

WINTER 1999



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WINTER 1999

Register NOW for the 7th Annual ASIFA/Central Midwest Animators Conference and Retreat April 30 - May 2, 1999.
See page 4 for more information and page 5 for a registration form.

Digressions on the Ottawa International Animation Festival by Jim Middleton

All things, in however diverse degree, are animated. -Spinoza

29 September - 4 October 1998

I begin each and every animation festival fully committed to attending the entire catalog of seminars, screenings, and retrospectives. And then someone hands me a ticket to a party in an unmarked grotto with the promise of lots of Talking Heads dance mixes. And then I wake up in an upper balcony of Parliament listening to a debate on tobacco advertising at hockey games. And then I find my passport has expired and I try to explain things to the judge in French and end up calling him a tofu stuffed tractor and, well, I usually wind up missing quite a bit of

the festival.

But this year was to be different; Canada's Ottawa was a home away from home, and a mere eight year absence wasn't going to make any difference. ("Whoa! The Elgin Business Inn is Out?" "That Hungarian restaurant is a parking lot?" "Where'd this pedestrian mall come from?") OK, so a few things changed.

Let's put things in perspective: at my first festival in 1984, computer animation was treated as an aberrant, expensive anomaly

Digressions continued on page 3

Ottawa Animation Festival - Part One: The Seminars

by David Baker First of a two part series.

The Ottawa International Animation Festival is held every two years in Canada's national capital as a showcase for animation art worldwide. Along with a nightly animation 'competition' that offers films ranging from the merry to the macabre, educational seminars and retrospectives held during the day keep festival attendees busy balancing schedules to maximize the experience.

I have described this festival to friends as "sitting in dark rooms for four days and watching cartoons." This is an oversimplification but accurate view of the festival. The true nature of the festival can be one of transition and revitalization.

Part One: The Seminars

Ottawa is an 11-hour drive from West Michigan. While other West Michigan attendees flew to the Capital of Canada, the drive provided me with a great opportunity to reflect on the past year at my studio within Lawrence Productions. Projects spun through my mind, software apps reviewed and possible projects for the future were fervently dreamed. The trek to Siggraph made in July had

left me somewhat dazed and bewildered at the state of animation art. Is animation a now totally digital world where the traditional artist and independent producer is a shadow? Is the fact that the latest and greatest in software and hardware was not under the fingertips validation that one is out of the mainstream? Since major studios were pleading for resumes and job reels at Siggraph, but only offering 'not appropriate skill sets' in their replies reasons for changing goals? This 11-hour meditation helped set the stage for the five days to follow.

Since I left at about 8 PM on Tuesday night, I was consciously aware that the World Premier of Pacific Data Images "Antz" was starting. I smiled and sent warm wishes to the crew and audience. The one note mantra of my Ford droned on into the evening.

On arrival at 10 am, I picked up my Ani-pass and headed over to the first seminar. "Storytelling in Animation" presented by one of the best instructors I have ever had, Ellen Besen. In the following two hours, using Disney's "101 Dalmatians" as a visual guide, she showed how every action, pose,

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Letter from the Editor *by Jennifer Eldred*



This quarter features articles on the '98 Ottawa Festival and information on attending the 1999 ASIFA/Central Animators Conference and Retreat. The ASIFA/Central conference is April 30-May 2 and is chaired by Mary Lou Haynes and Dave Daruska. Presenters and volunteers are still being accepted. If you would like to be considered please contact Mary Lou at

morgpk@aol.

If you are interested in submitting an article for the Spring 1999 edition the deadline is April 15.

Note: ASIFA International has launched its new website at www.asifa.net. Check it out!

See you at the retreat!

Jennifer Eldred

CORPORATE SPONSORS SOUGHT FOR 7TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ASIFA/Central seeks corporate sponsors to help underwrite the Annual Midwest Conference and Retreat. We need your help to make the conference bigger and better for this and coming years. Two events we would like to find sponsorship for are the Saturday afternoon barbeque and the opening night party. Donors will receive acknowledgement in all promotional materials, as well as complimentary registration at the conference. All donations to ASIFA are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Please contact Mary Haynes or David Daruska at 773-233-9397 (ext. 9 to leave a message) or 312-322-2814 (David's work number) or e-mail us at MorgPk@aol.com.

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 7TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Two additional student volunteers are needed for miscellaneous tasks during the upcoming conference. Please note that student volunteers receive free lodging and registration. Do you have a sense of adventure? The room is a shared lodging arrangement (with two bathrooms) that doubles as our meeting room. If you're interested, e-mail us at MorgPk@aol.com, or send a letter of interest to: Mary Haynes, Conference Chair, 3400 W 111th St., Box #324, Chicago, IL 60655. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome our first confirmed volunteer, Matthew Boyd of Western Kentucky University.

Continued from Digressions (Middleton) on page 1

suited for special effects in technical hands, with rare character development from Lassiter's evolutionary Pixar. 8mm still referred to a film stock. It was still faster to shade a sphere with Prismacolor than do a CAD rendering. This past fall, however, computers were pandemic, and it was frequently

not a question of whether a production used a computer, but which one was used. This generated a lot of discussions about the "good old days." (A "young fogey" used to be someone who could remember the one-dollar price difference between a mono and a stereo LP; now it could be someone

Digressions continued on page 3

ASIFA/Central Mission Statement **ASIFA: Association Internationale du Film d'Animation**

The purpose of ASIFA/Central is to promote the art of animation locally and internationally and to promote communication among animators and between animators and devotees. – adopted 3/92

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ASIFA/Central Conference:

April 30-May 2, 1999

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To join ASIFA/Central:

Send a check (payable in US dollars to ASIFA/Central) to the address above.

who can actually remember the delicious aroma of a freshly opened canister of Kodachrome.)

The first night set the tone for the technical aspect in the festival--the premiere of Dreamworks' "Antz." The presentation, on a football field sized screen, was preceded by local and Parliamentary governmental greetings, something that doesn't seem to happen in the US, where governmental acknowledgment of anything artistic is usually an act of disdain, not enthusiastic encouragement. The currency exchange also put this world premiere ticket at just under \$5US, a form of sticker shock I've not experienced in a very, very long time.

"Antz" boasted strong characters, and landing Woody Allen for one of the voices pretty much helped write the first ten minutes of the feature. The producers and representatives of Dreamworks were on hand the following day to offer anecdotes about their first CGI release--that Sharon Stone enjoyed the prospect of being a character with an extra set of legs, demonstrating how she'd use them on one of the animators (now there's a computer guy's fantasy); that the "rendering farm" took 4 hours to render each frame of film (for comparison, Pixar's "Toy Story" just two years before took nearly 24 hours to render each frame; interestingly, the present website for "Bug's Life" holds to the 24 hour rendering time); that Sylvester Stallone adlibbed the "You're da ant!" line near the end; that Christopher Walken would surround himself with screens and remove all punctuation from his script whenever he did his lines; and that last minute changes had the production still dealing with alterations just three weeks before the Ottawa premiere. The musical score was created over a six week period and recorded in London over seven days. A statement that no motion capture was used in the film drew applause from the SRO crowd in attendance. One of the best portions of the presentation was the running of selected scenes as they evolved from storyboard to rough cut to animated completion. Sources as diverse as Lang's "Metropolis" and Wood's "American Gothic" were put forth as inspiration.

The statistics of trying to do "Antz" in linear time, as traditional animation, described a sole animator beginning work on January 1, 1646 and continuing to the end of 1946, then letting a single computer render until the 1998 release date. As it was, each one of the core group of 25 animators was expected to produce 5 seconds of animation each week.

These comments are not to make the festival seem to revolve about "Antz," although the representatives of Dreamworks were pretty full of themselves at their booth over the following days. Pixar, by comparison, seemed almost homey at their cubicle and were incredibly generous with "Bug's

Life" buttons, something that held a load of importance with a 13 year old boy in tow (he came back with 3 dozen for his classmates).

And lest anyone get too full of himself, scattered around nearby signposts were broadsides reading:

ADDENDUM TO WARNING
ART IS MERELY A MIRROR
CONTINUE THE MUNDANE

This was a bit unsettling. It served as a reminder that the festival would be getting interpretations in other tongues, many of them pierced.

But there was no time to remain unsettled with the collection of programs available during the week at Ottawa. "Dalmatians 101" was an in-depth, often frame-by-frame analytical comparison of the 1961 animated feature with its 1997 remake; Ellen Besen of Sheridan College showed the superiority of the earlier production in terms of its composition, timing, and use of sound. Later, several hours were spent on portfolio assembly at Chez Ani; unfortunately, many of the questions asked seemed more interested on the "why" (as in "why won't they hire ME?") rather than on the "how" (as in "how do I minimize my portfolio getting lost?"). I had the distinct impression that many of the students at Chez Ani would not be interested in doing animation unless a big, drooly paycheck were involved (could it be they majored in animation for the same reason students majored in business in the 80s? A means to an end, and thereby an end to the means?). But I digress.

Priit Parn from Estonia challenged his gathering to redefine storytelling in terms of fantasy, then further challenged everyone to redefine fantasy. "The brain and stomach must work together," he said, adding that a film has two problems, "the beginning and ending...and then there's that middle part."

Other workshops laid out storyboards, discussed the future of the animated feature, looked at animation on the web (load up spumco.com!), and examined the nuts and bolts of creating a studio. All the while, animator portraits by Timo Viljakainen stood silent watch (well, that's not exactly right--the portrait subjects all had their eyes closed; let's call it silent somnambulance).

There were several great retrospectives, and the history buff in me devoured what I could. One of the biggest delights at these festivals is the possibility of watching golden age animation on something other than a monitor measured in inches. In a large projection hall you can drown in a sea of animation, slam your eyes into a wall of light and color. The

Register Now for the 7th Annual Midwest Animators Conference and Retreat *by Mary Lou Haynes*

CONFERENCE DATES: Friday, April 30 - Sunday, May 2
The Conference is open to anyone with an interest in animation. Anyone can attend, present or sign-up for the screenings (VHS videotape preferred). ASIFA membership is not required.

This event brings together an informal group of attendees to hear featured speakers, view animation, and discuss various aspects of the animation business. Recruiters also have attended past Conferences.

The focus of the gathering whether artistic, personal or commercial, is an exceptional opportunity for animators laboring in distant corners of the country to gather and re-energize with kindred spirits. Included on the schedule is time for: a Bar-B-Que, nature hikes, swimming or relaxing in the ever popular hot tub.

AWARDS CEREMONY

The Retreat also features an Awards Ceremony for a competition designed to encourage student animators. The Helen Victoria Haynes WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition is unique because a portion of the prizes are awarded to the winners for turning an 'idea' into a completed project.

SETTING

Starved Rock State Park is 2,600 acres located on the Illinois River. It boasts 18 canyons, waterfalls, spectacular rock formations and 15 miles of trails. Amenities include a restaurant, coffee shop, snack shop, cocktail lounge/bar, spectacular Great Room lounge, gift shop, indoor swimming pool, whirlpool, kiddie pool, game room, exercise room, outside patio and saunas. All rooms are handicap accessible.

PRESENTATIONS, SCREENINGS, WORKSHOPS

Confirmed and Accepted Presenters for the 1999 Conference are: Ed Counts, 'ZOETROBICS' screening; Kim Roberts, 'INFLUENCES OF FINE ART IN FILM & ANIMATION'; Randy Rockafellow, 'ASIFA/Central WEB SITE' and Workshop; Rita Dobias, WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Competition winner screening
Unconfirmed presenters/screenings at the time of this printing are: Tom Brierton and the ASIFA East reel.

ROOM RATES AND RESERVATIONS

Rooms should be reserved NOW through Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center (1-800-868-7625). Room reservations are must be made for 2 nights (Friday & Saturday) for approx. \$67 per night, single occupancy, prices subject to change. Outdoor cabins and camping are also available. Other accommodations are nearby. Check-in time is 3pm. Please mention you are with

ASIFA/Central Midwest Animators Conference when booking rooms. A block of rooms is being held for conference attendees. Starved Rock is a popular destination, rooms book up quickly.

TRAVEL

Utica, Illinois is 90 miles west of Chicago (approx. 90 minutes), at I-80 near I-39 (Illinois route 51).

DEADLINES - PROPOSALS, COMPETITION, FEE

Proposals - Workshops/Poster Sessions -

Feb 14, 1999. Notification - March 15, 1999.

WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition - Feb 14, 1999.

Conference Registration Fee - April 15, 1999.

Volunteers accepted through May 2, 1999.

REGISTRATION & RESERVATIONS

Advance Registration fee for the full conference is \$40 for members until April 15, 1999 or \$50 afterward at Conference. Do not mail Registration after April 15. Bring your Late Registration fee to the Conference. Conference registration does not include lodging. Attendees are responsible for reserving their own rooms.

Conference registration for Saturday only is \$20 in advance of April 15 and \$25 on-site. This is an option available to individuals who wish to drive in for the day. Saturday only registrants are welcome to attend the afternoon Bar-B-Que. We request that people who are registered at the hotel for the weekend pay the full conference fee. (See registration form, page 5)

PROPOSALS & REGISTRATION FEE

Send all Proposals & Conference Registration Fees to address listed on conference registration form.

SCHOLARSHIP COMPETITION

For rules, or to volunteer as a Judge, for the 4th International WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition, send e-mail to:

WORLD PEACE SCHOLARSHIP

at morgpk@aol.com - or - call 773-233-9397 ext. 3. - or - send a brief note including a #10 SASE including 1st Class (\$.33) postage to: M. L. Haynes, Coordinator
4th International Helen Victoria Haynes
WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition

3400 W. 111th Street, Box #324

Chicago, IL. 60655

Please allow 4-6 weeks for processing.

- Mary Lou Haynes, '99 Conference Chair

Registration Form for Seventh Annual ASIFA/Central Conference & Retreat

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone #: _____ Fax #: _____ Email: _____

Advance Registration and payment by check/money order in US dollars
(do not send cash through mail) accepted until **April 15**. After April 15 register onsite.

This years conference chair, Mary Lou Haynes, is a globe-trotting computer software engineer by day and composer by night. A devoted fan of Animation, and longtime member, she has served on the Board of ASIFA/Central, coordinated numerous programs, screenings and special events.

ASIFA/Central Member Advance Registration

☐

\$40 Weekend

☐

\$20 Member-Saturday Only

☐

\$25 Student Member-Weekend

Non-Member Advance and All Onsite Registration

☐

\$50 Weekend

☐

\$25 Saturday Only

☐

\$30 Student - Weekend

Make checks/money orders payable to ASIFA/Central
Allow 4-6 weeks for processing

Amount Enclosed: _____

Detach and mail registrations to:
ASIFA/Central Animator's Conference
M. L. Haynes
Conference Chair
3400 W. 111th Street, Box #324

For questions regarding the Conference and Retreat contact:
Mary Lou at morgpk@aol.com

Seminars (Baker) continued from page 1

layout and word was carefully crafted to advance and develop the story. Subtle design elements were brought out that helped illustrate the devices used to advance the story and develop the characters. Storyboards were discussed as an integral tool in the process along with leica reels and pose tests. After careful study of two scenes, she juxtaposed these with the corresponding scenes from the live action film from 1996. Though entertaining, one could see how the live action film was, well, flat compared to the animated film. The devices used to move the story were much broader and simplistic, and as she pointed out, gratuitous action/adventure chases were used to excite the senses as opposed to true story development. After two incredible hours, the seminar was ended only so the next class could start.

On the heels of the Storytelling Seminar was the Antz Presentation at from Pacific Data Images and Dreamworks. Since the "World Premier" was at the animation festival the night before, you could sense the relief on the faces of the two directors, from PDI and Dreamworks. Not only was the project finished, but that their two-year project was well received! The directors offered an in depth review of the process used to create a 3D film of this magnitude. Using video segments from leica reels, pencil tests and low rez renders, they brought the audience through the making of the "Giant Sneaker" scene of the film. The audience sat enraptured at the work and the in-house stories the directors spun. The most remarkable part of the seminar was that the directors were very down to earth people who were quite open about providing candid answers from a probing audience.

With the gentle way both men had, one could see where creativity could flourish in such an environment.

The 2 PM seminar was "Preparing a Digital Portfolio, presented by the recruiting director of Pacific Data Images. The audience was looking forward to positive input on what to include in a job reel that would be attractive to major studios. Instead, we were accosted with a 45-minute sales job of why PDI was a great place to work and all the wonderful things that PDI has done. Afterward, he gave us a good idea what it was like to be in his shoes traveling the world in search of the best artists and the thousands of artists he must turn away. He finally provided ideas of what not to do... creating a reel that was too long (anything over 3 minutes is suspect). Putting labels on the spine of the videotape that included your phone

Seminars continued on page 8

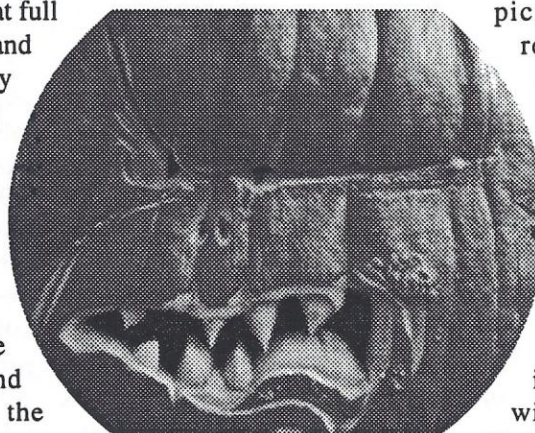
lush detail of early experimental animation benefits from this attention, and previously I have sat, in slack jawed amazement, before the works of Richter, Fischinger, Ruttman, and the Whitney brothers. This time, Wendy Jackson brought experimental animation scholar Cecile Starr, co-author of *Experimental Animation*, to reintroduce audiences to Mary Ellen Bute. Bute, not well known today, had the good fortune of having her short films shown nearly exclusively at Radio City Music Hall from 1934 to 1953, which meant that 120,000 patrons saw her productions over the course of a week (talk about audience envy!). Fellow attendees were astonished at the amount of imagery that later seemed adopted for "broader audiences" in Disney's *Fantasia*.

Frank Tashlin had his week as well. It seemed interesting that his earliest black and white Warner entries seemed to have more sophisticated direction and editing than the later, more gag-oriented productions (the same could be said of his later live action films, but that would be for another article). Of his two scheduled live-action features, "Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter" made it to a postage stamp-sized Odeon screening room; even with splicey print, the monologues by love-bereft Joan Blondell were priceless (I dropped my popcorn at "I get a throat full of hard when I think about him," and her references to AC-DC may actually have been innocent in 1957... naah). Where else but at a festival can you see people attending a Frank Tashlin movie take notes? OK, so I was the only one doing it, but I don't take notes during standard screenings... well, so I just write down some of the more important character lists and plot twists... ok, I take notes all the time...so shoot me.

The work of Canadian-born animator Charles



photos courtesy Jim Middleton



Thornson also hit the screen, Paul Driessen returned from teaching in Germany to preside over a retrospective of his work, and Karl Cohen challenged the sensibilities of the attendees with his collection of *Forbidden Animation* (just who did "Buried Treasure," anyway, and could he be a relative?).

And if this weren't enough, the nearby National Gallery of Art held a Whistler retrospective! Check out his etchings!

One thing this festival lacked, however, was Helen James. Helen had been a common fixture at previous festivals and died this past February after an extended illness. Schooled in silhouette animation in her early 70s, a fan of Kandinsky, a teacher, photographer, and ceramic artist, her enthusiasm was infectious. She had been one of the first animators I met in Toronto's 1984 festival and played host to the divergent Michigan group in her suite. This impressed us lowly hostel dwellers.

One constant feature of the festival has been the animator's picnic and pumpkin carving contest. This time Strathcona Park felt the invasion, some of whom were armed with coffee-table sized references to guide the carving. Occasionally promotional, always creative, the pumpkins showed as much variety as the festival's films. And then, if you weren't partied out after picnics, Chez Ani screenings, and restaurants of every conceivable nationality, there were evenings of parties sponsored by software vendors and Nickelodeon! Everyone else was a designated driver these nights, and Babylon earned its name as the 60s returned, bad pants and all, for one evening in Canada's capitol.

And then the product demos! The instantaneous lip synch, the joys of 2D with the look of 3D. My luggage and Christmas stocking were never big enough. And cel phones! Separation anxiety in Canada seemed to involve not having a phone attached to your

Digressions continued on page 7

ear. People in line for espresso were ordering pizzas that way. And from a pharmaceutical perspective, Canada was a hay fever haven--Allegra and Claritin are available without a prescription (but on the other hand, don't even try to find generic Sudafed).

Oh, and I nearly forgot - there were competition screenings, too! Marred by occasional projection and sound misadventures (when they said NTSC, they meant NTSC!), each evening brought film after film, ranging from the elegant simplicity of waving hands to the baroque obscurity of Polish metaphor. I cannot say I shared the same taste as the selection committee, but they certainly offered up an interesting variety from the several thousand entries.

There are few places so close to home as Ottawa that can give such an elegant setting for a genre that has often been considered little more than cinematic filler; this biannual Canadian venue for animation gives it the attention, respect, and pure YEE HA it deserves. This past visit made me realize how much I've truly missed the opportunity to cavort, cajole and otherwise hobnob with fellow fans of animation. I'll be there in 2000, so help me Winsor McCay.

- Jim Middleton

number and address along with slates on the tape including the same material. VHS is the preferred format. His idea of a resume was basically a laundry list of skills that explicitly laid out what you had done on your reel. Life experience had no bearing in his requirements. He also mentioned that the cover letter should actually say what position you were applying for and not be more than a short page since he had so many reels to review. After these ramblings, he opened up the floor to questions and promptly got into heady arguments about monitor setup and other unrelated stuff. With twenty minutes left in this frustrating two-hour seminar, the audience finally called to SEE SOME EXAMPLES of what is a good reel. After sensing the audience's demeanor, he complied and showed four short reels from successful applicants to PDI. In a nutshell, the most successful showed excellence in either lighting, special FX, modeling, or animation (i.e. good walk cycles). Each of the reels revealed that his studio was not looking for producers of animation, "commercial" reels comprised of flying logos, technical projects or space ships. What this guy looks for is specific excellence, but not necessarily experience.

In all fairness, I was operating on little sleep but also believe the recruiter planned his seminar with a more

intimate group in mind. He overlooked the first question any producer would ask: "Who is your audience." Later, I will review the dynamic "Preparing the Traditional Portfolio" seminar that was outstanding as this one was frustrating.

Other seminars for Wednesday included the opportunities, risks and rewards of Co-Productions presented by Nelvana, How to Set Up Your Own Studio by the Funbag animation company and the Ani-Legal Workshop which discussed copyright and protecting your work.

Thursday's seminars started with a storytelling session by noted Estonian animator Priit Parn. He offered his vision and advice on how to create and render your own ideas in animated form. His background in history, politics, art and music created a quirky and eclectic lecture that left the audience both amused and confused. An engaging and entertaining speaker, Priit's lecture was less about storytelling than him telling stories of production in his homeland and the trials an animator from Eastern Europe has these days. While those looking for a dynamic storytelling seminar, as "101 Dalmatians," were disappointed, Priit's adventure in animation land offered a great insight into the world of state-funded animation projects and creative mind expansion.

At the second Thursday seminar for this writer, "Getting Started, Funding Your Animation Work" was billed as a way of getting your work funded in both Canadian and international contexts. After the panel of Canadian funding agents was introduced, it became apparent that this seminar was designed for Canadians looking for Canadian money... so this writer slipped out the back door to "Animation and Hi-Tech." The course description talked about "paradigm shifts" and "merging creativity with new techniques," but was really a demo of Alias / Wavefront's new Maya product. After seeing scores of demos this summer at Siggraph, I bristled at the idea of someone trying to sell me on Maya. (No selling needed... it's a great product). After settling in, though, the seminar did go into great depth on tools and approaches that can be used no matter which applications you use. The technical director leading the demo was very knowledgeable and free with his ideas. His approach was that yes, this is cool software.. and look at how this can embellish scenes and help you create better animation. He gave credence to the people developing the stories making sure to recognize that good software cannot cover up a bad story.

Thursday afternoon, "The Future of

Entertainment Delivery-Animation and the Internet" was a very well attended seminar. Very well prepared was speaker Steve Dryall of Metal Motion Productions whose enthusiasm and insights into Internet media production riveted the crowd to his outstanding presentation.

Along with providing inexpensive yet powerful internet resources, Steve was televising his presentation live over the net with a simple consumer video camera, Mac, and inexpensive capture card, letting anyone connected to the Net see the workshop. He was a perfect example how small, enthusiastic entrepreneurs can outshine even the major studios in technological expertise and creative content. Also, Steve was very generous with a twenty-page handout with WWW resources for needed equipment and content production. This seminar alone was worth the price of admission.

The last session of the day was "Meet the Masters- Estonia and Russia". This panel discussion featured several prominent animators from Estonia (Priit Parn, Janno Poldma, Mati Kutt and Rao Heidmats) and Russia (Igor Kovalyov and Alexei Karaev.) In addition to their artistic approaches to animation and thematic interest, these animators discussed working in their particular social, political and cultural environments. Being a boomer from the cold war, I found this discussion particularly poignant. Talking to fellow artist that worked behind the iron curtain at one time, I felt an incredible kinship to a group of people that my government had at one time told me were evil propagandists. Art, for once, had shown me it has no boundaries and can be used as a tool to bring humanity together. Along with amusing anecdotes about working with the communist bureaucrats whose concerns sounded much like our own corporate clients, the animators told of the difficult state of their art now that the government has no money to support them. This should be a rallying cry for our industry to help these dedicated animators.

The Friday morning seminar "Tooning in: The World of Cartoon Cable Channels," was hosted by The Cartoon Network's Linda Simenski and Canadian Teletoon's Madeleine Levesque as they reviewed the lives in the world of cartoon cable channels. This candid encounter addressed creative problems and possibilities and future directions of animation networks. This refreshing discussion between two executives in television helped demystify the world in which they live. Money was a concern for both producers, but well balanced with creative opportunity and a good dose of humanity. Both Linda and Madeleine were candid and open about their funding sources and problems and were very happy to share important information to an inquisitive audience.

Following "Tooning in:", came "New Tools of the Trade"... a seminar presented by Nelvana, Windlight Studios, and Silicon Graphics. In it, the presenters offered a working example on how a whole new genre of animation, the 3D cartoon is created. I honestly felt as if I were seeing something very new at its genesis. How a new series, Rolie Polie Olie, is produced in four separate places around the world using the Internet as a way to exchange data and improve financial efficiency. Though not the first multinational production, Rolie Polie Olie is written and boarded in Toronto, motion captured by a Minneapolis company, blocked in France with final animation and rendered in Vietnam, and edited in Toronto for distribution by the Disney Channel in the United States. Using software tools such as Alias and Softimage, artists of different languages and cultures are using computer software as the common language to produce a new and innovative show. The presenters could barely contain their enthusiasm for their new media and graciously led people through a production process that will be a model for years to come. If you wanted to see the future of animation production, this workshop was not to be missed!

Saturday afternoon, I was going to see independent animator Bill Plympton's "I Married a Strange Person" but was disappointed when the theatre was filled to capacity. Reviewing my program, I decided to venture over to the "Preparing a Traditional Portfolio" thinking that it would be an OK thing, but not great. Boy was I wrong! This workshop, by the "Manager of Training and Development at Warner Bros. Feature Animation", Dave Master, offered advice on how best to assemble an impressive portfolio of your work. The presentation covered areas such as life drawing, animal studies, sketchbooks, and animation reels. Advice was also given on how to tailor your portfolio for the areas of background, layout, storyboard and animation computer animation and clean up. Not only a "how to", this was an in-depth insight into the minds of the animation industry. The speaker, both candid and frank, left no one without the insight that much like an Olympian, you will work your buns off to get to the top. However, he also left the impression that anyone with the dream, commitment and dedication can achieve the goal of working on a feature film. Part coach, cheerleader, taskmaster and favorite uncle, Dave Master enchanted the spellbound crowd with tales of success, dreams come true and unfulfilled hopes. His examples were concise and his advice poignant. Yet, I never felt that I was unworthy to be working for this goal. My only regret is that there wasn't someone like Dave telling me these things many years ago. Follow Dave's advice: Work hard, focus on what the studios want, and DRAW!

The last of the seminars I attended was "The making of a
Seminars continued on page 9

Prime Time Series". We heard about the genesis, productions and directions of Nelvana's new series, Bob and Margaret, Canada's first animated series for prime time television. The workshop included David Fine and Alison Snowden, director Jamie Whitney and Nelvana Representatives. David and Alison were the focus of the panel, and basically described what it was like to go from piloting a project as "Bob's Birthday" to the full scale production that it has become... perhaps even to someday eclipse "The Simpsons". The down to earth quality of the creators enamoured the crowd as they described the day to day process of putting on a full-scale show from start to finish. The producers of the show also provided day to day operational insights to how a show of this magnitude is created. After the lively panel discussion, we were treated to a full-length episode of "Bob and Margaret" and a wonderful buffet by its creators, Nelvana. A first rate even for those holding an Ani-plus pass, the traditional animator picnic was held at a nearby park on the sunny Friday afternoon. Sponsored by Warner Bros., delicious picnic foods with a substantial amount of beer and wine created a festive atmosphere for the two hundred in attendance. Transportation was provided with London style double decker buses through the picturesque city of Ottawa. The Pumpkin Carving contest was a highlight featuring a score of intricately carved orange creations. This event allowed for a homecoming for many of the artists who work worldwide in the industry. Everywhere "tour" jackets with Walt Disney, WB and ANTZ Logos warmed proud and happy bodies. Hollywood style networking was in force as people could mix where seminars and film showings did not allow such interaction. A wonderful event to break up a big day. The merry crowd returned to the Art Center refreshed for an evening of animation.

If one grew tired of the seminars being held, there were reviews and retrospectives. Topics included Animation from Norway, 40 Years of Estonian Animation, Forbidden Animation, and 30 Years of Swiss Animation among others. These offerings helped showcase areas that have had little International Exposure. I personally enjoyed a retrospective of a New York filmmaker Mary Ellen Bute whose abstract animated expressions were first displayed in Radio City Music Hall. In it, this author, who had previously thought Fantasia was a groundbreaking film, saw work that predated the Disney masterpiece by half a decade. The other notable seminar for this attendee was the "Canada: Mother of Computer Animation" seminar given by a noted producer. In it, we were given a comprehensive history of the last twenty-five years of computer animation as it developed in Canada. Dozens of short films and demo reels reminded us of how the industry grew steadily from simple line morphing animations to the applications of today.

Another facet to the festival was screenings of independent animators such as Bill Plymton and Paul Driessen. Anyone familiar with these artists were not only treated to hours of their outstanding work, but got to meet them in person during the festival. While such interaction and intimacy at other festivals is rare, the Ottawa Festival abounds in such experiences.

Saturday was "Kid's Day" hosted by Nickelodeon. In it, about 60 kids were treated to a day in the life of an animator. They were shown how animated films during morning seminars and given a tour of Funbag Studios of Ottawa.

Also of note was the Animation Trade fair. Located outside the main theatre at the National Arts Center, it was created to provide a vehicle for professional

displays, promotions and demonstrations and to facilitate the recruitment of up and coming animation talent. Though small in comparison to a mega-circus like Siggraph, trade show participants included PDI, Pixar, Disney of Canada, Nelvana and Sheridan College. Anyone could get the opportunity to speak with recruiters and get honest feedback from them. A great chance to see the industry in action. Also, a number of hardware and software companies showed products ranging from motion-capture systems to 2D cel animation production applications.

One travels to an animation festival to see new innovative productions. The evening competitions provided two solid hours of first rate international efforts. The structure of the competition allows for independent animator entrance into an international venue that is unavailable on broadcast TV. While there was no lack of presence by the major studios, smaller studios and individuals were well represented. In a following installment, I will review a few of these outstanding works.

A welcoming letter from the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Cheileire, describes the event succinctly.

"This important festival, dedicated to further development and strengthening the animation industry, is central to the quality of animation in North America and around the world.... This gathering provides you with an excellent opportunity to exchange views and discuss developments in your profession, while renewing old acquaintances and establishing new ones in an atmosphere of creative congeniality..."

Next Time: The Competition... or... Why We Came in the First Place

For more information on the Ottawa Festival contact www.awn/oiaf.com

- David Baker

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