

ISSUE NO. 25

# KEYFRAME

## THE ANIMATION GUILD QUARTERLY

# EXPLORING THE MIND THROUGH ANIMATION



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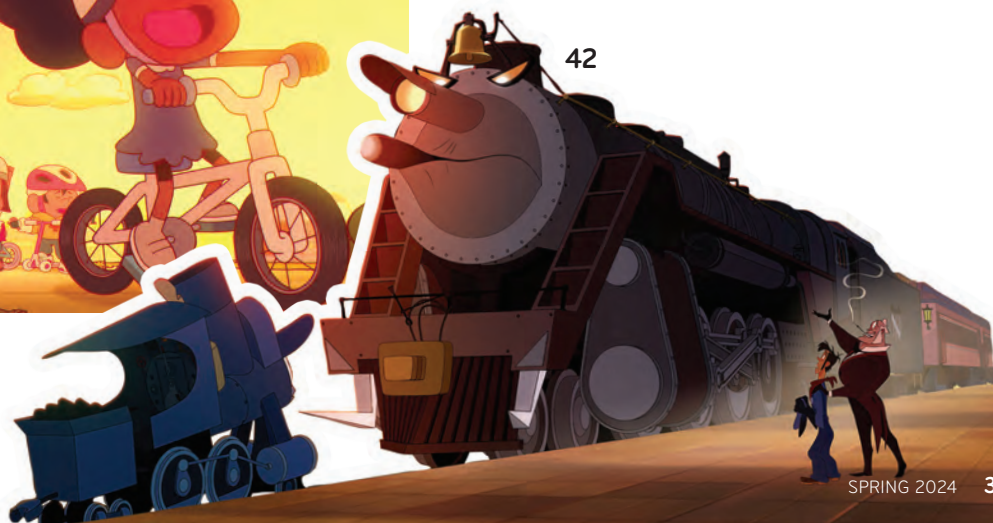
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## ON THE COVER

For *Orion and the Dark*, Visual Development Artist Emily Tetri drew the images for the notebook where the character Orion chronicles his fears.



# NEGOTIATING YOUR ANIMATION CAREER

## THE POWER OF CLARITY IN DEAL MEMOS



In the early days of my animation career, starting in my mid-20s, I hesitated to ask specific questions about job offers. The thrill of contributing to movies that my family and friends would eventually watch overshadowed my concerns about delving into details about pay and benefits. The fear of being perceived as a troublemaker and potentially jeopardizing opportunities held me back.

As the years passed, I learned a valuable lesson—the importance of a written agreement known as a Deal Memo. Without this document outlining crucial information, I realized I was doing myself a disservice, leaving room for misunderstandings between myself and the studio. It became evident that fostering clear communication through negotiation is an integral part of the hiring process. Over time, I discovered that not only does this benefit me personally, but it also contributes to building a robust professional network that extends beyond the confines of a single studio.

In the animation industry, where times have proven challenging, many artists and production workers are grappling with tough decisions. Some are exploring opportunities outside our field, while others are accepting positions at levels below their previous roles. The downward shift in job positions exerts pressure on wages, making it crucial for us to be aware of our rights. Fortunately, our Union contract serves as a safeguard, ensuring wage minimums that provide a level of stability during uncertain times.

Irrespective of where you stand in your career, it's imperative, at any stage, to secure a clear and comprehensible written agreement. Taking the time to review a Deal Memo thoroughly ensures that the offered wage aligns with The Animation Guild's standards, and that you are fully aware of the job description you're committing to. Understanding the benefit hours associated with your position, as defined by your job code in the Union contract, sets the groundwork for a transparent employer-employee relationship.

Whether you remain in animation or transition to a different industry, engaging in a frank conversation with your employer about wages, benefits, working conditions, and performance expectations becomes paramount in making informed decisions. This dialogue not only aids in your decision-making process but also provides a roadmap for the dynamics of your professional relationship.

In Solidarity,  
Jeanette Moreno King | President  
The Animation Guild, IATSE Local 839



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San Francisco Chronicle

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BEST FEATURE

# NIMONA

“A TRULY GROUNDBREAKING LGBTQ+ STORY.

Unlike anything else in feature animation history.”

Rolling Stone

“A VIVID CREATURE  
ALL ITS OWN.

At its heart, it's a pointed allegory about politicians who build their national profile on the backs of queer and transgender children.

Nimona the character doesn't claim to speak for them, but does try to speak to them and to others grappling with the concept of *what it might feel like when your shell doesn't match your soul.*”

The New York Times



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# CELEBRATING COLLABORATION, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY



**SINCE I CREATED *KEYFRAME* MAGAZINE, ONE THING REMAINS CONSTANT—THE JOY WE EXPERIENCE IN COLLABORATING WITH OUR IMMENSELY TALENTED MEMBERS.**

From the very beginning, when this magazine was just a vision, the aim was always to uplift and elevate the voices of our community, showcasing the brilliance that resides within our diverse group of artists, technicians, writers, and, now, production workers.

Over the last five years, the animation industry has experienced highs and lows—unforeseen challenges posed by the global pandemic and unexpected surprises such as flexible schedules and remote work opportunities. We witnessed the bursting of the streaming bubble, and, more recently, the unfortunate wave of layoffs that is affecting so many. Amidst these setbacks, however, the unwavering creativity and talent of our members have stood out as a beacon of inspiration. The arts must be a resilient force.

Another example of resilience: Mental health, once a topic shrouded in stigma, has become more accessible and widely discussed. In “The Mind Matters” (p.18), we explore how creators and experts are infusing animated TV shows and films with emotional wellness and mental health themes. It is a testament to the power of storytelling—entertaining, enlightening, and empathetic.

An important aspect of animation involves recognizing the responsibility that comes with influencing young minds. In an era where preschool shows hold significant sway over children’s development, our feature with the tongue-in-cheek title, “Kidding Around” (p.26), explores how TAG members both educate and entertain our future generations through bold imagery, music, and more.

On the legal front, we delve into personal service agreements—“Deal Memos 101” (p.34)—and what TAG members can do above and beyond Union protections to ensure their rights are safeguarded. In an industry where contracts can be intricate and negotiations complex, we hope to empower our members with knowledge. As a community, you deserve to be protected and supported in your endeavors.

In every page of this magazine, you’ll find the culmination of collaborative efforts, the celebration of creativity, and the power of a unified community.

Together, we will continue to create, inspire, and uplift.

*Alexandra*

Alexandra Drosu  
editor@tag839.org

## CONTRIBUTORS



**SONAIYA KELLEY**  
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# IN THE MOMENT

**ARTIST:** Janna Bock

**TITLE:** *Mortal Nonsense*

**MEDIUM:** Acrylic paint, Sharpie, and paper

**SIZE:** 9" x 12"



Janna Bock adores sitting back and observing people gathered in a lovely space to chat over drinks and food. The Visual Development

Artist says it gives her a sense of peace. What it also gives her is inspiration. On a romantic trip to France, visiting a wine bar in Nice led to the creation of her painting *Mortal Nonsense*.

While Bock could have gotten caught up in the details of the scene, she says: "I just wanted to get the feeling across of being there at that moment." This concept guided both her choice of materials and technique.

Bock started with a Sharpie to block in a sketch; a bold approach since "there's no

going back when you use a Sharpie," she says. She then added torn pages from the novel *Interview with the Vampire* to evoke the snippets of conversation happening in the scene. She loves author Anne Rice's bittersweet poetic language, but she doesn't deliberately select passages to suit a piece. "I think our brains like to make meaning and connections in most things we come across, so almost always, a passage [feels] right for the painting," she says. So right, in fact, that an evocative combination of words became the title for this particular work of art.

Bock next washed in thin layers of yellow and pink acrylic paint and worked up the thicker areas, focusing on the shape sizes, colors, and positive and negative space on the 9" x 12" canvas. This size was as deliberate a choice as all other

aspects of the piece. She says that there is something undeniable about how an image takes up physical space: "It makes the viewer aware of the composition in a visceral way."

Using her own artistic instincts rather than the digital tools of her job, such as undo, hue adjustment, and cut-and-paste, Bock has found that painting physically has made her more comfortable with letting go of control. "It's at once more deliberate and requires improvisation," she says. "The painting does at a certain point, bit by bit, tell me what it should be." And when it does, she lets it lead the way.

Bock's solo show, *Mortal Nonsense*, runs from March 2nd to March 18th at Keystone Art Space in Los Angeles. See more of Bock's work at [www.jannabockart.com](http://www.jannabockart.com).

# CRIME SCENES

*"The interesting thing is that the mystery framing of the story also helps with the game design. They're very symbiotic... I need to tell the player this information in this order so that they understand the mystery. Not just because it's a story, but because it's a puzzle that they have to solve."*

**THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE PAGE:** Woodard has fun with an evidence board to map out scenes from his crime-solving video game.

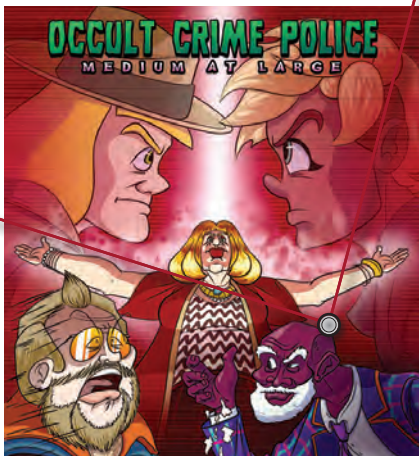


## A LOVE OF MYSTERIES, ANIMATION, AND FILMMAKING LED CAMERON WOODARD TO CREATE HIS OWN VIDEO GAME.

Cameron Woodard is taking things slower these days—compared to last year when he was working on the second “chapter” of his video game, *Occult Crime Police* (OCP). “I was basically just a machine for making this game. I did my day job, and I did work on this new chapter, and that was it,” says the Wild Canary Production Assistant and Story Revisionist.

This isn’t to say he’s not excited about the third OCP chapter he’s working on now. In fact, he says, he’s been envisioning an investigation into “a body-snatching epidemic at the local mall” since he first got the idea for OCP more than five years ago when he was a student in animation at Loyola Marymount University.

At school, when it came time to decide on his senior thesis, he says: “Everyone was picking their projects and I was like, it would be fun to do this weird mystery video game.” But he was pretty sure he wouldn’t be allowed to do it. “At some point somebody’s going to say, ‘You have to do a normal thesis,’...but that never happened, and so I made the whole game.”





Woodard's inspirations for *OCP* are conspiracy mystery stories like *Twin Peaks*, *The X-Files*, and *Gravity Falls*. It's also a "love letter" to Capcom's *Ace Attorney* series, "about playing a defense attorney defending your clients from murder charges in all of these wacky melodramatic cases," says Woodard.

Wacky is the operative word in *Case 1: Occult Crime Police*. A missing persons case at a mysterious government base has destroyed the reputation of Sheriff Miranda Warren. Now, a murder case at that same base offers her a chance for redemption. That is, if she has what it takes to deal with a condescending FBI Agent, a suspect who keeps lying to prove his own guilt, and a so-called "thought influencer." For *Case 2: Medium at Large*, a spirit medium claims to be able to use a séance to solve the case that ruined Warren's life—more murder, ghost hunts, and stupid witnesses ensue.



During a beginning "Investigation" sequence in *OCP*, the player is free to explore all the locations related to the crime, collect evidence, and speak to any of the eyewitnesses. Then, sometimes to uncover what a witness is hiding, a player enters into a "Persuasion" sequence. "Here you have a list of predetermined dialogue choices based on the witness' personality, and you have to pick the right ones to get them to open up," says Woodard. For instance, a player needs the help of a brusque and narcissistic FBI Agent; they



can choose between responses that flatter him, responses that are logical, or responses that are blunt and to the point. "If you pick the right responses in the right order, you'll get what you need," Woodard says. "Otherwise, you'll have to start over." Finally, there are "Interrogation" segments, where a suspect gives phony testimony, and the player uses the evidence they've gathered to prove the suspect is lying.

The version of *OCP* that Woodard created in college evolved into what he calls the "cleaned-up version," released in 2021 by his newly formed Eggcorn Games and followed by the second chapter in 2023. Each chapter, or case, takes place in the same world and is a self-contained mystery. "The interesting thing is that the mystery framing of the story also helps with the game design," Woodard says. "They're very symbiotic...I need to tell the player this information in this order so that they understand the mystery. Not just because it's a story, but because it's a puzzle that they have to solve."

Except for the music and sound effects, created by Woodard's friend Sam Santillan, Woodard is responsible for all aspects of *OCP*: writing, animating, and coding. To create the character animation in the original chapter, he used Toon Boom, but for the second chapter, he switched over to Clip Studio because he liked the program's brushes and tool work. "It does make it a little trickier to do full frame-by-frame animation, but I think the trade-off is worth it," he says. He modeled the environments in Blender and then moved them into Clip Studio, drawing over the top to get the proportions right. The game itself runs through an engine called Ren'Py. This open-source game engine was designed for

making visual novels, which Woodard describes as "a funny term for games where there's a lot of writing."

Ren'Py did some heavy lifting, but Woodard says he had to build coding on top of it to customize the game: "All of the investigation mechanics had to be programmed by me." For example, he built out a custom inventory system so a player can pick up evidence, look at it, and show it to different characters.

"Basically, every character in the game, you can talk to [them] and you can show them all the evidence you've picked up," he says. "You can ask them about any other person who's involved with the case. One of the things I'm really proud of is that all of these [questions] will have some kind of unique response to them. It's not just a generic: 'I don't know about that object' or 'I've never met that person.' Each of the characters will respond in a way that reflects their personality and the object they are being shown."

In turn, *Occult Crime Police* is a reflection of Woodard. Not only does it embody his passion for animation, filmmaking, and storytelling, but it also showcases his particular brand of humor—wherever he can, he sneaks in a joke. As well, it's helped him discover unique strengths to expand his skills as he continues on his animation journey.

— Kim Fay



THIS PAGE: Abramovici derives inspiration from studying skulls. OPPOSITE PAGE: (FROM TOP) Abramovici's love of drawing is ongoing; With his painting "Elequid," Projection mapping his art at Orlando's interactive arts event IMMERSE; Exhibiting his paintings at Blue Sky Studio.

# SMART ART

DANIEL ABRAMOVICI'S ECLECTIC CAREER PAIRS HIS LOVES OF ART AND TECHNOLOGY.

When Daniel Abramovici moved from New York to Los Angeles with his family in 2020, he intended to start a projection mapping business. He'd discovered projection mapping a few years earlier with a friend, exploring it for fun using his personal artwork as a base. But the pandemic brought that plan to a halt. With everything shut down, he took up surfing, and these days he's back on land as the CG Supervisor and Co-Showrunner of a to-be-announced Nickelodeon series.

Abramovici's journey to this role has been a natural, if not eclectic, progression. For most kids, Saturday mornings mean activities like dance classes, piano lessons, or soccer practice. For Abramovici, who was raised in Toronto, Saturdays were for going to his neighbor's house. That's where Mrs. Elliot—he never knew her first name—would instruct Abramovici and five or six other kids from the neighborhood on the fundamentals of art.

"I remember one of my first classes with her, she was like, 'Here's an apple. Draw it,'" Abramovici says. "I thought to myself, 'This is so simple.' So, I drew a picture of an apple, and she quickly corrected me and showed me how complicated it was to actually draw an apple in real life: all the nuances and shadow and light and sculpting it with just a pencil." It was his first awakening to the realization that "art is really involved," he says.

Abramovici's musician father and interior designer/flowerist mother signed him up for Mrs. Elliot's classes because they recognized early on that he had a passion. Abramovici family lore, he says, is that "as soon as they put a pencil in my hand, I was always drawing." His mother would also routinely take him to museums. He calls himself a very "spongy kid," and he fell in love with Impressionism and German Expressionism. "I just liked the dark palettes and the really heavy strokes," he says of the latter. As a teenager, he went through



a self-described “punk rock phase” with an adulation of Neo-expressionist street artist Jean-Michel Basquiat.

Because art was the only subject that interested Abramovici in high school, his parents let him take several weeks off school to put together portfolio packets for art-focused colleges. He attended Ontario’s Sheridan College, where—thanks, in part, to Mrs. Elliot—he was able to skip the first year’s courses of art fundamentals because he already understood introductory topics.

Abramovici entered the university to study illustration and moved onto photography, mostly so that he could learn how to showcase his work. This led to painting and, eventually, computer animation and technical directing. “Connecting painting, the [camera] lens, and computer graphics—I knew that there was something there. [But] I didn’t know how it all came together,” he says. His computer animation class was where he figured that out.

After graduation, Abramovici joined the Toronto-based film and TV animation house Nelvana. He did camera layout and character work there for about four years, but his goal was to move into visual effects. He fudged his way through an interview with Disney to get hired as a compositor on *The Wild*, and when that contract was up, he moved into live action with the horror film *Silent Hill*.

He calls *Silent Hill* a real eye-opener because he had to create Z-depth passes with Rotoshape, a free-hand rotoscoping tool. After taking some time off to produce a showcase of his own art, Abramovici joined a friend in New York for a compositor role that was supposed to only keep him in the country for three months. Instead, it segued into more permanent employment in the states that included more than a decade at animation house Blue Sky Studios, where he met his wife, Ashleigh Abramovici.

With credits that include *Burn After Reading* and *Rachel Getting Married*, Abramovici

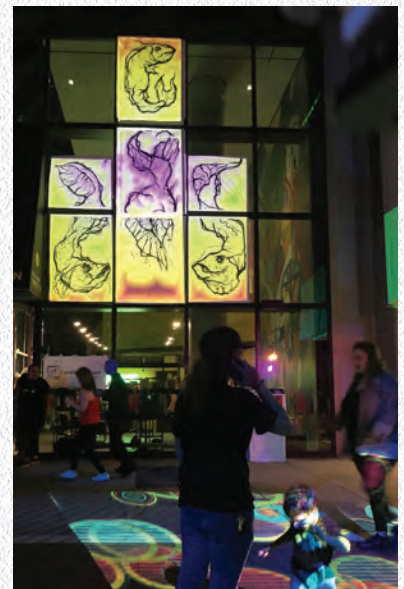
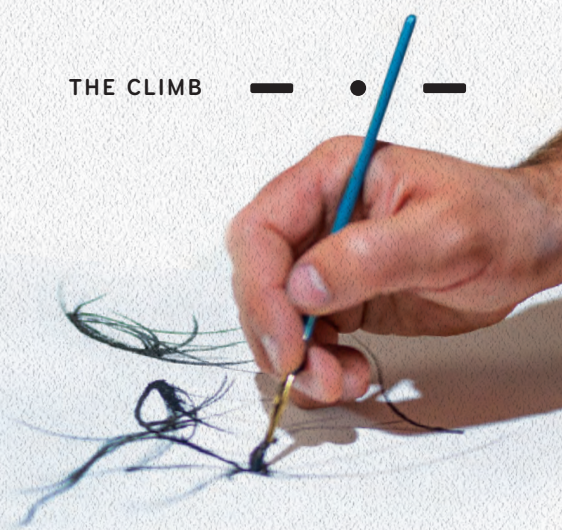
says he’d never planned to focus specifically on live action or animation. “It was always the role [itself] that looked interesting to me,” he says. When one such role with both creative and technical work opened up, he was inspired to try something totally different from the compositing and live action he’d done previously. This turned out to be stereoscopic work on a range of films including *Rio* and *Ice Age: Continental Drift*.

Abramovici isn’t one to sit still, though. With others he developed patented projects like a 3D contact sheet that let animators look at scenes in stereo and quickly see if the shots were consistent with each other. He worked in the virtual production pipeline space, assembling a team of coders who developed a virtual reality tool set that would allow cinematographers and others to “enter” a CGI project the way one would a VR game. He also oversaw a team of artists who helped transform the *Ice Age* short film *No Time for Nuts* into a 4D theme park ride that would appear at places like New York’s Central Park Zoo and The Adventuredome in Las Vegas. This meant turning a 10-year-old film that had not been made in 3D into one that not only had 3D components, but also had those components timed to appear when the ride introduced elements like moving chairs, lasers, and water.

As for what Abramovici does in his spare time—yes, he does have some—he never lost his love for drawing and painting. A recent TAG exhibition showcased works that spanned more than a decade, an exploration of ethereal creatures using linework to mirror the organic flow found in nature. He also enjoys watching animated programs with his kids. “Every time they watch a cartoon, they ask me if I worked on it,” he says. “They think I leave the house and then things [just] show up on Netflix and Disney.”

If they only knew—his job is as deceptively difficult as drawing an apple.

– Whitney Friedlander





# RIPPLE EFFECTS

HEAD OF EFFECTS (OR FX) REQUIRES TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW, CREATIVE THINKING, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, AND A DESIRE TO NURTURE TALENT AND WATCH IT GROW. LEARN MORE FROM THESE TAG MEMBERS ABOUT WHAT IT TAKES TO GET THE JOB DONE.



**JASON MAYER**  
HEAD OF FX

*Kung Fu Panda 4,*  
DreamWorks Animation

Jason Mayer started his film career in live-action FX, with his first feature credit on the BAFTA Award-winning VFX in *The Day After Tomorrow*. Soon after, he jumped over to animated features at DreamWorks Animation and has contributed FX to 19 features along with a variety of commercials, specials, and theme park rides. He just completed his 19th year at DreamWorks, which has included Annie and VES Awards for FX contributions. Among his career highlights are *The Croods*, all three *How to Train Your Dragon* films, both *Boss Baby* films, and the *Kung Fu Panda* films. He is currently Head of Effects on *Kung Fu Panda 4*.

## HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

An animated feature can have between 500 to 1,200 effects (FX) shots. It requires a team that can range in size from 15 to 50, depending on the schedule. The Head of Effects (HoFX) oversees that department. The HoFX will periodically review script pages, storyboards, and pre-vis/layout as editorial continues to refine the cut, to call out where FX are needed, and to provide a bid for the resources required. As those sequences progress through the pipeline, we often revisit these bids once models, characters, and animation are completed. It is crucial to stay in contact with leadership of other departments to achieve success. We provide feedback on ways to retain the creative intent while simplifying the cost of the work. We also call out any specific technological or visual development required in the FX to achieve the vision of the director. The HoFX is also

responsible for casting out these tasks to the members of the team. We use a combination of an artist's strengths in the various categories of FX like fire, water, clouds, destruction, etc., and then balance that against career growth. A goal on every film is to give every artist something that will grow them in some way, enhance their expertise, or improve their demo reel.

## WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING HOFX?

You are the conduit for your department into the show leadership and will often get to discuss with the director what their vision is and what are the relevant story moments. They are relying on you to bring your experience to offer suggestions to further that storytelling with the FX animation while staying within your budget. At the studio department level, you also play a role in hiring new talent. This helps shape the department's talent pool with great people that support each other. One of the most rewarding parts of my job is to see people thrive in their roles, be recognized for their contributions, and grow into leaders themselves.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING HOFX?

Trust is the number one thing you must have to be an effective leader of any department. A career of high performance is helpful and can help foster initial trust that you've walked a mile in your team's shoes, but look for opportunities to help lift up your fellow coworkers as you're seeking that promotion.





## ERIN V. RAMOS

### HEAD OF EFFECTS ANIMATION

*Wish*, Walt Disney Animation Studios

Erin V. Ramos started at Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2014 to do development work on the water animation pipeline on *Moana*, for which she and her team won an Annie Award for Outstanding Achievement, Animated Effects in an Animated Production. From there she went on to serve as an Effects Supervisor on *Frozen 2*, and she was Head of Effects Animation on *Encanto* and *Wish*.

### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR JOB?

My team is in charge of the effects work, which can range from large-scale destruction to creating magical sparkles. What I love about effects work is that it's a mixture of art and science. It's a lot of physics-based work, but we use that foundation to create effects that are beautiful and believable. We strive for believability, not necessarily realism.

As Head of Effects, I oversee all the effects work on a show and make sure everything stays consistent with the shape language of our film. I also work with the Production Designer to make sure our effects match the given artwork. Every day I review my team's work and decide whether it's ready to be shown to the directors or whether it needs more tweaking. It's a lot of strategizing and planning but is also very creative.

### WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES OF YOUR JOB?

As an effects artist, you only have to worry about the shot you're working on; but as Head of Effects, you have to worry about the entire movie and make sure we're keeping continuity. Having to

keep that bigger picture in your head—juggling multiple sequences and a wide variety of effects—is quite challenging, and I rely heavily on my production team to make sure everything is scheduled correctly and that everybody has something to work on. I don't know what I would do without my production team—they're top-notch!

### WHAT ARE THE BEST PARTS ABOUT BEING HEAD OF EFFECTS?

Some of the best parts of my job are when I'm in director review, and my artist is presenting their work. By this point, I've seen their work multiple times and given all the notes I need to, and I feel like it's ready to be shown to the directors. I leave it up to my artist to present their work and feel incredibly happy for them when they get their shot approved. It's a great feeling knowing how much work my artist has put into a shot and watching them put their best foot forward and succeed. I'll never get tired of that.

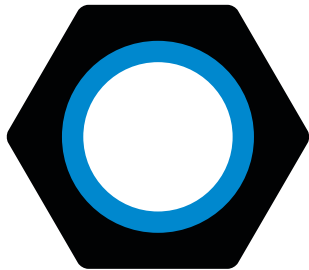
### DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR ASPIRING HEAD OF EFFECTS?

Communicate well! I think the great part of working at this level is that we get to be in the story rooms early and pitch our own ideas for how the effects can work with the story. It's a skill to be able to speak up in a room full of other department heads and share your ideas with confidence. It's also important to be able to communicate notes effectively to your team. The clearer you can be with your art direction, the better time the artist will have, and the more efficient things will be.

# LABOR SCHOOL

**THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
FEDERATION OF LABOR, AFL-CIO**

YOU'VE SEEN THE NAME AT  
UNION EVENTS AROUND TOWN:  
THE LA FED. WHAT IS IT AND WHAT  
DOES IT DO? READ ON TO FIND OUT.



## WHAT IS THE LA FED?

The Los Angeles County Federation of Labor is the local arm of The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), which represents union members around the country with operations such as organizing efforts, educational campaigns, and support for legislation that benefits workers.

## WHEN DID IT ORIGINATE?

The LA Fed was officially organized in 1889 by five unions: bakers, cigar makers, printers, tailors, and carpenters. More than a century later, it has evolved into an organization that includes 300+ affiliated union and labor organizations representing more than 800,000 members.

## WHY DOES IT MATTER TO YOU?

Whether The LA Fed is working with Labor Community Services on a holiday food distribution, or providing strategies for an organizing effort, its scope encompasses a variety of needs. Its monthly House of Labor meetings are made up of delegates from members of all unions under The LA Fed umbrella. Informed by the Council on Political Education, delegates vote on which politicians and campaigns The LA Fed will endorse. And on a closer-to-home level, delegates can bring requests for support. For example, if TAG is going to hold a rally, it can request support from all the unions under The LA Fed. In the way that TAG members work together to create internal solidarity, and TAG supports and is supported by other IATSE locals, The LA Fed casts the net of support wider to give a single union greater leverage for its labor actions.



MEET  
YOUR  
TAG  
STAFF

LESLIE  
SIMMONS  
FIELD REPRESENTATIVE AND  
POLITICAL COORDINATOR





# LET'S NEGOTIATE

## LEARN ABOUT THE COMMITTEE THAT NEGOTIATES TAG'S MASTER AGREEMENT.

Every three years, The Animation Guild bargains its Master Agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP). These negotiations are directed by our Business Representative, Steve Kaplan, and a Negotiations Committee consisting of Guild members. Any member in good standing is eligible and can submit an “expression of interest.” These submissions are then reviewed by Kaplan and the Executive Board.

Kaplan says that the goal in putting the committee together is to select a group of people that represents the body of the Guild. This includes members from every craft, new members, veteran

members, and members from a diversity of backgrounds.

While Kaplan is officially the head of the committee, in previous negotiations he counted on the consensus of the group, saying: “It’s the committee that decides what to move forward with and what to hold back on. [Because of this], the group really does need to come together as a whole and act as democratically as possible.”

Leading up to negotiations, the committee’s job is to craft and approve proposals. These proposals are based on a variety of interactions with the membership. This includes craft town

halls, to learn more about issues affecting crafts directly from the members; a survey about wages and working conditions, which helps the committee understand the issues that need to be prioritized; and connecting with committees that have been preparing for upcoming negotiations since the last contract negotiations.

For this year’s negotiations, expressions of interest have been submitted. With the resulting committee to represent the interests of the Guild’s almost 6,000 members, Kaplan calls being on the Negotiations Committee “one of the most meaningful things a member can do.”

### WHAT ARE YOUR JOB DUTIES?

As a TAG Field Rep, I enforce the contracts. This means outreach to studios to deal with member misclassification or workplace issues. I participate in contract negotiations and support organizing staff in their campaigns as needed. I also work as the liaison for TAG Member Engagement (TAG ME), providing input and support, including their monthly phone/text banks to the membership.

With 15 years of experience working for unions, I am deeply involved with the local labor movement and the various state and local AFL-CIO bodies that represent thousands of union members across the country. As TAG’s Political Coordinator, I run the union’s political program,

including supporting the Political Action Committee for the annual Post-It Note Show fundraiser; attending California IATSE Council meetings; participating in political candidate endorsement interviews; and establishing relationships with elected officials. In 2024, I’m focusing not only on the national and local elections, but also on lobbying for programs or studio tax breaks that can keep animation jobs local and in the U.S.

### WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR JOB?

My favorite part of the job is representing our members and making real change in their lives. When members are underpaid or misclassified, there’s nothing more satisfying than getting these errors fixed

and putting money in their pockets or getting their hours corrected with MPI. This part of the work provides empowerment and an educational moment for our members—which I love to see. I also just enjoy interacting with our talented members and getting to know them. This helps me a lot on the Political Coordinator side when I speak with political leaders about our membership, challenges, and issues. It all ties in together.

### WHAT’S A FUN FACT ABOUT YOU?

I’m a big animal person. I was a volunteer zookeeper for almost 30 years working with big and small wild cats (tigers, jaguars, cougars, etc.) and even traveled in cargo with a lion to Vietnam! I currently volunteer with Downtown Dog Rescue at their monthly pet clinics in South Los Angeles.




# The Mind Matters

By Kim Fay

Intention and expertise guide artists exploring mental health and emotional wellness in animation.





From an episode touching on cognitive behavior therapy in *Steven Universe* to Perrito the therapy dog in the movie *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*, the past decade has seen animation actively exploring mental health and the different ways it can be depicted. Words like mindfulness and intention not only help guide productions, but this language is also finding its way into storylines and dialogue. To make sure they get it right, some creators reach out to experts to ensure their shows are authentic and meaningful. And they're allowing emotions a degree of screentime not seen in the past.

For DreamWorks newest feature film, *Orion and the Dark*, the story focuses on a grade school boy named Orion who feels his fear, faces it, and then befriends it—literally. Poor Orion is afraid of absolutely everything. Bullies. Clowns. Bees. Cell phone waves. Clogging his school's toilet. But most of all, he's afraid of the dark. Director Sean Charmatz notes that in kids movies, there seems to be a reticence to let a character stay upset for too long, but Orion is allowed to remain in a state of fear through most of the film.

Based on the children's book by Emma Yarlett, the quirky script was written by Charlie Kaufman of *Adaptation* and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* fame. When darkness, in the form of an apparition named, appropriately, Dark, visits Orion, he takes the boy on a tour of the night—and as a result, a tour of his fears.

Charmatz says that as he directed the film, he drew on his own childhood experiences with anxiety and constant worry. "To break the cycle, it's unrealistic to imagine that nothing bad is ever going to happen again," he says. Instead, it's important to realize your fears are just part of the ebb and flow of life, and you can't let that affect the moment you're in.

This is hardly typical kids' entertainment. There's even passing mention of nihilism, and in an extended beat, Orion floats in a kind void contemplating the greatest darkness of all—the idea of the nothingness that comes after death. The trick is to present fear without overwhelming the audience. To

do this, Charmatz notes a scene where Dark has introduced Orion to the elements of the night: Sweet Dreams, Sleep, Unexplained Noises, Insomnia, and Quiet in the form of a tiny white mouse with the body of a dandelion. When Quiet demonstrates how he can remove all noise from the night, the pure silence causes Orion to have a panic attack.

"I think we got away with a lot of intense stuff because it's so visually strange and interesting," Charmatz says. "A little mouse dandelion sucked up all the sound, which is a wild idea. Then you throw in this real reaction. It is visceral, but Orion's not having a panic attack because his mom and dad just got in an argument and his dad drove away, right? That to me would be too much for this movie. But because these real emotions are happening with such whimsical characters and whimsical events ... you can relate, and it's delivered in a way you're okay with it."



Orion and the Dark images courtesy of DreamWorks Animation.

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Visual Development Artist Emily Tetri created the drawings for the notebook Orion used to chronicle his fears. **THIS PAGE:** Filmmakers leaned into Orion's visceral reactions to his fears.



Whimsy is only one of many ways animation delivers emotions that are relatable and unthreatening, as can be seen in *Stillwater*. Created for pre-school and early elementary school kids, this Apple TV+ series is crafted entirely around emotional wellness. “Much like you would set an intention in terms of how you would take on any sort of task in life, we did the same thing,” says Writer and EP Rob Hoegee. “Our intention was to create a series that slowed the world down.”

*Stillwater* is about a giant Zen master panda of the same name who lives next door to a family with three children. Each episode is structured around a story—a koan—nestled within the story. A koan is a paradox used in Zen Buddhism to explore life’s questions. Hoegee explains that *Stillwater* rarely gives an answer. He talks to

the children about what they are observing and helps them comprehend what’s going on in the mind of someone else. “[This] gives our characters, and that way the audience, the tools and the ability to make their own observations and draw their own conclusions,” says Hoegee.

Of the many concepts the show explores, Hoegee notes a main one that runs through the entire series: “The idea that we as individuals are not defined by our emotions. This made its way into the language of our show and how [the characters] talk about themselves. You would never, but the once, hear a character saying, ‘I am angry.’” Instead, they learn to say, ‘I have angry feelings.’ “Stillwater says that our feelings are guests. They come and go, but all are welcome.”

As for the show’s appeal, Hoegee says,

“There is something inherently magical and slightly absurd about having a giant talking Zen master panda that lives next door to you.” Not only was *Stillwater* created to look like he would be soft and warm if he gave you a big hug, according to Director and EP Jun Falkenstein, Hoegee adds: “He’s a fascinating character because he approaches life in a way that we’re not quite accustomed to. It’s arresting in the sense that we have to stop and say, well, what’s going on? Why is he doing this? We were taking a big chance here, but [*Stillwater*] proves the point that we suspected—you don’t need the flash, the colors, the fast-pace editing to attract the kids’ or anyone’s attention. Because we as human beings are naturally curious, interested people.”



**“There is something inherently magical and slightly absurd about having a giant talking Zen master panda that lives next door to you.”**

**—Rob Hoegee**





**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Stillwater artists used texture to give Zen master panda Stillwater a soft, comforting appearance. **THIS PAGE:** Young Justice takes Beast Boy through emotionally challenging sessions with his therapist, Black Canary.

## TREATING TRAUMA

With animation for older audiences, there is more latitude in what can be addressed and how. For Max's *Young Justice*, Co-Showrunner and EP Brandon Vietti says: "Our original goal was to create the most realistic superhero show that we could. Telling stories for young heroes who are coming into their own, striking out on their own for the first time, growing in maturity. We found quickly through the writing ... the sorts of serious issues that teenagers in particular are going to have to pass through in their journey to adulthood."

One issue came to their attention when Vietti's fellow Co-Showrunner and EP Greg Weisman was on a convention panel about the psychology of superheroes. During the Q&A, a man in the audience stood up. "I can picture him," says Wiesman. "He was a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. He talked about his PTSD and how much he loved cartoons and how he wished that cartoons would address the issue of PTSD. It was like a light bulb going off above my head. I felt like we're a show that can do that."

They chose to use the storyline of Beast Boy, who had started out as a guest character in season one at age 8 and by season four was 18 years old. (*Young Justice* characters age multiple years between seasons.) "To an outside observer who doesn't know what he's going through, his behavior is somewhat obnoxious," says Vietti. He and Weisman decided that the arc of season four would address Beast Boy's trauma that led to substance abuse and disengagement from his team, among other behaviors. This would include an intervention and therapy sessions with Black Canary, a licensed psychologist trained in mortal combat.







"Not only are we featuring a character who's suffering through the symptoms of PTSD," says Vietti, "but we're also telling the story of the friends and family around him that are affected by it. We wanted our audience, through the course of our season, to maybe be able to better identify [those] symptoms."

The pair knew that they weren't qualified to handle this storyline using just their imaginations. They contacted Dr. Janina Scarlet, a licensed clinical psychologist, trauma specialist, and author of *Superhero Therapy: Mindfulness Skills to Help Teens and Young Adults Deal with Anxiety, Depression, and Trauma*. Dr. Scarlet had been on the same convention panel as Weisman, and they asked her if she would consult.

This was not the first time they had reached out for guidance. Over the course of the series, they've consulted with experts from GLAD, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and autism organizations, among others. As a process, Vietti and Weisman first come up with the story beats, craft drafts, and conduct interviews, such as one of their first with Dr. Scarlet.

"One of the things that we talked about were experiences of mortal injury and survivor's guilt, and shame and blame that [individuals might] go through and how they might self-sabotage," she says. Reading drafts of scripts, she would then "offer my input in what I would see in

the vocabulary to understand what we're going through, and it allows us to see that we can be a superhero, too."

In fact, Dr. Scarlet assigns pop culture homework to most of her clients, including *Young Justice*. "I find that for so many individuals, it allows them to find a

**"Seeing a fictional character who's been through something really painful, who then finds a sense of purpose and gives back to other people ... it allows us to see that we can be a superhero, too." –Dr. Janina Scarlet**

similar situations with clients that I've worked with."

Dr. Scarlet explains that for many who have struggled with physical and/or mental illness, "we might feel quote-unquote broken. But seeing a fictional character who's been through something really painful, who then finds a sense of purpose and gives back to other people ... it gives us

representation of themselves on the screen," she says. "Then they'll come back and be like, 'Hey, did you see this character? That's what I go through.' For many individuals, being able to point at a particular character or even quote a character—it helps them to explain to their therapist, and usually to their friends and family members as well, about their experiences."



## MANIFESTING MINDFULNESS

*Stillwater* also brings in experts to ensure the show is consistent with its goals. These include a child development psychologist, a Buddhist priest, and Awareness and Intention Consultant Mallika Chopra. With a master's degree in education and psychology, author and mother Chopra is the CEO of Chopra Global, an organization focused on the intersection of science and spirituality.

"When you're in the trenches of trying to get a show made, sometimes you need [to ask a professional] what are your thoughts on how we're approaching this," says Hoegee. This can come in terms of specific feedback. For example, how to approach a line of dialogue. It can also help with how characters can solve a problem, and on a larger scale, audience perception and how to get a concept across.

Chopra explains that she can bring the experience of growing up with the teachings depicted in *Stillwater*—she is the daughter of Deepak Chopra, an internationally recognized advocate of alternative medicine—as well as her years of studying it and writing about it. "But what [the creators and artists have] done is the storytelling, which is what I really believe has impact," she says. "I think if we look at wisdom traditions, and why they have lasted thousands of years, it's the stories."

"Kids like to talk and come up with concepts, and they want to share," Chopra says. But open space needs to be created for that dialogue, and she feels *Stillwater* is doing that through its koans: "It takes you out of this world, takes you to another world, and then it brings you back to the safety of this cocoon that they've created." Along with the storytelling, she observes that the visual beauty of the show makes it feel "softer and more empathetic. I feel like it's a warm blanket—this world."

**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Experts were consulted to ensure authenticity when *Beast Boy* confronts his trauma; **THIS PAGE:** *Stillwater* tells metaphorical stories within each episode's main story to explore aspects of mindfulness.



"Being aware from the beginning that *Stillwater* is a show featuring emotional awareness and mindfulness, I wanted those concepts reflected very specifically in the pacing, tone, art direction, and cinematography," says Falkenstein. "The editing is deliberately slower and calmer with fewer cuts than most shows, and ... much of the show features a locked camera so the audience can sit and calmly focus on the characters and story." Techniques include moving very close to an item to let the audience examine it, or pulling the camera out wide to feature what Falkenstein calls "the environment as character. Lingering on these elements to

almost become a mindful exercise for the audience at times."

At the beginning of the show's creation, Hoegee says scripts were the typical length for an 11-minute episode—14-16 pages—"but very quickly we found that we had to make the scripts shorter simply because we needed room to breathe quite literally. We have such quiet moments, so it would not be uncommon to have 10- or 11-page scripts just to allow our board artists the opportunity to let those moments happen."

The result? "Your breathing slows down, your heart rate slows down," Hoegee says. "Just the very nature of watching the show can be a calming experience."









## THE ART OF EMOTION

Emotion is intangible, and capturing the mood or tone of a feeling requires the artistry of elements such as color and light. But *Orion's* team had to go one step further. They had to personify Orion's fear. Dark is described by his creators as a cross between the Grim Reaper and a Muppet. "Based on ... people misunderstanding him—lumping him in a box of scary and not seeing who he really is—it seemed like he needed to look scary and imposing but not be," Charmatz says.

"Dark as a character needed to be versatile," adds Production Designer Tim Lamb. "His design needed to accommodate looking very threatening at first and later appear more benevolent as we become familiar with him." To do this Dark "moved and interacted in the world like a shadow, which changes shape and size depending on the environment," says Lamb.

"In the beginning of the film, Dark is just dark," Art Director Christine Bian says. "Just a very desaturated dark screen with some dramatic stage lighting in that initial meeting between him and Orion. But then as the film goes on and Orion becomes more comfortable with Dark, night and darkness begin to have a lot more color. A lot more variation. Twinkling lights, you

know, beauty that can only be appreciated in the darkness. [This] is a story about learning more about the things that you fear. When you have more knowledge, it can become less scary."

This speaks to the power of how animation can address emotional issues in uniquely safe ways. "Live action by its very nature is real," says Hoegee, noting that this can feel "gut punchy. [But while] animation can be every bit as real in terms of the emotion, there's the ability through fantasy or ... all the different aspects that animation provides us, that we can take a step back from the realism of it."

"For a lot of people who are going through a hard time, they're looking for a sense of escapism," says Dr. Scarlet. "Animation provides that because it's different. But over time that shield of escapism starts to fall off, and people start forming really meaningful connections [with the characters]." It's these connections that creators, writers, and artists are pursuing—with the help of experts—to usher in a new, more mindful age of animation. ☺

**"[This] is a story about learning more about the things that you fear. When you have more knowledge, it can become less scary."**

**-Christine Bian**



**OPPOSITE PAGE AND THIS PAGE:**  
*Darkness manifests as the character Dark to take Orion on a journey through his greatest fear.*



# Kidding Around

By Sonaiya Kelley



**Preschool shows are tasked with educating while entertaining a demographic known for its short attention span. Here's how they do it.**

Think about your early TV memories. Classic live-action shows like *Sesame Street* or *Barney & Friends* might come to mind. Series like these were among the first to introduce kids to concepts like spelling, arithmetic, literacy, as well as social skills, while offering entertaining storylines and lovable characters remembered decades later.





Today, though, it's animated preschool shows (for ages 2 to 5) that are leading the way in offering a new level of learning experiences to an increasingly distracted generation. Gen Alpha is the first to grow up in a completely digital world, and the voracious content consumers have been criticized for being socially awkward and having low attention spans as a result of so much screen time.

"The early childhood years are very formative," says Laura Brown, Ph.D., who has served as an Educational Psychologist and Curriculum Director on productions for Nickelodeon, DreamWorks, and Disney Junior. "[Kids are] learning how to deal with their emotions, other people, [and] what they think about themselves. I think that if we can put content out there that benefits children and supports that aspect of their development, we've done a great service."

Cartoon Network's *Jessica's Big Little World*, a spin-off of the popular big kid series *Craig of the Creek*, aims to develop kids' emotional intelligence by reflecting the challenges of being little in a world of adults. "What touched me growing

up were shows that gave me comfort, entertainment, reassurance—this opportunity to look outside of myself, which when you're little you're very new to," says Showrunner and EP Tiffany Ford.

"[Jessica's] story is about being too little to do the things that Craig wants to do, so we wanted to create a sense of magic in the things that are accessible for her," Ford says. One of the ways they illustrate this is through color. The show incorporates different depths of color to help establish and convey Jessica's changing emotional state, which is largely reflected in her home's surroundings, and also to show that there's an opportunity for magic wherever you are.

To develop Jessica's point of view, personality, and character independent of Craig, the show has used educational consultants. Ford says preschool is a different ballgame entirely than what she was used to doing in the 6-to-11 demographic. It requires a degree of story supports that weren't needed before. For example, Ford and her team learned, if Jessica is by herself, it's helpful for her mom

#### THIS PAGE AND OPPOSITE PAGE:

*Using a variety of techniques including depths of color, an artistic goal on Jessica's Big Little World is to depict the physical environment from a preschooler's point of view.*







or somebody to say, "I'm just down the hall if you need any help." Or if she falls, she can check in and say, "I'm OK." This provides reassurance that wouldn't necessarily be needed for an older audience.

Like *Jessica's Big Little World*, Disney Junior's *Marvel's Spidey and His Amazing Friends* is another series that takes an established mature IP and adapts it for a preschool audience. The mission of the show is to model behavior that will teach kids social literacy like being a good friend or an active member of one's neighborhood or community.

"We want stories to be exciting, funny, relatable, and preferably anchored by a lot of heart," says Bart Jennett, who began as a Writer and Story Editor and is now Co-EP. "Luckily for us we're making a show based on *Spider-Man*, which is an incredibly appealing property. It's got a really winning ethos baked into it about using power responsibly."

One of the challenges of adapting a superhero story for preschoolers is depicting action without veering into overt violence. To do this, they portray



**"I think that if we can put content out there that benefits children and supports that aspect of their development, we've done a great service." –Laura Brown, Ph.D.**



**“Our kid characters usually have a pivotal inspirational moment where they use their smarts to figure out how to beat a baddie versus just using physical abilities.”**

**—Bart Jennett**

their villains more like silly nuisances than deadly foes, says Chris Moreno, a former Supervising Director turned Co-EP. This keeps the focus on the big messes the villains cause, with the superheroes stopping them in their tracks with smart solutions and lots of webs. “Most of our villains are adults, but we always boil down their motivations to very simple, childlike

desires,” Moreno says. “For example, Doc Ock likes to show off how smart she is, Rhino is greedy and likes to steal stuff, Green Goblin is a spoilsport.”

Physical contact between characters is avoided and the action is so fantastical that kids won’t imitate it. Jennett explains that having three superhero characters who web up villains instead of physically fighting them helps keep things fun and non-violent. “Also, our kid characters usually have a pivotal inspirational moment where they use their smarts to figure out how to beat a baddie versus just using physical abilities,” he says. “When it comes to saving the day, we really focus on their teamwork and creative problem solving.”

“A big aspect to designing action for preschoolers is [visual] clarity,” says Moreno, noting how important it is for shot composition and editing to happen at a pace and direction that young eyes can follow. “This isn’t just for fast-paced action scenes, but also for visual gags and even quieter, more heartfelt moments,” he says.

Vibrant character design and color

schemes are another way Team *Spidey* seeks to keep its young audience engaged. “Simple, bright, bold contrasts and combinations really draw and hold the audience’s eye,” says Moreno. Props and vehicles are visually connected to each hero and villain by matching the characters’ color schemes. This way, for example, it’s clear that a hammer belongs to Doc Ock because it’s yellow and green just like her. They also simplify what are already relatively simple superhero designs, “maybe reducing the number of webs on a pattern, breaking more complex shapes down into fewer larger ones, thickening what used to be a thin line on a costume to be a much bolder stripe, or brightening the existing colors,” Moreno says.

The show makes it clear, though, that it’s not just the suit that makes the superhero. “It’s the character of the person inside the suit that really counts, and I think for kids to see fellow kid characters modeling that behavior is incredibly aspirational,” Jennett says.



**OPPOSITE PAGE:** In the preschool Spider-Verse, Miles, Gwen, and Peter wear simplified versions of the outfits worn by their adult counterparts;  
**THIS PAGE: (TOP)** Creative thinking takes precedence over physical abilities when it comes to fighting crime; Teamwork is at the heart of Spidey and His Amazing Friends.





## LEARNING CURVES

While shows like *Spidey* and *Jessica* focus on increasing kids' emotional and social development, Nickelodeon's *Blaze and the Monster Machines* caters more towards left-brain engagement. The show—which has been on the air since 2014—is credited as the first preschool show on TV to comprehensively cover science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts in every episode.

"Back when we were in development, there were a lot of studies showing declining numbers in science and engineering among students," says Developmental Psychologist Christine Ricci, the show's Director of Curriculum and Development. "We hoped an introduction to STEM at the early [ages] might somehow help kids maintain their love of STEM concepts as they move into the higher grades."

The creatives resolved to let story be the gateway to the science. "We weave in the curriculum through interactive gameplay where the kids feel like they're helping the characters," says EP Jeff Borkin who created the show with EP Ellen Martin. If the kids are invested in the story, it makes it easier to engage them in challenging science concepts.

In determining the right balance between story and curriculum, Ricci hosts focus groups of 18-20 preschoolers per episode. Writers' outlines are loosely adapted into a picture book format and presented to kids in reading circles or virtual demonstrations. "Kids weigh in on every aspect of the story," she says. "They get to hear the story before it's a script or animation, and we get a chance to try out vocabulary and make sure our concept is presented in an age-appropriate and exciting way."

Do the kids like the story? What do they think about the curriculum? Can they talk about it? Once these questions are answered, "we tweak it from there," says Borkin. "We're

always calibrating how we talk about the curriculum based on what the kids are giving back to us."

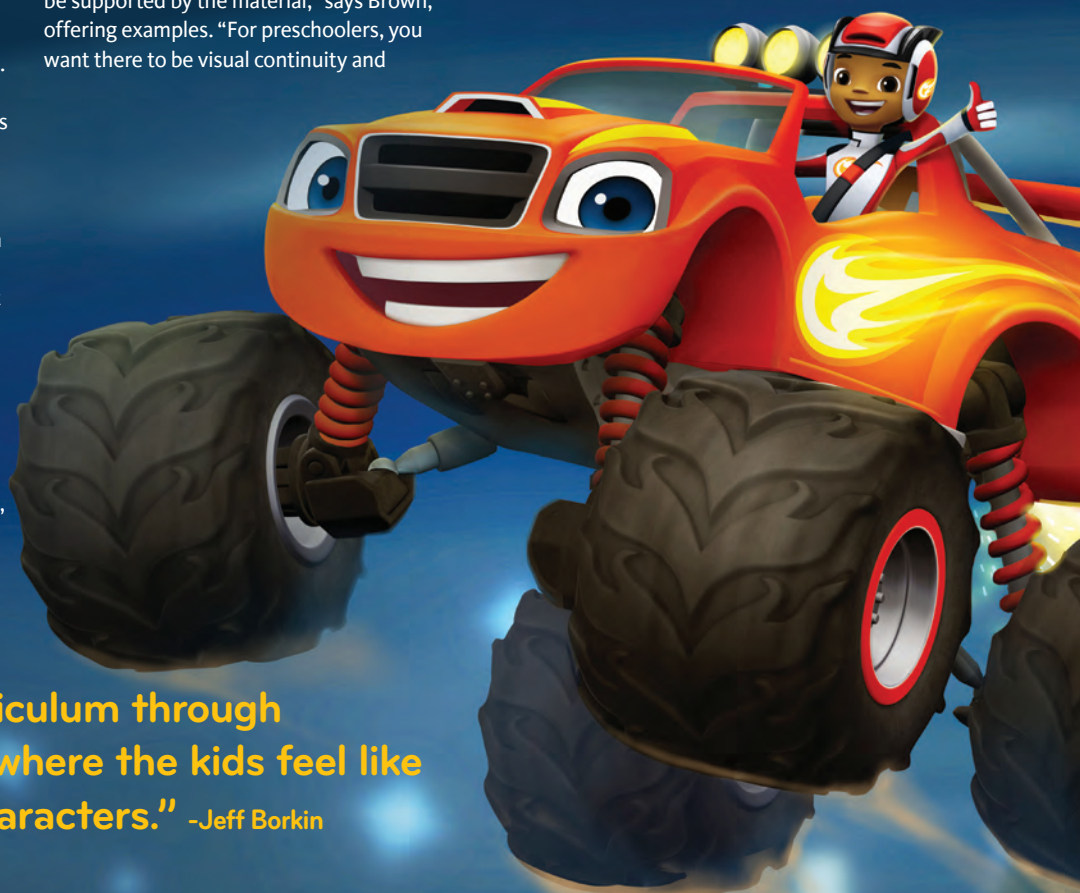
While Ricci offers educational consulting, curriculum work, and formative research (research that happens while the show is underway and informs future episodes), separate consultants are called upon for the STEM concepts. "I do a lot of work in children's television, but I am not a STEM expert," she says. A team of education experts helps determine correct wording and makes sure concepts are taught in the most accurate way.

In addition, experts can be employed to ensure more artistic elements like color, movement, texture, and background are expressed in a way that will translate for younger audiences. "We use color strategically to help kids mark out things that we want them to look at and to help them name and identify which things they're talking about, guessing, or answering," says Ricci.

"My consulting [also] relates to how the audience will understand, engage with, and be supported by the material," says Brown, offering examples. "For preschoolers, you want there to be visual continuity and

explicitness. You don't want to cut from one environment to the next without showing some continuity." One technique is to pull out and do a wide shot so children understand how two locations are related to one another. Then there is the storytelling, which should be mostly linear since flashbacks and jumps forward can be hard for young children to follow. And while story is essential for preschool shows, "I can't stress enough that this is a visual medium," says Brown. "Let's say you show something visually and the dialogue contradicts it, the visual will be believed over what you've told them."

Preschoolers have insatiable curiosity. Simplified but engaging storylines, bold but direct visuals, and game-based curriculum are all effective tools for teaching them. "[They] are wired to learn because that's one indication to them that they're getting bigger and becoming more like adults," says Brown. Through this learning comes agency, offering endless opportunities for the unique medium of animation to empower children at their earliest stages of development. ☺



**"We weave in the curriculum through interactive gameplay where the kids feel like they're helping the characters." -Jeff Borkin**





**OPPOSITE PAGE:** Blaze's driver AJ is an expert in technology. **THIS PAGE:** (ABOVE) Extensive research underlies the stem-related stories in each episode of *Blaze and the Monster Machines*.



# THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

There's no denying that music is a powerful storytelling tool, especially when dealing with young children. Things are just easier to learn and remember when there's a melody behind it.

"A child who might not be engaged by heavy action or lots of dialogue—you put music in there and it's a whole different game," says Brown. "If the lyrics are repeatable, they're like a hook to help kids hold onto important information. It's a great memory and attention tool."

The importance of catchy music is one reason the team behind *Marvel's Spidey and His Amazing Friends* employed Fall Out Boy front man Patrick Stump to compose and write songs. "Many of the lyrics help underscore the themes in the show like doing what's right and pitching in with the community," says Jennett. "The underscore also helps provide storytelling cues and sets the stage for what's to come."

Music is frequently utilized by the writers of *Blaze and the Monster Machines* to illustrate and accentuate complex STEM concepts. "Usually, not long after we introduce a concept, we will do a super-fast, high-action musical montage sequence where lyrically we're going to hammer this idea into your brain," says Borkin. "If [the concept is torque], we'll give a simple definition and just say it over and over again." For example, they might show Blaze zooming around past characters using torque to turn wheels and crank and screw in things, using lyrics to impress the concept: Torque is turning strength.

On *Jessica's Big Little World*, Jessica employs the song "Bonnet Brush Flush" as a memory device to recall her bedtime routine. "We wanted the songs to be exciting moments of story support," says Ford. "It also helps when the songs are super catchy because then little ones can remember [them] and hopefully think for themselves about their bedtime routine."

Not only does the song serve as a reminder for Jessica, but it's also about triumph. "This is the moment that Jessica gains her confidence and independence," says Ford. "Jessica is trying to find empowerment in remembering this small piece of her day that is so easy for everybody else to understand and do on their own." In this way the song supports what Ford calls the crux of the show: "How do I get to where others are at?" It is a gentle way of showing Jessica that she'll get there.





# DEAL MEMOS 101

BY EVAN HENDERSON

INSIDERS OFFER INSIGHTS  
AND TIPS ON HOW TO  
NEGOTIATE YOUR CONTRACT.

**WHAT'S THE DEAL?** NO, WE'RE NOT BEING FLIP. EVERYONE WANTS TO GET INTO THE CREATIVE STUFF, BUT BEFORE THE WORK CAN BEGIN, THERE'S THE PERSONAL SERVICES CONTRACT, ALSO KNOWN AS THE DEAL MEMO, THAT LAYS OUT THE TERMS OF A JOB ASSIGNMENT. DEAL MEMOS CAN VARY FROM PROJECT TO PROJECT BASED ON THE NATURE OF THE WORK, THE DURATION OF THE PROJECT, AND NUMEROUS OTHER FACTORS.



## THE INSIDERS

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**Christopher Amick**  
TAG MEMBER AND  
WRITER/PRODUCER

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**Bradford Bricken**  
PARTNER/MANAGER,  
CARTEL ENTERTAINMENT

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**Matthew Ellis**  
MANAGER,  
CARTEL ENTERTAINMENT

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**Alison Mann**  
MANAGER AND PRESIDENT OF ANIMATION,  
FOURTH WALL MANAGEMENT

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**Bill Wolkoff**  
TAG MEMBER AND  
WRITER/CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

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**Lori Shreve Blake**  
SENIOR DIRECTOR FOR CAREER  
ENGAGEMENT, USC CAREER CENTER

**S**alary and title are, of course, the key components to most deal memos. For TAG members looking to advance within the industry, these are part of a larger framework of considerations—and an endgame whereby both the employee and the producer/studio are happy. To reach that endgame, there are questions to be asked, concessions to be made, and terms to be negotiated.

In a deal memo itself, The Animation Guild's main role is to ensure minimum wages are being met and that the employer is contributing the proper benefit amounts. Most other items above and beyond are up to the member to work out. This can include everything from a higher salary to a carve-out (see sidebar) to additional options should the show become a hit.

Considering that the deal memo is all about you, experts maintain that it's important to know what the basic deal memo contains and whether there is the potential for a first offer to be improved. As easy as it may be to accept an early offer out of fear that it will be withdrawn if you negotiate, that's not necessarily the way to get ahead. Bearing in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all formula, here are some ways to help you reach a deal you can be happy with.





## RESEARCH AND ASK QUESTIONS

The more you know about the situation you're entering, the better prepared you will be to construct a deal memo that works to your advantage. Websites like Glassdoor can be helpful in determining what past employees at a given studio have earned and can also provide a window into the work culture. Colleagues who have worked with a given studio—or for a specific Showrunner or Director—can also provide valuable insight.

You'll want to know about your salary certainly, but also what a daily or weekly schedule will entail and what exactly is expected of you. Does production tend to run late? If so, what might this mean in terms of your workload? Colleagues, mentors, friends, and about-to-be coworkers can help prepare you. You'll know your own quote (the rate you have been previously paid or a rate you've decided is your bottom line and you don't want to be paid less), but it will be helpful to know what someone else in a similar position on the same production will be making as well. You can ask whomever you are negotiating with if yours is a "favored nations" deal—an industry term that means you're getting equal contractual provisions to others on the project.

Items you can get clarification on include "vacation, sick days and holiday policy, retirement policy, and any yearly or production bonuses," says Alison Mann, Manager and President of Animation at Fourth Wall Management. "While speaking to the recruiter or production person [in charge of hiring], you can say directly, 'Thanks so much for the offer, I want to understand the full comp package, can you please share with me the following...'" With these questions clearly answered and written into your deal memo, the less ambiguity there will be if an issue arises once you're hired.

## NEGOTIATE YOUR WORTH

You should never forget that you know your own value more than the person looking to hire you. It's your job to convince an employer why they should hire you and nobody but you.

"Employers still want to get you on the cheap," says Lori Shreve Blake, Senior Director for Career Engagement at the University of Southern California Career Center. "So it's incumbent upon the candidate or the new employee to negotiate and show that they are a thinking person. In some cases, it may be a component of the job to be able to speak up in a professional manner, so here it's on full display."

Dollars and cents are always sensitive areas, both when you're applying for the job initially and when you're negotiating the final rate. Remember that rates that meet the minimum wage for your job category according to the Guild's Master Agreement represent a floor, not a ceiling. According to Blake, you can ask for a first offer in writing and request a day or two to think it over.

It's good practice to avoid getting pinned down on an initial figure. If you are asked how much you're looking to earn, it's best to be vague ("I'm sure you'll pay me a competitive rate")—and, if pressed, give a salary range instead of a single number. Whenever possible, let the employer throw out the first figure. If you know what a job like the one you are seeking typically pays, one rule of thumb is to add 20 percent to your first counteroffer and negotiate down from there.

"The person who mentions the number first loses," says Blake. "Let them be the first to come up with a number, and then do your research to see whether that's a fair offer."

Even if the person hiring won't move much on salary, you might be able to negotiate perks. TAG member Christopher Amick recalls an experience in which he and his writing partner, Ben Mekler, were asked to help develop a feature film for a



friend. The partners figured they would put in a few of weeks of work, earn a couple thousand dollars, and do their friend a solid in the process.

That's when their newly hired lawyers encouraged them to ask for additional things that Amick dismissed as "insane and outrageous." Where they envisioned asking for \$1,000 per week, the attorneys suggested asking for \$5,000 with a guaranteed seven weeks and optional five-week extension, instead of the two that Amick and Mekler expected. They were also advised to ask for a production bonus and box office bonus—items that hadn't occurred to them.

"I was afraid we were going to lose this job, insult the studio, and ruin our friendship with the director," recalls Amick. "I almost negotiated against myself and told [our lawyers] to ask for less, but they basically said, 'Let's see what happens.'"

What happened was a happy ending. The studio agreed to nearly all their requests.

"That was a wonderful experience that also helped me value my work so much more," Amick says.

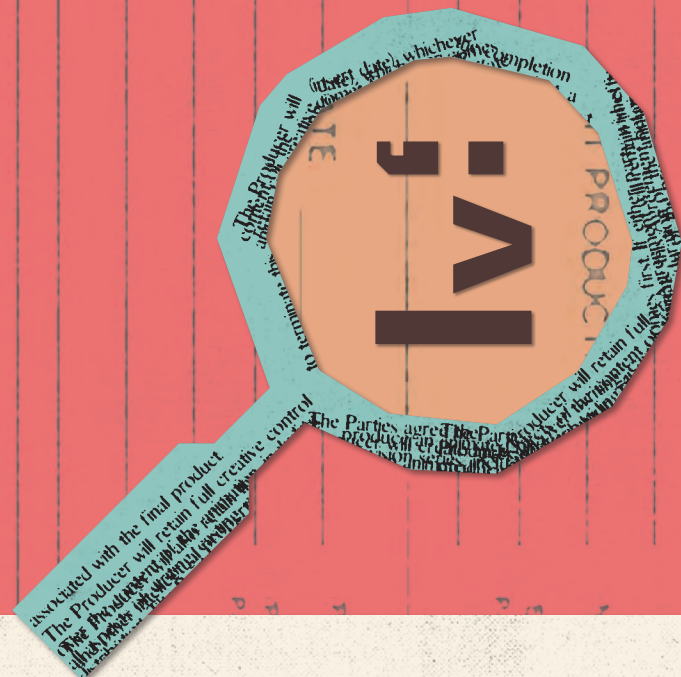
Not that a studio will routinely give you more just because you ask for it. You'll need to have persuasive reasons and be able to plead your case convincingly.

"An artist needs to be able to advocate for why they should be paid a higher rate such as quotes, skills, experience, other competitive offers—and understand the risk and cost benefit of walking away," says Bradford Bricken, Partner/Manager at Cartel Entertainment, a management and production company. "Sometimes these budgets are set, and producers can't bend on the rate. That's when it's important to try and be flexible and see if there are other creative ways to find solutions that are not monetary."

These solutions could range from specialized equipment, a more favorable credit, or schedule flexibility to getting a number of guaranteed weeks or loosened exclusivity to work outside of the studio. But remember, whatever you ultimately negotiate, get it in writing.

**“The person who mentions the number first loses. Let them be the first to come up with a number, and then do your research to see whether that's a fair offer.”**

**—Lori Shreve Blake**



## FINE TUNE THE FINE PRINT

Having established a track record, including writing and executive producing on *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, TAG member Bill Wolkoff was brought in to co-develop a web comic into an animated series for a major studio. Knowing that writers in animation often get treated "like a box of Kleenex," Wolkoff says he would only sign on if his title included Executive Producer and Showrunner. When his reps took the demands to the studio, the studio finally agreed to make him an EP, but the role of Showrunner was not clearly laid out in the contract, a circumstance that would come back to bite him.

"It's rare for writers to be kept on through delivery of the animatics, but as a Showrunner, that's what it should be. There's still work to be done after that, and that was what felt realistic to me," Wolkoff says. Even though he was doing the work of a Showrunner, the studio moved up his end date and refused to honor his pay-or-play option, essentially firing him a year before the end of his contract and squeezing additional work out of him at a pay rate that he had not agreed upon.

Other issues to be aware of are exclusivity clauses or language that is so broad that it unfairly restricts your creativity or your ability to work on other projects. If you're on an adult show, does that mean you can't also do some work on a kids show on the side or vice-versa?

"Let's say you're working on a show that's about toasters, and [the studio says] you can't work on anything that's even remotely kitchen-related for the next three years after this deal is done. That's just too broad," says Matthew Ellis, a Manager at Cartel Entertainment. "There are things that are going to be overcomplicated that may or may not actually be enforceable and that would really hinder your ability to get work in the future."



## NEW MODEL CONSIDERATIONS

Within TV, the proliferation of streaming has made deal-making a bit more complicated and left workers with the need to be vigilant over such factors as what their title means, exactly how long a season lasts, and the duration of their commitment to a studio. Contractually mandated pay bumps between seasons are well and good, but it's not unusual for a streaming studio to pay by the episode order and then get creative about where one season ends and another begins.

In the early years of his career, Bricken was accustomed to the traditional model within legacy studios. Nickelodeon had its mandates, as did Warner Bros. and Sony without significant variation. Over the past decade, the arrival of Netflix and other streaming services shook things up and introduced new variables for employees whose product would now never be "off-service."

"Are there bonuses?" asks Bricken. "Are there upsides, or are we just working for fees? We had to figure those out .... We want to make sure that in [the case of a] success, we have thought of everything so our clients aren't in the position where they helped deliver this huge hit show and then they see it everywhere, all over every store, on every kid's backpack, and they did not make much on this at all. That's something you always want to try to avoid."

## BE READY TO WALK AWAY

Amick, who works in both animation and live action, says that writers and artists who are hired for what is essentially a freelance gig may feel like they have very little power when negotiating with a studio, but that is not entirely true.

"I really do believe that the only leverage we have as writers—but also as artists and anybody who is entering into what ends up being a freelance contract—is the ability to say no. Our ability to walk away from a bad deal," says Amick. "A lot of times, when it's someone's first job, they're not going to walk away no matter what just because they want the experience. That's why we have a Guild to make sure there is a floor and that [people] can't undercut themselves."

After all, in animation as in live action and all other industries, you are the CEO of your own company, the protagonist of your own story. "What makes a good protagonist is somebody who has agency, who is driving things forward, and when people are the lead, and they know what their goals are and it's clear and it's communicated, I think things work out," says Mann. "At the end of the day, what is important is that you're legislating a great collaboration between yourself and the [employer] so there is a clear expectation and pathway for success." ☺

**The only leverage we have as writers—but also as artists and anybody who is entering into what ends up being a freelance contract—is the ability to say no. Our ability to walk away from a bad deal. —Christopher Amick**



# STARVIN' — FOR — CARVE-OUTS

A contract may imply exclusivity, but a savvy negotiator knows better. A person working in a creative industry like animation will often have multiple projects in various stages of development. Before you sign your deal memo, make sure that projects you may be working on outside the existing deal are “carved out” to allow you to work on them separately from the assignment.

How many carve-outs should your deal memo include? As many as you can get the studio to approve. Maybe it’s something for which a script already exists or there is some existing paperwork. Maybe it’s a project in

the earlier stages, i.e. an idea that you had a conversation with a producer about.

The more carve-outs you include, the greater your options. So when in doubt, carve it out.

“Especially in animation, I think it’s almost mandatory that you work on multiple things at once, because the pay is so low and the price of living in L.A. is so high,” says Amick. “I think you’re still exclusive to the studio for anything new [you develop while working for them], but the carve-outs look backward and say you don’t have to stop working on those.”



# HONORING OUR ANIMATION FAMILY

ON FEBRUARY 24TH, THE ANNUAL AFTERNOON OF REMEMBRANCE HONORED THOSE IN THE ANIMATION INDUSTRY WHO PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR. HERE, WE REMEMBER THE LIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THESE TALENTED ANIMATION GUILD MEMBERS.

## LIN LARSEN 01/10/2023

Lin Larsen got his start in 1955 at Walt Disney Productions. He worked as a Storyboard Artist and Layout Artist at Disney TVA, Marvel, Hanna-Barbera, and Warner Bros. Among his credits are *The Big Bang* and *Daffy Duck's Quackbusters*. He was 89.

## SUSAN BURKE 01/11/2023

An Animation Checker and Painter, Susan Burke worked at Warner Bros., Disney Feature Animation, Disney TVA, Film Roman, Hanna-Barbera, and Bento Box. Her credits include *The Little Mermaid*, *The Princess and the Frog*, and *Teen Titans*. She was 67.

## DAVID BRADEN 01/16/2023

As a Xerox Processor, Scan Checker, and 2D Animation Processor, David Braden worked at Disney Feature Animation and Filmmation. *Mulan*, *Fantasia 2000*, and *Lilo & Stitch* are among his credits. He was 61.

## JEFFREY "JEFF" RICHE 01/20/2023

Jeff Riche worked as a Background Designer at Crest Animation, Hyperion, Amblin, and Hanna-Barbera. His credits include *Yogi's Space Race*, *The Jetsons*, and numerous *Scooby-Doo* series and TV movies. He was 76.

## WILLIAM RUZICKA 02/01/2023

Storyboard Artist, Production Artist, and Director William Ruzicka worked at DreamWorks TV, Titmouse, Cranetown, and Crunchyroll on series including *Kung Fu Panda: The Dragon Knight*. He was 45.

## GREGORY "GREG" JOACKIM 02/04/2023

Greg Joackim worked as a writer at Warner Bros., Paramount Pictures, and Cartoon Network. His credits include *Looney Tunes: Reality Check* and *Looney Tunes: Stranger than Fiction*. He was 52.



## BURNETT "BURNY" MATTINSON 02/27/2023

Disney Legend Burny Mattinson began his career at Walt Disney Animation Studios in 1953 at the age of 18 and was working full-time as a story consultant and mentor when he passed away. He is credited as "the longest-serving cast member" in the company's history. His prolific film credits started with *Lady and the Tramp*. He was 87.

## WILLIAM "BIKE" KINZLE 03/06/2023

Bike Kinzle worked as a Color Designer at Film Roman and Fox TVA. Among his credits are *The Wild Thornberries*, *Rocket Power*, *Rugrats*, and more than 100 episodes of *Family Guy*. He was 69.

## WALTER MARTISHIUS 03/19/2023

A Model Designer, Background and Layout Artist, and Art Director, Walter Martishius worked at Walt Disney Feature Animation, Warner Bros., Paramount Pictures, Wild Canary, and Bento Box. His work on *Dinotopia* earned him an Emmy nomination. He was 63.

## JAMES MICHAEL REAVES 3/20/2023

Writer Michael Reaves spent his career at Hanna-Barbera, Warner Bros., and DreamWorks TV. He won an Emmy for Outstanding Writing for *Batman: The Animated Series*, and additional credits include *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. He was 72.



## JESSIE ROMERO 03/21/2023

As a Layout, Storyboard, and Production Board Artist, Jessie Romero worked at Bento Box and Robin Red Breast/Titmouse. His credits include the *Bob's Burgers* TV series and movie, and the *Beavis and Butt-Head* original and reboot TV series. He was 52.



## LEO SULLIVAN 03/25/2023

Leo Sullivan's career as an Animator, Animation Director, and Timing Director encompassed Hanna-Barbera, Warner Bros. TV, Filmmation, Marvel, and Ruby-Spears. Co-founder of Hollywood's first Black-owned animation studio, his credits include *Jabberjaw* and *The Incredible Hulk*. He was 82.

## DUANE POOLE 04/01/2023

Prior to his live-action writing career, Duane Poole worked for Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears, and Sid & Marty Krofft Pictures. His credits include *Super Friends*, *The Krofft Supershow*, and numerous *Scooby-Doo* series. He was 74.



**NICHOLAS "NICK" LEVENDUSKI**

04/06/2023

Nick Levenduski worked as a Production Technical Director, Digital Effect Lead, and Crowds Artist for DreamWorks Animation and Walt Disney Animation Studios. His credits include *Ruby Gillman*, *Teenage Kraken*, which he was working on at the time of his death. He was 41.

**GERALD "JERRY" LOVELAND**

04/21/2023

Visual Development and Background Artist Jerry Loveland worked at Sony Pictures Animation, Walt Disney Animation Studios, Warner Bros., Filmation, and Hanna-Barbera. His credits include *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* and *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*. He was 58.



**TONY KLÜCK**

04/24/2023

Two-time Emmy nominee Tony Klück was a Storyboard Artist and Director at studios including Film

Roman and Bento Box. His TV credits include *Beavis and Butt-Head* and *King of the Hill*. He also worked on *Ice Age* and *Beavis and Butt-Head Do America*. He was 75.

**VAHE HAYTAIAN** 04/27/2023

Technical Director Vahe Haytaian worked for Bento Box and Walt Disney TVA. His credits include *Big Hero 6: The Series*, *Amphibia*, *The Owl House*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, *Bob's Burgers*, *Central Park*, and *The Great North*. He was 40.



**ALLEN STOVALL**

05/08/2023

Allen Stovall was an Effects Assistant and Animator who worked at Duck Soup, Filmation, Turner

Feature Animation, and Disney Feature Animation. His credits include *She-Ra: Princess of Power*, *BraveStarr* and *The Little Mermaid*. He was 69.

**ERNESTO "ERNIE" BRIENO**

05/22/23

Ernie Brieno worked as an Inbetweenner and Breakdown Artist at Walt Disney Animation Studios and DreamWorks Animation. Among his credits are *Hercules*, *Tarzan*, *Fantasia 2000*, and *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. He was 57.

**FILONELLA "NELLIE"**

**RODRIGUEZ BELL** 05/26/2023

Nellie Rodriguez worked as a Cel Painter at Filmation, Rich Entertainment, Hanna-Barbera, Walt Disney Pictures, Kroyer Films, and Warner Bros. Her career included *The Little Mermaid*, *Fern Gully: The Last Rainforest*, and *Batman: The Animated Series*. She was 87.

**JEFFREY "JEFF" SCOTT-SMITH**

07/05/2023

Jeff Scott-Smith worked as a Storyboard Cleanup Artist at Fox TVA. His credits include *American Dad!* He was 70.

**RANDY FULLMER** 07/10/23

Randy Fullmer worked as an Effects Animator, Visual Effects Supervisor, Artistic Coordinator, and Producer. Early credits include *BraveStarr: The Legend*, and he spent nearly two decades at Walt Disney Animation Studios. He was 73.

**LUCINDA SANDERSON** 07/28/2023

Lucinda Sanderson worked as an Inbetweenner, Breakdown Artist, and Assistant Animator at Warner Bros., Rich Entertainment, Hyperion, Filmation, Hanna-Barbera, and Walt Disney Animation Studios. Among her credits are *Space Jam* and *Cool World*. She was 72.



**SUKHDEV DAIL**

08/07/2023

Originally from India, Sukhdev Dail was invited to the U.S. to work on *Scooby-Doo*. He worked as

an Animation Timer and Layout Artist at Hanna-Barbera, Universal Cartoon Studios, and Warner Bros. on shows including *Super Friends*, *Rugrats*, and *Rocket Power*. He was 81.



**CRAIG ARMSTRONG**

08/15/2023

As a Layout and Storyboard Artist and Animation Timer, Craig Armstrong worked at

Warner Bros., Fox TVA, Cool Productions, Disney TVA, Filmation, and Hanna-Barbera. His credits range from *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* to *Family Guy*. He was 70.

**ISTVAN MAJOROS** 09/27/2023

Istvan Majoros worked as a Layout Artist and Character Designer at Filmation, Bakshi Productions, Universal Cartoon Studios, Warner Bros., Film Roman, and Fox TVA. His credits include *FernGully: The Last Rainforest* and *The Simpsons*. He was 72.



**JOHN "RICH" CHIDLAW**

10/03/2023

Storyboard Artist Rich Chidlaw worked at Hanna-Barbera, Disney TVA, Hyperion, Warner Bros., Nickelodeon, and Film

Roman. His credits include *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, and *Tom and Jerry Blast Off to Mars!* He was 72.

**KAYTE KUCH** 10/15/2023

Kayte Kuch worked as a Writer at Ruby-Spears, Marvel, Filmation, Disney TVA, Graz Entertainment, and Universal Cartoon Studios. Her credits include *The Scooby and Scrappy-Doo Puppy Hour*, *Centurions*, and *Kim Possible*. She was 70.

**GARRETT HO** 11/05/2023

A Storyboard and Layout Artist, Garrett Ho worked at Warner Bros., MGM, Disney TVA, Nickelodeon, and Universal Cartoon Studios. Among his credits are *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog*, and *Space Jam*. He was 59.



**SUE BIELENBERG**

12/05/23

Sue Bielenberg worked as a Layout Artist, Character Layout Artist, and Storyboard Artist on series including *The*

*Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, *Rugrats*, and *Dragon Tales*. She was 58.



# ALL ABOARD

ANIMATOR ANDREW CHESWORTH USED MODERN TOOLS TO CAPTURE THE WHIMSY OF THE PAST IN HIS SHORT FILM *THE BRAVE LOCOMOTIVE*.



To call *The Brave Locomotive* a nostalgic joy ride is an understatement. Written and directed by

Andrew Chesworth, who also served as the Lead Animator and EP, this Oscar-qualifying short film embraces the past in look, feel, and story.

Henry the engineer and Linus the coal train engine work in cooperation to get their job done, transporting modest loads and caring for even the smallest creatures crossing the tracks. But along comes progress in the form of cigar-puffing Samson the steam engine, and Linus is cast aside in what becomes a little train that could, then couldn't, then could again tale.

The story is told completely in lyrics and melody, and Chesworth's inspirations were 1940s Disney anthology films like *Melody Time* and *Make Mine Music*. "Creating music in parallel with storyboards and animation can yield a rich, unified, vintage result," he says.

Before the melodies were written, Chesworth crafted prose like a bedtime story. Then he collaborated with Composer and Sound Designer Tom Hambleton to rewrite that material as simplified lyrics that conformed to the

melodies they developed. The two worked strategically, removing lyrics when they felt the visuals and score were strong enough to sustain the drama on their own. The lyrics themselves add to the film's old timey feel, capturing the boogie-woogie style popularized by the Andrew Sisters.

Production design was equally informed by 1940s animation, although Chesworth explains that everything was created on computer. Layouts and backgrounds were painted in Photoshop, while animation was created primarily in TVPaint. Although rendered to look like the drawn characters, the trains were created in Maya, and scenes were assembled in After Effects and given a vintage treatment with subtle film grain and other filters. Finally, the whole film was edited together in Premiere. "The fully digital pipeline is just so independent-friendly and remote-friendly," Chesworth says.

Nominated for an Oscar for his short film, *One Small Step*, Chesworth is an animation veteran. He's worked as an Animator on numerous films including *Wreck-It Ralph*, *Moana*, and *The Monkey King*. Currently Character Lead on an upcoming animated series for Netflix, he notes

that there was still a lot to learn on this project. "Even a scene that goes by in the blink of an eye can require days of dedicated work," he says. "Balancing my producer hat with my ground-level artist hat was the hardest thing." Animating about one-third of the film himself, Chesworth worked with a team of about 30 visual artists on the rest.

Chesworth funded the film through Patreon, an income-generating website that operates on a subscription model. Subscribers usually receive something in return for their subscription, and for this project, higher subscription tiers came with "more visibility into our processes of design, animation, and music," Chesworth says. Using Patreon removed pressure since he made the project on the side of his regular job, and he didn't have a definitive end date. Using social media to promote, he had hundreds of Patreon supporters from 2020 to 2023. "This enabled me to pay freelance background painters and animators, and subsidized the cost of music production," he says.

When asked what he'd advise new filmmakers wanting to make a short, he says, "It sounds obvious, but pick a concept that you truly love and can always engage with even at your lowest point. The whole point of a passion project is to express something that can only come from you." Chesworth grew up loving trains, classical animation, and musicals, and he says that everything about *The Brave Locomotive* was built around things he appreciates.

Chesworth also offers more practical advice: "Confront the numbers early to form a cohesive strategy." He suggests tracking everything in a document, including how long your film is, how many shots are in it, and how many days it takes to do one shot. "[From here] you can find places to simplify," he says. "Streamlining a story for cost can also make it more interesting for the audience. Brevity is the soul of wit, and short films are all about brevity."



Nostalgia played a major role in the creation of *The Brave Locomotive*.





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