, believes that a parallel Earth exists alongside ours. Kazuki is transported there, where he finds that the other world's versions of Sanada and his academic rival,



Kazuki is plagued by visions of giant, destructive robots that no one else can see. © Pioneer.

Prof. Rara, are commanders of opposing armies. Sanada is the head of the Earth Defense Command, fighting for freedom, while Rara is trying to conquer the world. Again using the Japanese myth of the mystic power of virgins, the super-scientific technology of the combat battle suits (giant robots) is such that only the brainwaves of strong-willed young women can control them. The ace pilots of the two armies are the teen daughters of Sanada and Rara, both named Mitsuki. (The plot gets as much mileage out of parallels as possible.) But the robots inexplicably respond to Kazuki. Sanada and U.N. Inspector

Yamano (stereotype of a stern schoolteacher) draft Kazuki as a new pilot. He is delighted to be able to fly a real giant robot; is less delighted when he is ordered to do so in drag to keep his gender a top secret; and is terrified when several of those strong-willed young women pilots develop a personal interest in him. Some of the middle episodes get a bit heavy into the comedic romantic complications, but the plot keeps twisting and turning in clever ways. *Dual's* story is credited to Masaki Kajishima, who was the character designer of *Tenchi Muyo!*, and bashful teen hero Kazuki is a double of both *Tenchi*

Muyo's Tenchi and *El-Hazard's* Makoto. But where the ultra-popular *Tenchi* ran on interminably, *Dual* is complete in 13 TV episodes (April 8 - July 1, 1999 in Japan) and one direct-to-video epilogue, all contained in these four volumes. Anime International Company's production is mostly smooth cartoon animation with nice CGI highlights.

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

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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 Next Big Drive: Gaming Transforms Itself Again**
Jacquie Kubin delves into gaming. From its history to its future, she discusses the brink that gaming is getting ready to leap, and yes, film industry, you should be looking over your shoulder... Go online to see more in-depth specs and information on gaming!
(<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/kubingaming.php3>)
- **The Animation Pimp**
What's wrong with *Ring of Fire* and *Night of the Carrots*? The Animation Pimp sees nothing offensive here; this month Chris Robinson takes on a few feminist nay-sayers. Visit us online at <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/5.11animpimp.php3> to download and view QuickTime movie clips!
- **Sketching on Location: Texture as Planes in Space**
Renowned drawing instructor Glenn Vilppu continues with his fifth installment discussing how to use texture to create depth and perspective while sketching on location. For a complete gallery of examples, go online at:
<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/5.11vilppu.php3>.
- **eKIDS: Everyone Wants a Piece of the PIE**
SilverTech isn't just eKIDS. Forging into the realm of secure Web transactions, the company is just beginning by conquering the sensitive kids online issue that has foiled many others. Gregory Singer reports. Check us out online at <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/singerekids.php3> to see sample Flash animations!
- **Fresh from the Festivals: February 2001's Film Reviews**
Maureen Furniss reviews short films: *Daddy and I*, a collective Korean student film, *Hein?! by* Mauricio Vidal, Renan de Moraes and Sergio Yamasaki, *Au Premier Dimanche d'Août (A Summer Night Rendez-Vous)*, directed by Florence Miaillhe, *Film S Djevojicicom (Film with a Girl)*, directed by Daniel Suljic and Bob Godfrey's *Millenium - The Musical*. As always, QuickTime movie clips available online at:
<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/5.11festival.php3>!
- **The Eighth Trip to the Holland Animation Film Festival: Scenes from Utrecht**
Visit the most recent Holland Animation Film Festival. AWN's Ron Diamond attended and brought back photos of festival participants and the lovely city of Utrecht. To see more photos, visit us online at
<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/robinsonholland.php3>.
- **The New messiah's Details**
Project:messiah 1.5 is about to expand into messiah:studio, a new modular and innovative approach to animation. Mike Amron investigates. Dowload and view QuickTime movie clips at:
<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/amronmessiah.php3>.

The Eighth Trip to the Holland Animation Film Festival: Scenes from Utrecht

Introduction by Chris Robinson



From left to right: Dmitry Rezchicov, Igor Kovalyov, Ron Diamond and Piotr Dumala.
All photos courtesy of Ron Diamond.



Acme Filmworks' executive producer and AWN publisher, Ron Diamond with
Mikhail Aldashin, director of *Mike, Lu and Og* for Cartoon Network.



Director Paul Driessen with his wife Diane.

One of animation's most unique festivals lies about thirty minutes from Amsterdam in the historic Dutch town of Utrecht. The most recent edition of the Holland Animation Film Festival was held from November 15 - 19, 2000. After years of holding a competition for only applied animation, HAFF introduced its first competition for independent short films. Fittingly, the two grand prize winners were Dutch productions. Michael Dudok de Wit's *Father and Daughter* took the best narrative film prize, while fellow countryman Joost Rekveld won the Grand Prize for non-narrative film with the enticing and strange *#11, Marey<->Moiré*.

Complimenting the competitions were a number of special programs including tributes to Paul Driessen and Rene Jodoin. Beyond films, HAFF is a hurricane of socializing and dope smoking that definitely caters to the more artistically orientated animator.

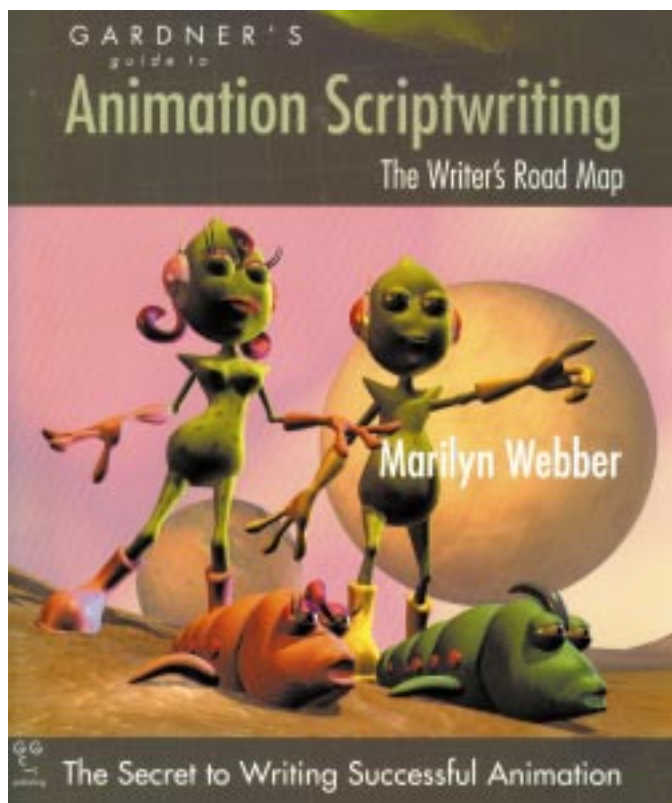
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Chris Robinson is the artistic director of the Ottawa International Animation Festival.

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Animation Scriptwriting: The Writer's Road Map

book review by Rick DeMott



The book contains good industry tips and guidelines, plus helpful exercises.

There is one major problem with books on screenwriting — they can't teach creativity and originality. These two factors are the top tools a writer needs to scribe scripts that sell. In regards to *Animation Scriptwriting: The Writer's Road Map*, truly humorous writers might find it quite amusing to read a chapter trying to teach scribes how to be funny. While the text is definitely for the inexperienced scribe, a high school student, an underclassman in college or someone

just arriving to the animation writing scene could glean some helpful tips from reading it though.

Good Stuff!

For students who want to write for television, the beginning and the end of the book could prove invaluable. Chapters 1 through 6 outline the creation of a series and its cartooniverse. Author Marilyn Webber goes into solid detail on how to develop an original series, i.e. its world and characters for given genres. The exer-

cises she creates to break down a series and understand its characters and style are very in depth and informative. Those writers dreaming of penning the next episode of *Rugrats* or *The Powerpuff Girls*, but who have no idea where to start, will find the first six chapters helpful.

Students and aspiring writers might find the tips in the last chapter well worth the price of the book. As a paid screenwriter, the author outlines the industry standards for submission and pitching. Her pointers are very useful and she uses great examples from her own work on how to create springboards, premises, treatments and beat outlines. She even gives advice on how to locate script editors, who might read your work. In addition, the end of the book contains a full script for a seven-minute *What-A-Mess* episode.

One highlight of the book is Webber's use of examples. I've read a lot of screenwriting books that don't explain what is going on in the example well enough to drive home the author's point. Webber does a good job, so that even if you have never seen the series, you are not totally lost.

A Bit Dodgy...

Earlier I criticized the chapter on how to be funny, but it does serve as a good list of standard gags that have proven successful in toons for years. Writers in a bind could use it to discover a way to reinterpret one of the scenes that they feel isn't working. However, if the writer can't think of a way to make these examples seem fresh and new, a list of tired old routines isn't going to put them on the staff of *The Simpsons*.

The real problems arise

when Webber delves into explaining the process of drafting sample episodes. She uses a car/road metaphor throughout the text, which gets bogged down in unfamiliar terms. If she just called an anti-hero an anti-hero, it would have been easier to follow.

Overall the book is a good text for novice and aspiring writers. It contains good industry tips and guidelines, plus helpful exercises. However, I warn teachers about using it as a classroom text. Misspellings (including *Looney Tunes* spelled *Looney Toons*), grammar mistakes, missing words and inconsistent formatting really hurt its overall credibility.

Your Own Voice

The best advice I can give on which scriptwriting book to read, is to read them all. Most of the authors are paid screenwriters, so each will offer something regarding the craft. One key to penning a great script is discovering the process that best suits you; the process that unleashes your natural talent and ability. While some texts will help one more than others, each book can give the reader new insight into the writing process, which can be helpful in finding one's own path. Webber's book will definitely clue in the uninformed or ignite the imagination of a writer in a rut, but probably won't inspire the

next break through in animation.

Animation Scriptwriting: The Writer's Road Map, by Marilyn Webber. Fairfax, Virginia: GGC Inc./Publishing, 2000. 208 pages. ISBN: 0-9661075-9-4 (\$24.95)

Rick DeMott is the associate editor of Animation World Network. He is the writer of AWN's Animation Flash Newsletter and the weekly Web Animation Guide.

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pmG: An Artistic Answer to 3D Animation

by Heather Kenyon

It's 2:00 a.m. and the pmG team is working late. They're up writing a piece of code for a client who is up against a deadline and needs to solve a problem fast. Not a big studio client, mind you, just an independent animator trying to finish a piece of facial animation for a homegrown project. With most other creators of professional 3D animation packages, you might (but not necessarily) expect that kind of service during normal business hours from a technical director (TD) in a cubicle. But at 2:00 a.m., it's more than likely going to be either Fori Owurowa, Lyle Milton or Dan Milling, founders and partners of pmG (project:messiah Group), and creators of project:messiah 1.5, the hi-end, low-cost professional 3D software toolset that has taken 3D animation by storm. It is also the first 3D program created from the ground up to fill the production needs of studios and the artistic needs of animators and technical directors.

From Jimmy to Zappy

It's been a year and several odd months since project:messiah was announced at Siggraph 1999. In just that time, the company has acquired a who's who client list that includes: Will Vinton Productions (spots for Wisk, Zappy, Mountain Dew and Hula Girl); Steve Oedekerk and Nickelodeon's animated feature and TV series, *Jimmy Neutron* (animated by DNA Helix); *Edward Fudwupper*, Berkeley Breathed's



theatrical short for Nickelodeon and produced by Threshold Digital; *Butt-Ugly Martians*, a new series produced by DCDC; spots for Colgate, Wonka Candies, Thunderball Lottery and the show open for the D&AD Awards, all produced by Passion Pictures; sequences for features such as *Battlefield Earth* (Computer Café also used messiah on a package of spots for Nerf); and TNT's movie of the week *The Hunley* (in addition Station X Entertainment utilized messiah to create *Full Tilt*, the opening for Siggraph 2000's Electronic Theatre).

Other pmG clients include Savage Frog!, Rhythm n Hues, Coulter Studios/Henson Interactive, Pixelizm, Joe's Digital Bar & Grill, Grid Productions, Discreet Monsters, Creative Imagineering, Artworld UK, Blue Rocket Productions, Grid Productions, O Entertainment and rez•n8, among others.

Technology for Art's Sake

What has made messiah a favorite tool of these global producers is its combination of speed, power and price. "messiah blends an extremely comprehensive toolset with an easy, uncluttered interface," says Owurowa. "The program features the world's fastest inverse kinematics (IK), bones and expressions, easy char-

acter setup, real-time interactive animation, local/world coordinates on the fly, forward/inverse kinematics and a pre-managed interface. Strictly speaking from *Websters*, a messiah is defined as the professed or accepted leader of a new hope or cause, and that's what we've tried to bring to 3D animation through our products."

Whether for an independent animator or a huge studio, the kind of customer service provided by pmG (six updates in just one year) is nothing new to the three partners, who celebrated the company's first anniversary in January. Together, they have created some of the most impactful products in the 3D marketplace. Fori Owurowa, with 14 years of CGI experience, has contributed a progressive series of advancements such as MetaNURBS®, Puppet Master™, Metamotion, Morph Gizmo and FreeForm 3D, through version 5.5 of LightWave 3D. Lyle Milton spent 10 years at AT&T Bell Laboratories and AT&T Advanced Communication Laboratories as an award-winning artist, project manager, technology visualizer and marketer. As co-founder of One and Only Media, he created LightWave plug-ins such as MacroForm and FXtremePRO, and co-wrote the book, *3D Modeling the Natural Way*. Dan Milling, a former LightWave 3D programmer, was the developer of Translator 3D, and co-developed Morph Gizmo with Owurowa.

"The key to understanding project:messiah is that this is a

product created by artists, for artists. We have spent five years collecting the wish lists of digital animators and putting them into one fast, elegant package," says Dan Milling, who with Owurowa was a co-founder of Station X Studios before the two hooked up with Lyle Milton to form pmG. "Separately, we were all plug-in developers for LightWave," adds Milton. "When we were working on our own, we began to get a sense of what was missing in other products. This is not a criticism of other companies or programs, but we were all artists to begin with, not just programmers, and we knew the things we wanted to see in a software package. pmG became our vehicle to do that."

Only Getting Better

A year after the release of project:messiah, pmG has reached its initial goals and is reaching out for much more. What has been the premier animation plug-in for LightWave, is about to take a giant leap with the upcoming release of the standalone messiah:studio suite, consisting of messiah:animate 3.0 and messiah:render, the company's new global illumination and radiosity renderer. The products can be purchased separately or as a full suite. The big news for the industry is that messiah:animate will also support and enhance Maya, 3D Studio MAX and Softimage XSI, in addition to LightWave. In a surprise announcement, pmG has just announced that the full suite will also port to Apple OS X.

In addition to fast, high quality diffuse illumination, messiah:render will feature caustics, volumetric lights that are accurate to real world conditions, soft shadows, efficient rendering of dense

polygon scenes without a proportionally linear increase in render time, and luminous objects that not only glow but actually give off light. "The renderer can be controlled through messiah's GUI, its user-programmable shader system, which gets information for rendering at levels deeper than any other system's, and also through messiah:animate's powerful and fast expressions system, which provides ultimate control by procedurally modifying rendering and surface parameters," adds Owurowa.

**"We set out to enhance and expand the tools we introduced with project: messiah, and we have accomplished that."
— Lyle Milton**

messiah:animate will incorporate all the features of version 1.5 with many newly-added abilities. A faster, even more customizable interface will allow users to resize windows and easily change arrangements of control blocks, buttons and sliders. The new SDK (Software Development Kit) will allow developers to create their own effects and applications that work with, and talk to, messiah. Expanding on messiah's motion blending tools, a new Non-Linear Animation Editor greatly enhances the program's MotionClip™ technology. In addition, messiah:animate will also provide support for Renderman RIB files, and will

enable users to write scripts that are just as powerful as compiled plug-ins.

"We set out to enhance and expand the tools we introduced with project:messiah, and we have accomplished that," says Milton "We are still what we started out as: a company created by artists, for artists, dedicated to creating and selling great 3D software. We are now ready to take the next step in the process: to expand and diversify our product line and create new customer bases. We are dedicated not just to being different, but better."

"Studios around the world have included project:messiah into their productions since the day it was released," says Milling, "and in the highly demanding world of CGI, that's no small task for a product that is a little over a year old, having debuted in November 1999. Messiah has become the secret weapon of producers, animators and TD's around the world."

Heather Kenyon is editor-in-chief of Animation World Network. After receiving her B.F.A. with honors in Filmic Writing from USC's School of Cinema-Television, she went to work for Hanna-Barbera Cartoons. Currently, she is an International Board Member of Women In Animation and on the Board of Trustees of Trees for Life.

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

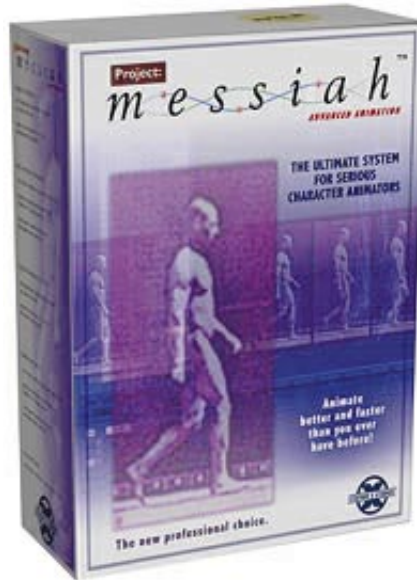
The New messiah's Details

by Mike Amron

Recently I met with Fori Owurowa, Dan Milling and Lyle Milton, the principal programming architects of pmG (project:messiah Group), the new-comer in the field of 3D animation programs, to discuss their upcoming release of messiah:studio and other matters of a graphic nature.

Just going into beta, the new 3D animation and rendering stand-alone version of pmG's award-winning messiah software, messiah:studio, is a suite composed of messiah:animate and messiah:render. Or maybe I should say "stand-with-others version," since the package can work alone or concurrently with other packages. Let me explain: messiah:animate will be able to work directly with a package like Maya. For instance, one will be able to update animation in the Maya interface, as the animation is created in messiah:animate. With both packages open at the same time, the user will be able to change parameters in both messiah and Maya utilizing the strengths of both packages at the same time. A novel and modular approach.

Having an open system to interface with other software seems to have many advantages and few disadvantages. Open code within packages creates many more possibilities than packages that stand-alone. Using the best renderer with the best modeler on one project is common. To use both within a single software system would be both practical and desirable. Let's just say it's easier than sowing the packages with custom-written software.



All images courtesy of and © 2000 pmG.

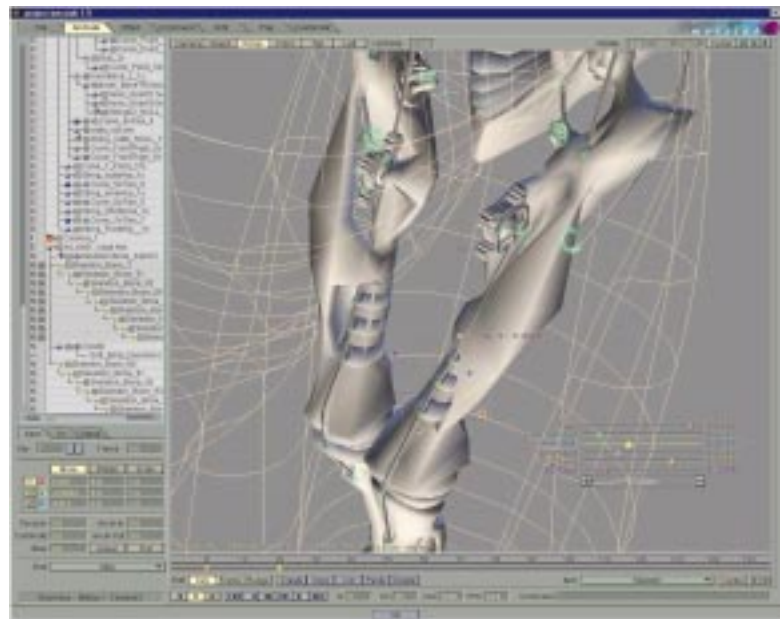
A Whole New Package

The first version of project:messiah is a plug-in for Lightwave. Released last year, project:messiah 1.5, and its subsequent upgrades, have been embraced by many production houses and studios already. The main focus of the first version, and

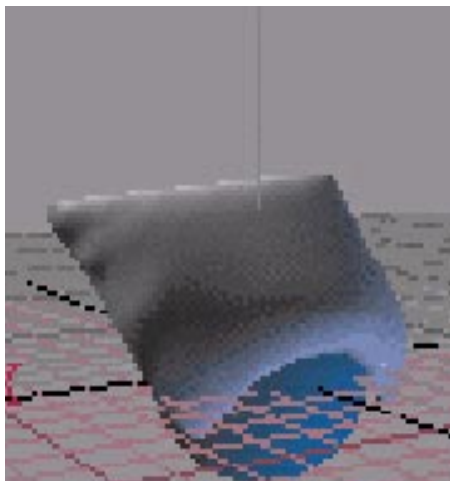
now messiah:studio, is animation capability and speed.

messiah:studio will consist of two modules — messiah:animate and messiah:render. Among the features of messiah:animate are simplified character animation, soft-body dynamics to create soft objects, cloth simulation, object collision and mathematical expressions. Many of these features are in other 3D animation programs, at a much higher price. messiah is aimed at the professional animator, but at an affordable cost. Alias|Wavefront, 3D Studio Max, Lightwave and other 3D model formats can be imported into messiah:animate to create animation. MetaNURBS® are also supported.

messiah:render, the renderer, will initially be familiar to the messiah user, with features in the renderer utilizing the same method-



Screen shot of a 1280 x 1024 screen created by Taron, demonstrating a setup using the many features available in project:messiah 1.5.



Go online to see a video clip that shows real-time Soft Body Dynamics in action.
(<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/amronmessiah.php3>)

ology as messiah:animate. messiah:animate will have parameters as a control to the renderer; the ability to access all of the parameters, have control through expressions, be able to access the features deep in the render core, and use expressions to control the rendering parameters, all will add to the power of messiah. The ability to use the renderer with other packages will allow the parameters in the outside package to talk to the host application, messiah:render. The outside package's operations, such as shader colors and specularity, will be used by messiah:render. messiah:studio also exports Renderman rib files if the user would like to render the files in RenderMan. Optimized in the program, the speed of messiah:render promises to be quite fast. project:messiah has been developed to provide continuity within its diverse parts. The same methodology used to change expressions can be utilized to change surface parameters. An interesting concept. The interface will not divert the animator from their animation tasks within messiah, yet will enhance the functionality of outside packages. Plug-in capability to Maya, XSI and 3D

Studio Max will be available as well.

Most animation companies have many different software packages. With the release of messiah:studio, the animator not only gets an animation program that's affordable, but compatible with the other 3D packages that are available. That's an unusual concept, one that fosters a much different outlook on creating animation within an open system.



Go online to see a facial animation video showing what can be achieved with bones, instead of morphs.
(<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/amronmessiah.php3>)



Go online to see a second clip showing the bone setup that was used for the facial animation video.
(<http://www.awn.com/mag/issue5.11/5.11pages/amronmessiah.php3>)

Added Control and Ease

The look of messiah:studio should appear similar to current users of messiah. Many of messiah:studio's parameters, windows and menus are adjustable and configurable. Windows can be resized, while menus can be resized and even hidden. Control of the interface will enhance the

utility of the software on your desktop or laptop. All of the features for messiah were developed with the user in mind, with much of the next version's features implemented because of feedback from current users. OS X Mac capability will be available with the new release too. Linux is also a future possibility.



A screen shot showing the sliders being used for facial animation.

messiah has motion-capture capabilities that allow loading of the most common capture files. Just one key can automatically create a skeleton from motion-capture data. The bones of the skeleton can then be adjusted to better fit the model.

pmG has found that using the Web affords great access to its user base. Using the Web to distribute the initial release of the software worked out very well and will continue. It's a unique idea, and has brought tighter communication between the messiah developers and users. An animator can log on to the messiah e-group, post a question and get feedback very quickly, either from the developers themselves or other experienced users. Also, CD based documentation turned out to be more efficient and practical for updates and will continue. Voluminous collections of manuals will not be a part of future releases of messiah. A single CD holds the present version of messiah, and hopefully future releases and documenta-

tion will continue to be able to fit on a single CD as well.

To learn more and get involved in project:messiah's community, simply visit their Website and await the arrival of their new product line starting in the second quarter of 2001.

Mike Amron is a computer graphics instructor at DHIMA. He has worked for a number of leading visual effects companies, including Digital Domain, VFX and Industrial Light & Magic.

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



The MotionBlender panel where you can select which effect you want to apply and showing a description of how each effect works.



The SaveMorph panel where you set up to save out object sequences of animation.



A panel showing the camera reticle settings.



Another panel showing some of the motion editing capabilities.

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Awards

- Sci-Tech Oscar Goes To Pixar
- Grammy Gives Nods To Toons With Tunes
- Havana Film Fest Awards Go To Gods & Cinema
- Chicken Run Lays A Golden Globe Nom

► <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Awards>

Business

- Film Roman Dropped From Nasdaq
- Mondo Media Lands \$17M More In Financing
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, January 16, 2000
- FCC Approves AOL/Time Warner Merger
- New Visual Design Firm Opens In Jersey
- Das Werk Acquires Centropolis Effects
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, January 9, 2000
- Kirch Might Not Bail Out EM.TV
- Aardman Catches Spies In Their Midst
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, January 2, 2000
- Stan Lee Media Probed Over Stock Trades
- Pentamedia Acquires Media Dreams
- Incanta and AtomFilms Announce Distribution Agreement
- Saban Forces His Way Out Of Fox Family
- Z.com Sues Chris Rock Over Non-Delivery Of Content
- EM.TV Shares Rocket Upward
- Cinar Announces Canadian Tax Settlements
- Animation Stock Ticker For Tuesday, December 19, 2000
- Medusa Etches Deal In Stone To Buy Lanterna Magica

► <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Business>

Commercials

- Class-Key Chew-Po Goes Cuckoo For Coco-Puffs
- Blur Travels Back In Time For New Pac-Man Spots
- Rhinoceros Tears Up 3M Scotch Tape Spot
- TOPIX/Mad Dog Opens Pool For Thrifty Spot
- Click 3X Spots Disney Store Ad For 102 Dalmatians Merchandise
- Spontaneous Shocks Circuit City With Photo-Real Santa Spots
- ViewPoint Livens Up Rivera Live With New ID Package
- Rhinoceros Sparkles For Victoria's Secret

► <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Commercials>

Events

- Animation Dreams VI Brings The Best Of The School of Visual Arts To The Public
- The 98th Toy Fair Invades New York In February
- The First Cartoon Masters of 2001 Comes To Reunion Island
- See How Voicebank.net Will Attempt To Change The Industry At Their Upcoming Demo
- Animation 2001 Includes Talks By The Bolex Bros & Bob Godfrey
- Cartoon Masters Strasbourg Tackles The Topic Of Business Plans
- Exploratorium Presents Behind the Screen: Making Motion Pictures and Television
- Larry Lauria Animation Workshops In Phoenix
- ASIFA-Colorado Best of Ottawa Screening
- Plympton's Mutant Aliens Premieres At The Sundance Film Festival
- The British Academy Gives Their Year End Nods
- Brussels Festival Highlights The Best In All Kinds Of Animation
- Australian Effects & Animation Fest Brings F/X Down Under
- Discover The Middle East Toon Scene At The Animation Festival Of Tehran
- Kick Off The Buying & Selling Year At The Monte-Carlo Television Market
- The Second Annual Interactive TV Games Conference
- Evening of Remembrance Celebrates Animation Greats Who Passed In 2000
- Find New Opportunities At The Interactive TV & Mobile Games Conference
- Sell Your TV Ideas At The 41st Monte Carlo Television Festival
- Milia New Talent Competition Showlights Sensational Student Work
- Art In Motion II Investigates Who Is The Author In Filmmaking?
- Milia 2001 Brings Interactivity To Life For The World To See!
- Mobius Advertising Awards Honor The Best In Commercials
- Phoenix Film Festival Sets The Moving Image Ablaze
- Want To Sell Your Toon Premise Then Go To WIA's Writers' Group Seminar
- Discover New Talent At The Victoria Independent Fest
- Internet World Media & Entertainment Fest Brings The Best To The Web
- New York Intl Children's Film Fest Highlights The Young At Heart

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Call for Entries

- Tough Eye Festival Highlights The Best of All-Time
 - Get Your Film In Front Of Tinsel Town At The Hollywood Film Fest
 - Animate In Paradise On A Balearic Islands Retreat!
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Call%for%Entries>

Films

- Cast Away Sinks To Second At US Box Office
 - Unbreakable: Int. Box Office Hero, Chicken Still Runs Mexico
 - Crouching Tiger Director To Take On The Hulk
 - Disney's Groovy Spanish Dub Disaster
 - Unbreakable Unstoppable At IBO, Chicken Run Takes Mexico
 - Third Week Atop The US BO For Cast Away
 - Dinosaur Still Roars At IBO, Pokemon Claims Germany
 - Disney To Release Spanish Dubbed Groove In LA
 - National Registry Adds Clampett's Porky In Wackyland
 - Cast Away Floats Atop Holiday Box Office In The US
 - Cats & Dogs Writing Duo To Pen New Looney Tunes Feature
 - The Grinch Steals Int BO As Charlie's Angels Fades
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Films>

In Passing

- Indie Animator Alison de Vere Has Passed Away
 - Schoolhouse Rock Co-Creator Passes
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=In%Passing>

Internet and Interactive

- This Week's Web Animation Guide For Friday, January 12, 2001
 - Rumpus Gains Big Voices For Next Online Feature
 - This Week's Web Animation Guide For Friday, January 5, 2001
 - DreamWorks Signs 5 Year Gaming Pact With TDK
 - Electronic Arts To Support Microsoft Xbox Console
 - This Week's Web Animation Guide For Friday, December 22, 2000
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Internet%and%Interactive>

People

- AOL Time Warner Cuts Colin Powell & 5 Others From Board
 - TV Loonland Beefs Up Sales Staff
 - Unbound Opens Doors For VP Of Business Development
 - iXL Gains New Exec Producer & Senior F/X Artist
 - CartoonNetwork.com Registers New VP
 - Mondo Media Appoints David McCoy To VP Of Advertising Sales Post
 - Cinesite Adds Townley To Art Department
 - Cartoon Network Spain Gains New Head
 - Ring Of Fire Ignites With Four New Artists
 - Eyeballnyc Blinks In New Executive Producer
 - Cinesite Adds More Color To Staff
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=People>

Technology

- Electric Image Announces Amorphium PRO
 - SGI Digital Media Software Development Kit Now Available
 - IBM Announces World's Fastest UNIX Workstation
 - AFX Releases SceneGenie 1.4
 - Stop Motion Pro 2 Available Now
 - Alias|Wavefront To Preview Maya For OS X At Macworld
 - Interactive Effects Ships Piranha HD 3.3
 - NewTek Releases Lightwave 6.5
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Technology>

Television

- CTV Gains Star Wars Rights
 - Nick Toons On Brazil's TV Globo
 - Howard Stern's Doomsday May Be Dead
 - U.S. Primetime TV Ratings For The Week Of January 1-7, 2001
 - Imagine's The PJs Loses WBTV As Production Partner
 - Fox Renews King Of The Hill & Futurama
 - U.S. Primetime TV Ratings For The Week Of December 25-31, 2000
 - Fox TV Taps Gear-CGI For New 3D Series
 - Collideascope To Produce Flash Animated TV/Web Program
 - Oxygen Resuscitates DotComedy
 - Celebrity Deathmatch Enters UPN Ring
 - U.S. Primetime TV Ratings For The Week Of December 11-17, 2000
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Television>

Video

- Original-Cut Pete's Dragon Arrives On VHS & DVD
 - NightWalker Descends Onto Video
 - Demon Warrior Koji Heats Up Home Video
 - Princess Mononoke Brings Peace To DVD
- <http://www2.awn.com/mag/news.php3?item=Video>

Next Issue's Highlights

Technology, March 2001

March is technology month. In this issue we will be discussing what the future will be like for the high-end computer hardware/software companies. Have their glory days passed? Are they just releasing new software versions to release new product or are these true advancements? Do studios need all of these versions? Due to previous advancements are studios now comfortably doing more with less due to the high-end/low-end technology blur and proprietary software? How does the cost of retraining factor into these decisions? Karl Marx said that capitalism was doomed to a circle of producing product for the sake of producing product...is this what is happening in the hardware/software world today? Led by Bruce Manning, these will be a few of the topics we tackle. We are also going to look at how software packages are being altered to accommodate bringing animation to the Web.

Martin Goodman is going to look back at John K.'s landmark series, *Ren and Stimpy*, which has inspired a generation of artists. Gerard Raiti is focusing on the new trend of taking small screen animation hits to the big screen. From the *Recess* gang to *Rugrats* to *Powerpuff Girls*, they are all getting their turn to shine on the big screen. Chris Robinson will be providing us with yet another Animation Pimp rave and a profile of independent filmmaker Piotr Sapegin. Also, Fred Patten will return with five more anime faves.

Upcoming Editorial Calendar

Technology	March 2001
The Business of Animation	April 2001
Recruiting and Jobs	May 2001
Independent Animation	June 2001