

FALL 2018

ISSUE NO. 3

KEYFRAME

THE ANIMATION GUILD QUARTERLY



**RALPH BREAKS
THE INTERNET:
INSIDE THE SEQUEL**

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL
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 - + *The Grinch* returns after more than 50 years
 - + *Smallfoot's* many shades of white





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ON THE COVER

The Disney Team (CLOCKWISE L TO R): Head of Animation Kira Lehtomaki; Head of Cinematography, Layout Nathan Warner; Head of Effects Animation Cesar Velazquez; Director of Cinematography, Lighting Brian Leach; Head of Story Josie Trinidad.

HAIR AND MAKEUP:

Kelly Shew, Joannel Clemente



About once a month, a ragtag group of board members, including myself, meets with Brooke, our Director of Communications, Alexi, our Editor, and Jenn, *Keyframe's* Art Director, to discuss the direction of this magazine. Usually it begins with collected “oohs” and “ahhs” as Alexi and Jenn spread out proofs for the upcoming cover. Don’t believe that “don’t judge a book” bit, the cover is the first thing you see—it’s the gateway to the content, so making an impact is important. It is like trying to pick your favorite type of chocolate though, they are each impeccably thought out and beautifully designed. We then go through a binder that represents the finished magazine and talk about the progress

of various articles. The whole process is actually similar to creating animation, it’s about constantly refining and narrowing down the story you want to tell.

So why do I volunteer for this?

I’m on the publishing committee for the same reason I work in animation. I love stories. I love reading them, I love watching them, I love hearing them, and I love helping create them.

I had something inspiring happen to me this year. We hired eight new animators into our department of about 25 at DreamWorks Animation. Typically, when we hire someone, the new hire gives a short introduction during a department meeting, which often sounds like a Tolkien lineage of their resume where previous companies are listed in order instead of “son of...”— “First I worked at Disney, then R&H, then Sony, oh yeah that one job at Warner.”

This helped all the existing employees get a small sense of the new hire’s background, but it was pretty one sided. I decided to reverse the dialogue and ask existing employees to first give presentations about themselves to the new hires. I reached out to each of my co-workers and told them they owed me 15 minutes about themselves. So for three months, every Friday, we would gather and have two veterans in our department tell our new employees a little bit about what was important to them. Some decided to share professional backgrounds, others talked about hobbies, some talked about travels, one even did an animated collaboration with his daughter about his life!

I was absolutely blown away by the diverse backgrounds and stories they told. The only common thread was the ability to surprise me. These are fellow members I had been working with for at least six years and in some cases for as much as 14—“Really, you sailed across the ocean?” It gave me insight into people I would have said I had known. I found myself creatively invigorated by the experience.

And this is precisely what I want the magazine to do for our membership. The more we learn about each other, about the cool talents and amazing journeys we have traveled, the more we can be inspired to pursue those passions in ourselves.

Of course, just like our union, we are stronger when we are involved together. So we want to hear about those creative tidbits that make you, you. Please share them with a member of the publishing committee or contact Alexi directly at editor@tag839.org.

Thanks,

Jason Mayer | Executive Board Member

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THE ANIMATION GUILD IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER LOCAL IN THE UNION BECAUSE OF THE VARIETY OF JOBS THAT FALL UNDER IT.

You'll find writers and showrunners, art directors and production designers, CG riggers and lighters, storyboard artists and color stylists, technical directors and effects artists, to name just a few. I am consistently awed by the depth of

creativity, innovation and imagination in this group, and how truly collaborative the process of animation can be.

The importance of shared contribution is evident, for example, in our feature on *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (p. 34), where we looked at five different departments and their roles in the film. A different kind of contribution, one anchored in personal experience, is explored in "The Art of Inclusion" (p.22), an article that focuses on how we can reflect different cultures into our work.

To the outside world, The Animation Guild is a collective of artists who only draw but we know we are much more than that—we're a force of creators.

Cheers,

Alexandra

Alexandra Drosu
editor@tag839.org

P.S. Do you have an Etsy shop? Do you print your own t-shirts? Have you published a book? I want to hear from you for our first gift guide that features only items created by TAG members.

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garden was home to wild chameleons. Her most recent novel is *Snowize @ Snitch: Highly Effective Defective Detectives*.



EVAN HENERON'S ("Brothers in Art") career spans journalism and nonprofit communication. His work has appeared

in *Orange Coast Magazine*, *TV Guide* and *Los Angeles Daily News* where he was a staff writer and critic. While earning his Master's Degree from USC, Evan walked the entire length of Ventura Boulevard.



LA based photographer **TIM SULLENS** has one wife, two daughters and six cameras. He photographed this month's

cover featuring artists on *Ralph Breaks the Internet* for "Network of Inspiration."



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POWER GLASS



ARTIST: Sarah Oleksyk
TITLE: Medusa
MEDIUM: Stained Glass
SIZE: 20.5" diameter

Participating in her first stained glass class at eight years old, Sarah Oleksyk has seemingly always been fascinated by the medium. "If you ever walk into a stained-glass store where you see all the sheets lined up in colors, it's like going into a candy store," she says. "It's like painting with light."

While stained glass has been historically preserved for exalted and religious imagery, Oleksyk has

found excitement in expanding its horizons into erotic creations.

"There's something kind of fun and subversive about doing something triple-X rated in the medium of [stained] glass because it's subverting the history of it," she says.

After experiencing a personally and politically difficult year, she crafted Medusa, a work that presents a powerful

interpretation of the Greek Gorgon. "Instead of just tapping into the sexual side of her, I think she's more of a reflection of female anger and rage," she says.

After choosing black glass for its iridescence and texture the other colors fell into place, says Oleksyk, who decided on a green background with golden swirls to conjure a sick and witchy feeling.

— Grace Pickering



BROTHERS IN ART

THE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BEHIND THE HOUGHTON'S NEW SHOW

Even as they busied themselves with other projects, brothers Shane and Chris Houghton have long felt their upbringing in rural St. Johns, Michigan could be the basis of a creative endeavor. Thus, in the new Disney Channel animated series *Big City Greens*, any similarities between the mischievous, fish-out-of-water Green clan and their pixie-like creators are purely intentional down to 10-year-old Cricket Green's bowl haircut and the mercurial temperament of the family's sword-wielding Gramma Alice.

"We lived in a farm house that had corn fields on all sides and dirt roads and we were always surrounded with pets and farm animals," says older brother Shane, the series' co-creator and executive producer. "We both ended up going to big cities where we had culture shock. It wasn't better or worse. It was just different."

"We're always kind of pulling from the same well of inspiration of our childhood, kind of feeling like a fish out of water," agrees Chris, who in addition to co-creating and executive producing *Big City Greens* also voices Cricket Green.

With those St. Johns days long since behind them, the brothers run *Big City Greens* as a tag team, collaborating on and contributing to every episode. All major decisions are made in partnership with nothing moving forward until both brothers have signed off. They even share an office.

"It's a little cramped, but it saves a lot of time," the Houghtons say. "We can easily turn to one another and ask a quick question that we may be too lazy to get up and walk down a hall to ask. It keeps us on the same page. Plus, when



someone on the crew has a question, they don't have to decide if this is a Shane question or a Chris question—they can get us both.”

In *Big City Greens*, siblings Cricket and Tilly, their dad Bill and Gramma Alice plunk down their ramshackle home amidst the urban sprawl of the unnamed Big City and proceed to negotiate their new life. Whether trying to launch chickens into outer space or navigating the subways in a quest to preserve the country tradition of “steak night,” the never-say-die Green clan gets into all manner of mischief.

Fans of the Houghtons’ bear-riding cowboy comic book series *Reed Gunther* may recognize the Houghton look. The yellow-skinned Greens were designed to pop against the concrete and glass hues of the big city. The characters’ big eyes and nose-free faces are meant to evoke the Muppets, albeit in sort of a cracked way.

“I think the biggest compliment we got was from a kid in a focus testing who said he liked the show ‘but it’s kind of weird,’” Shane says. “We were like, ‘I think that’s good!’ We wanted it to be a little off beat.”

The Houghtons’ animated sensibilities developed early. During trips to their grandparents’ houses and on family vacations, the brothers would get unlimited access to ‘90s era cartoons like *Dexter’s Laboratory*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Cow and Chicken*.

“For our daily intake of entertainment, it was more newspaper comic strips,” Chris said. “We loved ‘Calvin and Hobbes’ and ‘Foxtrot’ and ‘The Far Side.’ I think those strips really shaped our humor.”

The Houghton brothers left St. Johns and moved to big cities for college: Florida State University Film School for Shane and College of Creative Studies in Detroit for Chris. When they started working together on *Reed Gunther*, Chris was still in college and big brother Shane had based himself in Los Angeles.

They pitched the concept for *Big City Greens* to Disney in early 2014 and developed the project for two years before getting a green light in 2016.

They maintain that running *Big City Greens* together has strengthened their bond as partners and as siblings. The two serve as each other’s creative sounding board and barometer for whether something is funny, and their “divide and conquer” mentality allows each Houghton to instinctively take the task that the other sibling doesn’t want.

“When I’ve got my head in a story and I’m trying to figure this out and I think I’ve cracked it, but I can’t tell because I’m too close, I can turn to Chris and say, ‘Give me your honest feedback.’” Shane says. “Running a show is really tough. I think it comes down to just trust. I unconditionally trust Chris.”

“And I’m a little skeptical of Shane,” quips Chris.

Working as they do in close quarters—and being siblings—Shane and Chris acknowledge that creative differences may arise from time to time. And they are always resolved in the maturest way possible: “With a violent battle of fists and teeth gnashing. Whoever has more of the other brother’s blood on them wins.”

– Evan Henerson

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ARTIST WITHOUT BORDERS

LILA MARTINEZ IS HAPPILY EMPLOYED AS A STORYBOARD REVISIONIST AT *AMERICAN DAD*. BUT THE MEXICO CITY NATIVE STILL WAKES UP EVERY MORNING AND PRACTICES HER SKILLS FOR AN HOUR OR TWO BEFORE COMMUTING TO THE SERIES' OFFICES. HER VISA TO WORK IN THE U.S. IS TIED TO HER JOB, SO SHE NEEDS TO STAY EXTRA COMPETITIVE.



Photo by Tim Sullens

“Every day, I practice my life drawing. I do something to keep improving, to not get stuck, because any show will get canceled, and any movie’s going to wrap up, and I need to be ready for another studio to hire me,” she says.

Indeed part of her success might be attributed to this industrious work ethic along with a single-minded determination to pursue her dreams.

At the age of nine while watching a Tex Avery cartoon she decided she wanted to go into animation. For many children growing up in Mexico becoming an animator would be an elusive dream, especially in a country without an established animation industry or a path to study the craft. But Martinez chased it anyway, undeterred by obstacles.

It took a degree in a different field (graphic design), a detour modeling for Corona, two stints studying in Canada,

and even starting her own company to carve a path leading to Los Angeles.

“In the beginning my father told me it was a career not meant for Mexicans, that it was only for Americans and that there was no market in Mexico City,” she says.

She went to a local university in Mexico City to study graphic design and applied to an animation program in Canada after she finished her degree.

The only obstacle? International schools are very expensive. Her solution? Take up modeling—a surprising choice for a shy girl who wasn't interested in makeup—but a lucrative way to earn tuition money.

"I was very shy back then," Martinez, a petite blonde with delicate features and a bright smile, confesses. "I needed to run for the cameras to show the brand and blow kisses, and that's something I'm not. But I forced myself. What was blocking me from studying animation was the money, so I found a way to pay for it."

After two years, she had the cash to pay for a year at the Vancouver Film School, where she studied classical animation. But she finished the program in 2007 and job prospects were scarce.

For Martinez, the answer was simple: Keep working toward her goal in any way she could. She found a job back in Mexico City animating jokes for a famous comedian. Over a year and a half, she fine-tuned her work ethic while pouring herself into the project.

"Canada really trained me to keep deadlines, to be efficient, and do something with a low budget," she explains.

The team loved her, and she loved the job, but she also realized she was running herself into the ground with too many sleepless nights and so she decided to move on. After hand-drawing animation for two different films (alongside other animators who'd gone abroad for their training), she opened a boutique studio with a partner in Mexico City creating animation for an advertising-heavy client base. After five years and a six-month stint back at VFS for a CG intensive, Martinez reached another turning point.

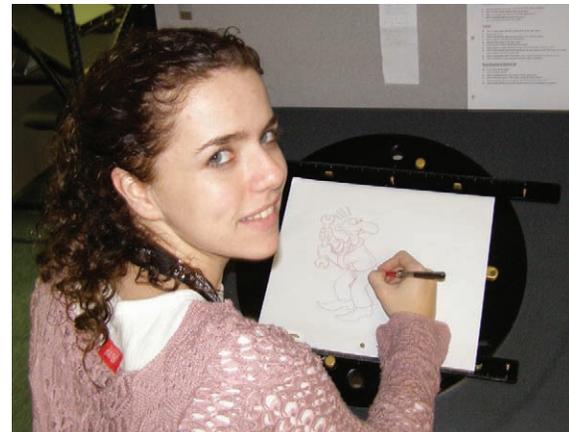
"I want to tell stories. I want to touch people. I want to work on something bigger," she thought at the time. She left Mexico again, this time to network in Los Angeles.

"Don't disregard networking events and special venues to connect with people who can get you closer to your goals," she advises others based on her own experience. "If money is an issue charge the expense to your credit card and pay off the debt monthly, this is what I did early in my career; look at it as an investment building new relationships and exposure to your work."

She made great contacts during her first visit to CTN but she also wrote down one producer's email wrong. It took a bounce-back, some heavy searching, and ultimately a LinkedIn message to get a test. Fortunately, they loved her work, and hired her for a five-month gig as a storyboard artist on Original Force's *Duck Duck Goose*—they provided her an employment letter but she had to secure her work permit. She wound up working there for a year and a half.

From there, she needed to find her next job. Despite reaching the end of the hiring process and all but being offered the position, some companies just weren't interested in signing the extra paperwork she needed, even though she was willing to secure her own visas. Ultimately, she was offered a job with *The Simpsons*, and later moved over to *American Dad*.

The journey has taken her a long way from her home in Mexico but her creative drive remains the same. Now, as an established artist she hopes to cultivate her own voice and pitch her own animated shows.



TOP: Invoking her Spanish heritage while dancing Flamenco. BOTTOM: Studying classic animation at the Vancouver Film School.

"My father passed away from colon cancer before he got to see my success in Los Angeles, when I prospered in the animation industry," she says. "I like to think my father has a huge smile now, that I'm living my dream and had the courage to take a risk."

— Jean Bentley

RIGGED FOR SUCCESS

AFTER A MODELER FINISHES BUILDING A CHARACTER, IT'S TIME FOR RIGGING ARTISTS TO ESSENTIALLY CREATE A DIGITAL SKELETON WITH JOINTS AND HANDLES SO THAT THE ANIMATORS CAN POSE THE CHARACTER. THESE SYSTEMS CAN GO FROM SIMPLE TO STAGGERINGLY COMPLEX. HERE, WE LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT THE JOB ENTAILS.

EVAN BOUCHER / DREAMWORKS ANIMATION



After graduating from Drexel University in 2011 with a BS/MS in Digital Media, Boucher moved to Los Angeles and interned with Side Effects Software, exploring character animation and rigging techniques in Houdini. Soon thereafter he landed a Character TD position at DreamWorks, where he most recently worked on *The Boss Baby* and next year's *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

I'm essentially responsible for building and maintaining digital puppets for the animators. We are the ones that provide the mechanisms and interfaces that allow CG character models to move. That involves building internal skeletons, and creating the illusion of deform-able muscle and skin. It includes everything from building facial expressions to engineering mechanical props.

WHAT DOES YOUR DAY LOOK LIKE?

There really isn't a typical day. Each character has its own set of problems. But in a general, it usually involves setting up a character, or maintaining one that is in production. We get notes from animators about what they are trying to achieve, and how they are trying to achieve it, and we try to adapt our characters to help them get there. But on any given day, I could be in a meeting about the art direction and design of a new character, or I could be sculpting shapes on a character, or I could be trying to solve a technical motion system problem for a one-off prop that hasn't been done before.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART?

I love the variety. I love solving technical challenges, but also love just making good art. Rigging blends the best of both worlds. It requires you to be a sculptor, engineer, programmer, and

comparative anatomist all at once! Just when your brain hurts from trying to solve a motion system issue, you can go and use your eyes to focus on more artistic deformation goals.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?

One of the big challenges is how to create endless possible characters with a limited set of tools in a limited time frame. Many of these characters are biologically impossible, but have to function as if they are real living things. I'm a big fan of keeping things simple and not over-complicating the problem. It's always good to keep in mind...the rig isn't the final product—the movie is. So while adding a lot of cool technical automated systems can be impressive, it also has the potential to be a time sink, where you could do something simpler, and spend the extra time really focusing on the artistic direction of the character.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR A NEW ARTIST?

Learn to animate. I try my best to think like an animator. The more you understand how things move, how people and animals behave, and the steps an animator has to go through to create a performance, then it will put you on the same page as the animator. Having that common ground helps build camaraderie, and can motivate you to take characters from simply working to truly shining on screen.

DAVID KIM / NICKELODEON



At the age of 10, Kim participated in an after-school program taught by animators who worked on *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. After that, he knew he wanted to pursue animation. He studied film and CG at NYU then freelanced in New York City before moving to LA in 2008.

WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES?

The main responsibilities are to make geometries look great in motion as they deform and to make character rigs easy to use! Of course, it takes a lot to fulfill those requirements. As for my responsibilities as a rigging supervisor, I develop and maintain our character pipeline, solve problems, teach rigging concepts and programming, advise character design and modeling in regards to rig efficacy, field questions, and rig characters whenever I can.

WALK ME THROUGH A TYPICAL DAY.

We might have a meeting to go over anything we need to be aware of between departments. Afterwards, I'll grab a coffee and check my e-mail to make sure that our characters are performing well and see if anyone needs my attention. When all is clear, I'll check in with my artists to set goals for the day and make sure we are on track for delivery. And when the day seems to be set in motion, I'll jump on a rig and get as much as I can get done before anyone needs technical support. When global problems arise or models are not ready to be rigged, I modify the pipeline and develop new tools and systems to make sure things are running as efficiently as possible.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB?

My favorite part is seeing our characters animated of course! When a character's performance respects the emotional requirements of the scene, I'm on cloud nine. It also gives us the opportunity to see what we can do better.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES?

Time. TV production is fast and we rarely have downtime, so time management and task prioritization are crucial.

DO YOU HAVE ANY HOT KEYS OR TECHNICAL TRICKS YOU MIGHT SHARE?

Use them, modify them, and make new ones. Get to know your marking menus. Anything that can take you from point A to point B faster, no matter how seemingly insignificant, will multiply its usefulness. One of my tried and true hot keys switches between unheld influences. It saves a lot of hassle, keeps me in add mode, and goes into weight painting mode to boot!



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Michael D. Four, Esq.

THE ABC'S OF DYNAMEX

THE FUTURE OF INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS IN THE STATE

Earlier this year, the California Supreme Court issued a decision that significantly increases the number of California workers who must be classified as "employees" rather than "independent contractors." Under California law, employees are owed benefits and protections that do not apply to independent contractors, and so this case shifts the balance in favor of workers who have previously been misclassified as independent contractors.

In *Dynamex Operations West, Inc. v. Superior Court*, the Court held that a new legal test will replace the old standard for determining whether a worker must be classified as an "employee." The Court explained that this new, broader test is appropriate to ensure that workers are protected from the harm of misclassification. It also explained that preventing misclassification is necessary so that scrupulous employers are not subject to competition from unscrupulous companies that unfairly shift costs onto the backs of workers through misclassification.

In today's "gig economy," many companies (Uber, for example) have business models that rely on cutting costs by classifying their workers as "independent contractors." These business models often undermine workers' rights and job security, and shift costs onto workers and the public. The *Dynamex* decision requires businesses to rethink such models, and they face serious legal liability if they fail to correctly classify their employees.

THE ABC TEST

This case began over a decade ago, shortly after delivery company Dynamex transformed all of its delivery driver employees into independent contractors overnight. One of these drivers filed a class action, claiming that all of these drivers were misclassified, and were still owed the benefits associated with employee status. Following a number of appeals, and after the trial court finally certified the class action to proceed, Dynamex appealed again. The California Supreme Court took the opportunity to develop the broader test for classification of employees.

The test is drawn from the test used in several other states, and is known as the "ABC Test." Under the ABC Test, a company that claims that a worker truly is an independent contractor rather than an employee must prove that the worker:

- Is **free from control** and direction by the hiring company in connection with the work, both under the contract and in fact;
- Is performing work that is **outside of the usual course** of the hiring company's business; and
- Is engaged in an **independently established business** of the same nature as the work being performed.

Parts A and C are important, but the biggest impact of adoption of the "ABC Test" will likely be under part "B." The requirement that the work performed be outside of the hiring company's usual business means that companies will not be able to provide their core services through independent contractors. To give an example, delivery companies (like Dynamex) will not be able to use independent contractors to provide delivery

services. On the other hand, because delivery companies do not provide (for example) plumbing services, they will still be able to call an outside plumbing company to come in to fix a broken pipe without becoming the employer of the plumber they hire. And companies that are not in the delivery business will still be able to use independent contractors for their delivery needs.

HOW DOES THAT IMPACT YOU?

Adoption of the ABC Test means that artists who were previously independent contractors may be reclassified, entitled to all of the benefits of employee status. Under Part B of the test, studios will likely be unable to argue that their artists are performing work outside of the usual course of the studio's business.

It is important not to overstate the impact of *Dynamex*, however. First, it applies only to certain aspects of California employment law (specifically, a set of 18 "Wage Orders" that provide for, among other things, minimum wages and overtime). It does not apply to other aspects of California law at this point, and it is unclear whether or how it might be extended. Moreover, it does not apply to federal law. That means, among other things, that *Dynamex* does not directly impact the status of loan-out companies for federal tax purposes.

For example, numerous TAG members (and in other Guilds) form what are referred to as "loan-out corporations," which are essentially small corporations operated by the member that contracts with the studio. There are federal tax advantages to doing this. The *Dynamex* decision will mean that members who have loan out corporations will be considered employees but their tax status is unaffected. So they can have "loan-out" corporations and still be considered employees under California law.

Next, most artists were likely already legally entitled to employee status under preexisting law. For example, when the hiring studio controlled and supervised the work, the worker was likely already an employee under the previous test (this part of the previous test is now Part "A" of the "ABC Test"). Additionally, Section 3351.5(c) of the California Labor Code provides that anyone working under a contract to create a "work made for hire" shall be deemed an employee. Where artists' contracts contain such provisions, they are therefore employees under that law, even without having to apply the "ABC Test" adopted in *Dynamex*.

The future of the "gig economy" remains unclear. Around the state, there will be new opportunities for workers to step up and claim employee status, while Uber and others are already fighting for legislation that would overrule the "ABC Test" and allow them to continue classifying workers as independent contractors. For the time being at least, *Dynamex* is a step in the right direction in ensuring that workers are not unfairly stripped of legal protections. ☺

(This article is not intended as legal advice, and anyone with questions about their circumstances should seek individualized legal advice.)

– Michael D. Four, Esq.
of Schwartz, Steinsapir, Dohrmann & Sommers

ASK US

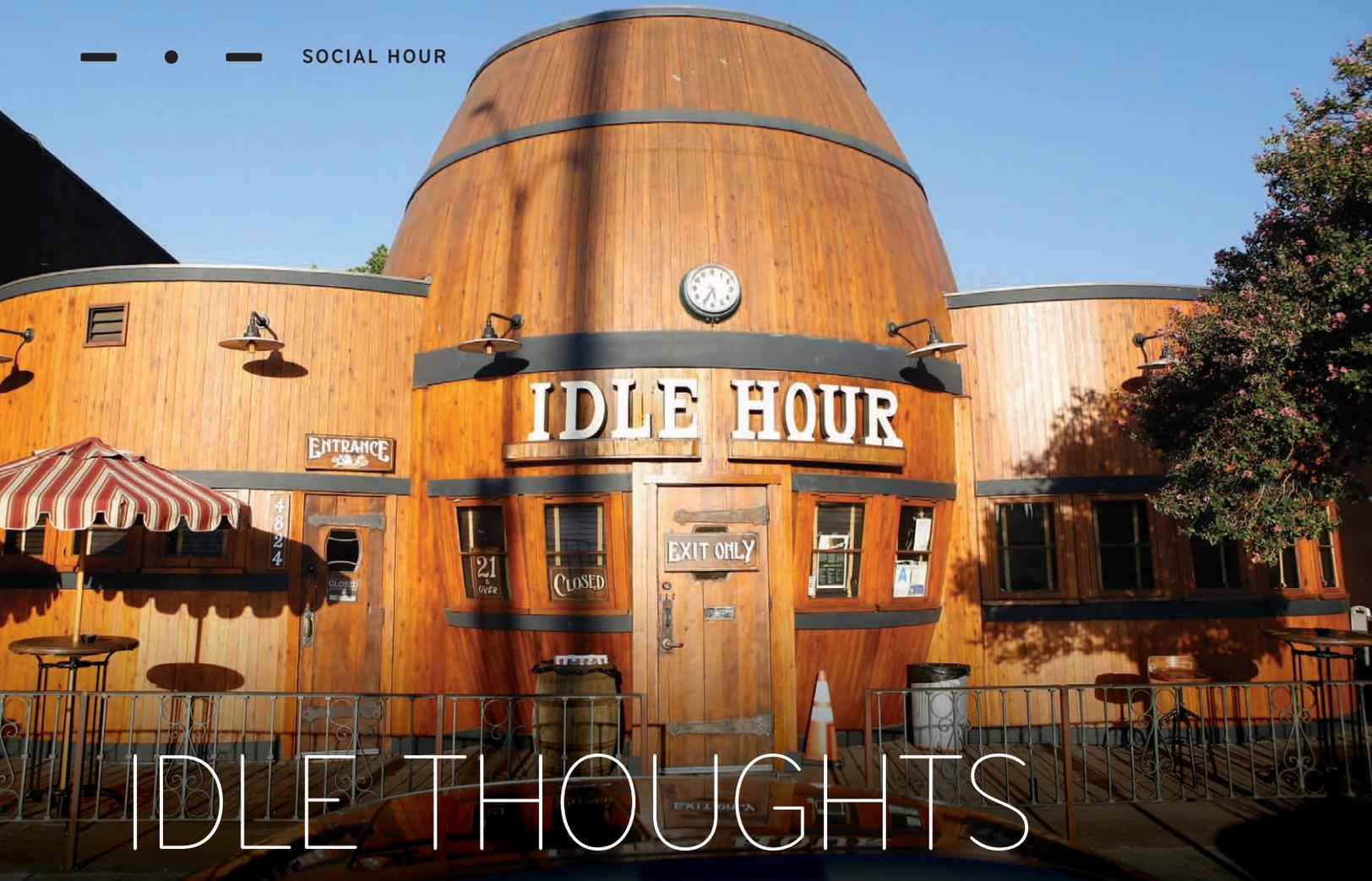


Doeri Welch Greiner,
Director, Feature
Animation Recruitment

Q: I JUST FINISHED ON A FILM THAT HAS YET TO BE RELEASED AND I CAN'T PRESENT MY WORK. WHAT SHOULD I DO, ESPECIALLY IF I DON'T HAVE A DEEP PORTFOLIO? CAN I SHOW IT IN PERSON?

A: It's a challenge when your last film [or TV show] hasn't released yet and you can't show your latest work on your reel. To avoid making the studio you're interviewing with nervous about your commitment to confidentiality, best practice is to only show material you have permission to share. Ask for producer approval in advance to show in person at an interview only, use on a password-protected reel, or use shots you contributed to in a teaser/trailer. Of course, add your most recent productions to your resume and consider adding a title card to your reel indicating material "Coming soon" from unreleased projects.

Do you have a work-related question?
Please email us at editor@tag839.org.



IDLE THOUGHTS



Last month, almost 170 members attended a mixer held on August 14th at Idle Hour in Burbank and sponsored by Adobe and XP-Pen. “We want to create opportunities for our members to catch up with past coworkers and meet new friends in a relaxed, safe environment, where we all can speak freely about union business and our experiences at different studios,” says TAG Board Member Jeanette Moreno King, who also heads up the Events Committee. “Our work can be nomadic so a mixer gives us a chance to reconnect with one another. It fosters good will and cohesiveness, making our union stronger!”

1. Dorothea Schoentag and Joe Binggeli 2. Grace Pickering, Angelo Di Nallo, and Brooke Keesling 3. Sarah Oleksyk, Nora Meek, David Van Tuyle, and Brianne Van Tuyle 4. David Shair and Josh Weisbrod 5. Marie Story 6. Jacob Hollander, Jeanette King, and Ray Kosarin 7. FRONT: Lis Savic, Sophie Kim, and Marie Bower BACK: Andrew Marshel and George Yang 8. IN FRONT: Gina Gress and Tony Unser with friends 9. Kai Akira and Sakari Singh 10. Kaya Dzankich, Mick Cassidy, and Dominick Polcino 11. Ken Roskos on an XP-Pen tablet 12. Rick Moser with his dog ,Otter 13. Sydney Sharp, Arielle Rosenstein, and Pete Michels



Photos by David Yeh



TOP, CLOCKWISE: Classes at LAFAA, including Figure Quick Sculpt with Adam Matano; Life Drawing with Chris SooHoo; and Color Theory with Ron Lemen

BACK TO SCHOOL

THE KIDS ARE HEADING BACK TO SCHOOL, AND MAYBE YOU SHOULD TOO! IT'S IMPORTANT TO STAY UP-TO-DATE WITH CURRENT TECHNOLOGY AND SOFTWARE, POLISH SKILLS AND LEARN NEW ONES—AND ONE OF THE PERKS THAT COMES WITH BEING A MEMBER OF THE ANIMATION GUILD IS ACCESS TO HUNDREDS OF CURATED CLASSES.



Although these courses can come with a hefty price tag, being part of The Animation Guild provides you with either complete or a substantial reimbursement that will ease your pocketbook's discomfort.

IATSE membership at one of the 705, 706, 800, 839, and 892 Locals offers artists access to subsidized classes funded through educational grants supplied by Contract Services Administration Training Trust Fund (CSATTF). Studios contribute \$0.08/hour worked or guaranteed work, to support these educational grants. Eido (eido-ed.com) is contracted to develop and administer The Animation Guild's program of free Local Provided

classes; registration materials can be requested on the website.

The CSATTF Grant program facilitates both free Local Provided classes and discounted Vendor Provided classes that strengthen skills and enhance knowledge. Vendor Provided classes are reimbursed at two-thirds the proposed price with the requirement of Contract Services approval in advance, a certificate of completion from the vendor, and a receipt.

For those who may not be able to attend classes in person there are more than 100 online courses available to choose from.

– Grace Pickering

WHERE CAN YOU LEARN?

Choose from any of these vendors to sharpen skills.

THE ANIMATION ACADEMY

theanimationacademy.com

11 courses, including:

- Animation Basics
- Advanced Body Mechanics
- Cartoony Animation for 3D Animators

ANIMATION MENTOR

animationmentor.com

Seven courses, including:

- Background Design and Perspective
- Character Design
- Visual Development

ANIMSQUAD

animsquad.com

Four courses, including:

- Expert Animation
- 2D Traditional Animation

COMPUTER GRAPHICS MASTER ACADEMY (CGMA)

cgmasteracademy.com

94 courses, including:

- Advanced Environment Design for Film
- Concept Art: From 2D to 3D
- Creating Comics: Drawing and Sketching

CONCEPT DESIGN ACADEMY

conceptdesignacad.com

87 courses, including:

- Advanced Digital Illustration
- Costume and Creature Design
- Story Development for Animation

IANIMATE

ianimate.net

24 courses, including:

- Body Mechanics
- Intro to Games Animation
- Feature Animation

LOS ANGELES ACADEMY OF FIGURATIVE ART (LAAFA)

laafa.edu

109 courses, including:

- Composition for Animation and Film
- Gesture Drawing
- Imaginative Worlds for Entertainment

MOLD3D ACADEMY

mold3dacademy.com

17 courses, including:

- Master Organic Modeling
- 3D Character Development
- 3D Printing for Character Artists

RIGGING DOJO

riggingdojo.com

Five courses, including:

- Face Rigging 101
- Rigging 101
- Maya API 101

SILVER DRAWING ACADEMY

silverdrawingacademy.com

- Character Design

SKILLWIRE

skillwire.com

184 courses, including:

- Photoshop Essentials
- Vectorworks Essentials
- 3D Printing Essentials

VANCOUVER ANIMATION SCHOOL

vanas.ca

Eight courses, including:

- Introduction to Concept Art
- Introduction to Game Design
- Writing for Animation

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR CSATTF APPROVAL?

Here's what you need to know to be reimbursed for your courses.

In order to be eligible for reimbursement, you must be a member in good standing with The Animation Guild (Local 839). You will need to provide CSATTF with: The relevant course application form and employment verification of a minimum of 30 union workdays worked under a Guild contract within the past two years. This verification can be submitted by providing six to eight paystub copies or with an employment verification letter from one's company on the company's letterhead and including the following:

- Full name
- Last 4 digits of Social Security
- Name of show(s) and production(s)
- Exact work dates
- Total days worked within specified time-frame
- Job classification
- Union Jurisdiction the time was worked under

You can download an application from TAG's website at animationguild.org/about-the-guild/grant-classes. You should receive approval within 10 days. In some cases, the application process can be intricate and TAG staff is on hand to help you navigate through grant approval. If you have additional questions, please contact Mike Sauer at msauer@animationguild.org.

THE ART OF INCLUSION

By Whitney Friedlander

How artists represent cultural diversity without resorting to stereotypes

ASK ANY ANIMATION GUILD MEMBER WHAT WAS THE FIRST CARTOON THEY SAW AND THEY WILL ANSWER WITHOUT HESITATION, DESCRIBING THE INDELIBLE IMAGES THAT ARE IMPRINTED IN THEIR MINDS. SUCH IS THE POWER OF ANIMATION—INFLUENCING CHILDREN THROUGH ITS IMAGERY AND OFTEN LEAVING A LASTING IMPRESSION.



But, as the *Spider-Man* cartoons and comics have taught us, with great power comes great responsibility—and great opportunity as well. Specifically, animation offers the opportunity to depict cultural diversity, engage children in the dialogue at a young age and perhaps eventually start bringing down barriers.

While there has been significant growth in including people of different races, genders, sexualities, religions, body types and more on screen, the trick is figuring out how to depict all of this without resorting to stereotypes—particularly now, as fans and the media are quick to put any and all character decisions under microscopes.

Diego Molano, who created the new Cartoon Network series *Victor & Valentino* as an ode to “the pre-Columbian mythologies and folklore” he learned as a child, says that stereotyping happens when we “generalize and fill in the blanks when encountered with things that are not within our experience.” A perfect example? He says that while Latinx people “have a common history,” they also “have the widest diversity of ethnicities” and these cultures don’t always perfectly overlap.

“For me, it is such a pleasure to research and learn new things about people and culture,” Molano says. “I think everyone stereotypes until they learn and grow and eventually replace that incomplete knowledge with real facts. We just have to do that more often. I think if we do, we will find more similarities than differences in our human struggles while still being excited and delighted by the differences that our pasts have left us with.”

Jess Cuffe, a storyboard artist who has worked on the *Marvel Rising* projects, says she begged to be part of an undertaking that showed an array of female crime-fighters with various ethnic backgrounds and body shapes. Based on the comic series of the same name, the stories follow inspirational heroes like Miss America/America Chavez, an out and proud Latina whose independent streak is almost as strong as her need for speed, and Doreen Green/Squirrel Girl, a chipper woman who eschews conformity all the way down to her clothing and body type.

But these characters aren’t simply replicas of what’s seen on the printed page. What would be the fun in that?

“We’ve diversified [these characters] not just by their skin tone and the way they’ve grown up, but how they look apart from each other,” Cuffe says of converting them to animation. “It’s highlighting how people really look. In all honesty ... we want [to celebrate] all kinds of kids and how they like to dress and who they are.”

“I think everyone stereotypes until they learn and grow and eventually replace that incomplete knowledge with real facts.” - Diego Molano





Part of this push for representation and accuracy means not being afraid to ask others for help. Marvel Comics Director of Content & Character Development Sana Amanat says she was excited to work with the animators to transform all the Marvel Rising characters for on-screen adventures. But there's no denying that she was particularly pleased to work on Kamala Khan/Ms. Marvel, the Pakistani-American crime fighter whom she co-created and who only first appeared in the Marvel comics universe in 2013. For this animated version, some things stayed a part of Kamala or got an upgrade. Her trademark gold bangle bracelet, itself a

link to her cultural identity, now has a secret compartment for her mobile. She's also traded in her boots for sneakers.

"We wanted something that would have a significant female cast, but still [be] an action adventure that was appealing to boys and girls," adds Cort Lane, Marvel Entertainment's Senior Vice President of Animation and Family Entertainment.

But, he adds, they didn't want to go about this in a "prescriptive way" of making these inclusive stories just for inclusion's sake and therefore held several conversations with young girls in their target demographic to understand what they would want to see in the stories.

"Marvel's philosophy is our stories are characters who are just like you and who live outside your window, and so they should reflect the diversity of the world," Lane says.

This was similarly the focus of *Harvey Street Kids*, the DreamWorks Animation Television series for Netflix that's based on the old Harvey Comics. Little Audrey is now a rambunctious tomboy with three ponytails and a lightning bolt T-shirt. Little Dot is a mature-beyond-her-years African-American science whiz. Little Lotta shares her original incarnation's love of food, but Supervising Producer Aliko Theofilopoulos says they wanted to go beyond that one note and have "her be more passionate with a love for life" while still keeping her body type. This all carries over to *Harvey Street Kids'* secondary characters, all of whom are designed with thought-out behaviors and style to represent a multi-ethnic neighborhood utopia.

Peter Emmerich, *Harvey Street Kids'* art director, says his design crew didn't set out to check diversity boxes in as much as just create cool kids an audience would want to befriend or emulate. He says the design team had long conversations on how to update the characters—some of whom came to be in the middle of the last century—especially, he says in regards to "changing their clothes and changing their hair." He also called upon his diverse animation team to help with accuracy, such as working with African-American colleagues to ensure that Dot's hair looks realistic.

"I think it's important to have shows where kids can see themselves in [it]," adds *Victor @ Valentino's* Molano. "Being multicultural myself, I always looked for characters that I could relate to as a kid, but there were very few. I feel like I am now creating the show that I wished existed when I was growing up."

Similarly to Molano's philosophy of delving deeper into a culture to represent it more accurately, the team behind Disney's 2016 Polynesian-



LEFT: A panel from the comic book inspiration of Marvel Rising's animated transformation.

"Marvel's philosophy is our stories are characters who are just like you and who live outside your window, and so they should reflect the diversity of the world." - Cort Lane

themed *Moana* immersed themselves in that culture.

"The more you learn about the Polynesian culture, the more you realize how stereotypes have kind of undersold it," says David Derrick, who was on the story team, and has his own Samoan ancestors. "They had the largest cultural footprint of any culture prior to Western expansion ... it was a culture defined not by how they lived on the land, but how they navigated from the islands."

Research included hiring a choreographer to teach their staff the art of traditional tribal *haka* (or war dance)—even blessing artists in order to allow them to depict the dance—and debating with anthropologists and scholars on the potential anachronisms of their tribal characters' wardrobes and color palettes, but producer Osnat Shurer says they had a big ask for consultant Fiona Collins. The Samoan actress and playwright let the staff douse her with water so they could see how her long wavy black hair dried.

THE PAST AND PRESENT

Of course, these progressive attempts at representation are fairly new practices. It's a well-known fact that racism, sexism and other issues are shameful parts of animation's past—even if they were invoked in good faith at the time. Tom Sito, an animation historian and former Guild president, says just look at the 1943 Bob Clampett cartoon *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs*. He says there's no arguing that it's "unbelievably racist," even if Clampett was a huge jazz and swing music fan and was "doing his homage" to the people he idolized.

Similarly, the *Looney Tunes* character Speedy Gonzales is cringe-worthy now. Sito says it came about in the 1950s and was made in tribute to Frank Gonzales, a ladies man in the Warner Bros. animation department who garnered the nickname because he could draw so fast that he could finish in time to flirt with the single women in the Ink and Paint department.

Courtesy of © Disney



"[Big Studios] need to push the envelope because they are educating the future... they have the ability to risk."

- Cinzia Angelini

Sito reminds that early "cartoons and comics all worked off the pop culture of the period," often gearing themselves to immigrants who may not have been able to read English and were therefore "heavy on ethnic culture because America at the time was a deep ethnic mix."

Themes like the white savior fighting an evil foreign face may have diminished to some degree, as evident by both the live-action and animated *Black Panthers*, but Sito reminds that there was a time when Milton Caniff's WWII-era Japanophobic drawings for the U.S. Army's *Pocket Guide to China* were freely condoned by our government. Last year, comedian Hari Kondabolu's truTV documentary *The Problem with Apu* ignited a conversation about the long-time *Simpsons* character who both is voiced by a white man (Hank Azaria) and panders to the simpleton immigrant stereotype. Fox executives recently said it was up to the *Simpsons* producers to decide if they would end the character.

The dialogue continues as awareness builds. Sito, whose resume includes Disney's *Pocahontas* and DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt*, is well aware of sensitivity issues that must be addressed and says "it's a consciousness raising process."

INFLUENCING THE NEXT GENERATION

Cinzia Angelini is an animation director who has given a TED Talk on the importance of using the medium to highlight diversity and also discuss more serious topics, like her project *Mila* about child victims of war. She says she hopes the success of films with diverse storytelling will help this cause.

"Big studios are responsible because they're educating; they're influencing young generations," she says. "They need to push the envelope because they are educating the future ... they have the ability to risk."

She also says, as animators, the onus is on us to learn about different cultures and not assume that you're only capable of designing for people who share your background. Angelini says we are "fortunate that we live and work in Los Angeles where all kinds of people live and exist. So it's not that hard within your network to find people who can give you real perspective of how somebody of this race or this religion react to this situation."

Meanwhile, Damil Bryant, a storyboard artist at Bento Box Entertainment, says that the minorities and women on staff need to speak up and not be afraid to push back on stereotypes that others might not see. He explains that this could mean covering "something that's going on now like police brutality, but making the person that's getting beat up not black." For monsters and other nonhumans, he says he makes a point to "exclude race."

"I like to use reference and how other shows and movies have done it in the past," he says.

Bryant says he's seen this awareness in younger artists, especially because he says the trend toward streamlining and simplistic designs "give more opportunity to work on a style."

"...minorities and women on staff need to speak up and not be afraid to push back on stereotypes that others might not see." - Damil Bryant

Chase Conley, who is an animation director at DreamWorks TV, says even fleshing out these background characters "adds tangibility to the world; it grounds the story." To this point, he says he tries to design characters that go against type such as avoiding making an Asian character meek or "if it has to do with a female character, I won't hyper-sexualize them if that's not in their character."

While inclusion and diversity are necessary parts of animation, they only work if they don't feel forced.

"I think the creative should do whatever is natural to them," says Mark Davis, who is also a director on *Victor @ Valentino*. "It would be nice to have some representation all across the board, but that's not everyone's experience. I'm always a fan of staying true to whatever you feel is natural to you as a creator." ☺

FROM LEFT: TAG members Damil Bryant, Mark Davis, and Chase Conley often meet up after work to collaborate and laugh.

HOW LIFE EXPERIENCE SHAPES ART

Animation Guild members Mike Davis, Damil Bryant and Chase Conley often meet up to talk about the industry, their work and to collaborate creatively. "We're kind of like unicorns in our neighborhoods," jokes Conley, who grew up in Charlotte, N.C. while Bryant hails from Atlanta and Davis from Boston. They explain that they defied the odds in their hometowns, in pursuing a field like animation, which seems untouchable for many youth in those areas. And their life experience helps shape their creative artistry.

"We come up with who the character is first: their personality and then we circle back to what feels more natural from what we've seen growing up," says Mark Davis, Mike's twin brother and fellow animator. The two operate under the banner Madtwiinz and are known for African-American positive imagery like their *Blokhedz* graphic novels and their work on series like *Black Dynamite*. "It's never 'oh we need a black guy to make this

story feel well-rounded.' It's kind of a reverse engineering of serving the story first."

Mike Davis says they credit their upbringing in the multicultural neighborhood of Cambridge, Mass. for their attention to inclusion. He adds that this is also why they "cautiously make a decision to never have gratuitous violence ... we took our authentic experiences and we just channeled them into our creations."

Last year, the brothers directed an animated parody of the *Schoolhouse Rock!* song "I'm Just a Bill" that was featured in the fourth season premiere of ABC's *Black-ish* and entitled "I Am a Slave." They worked with Bryant and Conley to turn the members of the band The Roots into animated figures who discussed slavery and the emancipation holiday of Juneteenth. This meant that they had to walk the tightrope of creating effective and informative artistry that both paid homage to the educational program's vintage look while nodding to the vaudevillian imagery that solidified the song's message.



Photo by Tim Sullens

RESTORING TREASURES



ASIFA-Hollywood
President Jerry
Beck at the 2017
UCLA Festival
of Preservation

RESTORING TREASURES

By Karen Briner

How ASIFA-Hollywood is saving endangered cartoons before they are lost forever

WHETHER THEY LIE UNDISCOVERED IN BASEMENTS OR LANGUISH IN ARCHIVES, PRE-1950'S CARTOONS, LIKE OTHER MOTION PICTURES OF THAT ERA, WERE PRINTED ON FILM STOCK THAT IS NOT ONLY FLAMMABLE, BUT DETERIORATES OVER TIME. THE CLOCK IS TICKING FOR THESE OLD ANIMATED FILMS, AMONGST THEM RARE AND HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT CARTOONS. NO ONE HEARS THAT TICKING LOUDER THAN THOSE INVOLVED WITH ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD'S ANIMATION PRESERVATION PROJECT. ASIFA-HOLLYWOOD PRESIDENT JERRY BECK HEADS UP THE PROJECT, WHOSE MISSION IS TO SEEK OUT AND RESCUE ENDANGERED CARTOONS WITH THE AIM OF PRESERVING THEM ON 35 MM SAFETY FILM STOCK.

A self-described cartoon fanatic, Beck is an animation historian who has written 15 books on the subject and also teaches animation history at CalArts. While some studios have taken the initiative to preserve and restore their old collections, he says, others focus on their new creations and tend to forget the older ones. In addition, many of the older cartoons were aimed at adults. Since some of them are not suitable for children and may contain racist or sexist attitudes, these factors combined have led to their neglect. As a historian, Beck believes they need to be restored regardless of their content because they remain a part of animation history. He's become acutely aware of how easily these old cartoons can disappear, meeting a fate like the majority of silent-era movies, which were abandoned, left to deteriorate, and are now lost forever.



“Cartoons are just as fragile,” Beck says. If no one preserves the first Looney Tunes or Porky Pig cartoon, he says, they’ll disappear.

With restoration being a costly process (\$8,000 to \$30,000 dollars per film) and funding limited, choosing which cartoons to preserve presents a dilemma. “It’s a real Sophie’s choice,” Beck says. Once a year he presents a selection to the ASIFA-Hollywood board and makes his case for saving them. He is well versed in the classic libraries of the studios and communicates throughout the year with many archives. Invariably someone will call him with the discovery of a rare nitrate film that needs saving.

Just recently the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences found a cartoon negative in their library and approached him because they couldn’t find a reference to this film anywhere. ASIFA-Hollywood paid for creating a print after it turned out to be an unreleased UPA cartoon.

Beck tries to focus on rare and historically important cartoons, that will tell a story to future generations about the studio’s work. For example, this year they’re restoring two Puppetoon films which are both unusual. One is unique because in the Paramount 1944 Puppetoon, Bugs Bunny, voiced by Mel Blanc and animated by the studio that made the

Warner Brothers’ cartoons, makes a cameo gag appearance.

“It’s too important in the universe of animation history,” says Beck. “It’s a little footnote, but it would kill me if that wasn’t preserved.” The other Puppetoon uses the character of Superman in puppet form. The Superman character was licensed from DC comics at the time, in the ‘40s, and Beck found it exciting to stumble across a forgotten piece of superhero history and bring that back into the world.

Sometimes Beck will approach a studio and inquire about the status of certain cartoons. This is what happened with a rare Max Fleischer cartoon, *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy*. When he learned that it was not preserved, he set the wheels in



ABOVE: The prints of Max Fleischer's *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy*, an unusual two-reeler, were scratched, worn and faded before MacQueen starting restoring it.

motion for its rescue. He considered the film a perfect candidate for restoration because it was unusual, a two-reeler, and in color. It was also a musical and featured a character that most people had heard of—Raggedy Ann.

ASIFA-Hollywood frequently works with Scott MacQueen of the UCLA Film & Television Archive, who spearheads their restoration projects. The restoration they do with ASIFA-Hollywood is all analog film-to-film restoration. Restoring Technicolor is more expensive because each color film frame is a composite of three black-and-white pictures of the primary colors: red, blue and green.

MacQueen says that the *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy* cartoon had fallen out of distribution possibly because, like so many marginalized cartoons of that era, it wasn't an ongoing series with characters that are household names, such as Bugs Bunny. He adds that the prints of the film that are out there among collectors are usually on 16 mm. These cheaply made prints were created for TV use in the 1950s and 1960s and are scratched, worn, and completely color faded to shades of pink.

The process UCLA went through with the *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy* film involved printing the Successive

Exposure—black-and-white negative to a master positive called a “Fine Grain.” From that it gets three passes through an optical printer through color filters, to make a color negative which then makes a contact full color print. “The beauty of it is the fine grain master, which is on polyester base, now gives you an archival element that should last 500 years,” says MacQueen. The original camera negatives before 1951 were all nitrate cellulose—which was pliable and strong, but also very flammable and decomposed if not properly cared for. Short cuts in manufacture and bad storage could cause it to decay fairly quickly.

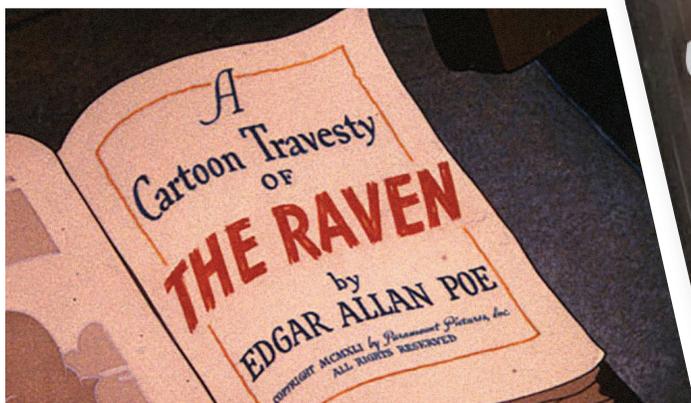
The *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy* film, as happened with many Paramount cartoons, was sold off for television and packaged into 16mm for TV syndication. MacQueen adds that when they made 16mm printing negatives, the new distributor also removed the original Paramount logos and replaced them with their own. "So all the old TV prints have rather clunky replaced title cards," he says, adding that fortunately the alterations were made in the TV negative and not the camera negative. Black and white cartoons weren't so lucky—they would just reshoot a new card, cut off the original, slap on a new card that said U.M. & M. TV Corporation. So when he's restoring black-and-white cartoons there's the added challenge

of trying to get back to authentic main and end titles.

While classic cartoons tend to be about seven minutes, the *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy* was a 17-minute special. MacQueen explains that Paramount and Fleischer Studios occasionally did these two-reelers which, in the cartoon world at that time, were considered epics. For such a project, if the elements are orderly, it can take anywhere from several weeks to maybe a month or two to complete the restoration. The process can take longer because of limited lab space availabilities—there are only two or three working analog film labs left in Hollywood.

Soundtracks are separate rolls of negative

that have been printed onto the film in a different printing pass from the picture. Nowadays, MacQueen explains, they will try to make a track print from that, if it exists, and then digitally do very careful noise reduction without sacrificing the brilliance and frequency response of the original recording. The original unprocessed track is archived so if there's better technology in the future, they still have an 'x-copy', a one-to-one of the original without any changes. In the case of *Raggedy Ann and Raggedy Andy*, the restoration was straightforward because the negative was in fine shape. It was just a matter of printing it,



If all the elements are orderly restoration can take from several weeks to two months, more challenging projects can take up to half a year.



cleaning up the sound, and waiting for various elements to come back from the lab.

However, projects can be a lot more complicated and challenging. "If you're working on a subject where you have to mix and match elements from different sources it could take six months." He recalls a Koko the Clown cartoon called *Bed Time* (1923) that they restored for ASIFA, which was more complicated because it came off multiple elements. Scenes had been removed from the nitrate camera negative when it was recut for TV in the 1950s. They had full-length 16mm prints from the 1920s and 1930s that were very degraded in quality and also had a nitrate print from 1922 that had decomposition and losses. Pieces from the secondary materials needed to be used to fill in the scenes that were cut from the original.

Other problems can arise when older nitrate film shrinks due to moisture loss, making it difficult to print. In these instances, specially machined register pins need to be used to engage the sprockets so that the film doesn't tear or jump—16mm film requires optical printing to enlarge it so it can cut into the same space field as the 35mm frame. Density and contrast also have to be matched. There are different methods to do a single color printing of a black-and-white negative and at UCLA they were able to replicate the old-fashioned tinting, just like it was done in the '20s. These are all issues and challenges that can come into play. MacQueen lauds the efforts of ASIFA-Hollywood's preservation project and the way they're giving back to their profession, because without them, he says, these cartoons wouldn't be restored.

While the preservation program has been around for decades, it's only in the last few years that they've been able to renew their restoration efforts. Frank Gladstone, Executive Director of ASIFA-Hollywood says, that the non-profit has reached a point where they're now

"We need to see that history, we need to be inspired by it and that's what we're doing with our restoration program."



ABOVE: Scott MacQueen of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

spending about 40,000 dollars a year on restoration. From restoring about one film every two years, they now do up to three or four films per year. Funding comes from the organization's membership, studio sponsors and corporate memberships. He adds that "with each passing year it becomes more urgent to do this. Beck finds these things that are on death's door, so to speak, and if we don't restore them then nobody is going to see them."

The aim is to show these rescued cartoons in museums and other venues such as ASIFA-Hollywood's yearly screening. It's a labor of love and there's nothing Beck likes more than showing a restored cartoon to an audience. As a historian and collector he's grown used to faded, muddy prints that looked horrible. The restored films look the way

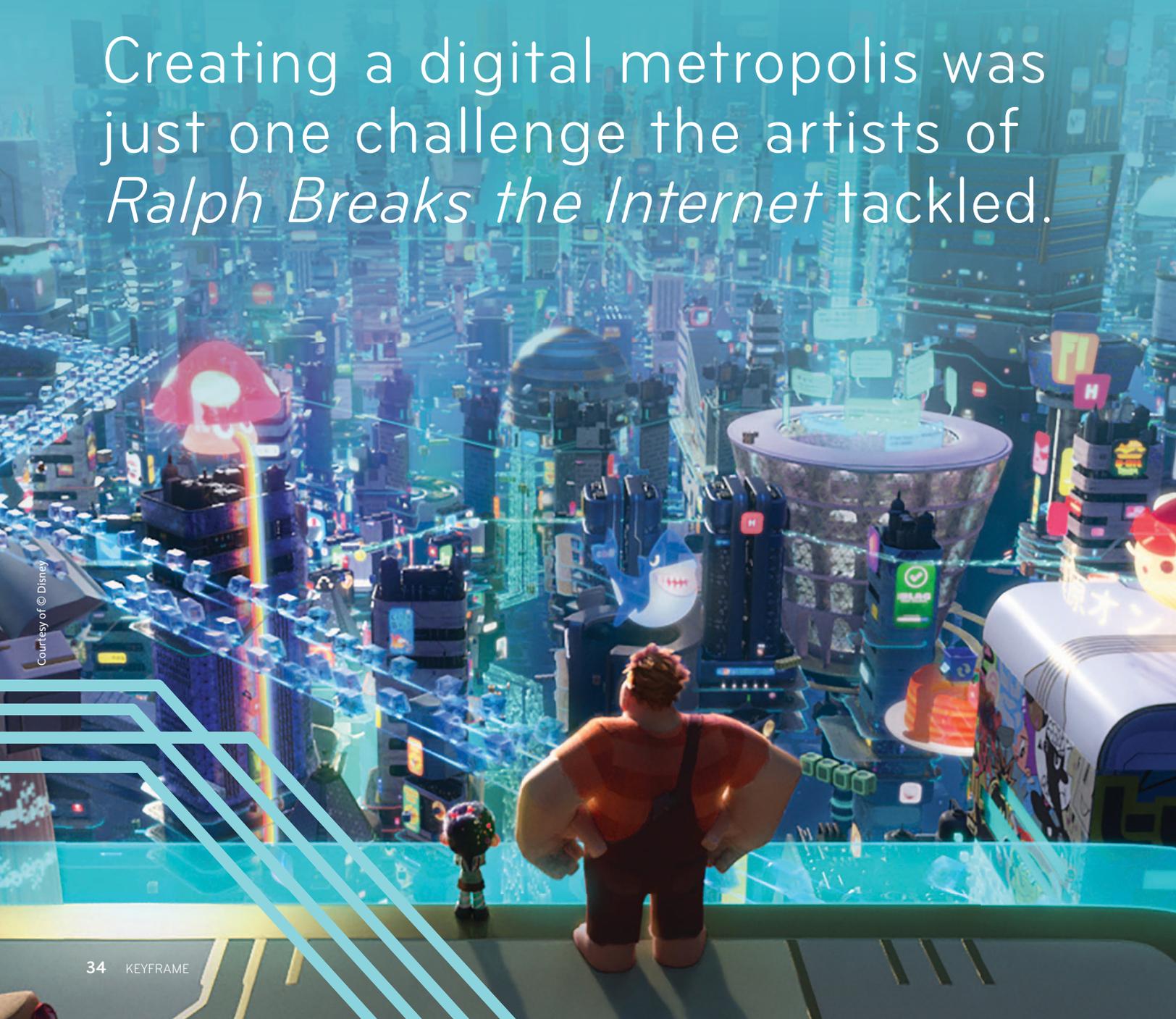
they did when they were first released with wonderful, vibrant colors.

Beck believes that showing the old films inspires the younger generation of new artists. He points out that many of today's cartoons are throwbacks, inspired by earlier works. The recent video game, *Cuphead*, for example, is "totally inspired by Max Fleischer and the old cartoons of the 1930s. We need to see that history, we need to be inspired by it and that's what we're doing with our restoration program." Gladstone echoes this sentiment: "We do it because we feel we're being good stewards of that particular art form—we don't want to forget them" ☺

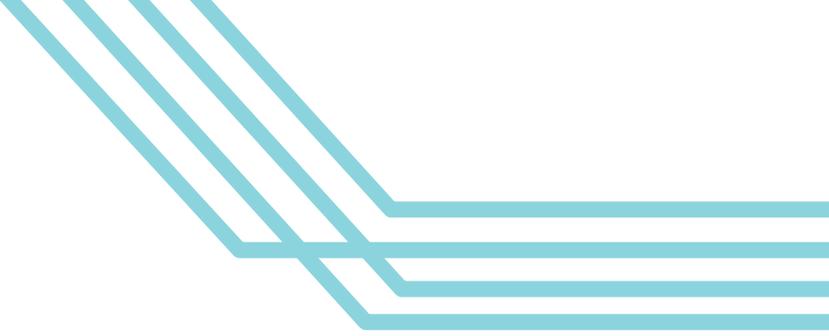
NETWORK OF INSPIRATION

By Alexandra Drosu

Creating a digital metropolis was just one challenge the artists of *Ralph Breaks the Internet* tackled.



Courtesy of © Disney



IT'S BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE *WRECK-IT RALPH* INTRODUCED TWO LOVEABLE CHARACTERS—GENTLE GIANT RALPH AND PINT-SIZED DYNAMO VANELLOPE VON SCHWEETZ—AND TOGETHER, THEY SAVED LITWAK'S ARCADE. AS THE FIRST DISNEY SEQUEL IN RECENT YEARS, REVISITING THESE CHARACTERS BRINGS BOTH OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES—KEEPING THE CONCEPT FRESH AND MAKING SURE THE STORY REMAINS TRUE TO THE DUO'S EVOLVING FRIENDSHIP.

In *Ralph Breaks the Internet* (Nov. 21), directed by Rich Moore and Phil Johnston, the steering wheel from Vanellope's arcade game, Sugar Rush, breaks and Litwak doesn't think it's worth spending the money to buy another one from ebay. Vanellope's life as she knows it is about to change but Ralph decides the two should go to ebay and get the steering wheel themselves. What follows is an adventure through the Internet that tests their friendship and, despite Ralph's best intentions, sets loose a virus that threatens to destroy the World Wide Web.

INSIDE THE WEB

One of the biggest challenges at the outset of story development was designing the location itself. "What does the internet look like?" says Josie Trinidad, Head of Story (with Jim Reardon). The team needed to visually conceive this amorphous entity and create a physical world that filmgoers could relate to. Early on, story artist Steven Markowski researched the Internet and shared his findings in a very detailed presentation.

"It was great because he started to use computer jargon that could then be inspiration," she says. The idea of data encapsulated in a little packet, for example, would inspire the transportation method for Vanellope and Ralph.

"The best way to figure out how something might look on the internet was to just ask ourselves what would we do right now in the human world and how can we then personify it,"

she says, but adds that the characters aren't technologically savvy so it's "your mom's or grandma's approach."

When Vanellope and Ralph first arrive to the Internet they're anxious to find ebay. In real life you'd Google it, in the movie they needed to personify a search engine. This concept led to a character called KnowsMore who runs the search bar. Originally, the story team wanted to create the experience of a click hole—"I went to look for ballet tights and then somehow I ended up buying tickets for a concert in Romania," jokes Trinidad. The idea ended up getting cut but they incorporated a humorous autofill gag instead.

"Despite how amazing or funny or well designed a character or sequence might be, if it doesn't fit into the overall context of the movie then it's useless," says Trinidad. "When I was a story artist, I was all about my scene but then I realized as head of story you're also supposed to be looking at the broader picture and seeing if it's even worth it for someone to animate or design those characters if it's not contributing to the overall story."

Nailing down the story was both difficult and beautiful, she says, "you don't always know if you're headed in the right direction and screenings can reveal underdeveloped plot points that need to be addressed." In fact, the department of 15 artists produced almost 300,000 drawings, boarding and re-boarding, until they hit upon a story "that everyone can relate to, that felt very true to our characters and true to ourselves as filmmakers."



Courtesy of © Disney

GLITCH PERFECT

Throwing Vanellope and Ralph into a new environment—the Internet—came with a series of challenges for the effects department.

“One thing that we really stress is creating logic for the world,” says Cesar Velazquez, Head of Effects Animation. The team needed to establish, for instance, how people travel around the Internet or how they convey messages.

Inspired by the idea of “packets of information” they envisioned a capsule that transports users. “The capsules are these mechanical things that just form around the users,” says Velazquez.

They also researched how electricity moves through a wire then examined WiFi and electromagnetic waves travelling through the air. “This led to a dramatic wave or pulse that would push them—kind of like surfing it—which is sort of analogous to what happens when electricity or data moves through a cable or air,” he says.

Creating a vehicle for movement was only the beginning. “How do you visualize different ideas so the audience understands things like a virus or a glitch or firewall?” asks Velazquez.

A glitch already played an integral plot point in the original film. Vanellope’s character had two kinds of glitches: one when she’s nervous, like a

hiccup, and another glitch, almost like a superpower, that transports her where she wants to go. The film’s new renderer, Hyperion, allowed the effects team to update her glitch to a more refined and polished version.

But it was also critical to the story to differentiate between Vanellope’s glitch and those caused by a virus. In the film, the Internet is represented as a large metropolis with different websites and apps represented as buildings. The team wanted to visually show a website crashing without mimicking the destruction of a real building.

“What does it mean if a Website is crashing? How is that conveyed visually?” says Velazquez. Coming up with a solution was a technical challenge requiring multiple tests and updates to the pipeline. “We’re showing data traveling, you’ve got chromatic aberrations, this staccato motion—visual cues to say it feels like a building crashing but there are other visual elements to say it’s a glitch that’s crashing it.”

In order to achieve this effect, the team integrated a destruction pipeline from Industrial Light + Magic. They also had to build a system that could apply the effects to any geometry. Velazquez says he considers this large-scale glitch one of his team’s biggest achievements on the film.



Courtesy of © Disney

ABOVE: The animation team integrated characteristics of the original princesses in the CG versions.

PRINCESSES UNITE!

In the film, there are more familiar faces than Vanellope and Ralph; the production revisited some of the studio’s most iconic stars—14 Disney princesses.

“I felt like had been studying for this moment my entire life,” says Kira Lehtomaki, Head of Animation (with Renato dos Anjos), who counts *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Little Mermaid* as major influences in her career. Of course, translating 2D characters into a CG world held its own set of challenges in order to stay true to the original characters while also updating them for an Internet world. Ami Thompson, Art Director, Characters, and her team re-imagined Internet versions of all the princesses—including those who were initially CG characters.

“It kind of gave us this freedom to unify them in terms of making them all feel like they live in the same world,” says Lehtomaki.

For added support, they turned to Hand-Drawn Animation Supervisor Mark Henn who has worked on more than half of the original characters, including Ariel, Belle, and Tiana. He would provide drawovers for the animators to make sure the team was being authentic to the character's movements. They brought back most of the original voices and asked the actresses to chime in on the action, asking them questions like: What would Ariel or Jasmine do in this modern-day situation?

"They all had such terrific insight," says Lehtomaki. "We tried to sort of infuse that into the movement."

Lehtomaki also scoured all the original films analyzing hand gestures and expressions. "We wanted every pose [to] be reminiscent of the original movies—maybe it wouldn't be immediately recognizable but it feels familiar," she says. For example, in the original film, Cinderella often taps the side of her cheek with her finger—it's her thinking pose. Sure enough, the same pose makes a cameo as Cinderella listens to Vanellope.

"We think about the whole tableau," she says. "And so you have to make sure that the movements of the characters that are not supposed to be the central focus of the scene are more subtle."

Usually the artists are animating one or two characters but in the princess sequence they were managing 15

(Vanellope plus the 14 princesses). With so many iconic characters in one room, the team had to figure out how to block each one's movement to work with the narrative. Lehtomaki's solution? Walk to the Disney store and buy action figures so the team could physically make sure the movement made logical sense and maintained continuity.

CHANGE OF PACE

It isn't often that a trip to the racetrack is part of your job description, especially when you work in animation. But for Nathan Detroit Warner, Head of Cinematography, Layout, learning to maneuver a racecar was just one aspect of research for the dynamic car chase between Vanellope and a character named Shank that takes place in an online game called Slaughter Race, set in a pseudo-post-apocalyptic wasteland.

The directors described the scene to Warner: Vanellope and Ralph need to steal Shank's car in order to sell it and earn enough money to pay for their ebay purchase of the Sugar Rush steering wheel. Vanellope drives off with Shank in close pursuit, they try to best each other until one wins. The actual specifics were left to the layout department.

Warner wanted the sequence grounded in reality so he compiled a 20-minute reference reel with clips from movies, such as *The Bourne*

Identity, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, and *Baby Driver*.

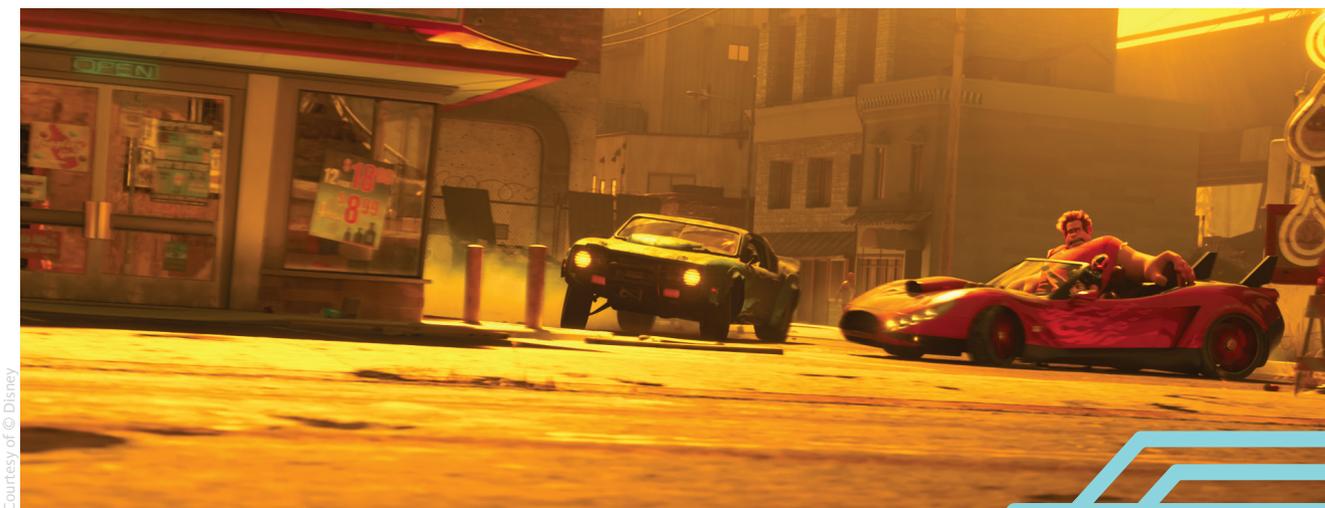
Though the action could serve as inspiration, Warner says, the pacing would never work in animation—"our shots often are less than a second and those are 30 second shots." Nevertheless, he and his team were up for the challenge.

Warner broke down the action into seven distinct plot points then began blocking each move. Mapping it out on paper wasn't always enough so his production supervisor brought in a bag of Hot Wheels. The team also brought in Jeremy Fry, the stunt choreographer for *Baby Driver*, and peppered him with questions about whether the action was realistic.

Basing the sequence in reality, says Warner, "adds jeopardy, it gives you tension and stress—including the way that the camera is held. That is what you're used to when you're watching live action."

Rather than stylize the action from a camera view—which is what they do 95 percent of the time, according to Warner—they took a live action approach and mounted nine cameras onto Shank's car, seven onto Vanellope's and littered the streets with different styles of cameras.

For a three minute sequence, they captured more than 100 minutes' worth of data, he says. "We were covering it from every which way imaginable." The result is most likely one of the fastest-paced, thrilling car chase scenes in animation so far.



Courtesy of © Disney

THE COLOR OF EMOTION

Similar to the original film, *Ralph Breaks the Internet* takes the characters into several different “worlds” from Litwak’s arcade to the digital metropolis of the Internet to various apps and games.

“Each specific environment has a unique color signature,” says Brian Leach, Director of Cinematography, Lighting. “It was really trying to draw a distinction between those worlds in terms of cinematic style.”

The Internet metropolis is more saturated with a punch of vibrant colors, Buzztube has a magenta and blue palette while Slaughter Race is defined by a toxic orange look devoid of any blues.

The team was also tasked with reinforcing emotion and the storyline through lighting. For example, when Vanellope and Ralph arrive to the Internet they are surrounded by a bright, cheerful world. “That’s the most

optimistic moment of the film,” notes Leach. The friends are just starting their adventure and they are full of confidence that they’ll get the Sugar Rush steering wheel but that’s not the way it happens. There is a dark side to the web.

One challenge for the team was addressing the idea that the Internet never sleeps—it never turns off—so it’s always daylight, explains Leach. “We need to feel time passing and we need to



Taking its cue from the story, the lighting in this scene evokes the emotion of Vanellope and Ralph’s relationship. The sun is literally setting on their friendship.

reinforce different moods,” he adds. “Our third act has a motivation for the Internet going dark which gives us that nighttime mood we hoped to reinforce.” The deep web’s green and red palette gives a dark and uneasy feeling that’s almost toxic and contrasts sharply with the bright, buoyant digital landscape.

Another challenge was the sheer geometric complexity of the Internet, says Leach, “giving every site that’s

ever existed on the Internet some sort of physical representation...[while also] organizing the scene to direct the viewer’s eye to the specific story point.

For Leach, lighting evokes the emotion of the scene. At the beginning, when Vanellope first realizes that her life is about to change dramatically now that Sugar Rush is broken, she sits atop an arcade game as Ralph starts to cheer her up. “Vanellope doesn’t

really think that what Ralph thinks is the perfect world is her perfect world,” he says. “So we literally have the sun set during that conversation and you get this sort of juxtaposition of this beautiful sunset as this rift is developing in their relationship.”

It kicks off the journey, which becomes a test of their friendship. As for the artists’ journey behind the film? It’s always a collaborative adventure. ☺



“Vanellope doesn’t really think that what Ralph thinks is the perfect world is her perfect world. So we literally have the sun set during that conversation and you get this sort of juxtaposition of this beautiful sunset as this rift is developing in their relationship.”

MANY SHADES OF WHITE

Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures





THIS FALL, WARNER ANIMATION GROUP BRINGS TO LIFE THE MYSTERIOUS YETI IN A FILM THAT FLIPS THE MYTH FROM THE CREATURE'S PERSPECTIVE. IN *SMALLFOOT* (SEPT. 28), THE DISCOVERY OF A HUMAN DISRUPTS THE IDYLIC, MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY AND MAKES THEM QUESTION WHAT'S OUT THERE IN THE BIGGER WORLD. ART DIRECTOR DEVIN CRANE SHARES THE ARTISTIC CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN AN ALL-WHITE, SNOWY ENVIRONMENT AND LOTS AND LOTS OF FUR.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF SNOW AND A WHITE PALETTE?

It was an artistic challenge; just to stretch yourself in terms of values and colors—from a white-cream to a violet blue, and finding complex ways of using value to get them to read against the snow. We wanted the environment and the village to have tons of detail and to feel lived in, like it had been there for hundreds of years. We were trying to make really cool compositions that would instantly have a focal point so the audience wouldn't lose our main character.

HOW DID YOU START THE CHARACTER DESIGN PROCESS?

We started with the idea that fur is fun, embracing the fact that we're going to have really long hair, pushing that technical challenge and then almost building the world around it—thinking of the cold as an ally and not a harsh world for them.

HOW DID YOU DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE CHARACTERS SO THAT THEY LOOKED LIKE THEY BELONGED TO THE SAME TRIBE BUT WERE ALSO VERY DISTINCTIVE?

It was important to look at each character, get a sense of his or her personality and find ways to make them stand apart so that you would know Migo instantly, you would know Meechee instantly. We tried versions where the color was more pushed and it didn't quite feel yeti so we landed in these really subtle shades of violet. We gave Meechee a Dior-inspired cape to push the fashion, and there were all these thoughts on braiding too. When you look at a character you should get a sense of who they are—like the Stonekeeper. All his hair hangs with the long beard, it's thinning at the base, and you can feel the age in him.

THE YETIS LOOK LIKE THEY USE THEIR FURS AS OPPOSED TO BEING OVERLY COIFFED.

That was intentionally designed. When you look at wolves and bears, their fur is so distinctive. We didn't think of yetis as monsters but as an animal species. We wanted to anchor it in

our world and something that would be believable. We worked hard at trying to find a unique groom and style and movement for every single character.

CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE EVOLUTION OF THE COLOR STORY?

We wanted to chart the color of the emotional aspect of the film—we did lots of concept paintings to set the tone for the filmmakers and the crew. If you Google snow it comes up as white but if you really look at it in different areas, like the Himalayas or Helsinki, you see these pinks and blue shadows, violets. So you can have an entire scene in green [hues] or orange. You can almost pick a dominant color that can push the mood. So we were really trying to [evoke] mood and use the snow as a reflector to create these really dynamic color shifts.

In four sequences, you see a shift of mood happen in the scene where it goes from super bright to super dark, or from sunrise to sunset. Having snow, you get beauty lights from every angle, almost like that 1940s bounce light, which you can play strong for drama or soft for romance.

The directors [also] encouraged us to go expressionistic with the color and really push the tone. And by doing so it really helped us get away from pure white scenes except for a couple that were truly intentional.

WHAT THOUGHT WENT INTO CREATING THE YETI WORLD THAT SEEMS TO BE ELUSIVE TO HUMANS?

The yetis picked this mountain that would literally shield them from the world at the highest peak in the world. Everything is closed off yet still warm and inviting to give the sense of a cozy and harmonious village. It has a romantic and storybook feel to it. The contrast of the human village was that it was open and neon with glowing lights—[materials like] steel, brick, tile. Everything is a bit sharper. The yetis world is a land that time forgot—a preserved, perfect utopia—while the human world is frantic and frenetic and exciting. ☺

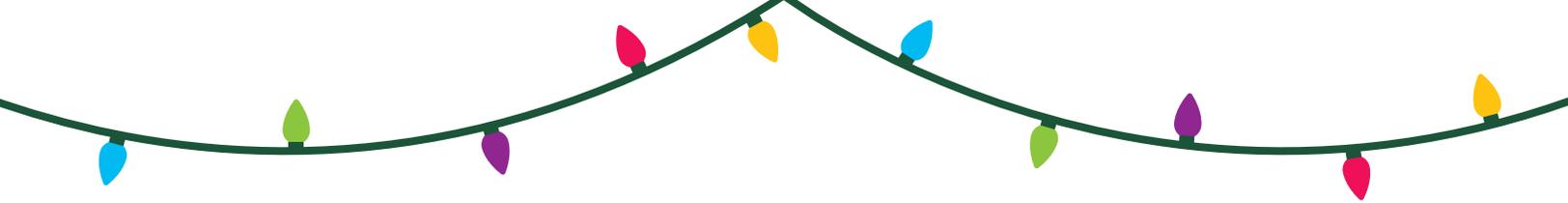


MEAN AND GREEN



Courtesy of Illumination
and Universal Pictures





IT'S BEEN MORE THAN 50 YEARS SINCE DR. SEUSS' BELOVED BOOK, *HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!*, WAS ADAPTED FOR AN ANIMATED HOLIDAY SPECIAL. BUT NOW THE GREEN GROUCH WILL HIT THEATERS ONCE AGAIN ON NOVEMBER 9TH IN ILLUMINATION AND UNIVERSAL PICTURES' *THE GRINCH*. DIRECTOR YARROW CHENEY TALKS ABOUT REVISITING THE ICONIC CHARACTER.

HOW DID YOU BEGIN TACKLING A STORY EVERYONE KNOWS AND MAKE IT FEEL FRESH?

It was very important to us to stay true to Dr. Seuss' original story. So that's where we began. From story to design, the book was the starting point for everything we did. We tried to make the world and characters feel current, but not dated. You'll see Whos catch a triple-decker bus and Max take flight in a Grinch-designed drone.

For the film, we had to find ways to naturally expand the story, characters and setting. We had to go deeper into the characters: Why was Grinch the way he was? What was it about Christmas and the Whos that caused him so much pain?

For the world, we treated it as if Dr. Seuss' drawings were based on a real place. But in the book, Who-ville was small, with just a few houses. For the film, we expanded Who-ville. We made it a bustling town filled with shops and cafés. We wanted it to be a wonderful place that would draw you in—a place you would want to spend the holidays.

YOU TAKE US INSIDE THE GRINCH'S HOME. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE DESIGN PROCESS?

We wanted to design a home for the Grinch that reflected who he was. He chose to self-isolate way up in a cave on a mountain. We chose to make his cave huge and cavernous to show how lonely he was. We liked the idea that the Grinch would have built living spaces into a naturally inhospitable cave. This reveals his ingenuity and allowed us to have a lot of fun figuring out how he would build a solitary life for himself where all he needed was his dog [Max], who also doubles as his butler.

Also, the Grinch is a character who tends to go a little extreme. He overdoes it sometimes. Stealing Christmas is the ultimate example of this. So we designed his cave to reflect this aspect of his personality. He's outfitted it with crazy ways to do everyday things and imaginative ways for he and Max to get around. He's a little eccentric and that gave us lots of design opportunities that were character-based, like rigging his dumbwaiter so Max can deliver him coffee in bed.

His cave also tells us that he's not just a first-degree, grumpy bad guy. He's got the potential for warmth buried deep within him. This is reflected in his home—from the outside, it is a cold, dark, foreboding mountain but the deeper you go, the more you see cozy living spaces and the special care he takes for his only friend, Max.

THIS VERSION DELVES INTO THE GRINCH'S ORIGIN STORY. HOW DID YOU SETTLE ON THOSE DETAILS WHILE CHANNELING DR. SEUSS' IMAGINATION?

In exploring the Grinch's origin story, we had to ask ourselves why he's the way he is. Why was his heart two-sizes too small? We know he's a lonely, bitter guy who hates everything about Christmas—family, joy, togetherness and music. But why? Why would the holiday cause him so much pain? This led us to tell a story of a lonely past, when a young Grinch didn't know kindness or love, even though he could see it all around him. Because of this, Christmas became an acute source of pain for him—so painful that he would rather live inside a cold, lonely mountain than down with the Whos in Who-ville.

WHAT WERE SOME OF THE BIGGEST ARTISTIC CHALLENGES ON THE PRODUCTION?

Artistically, one of our biggest challenges was designing and building out the world. We wanted to capture the grandeur and beauty of a snowy alpine landscape. Who-ville would have to be warm and inviting to pull the audience in; and, because it's Christmas time, it's filled with lights, decorations and fuzzy Whos dressed in winter clothing. We really wanted to capture the richness of the Christmas season in a fun, but elegant way.

Fleshing out Who-ville and giving it a population boom allowed us to make the Grinch's goal of stealing Christmas an epic challenge. We designed the town to be the last place anyone would attempt a Christmas heist because every street, house and living room was filled with lovely decorations and gifts. This forces the Grinch to be creative. Designing the heist and how exactly he'd accomplish this bigger-than-life task was a lot of fun! ☺

SEPT

- 3 Labor Day – Contract Holiday
- 7 Gallery 839 Opening
- 10-11 AAI Fall 2018 Semester Starts
- 15 Call for Annie Awards judges closes
- 17 70th Annual Emmy Awards
- 25 General Membership Meeting
- 26-30 Ottawa International Animation Festival
- 30 *The Flintstones*, the most commercially successful animated series for the next 30 years, airs (1960)

OCT

- 5-7 Women in Animation Symposium: *Breaking the Glass Frame* (USC School of Cinematic Arts)
- 5 Galley 839 Opening
- 12 DreamWorks founded (1994)
- 21 IATSE & MPTF Day at the Races

NOV

- 1 Annie Awards Nomination Committees Commence
- 2 Gallery 839 Opening
- 15-18 2018 CTN Animation Expo
- 22-23 Thanksgiving Day – Contract Holiday
- 27 General Membership Meeting
- 19 Worldwide highest-grossing animated film *Frozen* premieres (2013)



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Our goal in 2018 is to once again raise the amount we spend on projects outside of the Annie Awards by 15% from \$160,000 to at least \$185,000 for projects as diverse as the ASIFA Archives, the Animation Educators Forum scholarship and grant programs, the Animation Aid Foundation, our Animation Preservation Project, and the Open Source Support Initiative as well as continuing

to sponsor other animation organizations and events. That, and completing and opening our ASIFA-Hollywood Animation Center and June Foray Screening Room, keeps all of us on the ASIFA board focused squarely on our mission.

Frankly, without your help and support through memberships and individual and corporate sponsorships none of this would be possible.

It has always been a dream for ASIFA to be able to do all of these things. We hope, at least in some small part, our work can be part of your dream too.



For more information on ASIFA-Hollywood, the worlds largest animation society, please visit asifa-hollywood.org

DEDICATED & DETERMINED

In 2015, after three long days at around 1:00 a.m., a group of dedicated members marked the end of contract negotiations with a celebratory photo. Three years later, the Negotiations Committee for 2018 doubled in size and grew from one female representative, Paula Spence, to 8 women actively participating and bringing their experience and perspective to the discussion. These committed members started this journey more than a year ago, holding craft meetings to learn about the needs of the membership. They researched and submitted proposals, collected supporting data and opinions, circulated documents, rallied fellow members, and met monthly as a group and more often in craft sub-committees. "A labor union is run by its members and we are only as strong as the members who are willing to stand up together and do something to make change happen," says Spence. "We've got a bigger group who are standing up, and they're getting others to stand up, take notice and do something, too!"



2015 COMMITTEE, FROM LEFT: Jack Thomas, Steve Kaplan, Paula Spence, Steve Hulett, Jason Mayer, Dave Chlystek, Perry Zombolas, Spencer Knapp, and Tim Szabo



2018 COMMITTEE, FRONT ROW, FROM LEFT: Kyle Neswald, Brandon Jarratt, Jason MacLeod, Mairghread Scott, Ray Leong
BACK ROW, FROM LEFT: Spencer Knapp, Candice Stephenson, Danny Ducker, Paula Spence, Dave Chlystek, Henry Gilroy, Larry Smith, Lindsey Pollard **NOT PICTURED:** Teri Cusumano, Rex Faraday, KC Johnson, Steve Kaplan, Ashley Long, Jason Mayer

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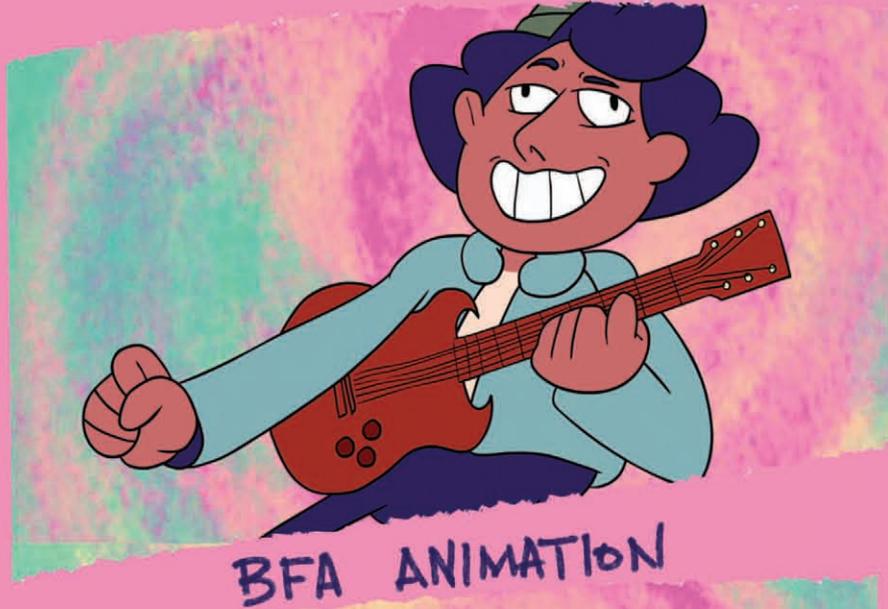
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