

2022

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

KEYFRAME

THE ANIMATION GUILD SPECIAL EDITION

7 YEARS



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by

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ANIMATION

Blush

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49th ANNIE AWARDS

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A work of art should be difficult
to pick up. It should be made of
such a shape that people don't
know which way to hold it.

—Jean Cocteau

**Here's to the Guild members who have
turned the world upside down and inside
out and created whole new worlds from
scratch. And to the Guild, which has fought
for their rights through THICK and thin and
back to THICK again.**

**SCHWARTZ, STEINSAPIR,
DOHRMANN & SOMMERS LLP**

6300 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 2000
Los Angeles, California
www.lalaborlaw.com
(323) 655-4700

MICHAEL R. FEINBERG
MARGO FEINBERG
HENRY WILLIS
WILLIAM HEINE

ZOE MOSKOWITZ
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SALES@MACHOLLYWOOD.COM
(323) 957-9557



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KEYFRAME

Editorial Director Alexandra Drosu

Managing Editor Kim Fay

Art Director Jenn Logan/Studio Fuse, Inc.

Photographers Martin Cohen, Tim Sullens

Contributing Writers David Brain, Karen Briner, Jay A. Fernandez,
Whitney Friedlander, Evan Henerson,
Sonaiya Kelley, Paula Spence

Publishing Committee Steve Kaplan, Jeanette Moreno King,
Carrie Liao, Jason MacLeod, Jason Mayer,
Paula Spence

Executive Board Jeanette Moreno King (PRESIDENT),
Jack Thomas (VICE-PRESIDENT), Steve Kaplan
(BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE), Paula Spence
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(SERGEANT-AT-ARMS), Jack Cusumano,
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Brandon Jarratt, K.C. Johnson (TRUSTEE),
Crystal Kan, Carrie Liao (TRUSTEE),
Mike Milo, Elisa Phillips, Stephen Silver
(TRUSTEE), Emily Walus

Advertising AFM/Ken Rose & Elizabeth Ferris
(818) 312-6880 (cell & text)
(866) 563-6193 (fax)
krose@afmla.com

Editorial Offices 1105 N. Hollywood Way
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 845-7500

   @animationguild

We welcome editorial submissions; please contact us at editor@tag839.org or kim.fay@tag839.org.

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the
animation
guild

Representing animation artists,
writers and technicians since 1952.



DEAR TAG MEMBERS,

IT MEANS SO MUCH TO US BE TO PART OF THIS DYNAMIC ORGANIZATION, AND WE HOPE YOU FEEL THE SAME. NO MATTER WHAT ROLE WE TAKE, WE ARE ALL EQUALLY IMPORTANT AND EQUALLY A PART OF WHAT THE ANIMATION GUILD IS: THE COMBINED STRENGTH OF EVERY MEMBER, FOCUSED AND WORKING IN UNISON TOWARD POSITIVE CHANGE.

Our Union brings us together to create the working environment and conditions we want. It also does more than that. It unites us to look out for each other and care about one another's well-being. It's both a tool to give us agency in the workplace and a tool to allow us to reach out and improve our communities.

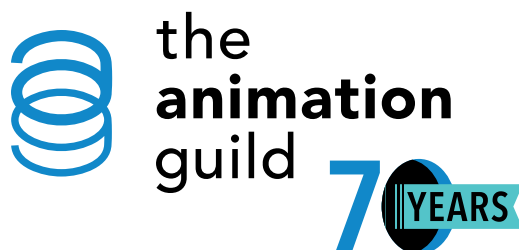
The importance of TAG—beyond contract protections and benefits—became especially apparent during the pandemic. Most of us were isolated at home, in bedrooms or dining rooms turned into offices. Workplace abuses are much harder to combat in isolation, and on the creative side, animation is an inherently collaborative medium. During these unprecedented times, the Union has provided a sense of community and security. It's been such a pleasure to hear from members about how thankful they are for their benefits, and in turn tell them how this support will continue into the future with their pensions and retiree health plans.

Learning about the long history of labor within this country, as well as the role our Guild has played in the animation industry over the past 70 years, makes us proud to be TAG members. Looking back on our history, it comforts us to know that we stand on a strong foundation of forces behind the battle lines watching our backs. We're thrilled that Local 839 has thrived for this long, and with exciting new developments like the addition of Titmouse New York, we feel the best is yet to come.

We also believe we're a force for good beyond our workplaces. Not only do we protect our union kin, we provide entertainment, escape, and illumination through the countless movies and television series our talented artists, technicians, and writers create.

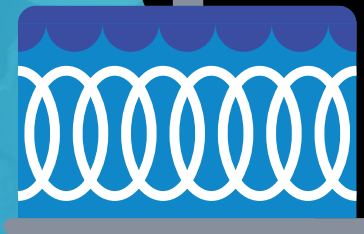
We are all in animation because we love what we do, but to be at our best and most effective, we must advocate for ourselves within our workplaces and industry as a whole. In recent years, our members have been the most engaged we've ever seen, and it's such an honor to be part of a great legacy fighting for animation workers' rights. As we look back on our own history, let's remember that what we do today will be the future's history of The Animation Guild.

In Solidarity,
The Animation Guild Executive Board



7 YEARS

CELEBRATING





ALL IN THE FAMILY

I came to L.A. around 50 years ago. Most of the big studios I worked for then are gone—notes in a film trivia book—except Walt Disney. Yet we animation workers are all still working. The only consistent thread is us.

Artists, craftspeople, and techs. Like professional stunt people, we all know each other. The old-timers taught us: “You work with the same people, only the producers change.” Over the years I’ve risen through the ranks, headed departments, directed, partnered in a small company. I’ve seen companies rise and fall, been backstabbed, promoted, fired. Companies that assured me “you’ll always have a job here” laid me off. Yet when the battle is over, and the smoke clears, the only people left for you are your friends. Your animation family.

I never really set out to be a big-shot union leader. I liked my job as an animator. I worked for union and non-union companies alike. Then, in 1991, I went to the officer nomination meeting to make sure they didn’t nominate some real ding-a-ling. They nominated me. Go figure!

Once I became president of Local 839, I sought the advice of some of the older animators who had served as officers on past executive boards, including Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, two of Disney’s famous Nine Old Men. Many recalled the big strike at Disney in 1941 and the struggles in the years that followed to establish the union. When these old-timers spoke about their experiences, their eyes sparkled: “Yeah, we shut ‘em down. It made the boss crazy.” But it wasn’t conflict for conflict’s sake. It was about establishing citywide rules for the workplace. Standardized wage minimums. Paid overtime and sick leave. No arbitrary firing because the boss doesn’t like your face, or you refused to go out with a predatory exec. Screen credits—the public was really led to believe Walt Disney drew everything himself!

Before the union, most animation studios had a 46-hour work week. That meant six hours on Saturday, before any overtime. Most of the studios converted to a 40-hour week the year they knew the guilds were planning to push for mass recruiting and recognition. And to win these concessions, union supporters didn’t just face losing their jobs, they faced blacklisting, even the threat of violence. All so in the twilight of their careers, they could look back with pride at what they had accomplished. L.A. has the highest standard of living in the animation world. The best contract and the best medical benefits. Other studios around the globe refer to our contract when budgeting theirs.

Those union old-timers imbued me with their passion to accomplish things for our whole animation community. They entrusted my generation with the organization that they built, with a hope it will go on into the future. This Union is your Union. Just as many animators employed at Walt Disney or Warner Bros. take pride in being part of those studios’ legacies, so Local 839 has a legacy that will live on into the future.

Love your craft. Love your animation family. It’s our tradition.

Tom Sito
President Emeritus (1992-2001)

EST.
1952

JANUARY 18

The Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Guild, Local 839 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees and Moving Picture Machine Operators of the United States and Canada is born! The charter, signed by IATSE President Richard Walsh, hangs on the wall of our boardroom.

APRIL 16

Across the country, the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists, Local 841 is chartered in New York.

OCTOBER

Hot on the heels of our charter, the agreement establishing the Motion Picture Industry Health Plan is signed. The Motion Picture Industry Pension Plan follows a year later. Guaranteed benefits—hooray!

1956



FEBRUARY 6

Floyd Norman starts working at Walt Disney Productions. He is the first African American artist at the Mouse Factory, although he has said there may have been two earlier, but they quit.

1962



MAY

The Guild officially inaugurates its new office and art gallery at 3625 Cahuenga Boulevard on "Animation Alley" with an open house and art exhibition.

SEPTEMBER 23

When *The Jetsons* premieres, it is the first ABC show to be broadcast in color.



Local 839 successfully organizes Hanna-Barbera Productions. Welcome Yogi Bear!

Animator (and later Hanna-Barbera Production Supervisor) **BILL SCHIPEK** is elected to be the first president of Local 839.



APRIL - JUNE

Comics take a hit when a U.S. Senate Subcommittee holds hearings on the effects of comics on juvenile delinquency. The Comics Code Authority is established, and more than 300 comic titles go bankrupt.

1958

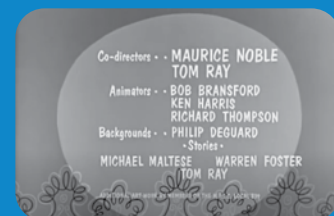


LATE 1950S TO MID-60S

Known for his work with Chuck Jones, including Jones' 1938 debut cartoon, **BEN WASHAM** serves as the president of Local 839.

MARCH

Read all about it! The first issue of *The Peg-Board* goes out to Guild members.



OCTOBER 11

Warner Bros.' *The Bugs Bunny Show* debuts on ABC. It features the credit: "Additional Art Work by Members of the M.P.S.C Local 839."

1954



1960

MID-
1970S

Having worked with many of Walt Disney's Nine Old Men, **HARRY "BUD" HESTER** serves as Guild president.

1978-
1982

One of the leaders of the 1941 Disney Strike, **MOE GOLLUB** helps the Guild during both of its "runaway production" strikes.

Blacklisted for union activities on the East Coast, Animator and layout artist **LOUIS "LOU" APPET** comes west and is eventually elected president of Local 839.

1965



1972

NOVEMBER

The first Annie Awards ceremony is held at the Sportsmen's Lodge. The honorees are brothers Dave and Max Fleischer, creators of *Betty Boop*.



1980

AUTUMN

Local 839 is fully moved into its new offices on 4729 Lankershim Boulevard in North Hollywood. The location will serve as the Guild home for more than 25 years.

1970

AUGUST

Following a "mini-con" in March, The Golden State Comic Book Convention debuts with more than 300 people in attendance. It will later change its name to San Diego Comic-Con and draw in crowds of more than 150,000.



1979

AUGUST 13

In response to "runaway production" (subcontracting animation work in other countries), Local 839 goes on strike against major TV studios Hanna-Barbera Productions, Ruby-Spears Productions, and DePatie-Freleng Enterprises.

AUGUST 24

The strike ends! The studios agree to a "runaway clause" guaranteeing in-studio staffing levels before a limited amount of work can be subcontracted out of the country.

SEPTEMBER 13

Veteran animator Don Bluth leads one-third of Walt Disney Studio's young animation staff in a mass resignation. They set up a new studio, Don Bluth Productions. With *The Secret of NIMH*, Bluth offers the first profit sharing contract (albeit with a wage cut) in the animation industry.

OCTOBER 15

Lyn Farris (later Lyn Mantta) is hired as a bookkeeper by Local 839. She later becomes the office manager, and when she retires in 2021, hers is the longest tenure in the Guild's history.



Animator Jim Carmichael takes over editorship of *The Peg-Board* with a regular publishing schedule. He designates his first issue as Volume 1, Number 1, establishing the sequencing we use to this day.

1963

JANUARY 30

For his Ph.D. thesis, MIT graduate student Ivan Sutherland created a computer program called Sketchpad. For the first time, a computer can be used to draw lines—paving the way for today's complex animation software.

1969



AUGUST 6

Despite the 1979 win, the studios refuse to renew the “runaway production” clause. With an overwhelming vote to authorize a strike, Local 839’s 1,600 members go on strike, this time against all animation studios in L.A.

OCTOBER 16

The 10-week strike ends—not happily, as strikers cross the picket line in week nine, and the president of the IATSE orders the Guild to call off the strike. As the result of a contract settlement that omits the “runaway production” issue, employment and Guild membership plummet.

**1980**

Local 839 establishes the American Animation Institute with the goal of providing reasonably priced education in the art and craft of animation by animation industry professionals.

**1983**

Storyboard and layout artist **TOM YAKUTIS** briefly serves as union president.

1982**1984-1992**

The Guild elects veteran Ink and Paint Artist **KARAN STORR** as its first female president.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers punishes Local 839 for its “runaway production” strikes, telling IATSE that it will no longer negotiate on behalf of the studios with Local 839 in the IATSE bargaining unit. Local 839 begins to bargain its own contract.

1985

The Society for Animation Studies is founded with a grant from Local 839. The society has hosted an annual conference since 1989 and publishes *Animation Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal.

With animation work shifting to Asia, Local 839 membership is now half of what it was following the failed strike in 1982.

1987

Anna Osborn and Cecilia Dellamore at the Golden Awards in the 1980s.

**1988**

Despite organizing the first computer animation shops, overall East Coast animation employment shrinks, and New York’s Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Local 841 merges with International Photographers of the Motion Picture Industry Local 644—now Local 600.



1989

FEBRUARY 3

Founded in 1962, Filmation Associates is purchased by an international investment consortium and shut down. More than 200 artists are laid off. It was the last studio producing TV animation solely in the United States.



NOVEMBER 13

Steve Hulett becomes Local 839's Business Representative. He holds the position for 27 years, and at the time of his retirement, he is the longest-serving union leader in the film and TV industry. The Guild building's Hulett Hall is named in his honor.

1990



While remaining two separate legal entities, MPI plans merge to form Motion Picture Industry Pension & Health Plans.

NOVEMBER 16

Disney's *The Rescuers Down Under* premieres. It is the first traditionally animated film to be painted digitally rather than using acetate cels and paint.

1984

JANUARY 20

The first Golden Awards banquet is held at Sorrentino's in Burbank. The purpose is to honor animation veterans who have worked in the industry for 50 years. Notable attendees included Chuck Jones and Bill Hanna.

SEPTEMBER 25

LaVerne Harding, Hollywood's first woman animator, dies at the age of 78. She's credited with Woody Woodpecker's 1950s redesign, and she worked on hundreds of shows in her decades' long career.

1992

FEBRUARY 19

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* becomes the first animated feature nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture.



OCTOBER 1

The Cartoon Network debuts. It launches to the finale of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, and shows the 1946 short film *Rhapsody Rabbit* featuring Bugs Bunny as its first cartoon. Initial programming is exclusively reruns of Warner Bros., MGM, and Hanna-Barbera cartoons.

CARTOON NETWORK



1993

Having served as the L.A. animation unit for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, The Baer Animation Company, founded by Dale and Jane Baer, signs with Local 839.

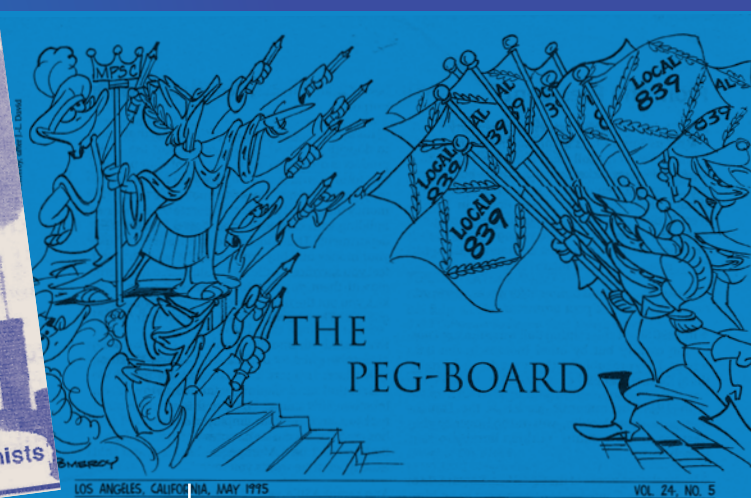
SUMMER

The Guild gains three new signatory studios: Rich Entertainment, Kroyer Films, and Leiva-Rees Productions.

SUMMER

As IATSE celebrates its 100th anniversary, it charts the Animation Guild IATSE Local 843 in Orlando. This is the first new screen cartoonists guild in 41 years, since our charter in 1952.

THE
BAER ANIMATION CO.



1996

JANUARY

The Guild partners with ASIFA-Hollywood to host the first Afternoon of Remembrance at the Hollywood Methodist Church. The event, created to honor those in our animation family who passed away the previous year, moves a few years later to the Hollywood Heritage Museum in the Lasky-DeMille Barn and eventually to our own Hulett Hall.



JULY

The Guild enters the computer age according to *The Peg-Board*: "We're proud to announce our new Local 839 World Wide Web page!"

AN AFTERNOON OF REMEMBRANCE



1994

The American Animation Institute registers more than 1,200 students for 38 classes, giving it the distinction of being the largest training program for screen cartoonists in the United States.

Local 839 offers a 401(k) Pension Plan to supplement the two pensions of the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plan.

SPRING

Local 839 signs a contract with the brand-new DreamWorks Animation. We are the first union the studio signs with!

JUNE

Stewie and the rest of the Griffin gang join Local 839 as Fox's *Family Guy* becomes a union shop.

1992-2001

For nearly a decade, **TOM SITO** serves not only as Guild president, but also as its unofficial historian.



1995



1999



2004

MARCH 15

The Guild opens a free, self-instructed computer lab, allowing members to take advantage of the opportunity to use “state-of-the-art Windows and Macintosh computers with the latest CG hardware.”

OCTOBER

Persistence pays off. By an overwhelming 166 to 20, employees of DPS Film Roman vote to join TAG. The studio produces *The Simpsons* and *King of the Hill* for Fox. The contract is ratified in January 2005.

2007

JANUARY

Netflix announces it will launch a streaming video service, “Watch Now,” that will deliver content directly to TVs, computers, and tablets. The animation landscape is forever changed.



JULY

TAG and the American Animation Institute move into their new headquarters at 1105 N. Hollywood Way in Burbank.

AUGUST

Sideletter N enters the Collective Bargaining Agreement, setting wage minimums and improved working conditions for New (streaming) Media.



2009



The Academy Awards presents its first Oscar for Best Animated Feature to *Shrek*.

2002



Walt Peregoy

2010

FEBRUARY

TAG's Gallery 839, located in the new Hollywood Way headquarters, presents its first exhibition titled Canvas, Bronze and Polyresin. It features animation veterans Bill Wray, George Scribner, Annie Guenther, Vicki Banks, and Ruben Procopio. The goal of the gallery's proposed First Friday exhibitions are to focus on work done by animation artists outside their day-to-day jobs.

2002-2010

Animator and Animation Supervisor **KEVIN KOCH** helps the Guild through most of the 2000s.

JULY

The Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Guild changes its name to The Animation Guild and Affiliated Electronic and Graphic Artists, IATSE Local 839. In short, the MPSC is now known as TAG.

NOVEMBER

Nickelodeon Animation Studios signs its first Collective Bargaining Agreement with Local 839, bringing *Dora the Explorer* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* into the Guild fold.



2011

JANUARY

Steve Hulett introduces a series of online audio interviews with the “old guard” of hand-drawn animation. The project expands into an oral history archive featuring in-depth conversations with legends in the field of animation.



Martha Sigall

2012



TAG rebrands with a new logo. According to the design firm behind it, "As the lowercase 'a' and 'g' join together to form the symbol, the letters seem to be in constant movement, animated."

2013

SPRING

Disney layoffs hit veteran animators who have worked at the House of Mouse for decades, essentially dismantling the studio's hand-drawn animation division.

Following a five-year effort, and an overwhelming 90.1% vote, Nickelodeon's CG artists ratify a contract with TAG.

2017

FALL

Members have a new way to show their Local 839 solidarity and pride with the birth of TAG Tuesday.

OCTOBER

More than 200 women and gender-nonconforming professionals in the animation industry (many of whom are Guild members) publish an open letter to all major L.A. studios to "wipe out sexual harassment in the animation industry."



2011-2019

Guild presidents during this decade include **BOB FOSTER, NATHAN LOOFBOURROW, JACK THOMAS, LAURA HOHMAN, and KC JOHNSON.**

2014



SEPTEMBER

Having taken the unusual step of organizing mid-production, the crew of *Rick & Morty* ratify a new labor agreement with TAG. *Rick & Morty* is an Adult Swim series, and the contract is considered especially notable since the majority of Adult Swim productions are not unionized, with most artists working at studios that produce Adult Swim shows at wages below union minimums.

2016

JUNE

Best known for work on *Futurama* and *The Simpsons Movie*, Rough Draft Studios reaches an agreement with TAG that covers feature films and TV series.

2019

JANUARY

The first This Week @ TAG e-newsletter goes out, providing up-to-date information on events, benefits, members, and more.

JUNE 21

Following an overwhelming vote of approval, the crew of ShadowMachine's *Bojack Horseman* ratifies a contract with TAG.

MARCH

Five Guild members turn #MeToo into #MeToo with their live-action/animated segment about a case of harassment in the animation industry on *Full Frontal* with Samantha Bee.

NOVEMBER 2

After a many-year break, the Golden Awards return, honoring 28 Guild members who have spent 50 years or more dedicated to the craft of animation.

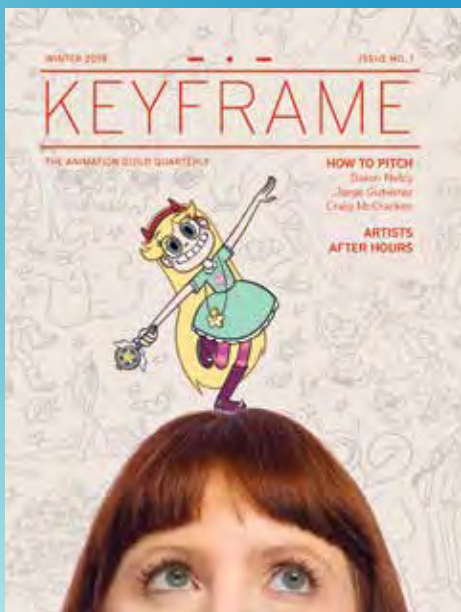
2018

MARCH

Keyframe magazine launches. The glossy quarterly features articles that celebrate the craft of animation and its union artists.

APRIL

TAG announces that more than 25% of workers under its union contract are women. This is the first time in modern history that the 25% mark has been reached.



2021 ILCA LABOR MEDIA AWARDS



Three years later the magazine wins a first place in general excellence in the Labor Media Awards.





2020

FEBRUARY 16

TAG hosts “Championing Diversity: A Conversation with Animation Luminaries.” Featuring Jane Baer, Floyd Norman, Enid Denbo-Wizig, and Willie Ito. Within the year the People of Color and Black Artists committees are established.

MAY 6

With the COVID-19 pandemic driving everyone to work from home, TAG holds its first General Membership Meeting on Zoom.

MAY 7

While the majority of the entertainment industry is hit hard by the pandemic, TAG members continue to work. In support of our union kin, TAG’s Executive Board votes to donate \$210,000 to support all IATSE members through the MPTF and the Los Angeles Federation of Labor.



2019-2022

Supervising Director **JEANETTE MORENO KING** leads the Guild into a new decade and through the challenges of the pandemic.

2021

JANUARY

Expanding its reach within the world of streaming, Nielsen Ratings releases its list of the Top 10 streamed movies of 2020. Eight are animated!

MARCH

TAG releases a report that the percentage of women working at union studios rose to 30.4% in 2020, and to 31.6% as of March.

SEPTEMBER 23

As IATSE prepares for Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations, the first TAG Tactical Action Group meets. By the end of the year TAG has reached out to 1,637 members, preparing for an unprecedented level of participation in TAG’s 2022 negotiations.

SEPTEMBER

Animation workers at Titmouse Vancouver ratify a new agreement with The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 938. The previous year, 87% of the crew voted on unionization, with more than 98% in favor. Titmouse Canada is the first animation studio in Canada to unionize.

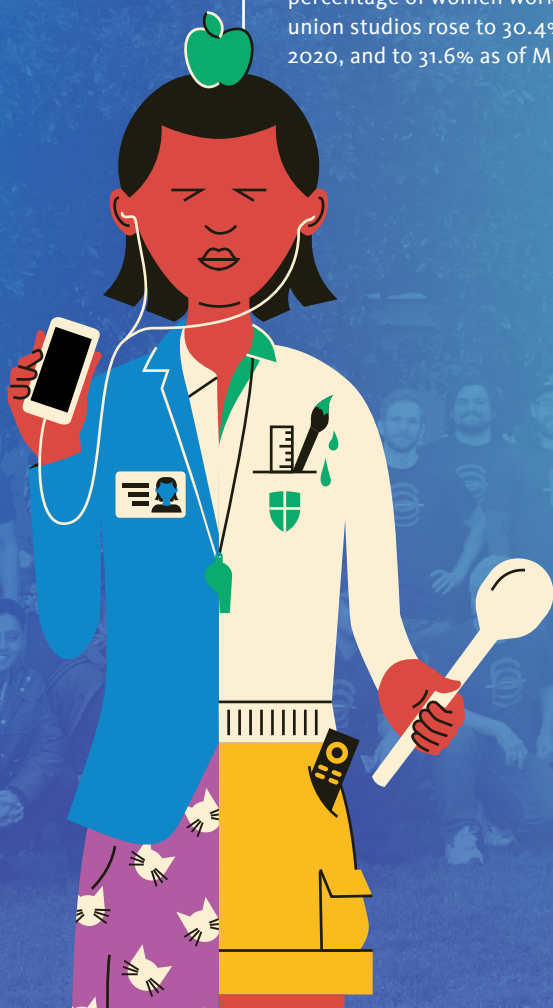


2022

JANUARY

To date—at more than 5,000 members strong—TAG has more than 23 committees and dedicated groups comprised of hundreds of engaged members focused on craft, advocacy, community, and organization.

For photography and illustrations, we would like to thank Disney, DreamWorks Animation, *The Pegboard*, The Animation Guild archives, The Animation Guild blog, and the many members who have shared images with us. For research resources, special thanks to Tom Sito, author of *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson*.



ACROSS THE

1960s JOANNA ROMERSA



Following short stints on *Lady and the Tramp* and *Sleeping Beauty*, Romersa spent nine years inking for Auril Thompson, then dove into a 33-year on-and-off career at Hanna-Barbera, moving from Animation Assistant to Director to Producer. Her final years before retirement in 2017 were spent as an Animation Director and Sheet Timer for Disney.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

I had no desire to get into the business. A friend asked me to come see her at her new job as a secretary at Disney Studio in Burbank. I was totally impressed and went home, gathered up some life drawings I had done in college, applied for a job, and was hired as an inker on *Lady and the Tramp* in 1954.

WHAT DID YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Every day was different. There was always something new to learn and a challenge to meet. I had the good fortune to know and be taught by the most talented, amazing, gifted people in the business, and many became my dearest friends.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER AND WHY?

Difficult to choose a favorite project. *Lady and the Tramp* because it was the first, *The 7D* because it was the last, and all in between.

TELL US WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 1960S.

Animation in the 1960s was traditional paper, paint, and camera animation. It could be limited or full or a mix of both. There was sunlight in the [Hanna-Barbera] building and laughter in the halls. There were cartoons of the real characters we worked with pinned up on walls, and jokes were played on friends on a regular basis. We worked hard and met deadlines and produced funny cartoons because it was fun!

HOW DID THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGE FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO WHEN YOU RETIRED?

Computers came along, changing everything from color to action, and the fact that most of the animation [began being] outsourced to countries outside the U.S. made a huge difference.

HOW DID THE UNION IMPACT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHEN YOU WERE A MEMBER?

I walked the picket lines—actually roller-skated—on the first strike [of 1979] but was not very active in the Union. I appreciated what they did for us but had no idea how important it was to work in a union shop. Now that I am retired, I truly appreciate my pension and would be lost without it!

AGES



From Joanna Romersa's memories of roller-skating the 1979 picket line to Anthony Chun's recollections of using "high-tech" Post-it notes for storyboarding in the early 2000s, seven TAG members across the decades reflect on their careers and how the Guild has been—and continues to be—a crucial part of their lives.

1970s ROBERT ALVAREZ

Currently an Animation Director at Cartoon Network, Alvarez is on his 54th year in animation. Since 1968, he has worked on more than 190 different shows. He still loves animation and is happy to be a part of the industry.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

In 1968, I got a phone call from a friend who was working at Fred Calvert's studio. I went there and Fred took me into a room and sat me down to do a test—an in-between. Twenty minutes later he came back and checked my drawing. He said I could start the next day on the *Banana Splits* show. The first animation segments I worked on were "The Three Musketeers" and "The Arabian Knights." My salary to start was \$50 a week, but I didn't care because I was finally in the animation business.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER AND WHY?

My favorite is *Samurai Jack*. I feel that show was so well done, and the crew were so very talented. It also gave me my first Emmy.

TELL US WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 1970S.

In the 1970s the animation industry was pretty much the same as it was in the late 1960s. There were still a lot of Golden Age animators working in television, and it was great meeting your animation heroes and hearing about the past. The people that oversaw shows were usually old veterans from the 1930s or the 1940s. Work was seasonal. Almost all of the studios that were around back then are now gone, and the big corporations did not own the studios. It was a good time to get started because you could be taught how to work in the industry doing almost anything.

HOW HAS THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGED FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO NOW?

Back in 1968 everything was still done on paper. Shows were still inked and painted on cells. Productions were still

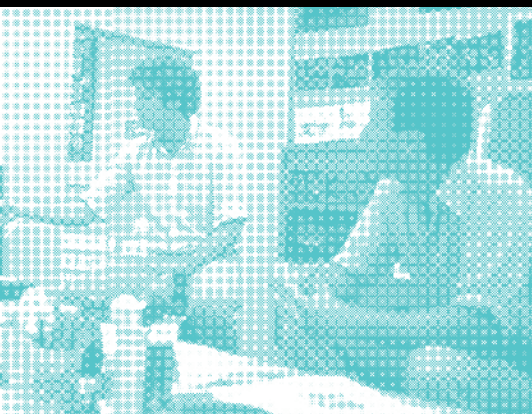
all done here in Los Angeles. Today we are working in the digital age. You no longer can hold the artwork in your hands. I prefer seeing and keeping the original art.

HOW HAS THE UNION IMPACTED THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER?

The Union has always been important to me. We all stand on the shoulders of those brave men and women who went out on strike [against Disney] in 1941. Animation artists benefit from a strong union.



1980s STEVE HULETT



From 1976 to 1986, former Local 839 Business Representative Hulett worked in the story department at Disney on movies like *The Fox and the Hound*, *The Black Cauldron*, and the *Winnie the Pooh* theatrical featurette. He departed (“got laid off”), did some freelancing for Warner Bros., and then joined the writing staff at Filmation until the studio closed its doors in 1989.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

In October 1976, I entered the trainee program in the animation department at what was then Walt Disney Productions. The artists who’d worked at the studios since the 1930s were retiring in droves, and the company was filling the department with newbies.

WHAT DID YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

The friendships, the camaraderie, the challenges that had to be met to get a project up and running—those were the main things. My best friend at Disney was a talented story artist named Pete Young, who died abruptly the fall of 1985. He was 37 when he passed. I still think about him.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU’VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER AND WHY?

My favorite would be *The Great Mouse Detective*. Story-wise, the feature turned out well. It was the first project under the Katzenberg-Wells-Eisner regime at Disney. It was the first project on which John Musker and Ron Clements were directors; it came in on time and on budget, and made a bit of money.

TELL US WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 1980S.

During the time I worked on the creative side, it was a different animal entirely from what it is today. The animation industry in Los Angeles was considered a minor sideshow in the film industry: Disney did a feature every two to three years, Hanna-Barbera and a few other TV animation studios cranked out Saturday morning cartoons, and the Guild had between 1,000 to 1,600 active members.

At the end of the 1980s, active membership in TAG was down to just over 700 members. Filmation, which had been a large studio in the mid-1980s, closed its doors. Things were bleak.

HOW DID THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGE FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO WHEN YOU RETIRED?

By the time I retired as TAG’s business rep in 2016, cartoons had gone from being a minor element in the motion picture industry to a major driver of employment and profits, with lots of animation studios in operation.

HOW DID THE UNION IMPACT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHEN YOU WERE A MEMBER?

It kept a floor on wages when times were bad and ensured good medical benefits and a pension during fat and thin times. It launched a 401(k) plan that gave members access to three different pension plans: the traditional Motion Picture Industry Pension, the Individual Account Plan, and the TAG 401(k) Plan.

1990s EUGENE SALANDRA

Salandra studied animation at New York University under John Canemaker, as well as classical figure drawing at the Art Students’ League of New York. After graduating from NYU, he spent time at MTV Animation and Jumbo Pictures, got his first union gig on Turner Feature Animation’s *Cats Don’t Dance*, and has since spent most of his career at Disney TVA and Disneytoon Studios.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

As a child, I was interested in drawing, performance, film, and puppetry. My mother Barbara and grandfather Eugene were creative and encouraged my interests. Lucille McKeon, an art teacher at our public school program for “gifted and talented students,” gave me



(THIS PAGE) Eugene Salandra with Marge Champion & John Canemaker-NYU, 1995; (OPPOSITE PAGE) Eugene Salandra working on *Faerie Film*, 1993



a Kodak book, *The World of Animation*, and it sparked a lifelong love of the medium.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Animation combines so many of the arts and is a collaborative medium. I enjoy those aspects of the work.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER AND WHY?

Definitely *Sofia the First*. It was a charming series, a great crew, and a favorite of my beloved mother, Barbara, who recently passed away.

TELL US WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 1990S.

Animation in the 1990s was enjoying a renaissance, after declining within the overall entertainment landscape in the mid-1980s. By the mid-1990s, studios

were trying to round up the very best talent to ride the animation wave.

HOW DO THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGED FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO NOW?

When I started, animation was a 19th-century artform in the 20th century, in many ways. I worked pencil-on-paper until 2010. It was also a less diverse profession years ago. My mentor, the great Tissa David, had directed in Europe but arrived in New York in the mid-1950s to discover a very sexist industry. That has changed to a great extent, thank God.

HOW HAS THE UNION IMPACTED THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER?

The union has been a great blessing. It has grown enormously since I became a member in 1995. It is more diverse, the membership is more involved, and it is a great resource to all those in the industry.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

I got lucky and was hired at Sony Television Animation as a revision/cleanup artist after a short stint drawing superhero comics.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

I love collaborating with great people on great projects, and I get to make funny pictures come to life!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER AND WHY?

I love *Solar Opposites*. I got to assemble a wonderful crew and work on a show that combines my love of well-written comedy, sci-fi, action, and horror with generous helpings of sex, violence, and profanity!

TELL US WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 2000S.

The most advanced technology we were using to storyboard in the early 2000s was Post-it notes.

HOW HAS THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGED FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO NOW?

We're drawing on Cintiqs and timing our own boards to audio tracks, but it's basically the same: lots and lots of drawings in a short amount of time!

HOW HAS THE UNION IMPACTED THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER?

I'm incredibly grateful for the stability and advocacy the Union provides. In an industry where we move from project to project, studio to studio, it's great to know we have a body of fellow workers standing in solidarity with each other and offering continuity of benefits and rights in a sometimes volatile profession.

2000s ANTHONY CHUN

From storyboarding to directing, Chun has worked on children's shows, action, and adult comedy. Most recently he is supervising on *Solar Opposites*.





2010s IAN JONES-QUARTEY

After graduating from art school, Jones-Quarthey worked several small jobs for commercials, short films, and random pieces of animation in NYC before becoming an Animation Director on Adult Swim's *The Venture Bros.* He then moved out to L.A. and segued into storyboarding, supervising, and eventually show-running *OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes* at Cartoon Network. He's also worked on *Adventure Time* and *Steven Universe*.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

In the summer after my second year at School of Visual Arts in New York, I found an animation studio directory online and cold-called every phone number starting from A. I found an internship at a small commercial studio and never looked back!

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Collaboration is my favorite part. Nothing feels better than when people get to do their best work on their favorite part of the process, and you start to see those parts come together to form a well-oiled machine.



WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER?

I really enjoyed my time as Co-Executive Producer on *Steven Universe*. The project was so character-based but lore heavy. We had a lot of fun dreaming up the most exciting places for the show to go.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKED LIKE IN THE 2010S.

In the first part of the decade, streaming hadn't yet hit, and I recall the reliance on television ratings to determine a show's worth. Networks were jockeying for the correct timeslots for their shows to air in. I worked on *Adventure Time with Finn & Jake*, and in the years since I've seen its influence spread throughout the industry. Now even comedy cartoons are expected to have ongoing plotlines. There was also a huge rise

in independent animators making themselves known on YouTube, which was very inspiring.

HOW HAS THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGED FROM WHEN YOU STARTED TO NOW?

Streaming seems to have changed things a lot. It's rare to see shows go longer than 100 episodes. Cartoons are expected to have large, engaged fanbases online. Cartoons fronted by celebrities seem to be making a huge comeback.

HOW HAS THE UNION IMPACTED THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER?

It's been incredibly exciting to see more studios join the Union. Compared to when I joined the industry, there's much more knowledge about the Union among show staffs and way more excitement to participate and make it stronger.



2020s ALEX ANDERSON KENNEY

Anderson Kenney has been in the animation industry for six years. Her work tends to be animation-centered, often with a fun problem-solving component. After working as an animator at indie studio Explosm out of Texas, she moved to DreamWorks TV, where she's been a Digital Animator for the last two-and-a-half years. Now moving into a different CG role, she's looking forward to the new challenges.

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY?

When I was in high school, a friend introduced me to the recobbled cut of *The Thief and the Cobbler*. Seeing it, I was hit by the realization: "Oh wow, someone MADE this!" I had known I wanted to be an artist, but seeing that film sealed the deal for me, and I knew I had to be an animator.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY?

Seeing other people enjoying something you've made is one of the best feelings in the world. My most recent work was on a preschool show, and when friends and family send videos of their kids watching it, I get so excited. It makes the hard work worth it.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PROJECT YOU'VE WORKED ON IN YOUR CAREER?

That's a pretty tough choice, I've been very lucky to work with really great teams on fun projects. I'm going to give it to *Madagascar: A Little Wild* because there were very few days where I came to work and wasn't laughing.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY LOOKS LIKE TODAY.

We're in a bit of a unique spot right now. Most of us have spent the past two years working remotely. We have worked hard to provide entertainment to folks that need it, especially in the face of the pandemic. The industry these days is very global, with most productions being made through the collaborative efforts of teams spanning different states and even different countries.

HOW HAS THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY CHANGED FROM WHEN YOU STARTED?

Even in the short time I've been here, we've been through a lot of changes. Streaming media has risen to prominence in the last few years. Perhaps as a direct result of that, we're seeing a lot of really unique shows being made. I'm especially excited about the growth and variety we've seen in adult animation.



HOW HAS THE UNION IMPACTED THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHILE YOU'VE BEEN A MEMBER?

The Animation Guild has had a big impact on the industry. We've seen the formation of the first non-U.S. animation union with our sibling Local 938 in Canada, and we just saw the expansion of our Guild outside of California through the addition of our friends at Titmouse New York. It's an exciting time, and I can't wait to see what's coming next. 🍷

(FROM TOP LEFT): Joanna Romersa with Bill Hanna, Eugene Salandra at his pegboard at Disney TVA, the *What a Cartoon!* directors at Hanna-Barbera, the crew of *Close Enough*, and Robert Alvarez bowls with the *Capitol Critters* crew and spouses.

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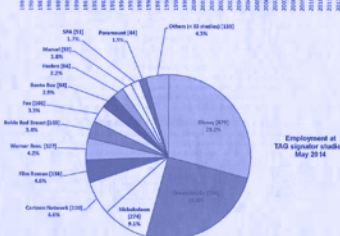
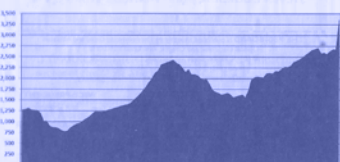


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TAG MEMBERSHIP AT ALL-TIME HIGH!



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The inaugural issue of *The Pegboard*.

Eventually, *The Pegboard* joined the digital age, and in 2012 it announced: "Members can now subscribe to an e-copy as an online Flash flipbook or a downloadable PDF file." Then, in 2015, it was taken over by its current editor, Recording Secretary Paula Spence, who used the newsletter's strong legacy to create an even more robust means of communication.

One of her reasons for wanting to expand in scope was that she thinks *The Pegboard* is a chance for those members who have the least amount of time "to get as much information as possible in one place so they can stay informed. People may not have time to join a committee, but at least they can keep track of what's going on." She considers the newsletter "a chance for the Union to communicate with its members," and a chance for members to get to know the Business Representative, the President, and other leaders through their monthly columns. It also gives members a voice. For example, the Golden Awards were revived after a lengthy absence after Robert Alvarez wrote an essay on the celebration's importance.

For 62 years *The Pegboard* has given us a valuable look into our historical journey as a Guild. Everything of importance that happened to Local 839 can be found on its front pages, from our Executive Board elections and the new studios that ratified agreements with us to "Members Call for STRIKE ACTION!" (1970), "The Computers are Coming!" (1980), and "Titmouse NY Raises the TAG Flag!" (2022). Since its first headline in March 1960—"The Economic Anarchy of Animation"—*The Pegboard* has served as our water cooler, high school yearbook, and town crier all in one, a role it will continue to play for future generations of Animation Guild members. ☺

The Pegboard masthead has served as an ever-changing exhibition of illustrations by members, including *MAD* magazine cover artist Sergio Aragones (BOTTOM RIGHT).



THE PEG-BOARD
MOTION PICTURE SCREEN CARTOONISTS
LOCAL 839, I.A.T.E.



THE PEG-BOARD
MOTION PICTURE SCREEN CARTOONISTS
LOCAL 839, I.A.T.E.



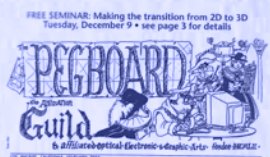
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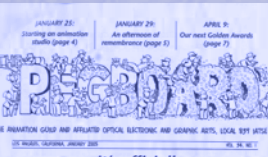
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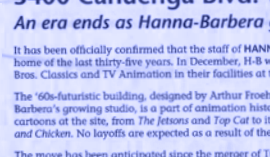
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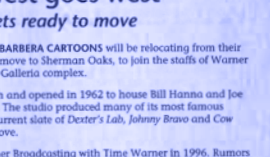
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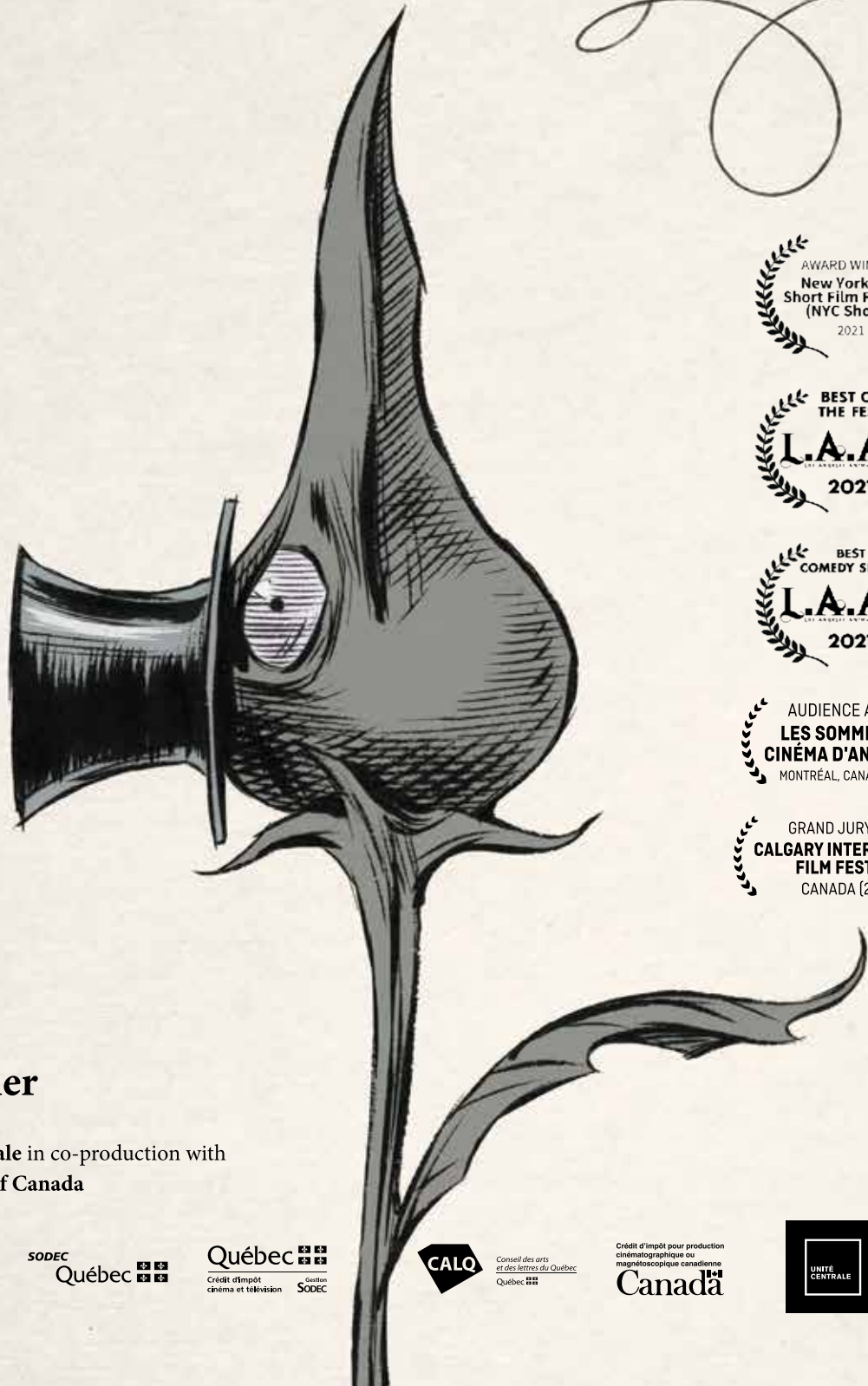
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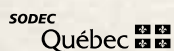
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ON
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FROM ITS PRAGMATIC, SERVICE-CENTRIC BEGINNINGS, LOCAL 839 HAS EVOLVED INTO A UNION THAT BOASTS UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF MEMBER PARTICIPATION, ACTIVISM, SOLIDARITY, AND COMMUNITY.

There was a time when many Guild members felt that Local 839 was an independent entity. It ensured certain work conditions, but really, what did the Union do?

In fact, Local 839 did *a lot* for its members: bargained for guaranteed wages, job categories, working conditions, health benefits, pension plans, and more. But there was a thought that these were things the Union—*them*—did while the members—*us*—worked. Sure, there were fun holiday parties, but the Union was considered by many to be a service.

When Business Representative Jason McLeod took the helm in 2016, he saw the opportunity to build upon the strong traditional union foundation his predecessors had constructed and take The Animation Guild in a new direction. Moving forward, there would be a dedicated effort to empower all members to understand the importance of their voices in shaping a vision of what the Union could be.

Since that time, continuing under the direction of our current Business Representative Steve Kaplan, The Animation Guild has expanded in numerous exciting directions, engaging members who in turn engage others, creating a domino effect of enthusiastic, inclusive teamwork across all generations and crafts.





CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH COMMITTEES

One of the many ways TAG members have found their voices is through the numerous all-volunteer-run committees. Under the headings of Craft, Community, Advocacy, and Organizing, these committees have created vital proposals for the bargaining table, and during the last two bargaining cycles we've had the largest negotiations committees in our history.

But the committees aren't just about important nuts and bolts issues like getting recognition for a specific craft or expanding skill sets through training. They are also about improving our members' overall quality of life. From the FAM Committee's work to draw attention to autism health care needs to the Queer TAG Committee's efforts to support the animation community's LGBTQIA+

members, the committees represent a diverse cross-section of The Animation Guild. It's not possible for everyone to always agree, but with our committees, everyone has a voice as well as a path to be heard.

JOINING THE MODERN WORLD

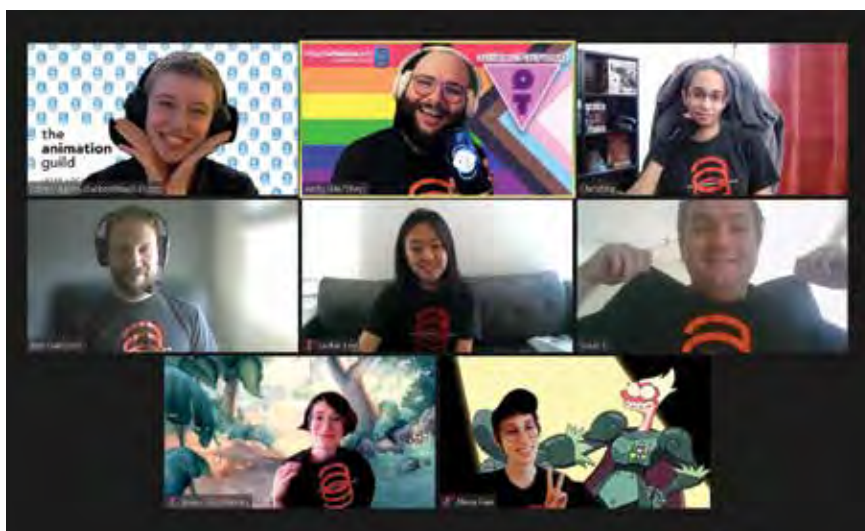
With an eye toward modernizing, TAG has been updating its databases so we can work more efficiently as an organization, increasing our communications efforts to improve transparency in how our Union works, and creating new means of connecting like *This Week @ TAG*, our member e-newsletter, to provide up-to-date information. We have also grown our staff. To the handful of core people who ran our office, we added a communications department, member programs coordinator, field rep, and an organizer dedicated to serving artists, technicians, and writers across the U.S.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

In 2017 member Lynn Hunter proposed doing something to promote the general membership meetings: What if we all wear our TAG t-shirts the day before the meeting? This idea, shepherded by former Director of Community and Culture Brooke Keesling, became TAG Tuesdays, where members of the Guild show their pride in being union members and show their employers the power in our numbers.

Along with this member-driven initiative, we expanded our event and workshop offerings. Lunch & Learns help address a variety of member needs, from improving credit scores to creating an ergonomic workspace to coping during Covid. Our panels—which didn't slow down but went virtual during the pandemic—offer information and insights, whether it's the ins and outs of showrunning or the history of diversity in animation. Through partnerships with our fellow local unions, we have expanded our reach beyond our Local 839 borders, and by connection with and supporting organizations like the Bric Foundation, LatinX in Animation, Black 'N Animated, and ASIFA, we have broadened how we engage with other organizations and doubled down on our commitment to a fully representative and inclusive industry.

Our holistic commitment can also be seen in our annual Portfolio Review Days, spear-headed by members Crystal Kan and Jake Hollander. By pairing members with hundreds of students who want to join our industry one day, we build a bridge, offer a first positive experience of The Animation Guild, and widen our mentorship reach



to improve our industry. Working with colleges and high schools in underserved communities like the Inglewood School District, we are inspiring a more inclusive workforce for the future. We understand that if we want to see change in the industry and create more equitable opportunities for studios to hire a more diverse workforce, then we need to be a part of creating that hiring pipeline.

CELEBRATION AND SOLIDARITY

Every new effort is a way of strengthening the Guild and showing those outside Local 839 that we are a force to be reckoned with. While more mixers may not seem like a serious contribution on the surface, they are a way for members working at different studios to get to know one another. We network, yes. But we also strengthen our sense of community—not to mention celebrating who we are.

Because celebrating is a crucial component of lifting our members up,

Keyframe magazine was conceived to tell the story of the union, our crafts, and our members—both on and off the job. We want the “outside world” to know the significant value of our members not only within the animation industry, but across the entire entertainment industry.

With celebration we bring our efforts full circle back to the core principle of any strong union: solidarity. The events, the workshops, the committees, the shout-outs—all of it has led to a greater desire to participate in organizing, as the last six months have shown. When it seemed that the Hollywood locals would go on strike, TAG mobilized in support. Our first-ever Tactical Action Group (TAG TAG) was born and instantly attracted hundreds of passionate, proud members with an eye to the future—for the benefit of Local 839 here in Los Angeles County and to ensure that the entire industry of artists across the United States have the same benefits and protections that we have worked so hard to achieve. 🌐

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: The crew at Bento Box shows their TAG Tuesday spirit, as do artists at Disney TV (**BOTTOM**). **THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE:** Animation luminaries at TAG’s “Championing Diversity” panel; Storyboard Artist Chris Paluszek; and TAG Tuesday for the *Jurassic World* crew at DreamWorks TV.





GROWING STRONG

AT AGE 70, TAG CONTINUES TO SHOW ITS MIGHT, ORGANIZING TITMOUSE NEW YORK AND SETTING THE STAGE FOR EXPANSION AROUND THE COUNTRY IN THE DECADES TO COME.

TAG neared the end of its seventh decade during unprecedented times. A pandemic was barreling toward its third year, hampering progress in many areas around the country. Local 839, on the other hand, was growing strong. Our membership was at an all-time high, our mobilization efforts were expanding exponentially, and we organized our first animation studio outside Los Angeles County since our charter in 1952.

With the support of TAG Business Representative Steve Kaplan and Organizer Ben Speight, an overwhelming

supermajority of more than 90% of the workers at Titmouse New York signed representation cards. As a result, the studio voluntarily recognized the unit, which was certified by a neutral arbitrator on January 7, 2022.

“It is wild to look back on where I was two years ago, making pennies, struggling to break in and knowing that if I was to have a stable livelihood in this industry, I’d have to leave everything behind and go west,” says Titmouse New York Story Artist T. Curry.

This milestone is the beginning of an active nationwide effort to represent animation workers across the United States—from fighting for expanded jurisdiction to helping organize studios in other counties and states.

This goal is echoed by Titmouse New York crew members like Background Designer Yves Menshikova who says, “I’m hoping that our victory here will be a catalyst for creating representation for animation workers spanning from coast-to-coast that aims to leave no one behind.”



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Michael J. Malone, *Managing Director*

e: mjmalone@sageviewadvisory.com

w: www.sageviewadvisory.com

SageView Advisory Group | 800.814.8742 | sageviewadvisory.com

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