



## Silent Era Cartoons: Bray Studios, Ub Iwerks & Beyond

at the EDISON THEATER in Historic Niles

Sunday, November 5th 3:00 pm

Requested Donation  
\$6 Museum Members  
\$8 Not Members Yet



We are proud to present a film program showcasing the truly imaginative and surreal world of early animated cartoon shorts. This screening features work from a variety of silent era animation producers, and serves as a fun cross-section of cartoon characters and series from a hundred years ago.

Highlights will include a topical **Bobby Bumps** subject from the first successful animation production company, the **Bray Studios**; an early animated adaptation of **Charlie Chaplin**; examples of Otto Messmer's **Felix the Cat** and Max Fleischer's **Koko the Clown**—the two cartoon 'superstars' of the 1920s; and three of Walt Disney's earliest films, featuring the animation by the exceedingly talented **Ub Iwerks**.



- **Bobby Bumps' Pup Gets the Flea-Enza** (Earl Hurd, 1919)
- **Charley at the Circus** (Otto Messmer, 1919)
- **Reunion** (Dave Fleischer, 1922)
- **The Four Musicians of Bremen** (Walt Disney, 1922)
- **Chicken Dressing** (Earl Hurd, 1923)
- **Felix Strikes it Rich** (Otto Messmer, 1923)
- **Alice Loses Out** (Ub Iwerks, 1925)
- **It's the Cat's** (Dave Fleischer, 1926)
- **The Mechanical Cow** (Ub Iwerks, 1927)



### Special Bonus!

Previously lost, now found

**Betty Boop** cartoon

**BUZZY BOOP** at the CONCERT  
(1938, Fleischer)

Photo Credit: Louis Depres



These newly restored versions, utilizing rare archival 16mm and 35mm prints, come from New York City-based historian and archivist, **Tommy José Stathes** and his Cartoons on Film label.



Animation historian and writer, **Jerry Beck**, will be on hand to introduce the digital program and conduct a post-screening Q&A.



EDISON THEATER  
Home of the  
NILES ESSANAY SILENT  
FILM MUSEUM  
37417 Niles Blvd.  
Fremont, CA 94536

[www.nilesfilmmuseum.org](http://www.nilesfilmmuseum.org)

Museum & Store open 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm Saturdays / Sundays  
Questions? Email [pr@nilesfilmmuseum.org](mailto:pr@nilesfilmmuseum.org) or leave a message at (510) 494-1411  
Advance Tickets will be available online or at the museum during open hours.



November 2023



### THE CHICKS ARE BACK AND ARE FIGURING OUT HOW TO RESCUE MOLLY'S DAUGHTER FROM A FACTORY FARM

Aardman's *Chicken Run* (2000) is the most successful stop-motion animated feature of all time. It grossed over \$277 million in theatres. Now, the sequel, *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget* just opened with a favorable *Rotten Tomatoes* score of 79% from critics based on 19 reviews. The *Hollywood Reporter* called it "tasty, if not especially meaty." It was directed by Sam Fell, a longtime Aardman collaborator, who previously directed Laika's *ParaNorman* and Aardman's *Flushed Away* (the studio's first — and last — all-CGI feature). The sequel had a production crew of about 350 people, with 45 units working simultaneously at the peak of production. PS, the film is not vegan friendly.

**'ELEMENTAL' HAS NOW BECOME A MINOR HIT** The Pixar film struggled at the box office initially, but it ended up making nearly \$500 million. It had a production budget around \$200 million, plus there were advertising and other promotional expenses. The reviews were warm, but not hot. It only had a *Rotten Tomatoes* score of 74 from critics; however, the audience gave it a 93, so

word of mouth must have contributed a lot to its success.

It became the most watched movie premiere of the year on Disney+ and it is among the top 10 movie premieres of all time on that website. It had 26.4 million views in its first five days of streaming.



Does Pixar and Disney need to adjust to the post-Covid economy? They are said to be re-examining their release strategy. They aim for billion-dollar successes and the Disney princess features can still achieve that success.

Unfortunately, the Pixar original features that don't include well-known stars, are not as successful. Perhaps they need to wait longer before streaming them.



**SEE ULI MEYER'S 'DISCARDED CARTOON CAT' AND 'FRED BASTARD'** Meyer is a British animator who worked on *Roger Rabbit* and a lot of other films. He has his own company and has produced *Molesworth*, a feature based on characters in Ronald Searle's book of that name. The teaser reminds me of the wild young ladies at St. Trinian's school (*Belles of St. Trinian* written by Searle. See the feature based on the book it online). Hope you enjoy his shorts about a mysterious cat and the one about Fred. I hope they will delight you. Visit:

<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/cartoon-brew-pick/ulimeyer-the-discarded-cartoon-cat-232646.html>



**DISNEY PLANS TO SPEND \$60 BILLION ‘TURBOCHARGING’ AN EXPANSION OF THEIR MOST LUCRATIVE DIVISION** Bob Iger CEO told investors the corporation expects to spend \$60 billion over the next 10 years on its parks. That is nearly double what it invested in the last 10-year period. That includes \$17 billion in Walt Disney World in Florida. The company has more than 1,000 acres of land available for development around the world (at Disneyland in California; Walt Disney World in Florida, and at parks in France, China and Japan. They also plan to expand their cruise ship ports in the U.S., Asia, and Australia.



**DISNEY’S ‘WISH,’ OPENING NOV. 22, WILL PROBABLY BE ANOTHER BILLION DOLLAR HIT** The trailer depicts a nasty or evil king, an oh-so-lovely princess, a cute talking lamb and some fast-paced snappy comic moments that will no doubt delight millions of people. It’s an animated musical about a magical wishing star.

In an article for IndieWire by Bill Desowitz, who has seen the first 20 minutes of the film, he focused his discussion on the backgrounds that were created using computers, but they look like traditional hand-painted water color paintings. He noted that the “painterly, 2D aesthetic in CG

that’s every bit as impressive as *Across the Spider-Verse* in displaying the hand of the artist.” I assume the preview didn’t “knock his socks off.”

**WILL BOB IGER BE CEO OF DISNEY FOR LIFE?** Bob Iger, the 72-year-old CEO of Disney, recently extended his tenure through 2026. He retired in February, 2020, but returned in 2022 when the board apparently told his replacement to retire. When Iger returned, he said he would stay until 2024. Now he says he will stay until 2026. It may be that there are not many people who have the skills and vision to run such a complex corporation.

### **A FIGHT IS GOING ON FOR SEATS ON DISNEY’S BOARD BY A CRITIC OF IGER**

Activist investor Nelson Peltz is making another play for Disney. In February, Peltz ended his proxy battle with the company in a big win for CEO Bob Iger, but with Disney’s stock remaining under pressure despite reorganization moves, Peltz is eyeing a renewed push for board seats, according to a source familiar with the matter. Peltz’s hedge fund Trian Fund Management has acquired further Disney shares, bringing the value of its stake to more than \$2.5b. Trian is expected to request multiple seats on Disney’s board of directors, including one for Peltz according to a tip given to the *Hollywood Reporter*.



### **IS DREAMWORKS ANIMATION IN TROUBLE?**

DreamWorks Animation has just eliminated about 70 jobs. They were in their feature, television, and technology departments. Earlier this year, DWA released *Ruby Gillman, Teenage Kraken*, which died at the box office. It took in \$44.7 million worldwide, but it had a production budget of \$70 million.

The studio’s last success was *Puss in Boots: the last Wish* (2023). It grossed \$481 million worldwide and had a production budget around



\$100 million. It won several awards and an Oscar nomination.

The studio's next release, the **Smurfs in Trolls Band Together**, comes out November 17. It is the third film in the series. The studio's work for the internet includes **Gabby's Dollhouse**. It streams on Netflix.



### PETE KOZACHIK, 'NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS' VFX ARTIST, DIES AT 72

The forward to Kozachik's memoir, *Tales From the Pumpkin King's Cameraman*, was written by Tim Burton. Burton wrote, "Watching him work was like seeing a giant hovering over a quiet village or a mad scientist in his laboratory, bringing inanimate objects to life; finding ways, both high-tech and low-tech, to solve problems; and delicately, tactically bringing the miniature sets to life. Pete's unique style gives you an insight into this special world and the weirdness, excitement, depression, humor, anger, loneliness and creativity of it all."



Pete Kozachik was a stop-motion specialist who worked behind the camera on lots of award-winning features including *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Corpse Bride*, *Coraline*, plus several of the *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and *RoboCop* films. He received Oscar-nominations for visual effects on *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *James and the Giant Peach*,

*Corpse Bride* and *Coraline*. He was 72 when he died.

Pete was one of the thousands of kids that grew up fascinated with special effect films. Unlike most of those kids, he turned that love into a very successful career. That career began to develop when he moved to LA and started working at Coast Special Effects in North Hollywood, 1979. He moved to the Bay Area to work as a stop-motion cameraman on features at ILM. His ILM credits included work on *Howard the Duck* (1986), *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (1986), *Innerspace* (1987), *Willow* (1988), *Ghostbusters II* (1989). and *Star Wars: Episode II: Attack of the Clones* (2002).

At Phil Tippett's Studio he served as director of miniature photography on *Starship Troopers* (1997). He also worked with Tippett at his studio on the *RoboCop* sequels released in 1990 and '93 and at various times on Tippett's *Mad Gods* (the completed version was released in 2021).

Kozachik was director of photography on Selick's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), *James and the Giant Peach* (1996) and *Coraline* (2009). He also worked on Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* (2005).



### SEE A LOVELY FILM THAT DESCRIBES THE CONDITION RESPONSIBLE FOR PETE KOZACHIK'S DECLINE

Pete Kozachik died of complications from primary progressive aphasia, a rare form of Alzheimers. A lovingly made animated film about aphasia is *Heart to Heart*, a music video by Candy Kugel, Buzzco Films, 2009. (The 3+ minute short opens a longer film, *It's Still Me!*) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1529282/>

### DEATH SUBSIDIES BY MARK FIORE

Mark writes that "no matter how you slice it, we are subsidizing fossil fuels to the tune of trillions of

dollars every year.” [https://markfiore.substack.com/p/new-cartoon-death-subsidies?utm\\_source=substack&utm\\_medium=email#media-552006cb-f5bc-4046-9885-22fff796c6c2](https://markfiore.substack.com/p/new-cartoon-death-subsidies?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email#media-552006cb-f5bc-4046-9885-22fff796c6c2)

**TRAILER FOR ‘LEO’ THAT OPENS NOV. 21**  
It was made in Australia by Animation Logic for Netflix and comedian Adam Sandler. The feature was written by former *Saturday Night Live* writers Robert Smigel, Robert Marianetti, and directed by David Wachtenheim. [com/feature-film/leo-trailer-netflix-adam-sandler-233633.html](https://www.netflix.com/feature-film/leo-trailer-netflix-adam-sandler-233633.html)



**A LIFE-SIZED STATUE OF POPEYE WAS BEING SOLD AT AN AUCTION** It is by Diederik van Apple (Dutch, b. 1985) and sculpted with “high quality colorful resin composite.” The life-size sculpture is titled *Stay Strong*. It measures 71”H x 42”W x 14”D inches. It was being auctioned off by Roland NY gallery in Glen Cove, NY.

Van Apple has created lots of sculptures and unauthorized 2D works using well-known characters including Mickey Mouse, Minnie and Roadrunner. See other examples of his work at <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/diederik-van-apple-the-world-is-yours>



**‘THEY SHOT THE PIANO PLAYER’ IS A REAL AUDIENCE PLEASER** It is by Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal who created *Chico and Rita*. Their new feature combines documentary material and animated sequences to tell the story of a beloved Brazilian musician who contributed to the creation of bossa nova. It is both a wonderful musical adventure about the artist and his music plus an investigation by a reporter voiced by Jeff Goldblum, who is trying to find out what happened to the non-political musician who disappeared in 1976.

He vanished in Argentina when they had an oppressive government that practiced state terrorism. The musician was Tenório, a keyboard artist, whose short life ended with a mysterious death. Apparently, he made the mistake of wandering outside at 2 a.m. to buy something at a corner pharmacy. His disappearance took place just days before the coup that ousted Isabel Perón, a period when there was a feeling of living in a war zone.

It was shown at The Telluride and Mill Valley Film Festivals. It has been described as a loving, haunting tribute.



**A CANDIDATE FOR THE MOST OUTRAGEOUS FEATURE OF THE YEAR**  
*Dicks: The Musical* includes a CG animated



anthropomorphic vagina, stop-motion puppets, a lot of trash talk and a woman walking several men on leashes. Some critics believe the feature will become a cult classic. It stars Nathan Lane and is based on an off-Broadway musical of the same name. Trailer at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQDmT\\_Cih2Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQDmT_Cih2Q)



*Dora the Explorer*

**LOCAL SCREENING OF BILL PLYMPTON'S 'SLIDE' WAS POSTPONED** His new feature wasn't shown at the Mill Valley Film Festival as they wanted him to show it in the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) format. He doesn't have it in that format yet as it isn't quite finished. He says it will get shown in early December locally by the Alameda Film festival and the Mill Valley Festival will show it when a DCP copy is available. DCP is the format used in major first run movie houses.

**AN ANIMATED STAR TREK SHOW FOR KIDS IS ALIVE AND WELL** *Star Trek: Prodigy*, the animated kids' TV show, was canceled by Paramount+ while the second season was still midway through production. The good news is that it has found a new home. Netflix purchased the series and will rerun the previously aired first season this year and will air the second series once it is completed in 2024.



**PAW PATROL IS A HIT AIMED AT PRESCHOOLERS** A *Paw Patrol* sequel "barked its way into theaters" Sept. 29 along with a *Dora the Explorer* short. Spin Master Entertainment, Nickelodeon Movies and Paramount Pictures are behind the sequel. A third is slated to arrive in theaters in 2026.

The first feature, *PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie*. 2021, was a surprise hit that grossed \$40 million domestically and more than \$144 million worldwide. It had a \$30 million budget. The third feature in the franchise is slated to be released in 2026.

*Paw Patrol* began life as a Canadian TV show 10 years ago. Its creator Keith Chapman has developed stories in which a tech-savvy boy named Ryder leads a team of search and rescue pups on mighty adventures. "*Paw Patrol* has entertained generations of preschoolers while subtly teaching them the value of community, inclusiveness and teamwork," said Jennifer Dodge, president of Spin Master Entertainment. "On the cusp of the premiere of our second, super-powered film, the universal love for our pups is stronger than ever."

Paramount currently has animated *Transformers*, *Smurfs* and *Avatar: The Last Airbender* features in distribution or in production.



**'PAW PATROL' SETS A DUBIOUS GUINNESS WORLD RECORD** In September, at the Autry Museum in Griffith Park, Los Angeles, a Guinness world record was broken. That record was for "**most dogs attending a film screening.**" It turns out 219 dogs of various breeds sat and supposedly watched an outdoor screening of *Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie*. This beat the previous record of 199 dogs, which was set a year ago in October.

Being a bit of a cynic, I wonder how many of the dogs were able to follow the plot of the movie, or if they were even aware that a movie was being screened in the first place. KC <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHb0Rz5Io-c>

**SONY IS NOW STREAMING MORE OF ITS ANIME COLLECTION FOR FREE** Sony is putting a collection of anime films that were on its premium streaming network Crunchyroll, and will place them on several free streaming platforms including Amazon Freevee, and Roku. Crunchyroll, their premium service, and AVOD will remain the home for new and premium anime content while the non-premium channels will show older works to “promote the growing medium of anime.”

**‘100 GREAT FILM BOOKS’** The *Hollywood Reporter* has published *100 Great Film Books*, a list chosen by 322 film people. Only one book, Neal Gabler’s *Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination*, was focused on animation. Animation still has a long way to go before the general film public realizes its importance.

**ANNECY FESTIVAL TO EXPAND SCOPE WITH SPRAWLING \$27 MILLION INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION HUB** Annecy Animation Film Festival welcomed more than 16,000 people to its last festival. They have just announced they will open a year-round international animation institute.

It is expected to launch during the second half of 2025 and will boast a 330-seat screening room, an artists’ residency, special areas for training courses and cultural action, a space for temporary exhibitions, a permanent exhibition hall to showcase the film collections, a bookstore and a gift shop. Mickaël Marin is the director of the Annecy festival and its industry market MIFA announced the center.



**ASIFA-CENTRAL HAS A 7 PAGE REPORT ON WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO ATTEND THE OTTAWA ANIMATION FESTIVAL HELD IN SEPTEMBER.** It is North America’s longest running and most important animation event. The article covers the films, the celebrities, the parties and other details. We thank ASIFA Central’s Jim Middleton, editor of their quarterly newsletter for making it available. The illustrated article is posted as: **2023 October ASIFA SF Appendix Edition – Ottawa Adventure Created for ASIFA-SF** [Download](https://wordpress.com/page/asifa.org/532) at <https://wordpress.com/page/asifa.org/532> Scroll down to the 16<sup>th</sup> “download” to find the article.



**IS HENRY SELICK SERIOUS** about his possibly directing a prequel to *Nightmare before Christmas*? In an interview with *People* magazine he wasn’t interested in making a sequel, but he said one idea that isn’t completely off the table is a prequel. “There might be a more interesting story there about how Jack became the King of Halloween Town.”





**‘TWEENDE’ IS AFRICA’S FIRST ANIMATED SERIES** It was produced by London-based Braintrust and Johannesburg-based animation studio Mind’s Eye Creative. The intended audience is kids.

<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/series/showmax-releases-the-trailer-for-its-first-2d-animated-original-twende-233661.html>



**SEE ‘LETTER TO A PIG’ TRAILER** Nancy Phelps has praised it and it has qualified for the Oscars by winning best international short film at the Anima Brussels Animation Film Festival. <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/awards/2024-oscars-short-film-contenders-letter-to-a-pig-director-tal-kantor-233357.html>



**IS THERE A MARKET FOR ANIMATION IN THE US CREATED FOR INTELLIGENT ADULTS?** By KC *My Love Affair with Marriage* is a first-person account of how songs and fairytales convinced young Zelma that love would one day solve all her problems. As she grows up, the young woman realizes her world is unlike the one she was

promised. A coming-of-age story that follows its protagonist through much of her early life, the film also features interspersed biological segments that scientifically explain much of what Zelma is experiencing. It even examines things like the effects on the brain from alcohol, drugs, and emotional abuse.

It isn’t a mindless work from Hollywood. Instead Signe Baumane shows us the faults of a world that leads naive people to believe false illusions of about marriage.

Beside her fascinating look at why marriages fail, the film is a wonderful visual treat that combines 3D model sets, with dramatic stage lighting and 2D hand-drawn animation. It also has an exceptional sound track. It really is outstanding.

Among the film’s impressive list of honors are the grand prize from Zagreb, the jury distinction prize for a feature from Annecy, the best film award at Fredrikstad, a nomination for best animated European film from the European Film Awards and other honors. The film is having successful runs in theaters in Europe.

So why has *My Love Affair with Marriage* performed well in Europe, but it took almost a year to find a distributor in the US that was willing to try to book it in to theaters? Others wanted to market it directly to streaming.

Is the US so provincial that there is almost no market for exceptional intelligent animated films for adults? I was shocked that it only played one night in San Francisco and that it wasn’t mentioned in the *SF Chronicle* the day it was shown here. I suspect that the American public is brainwashed into believing that theatrical animation is mindless entertainment for families. Apparently only a few theaters are willing to book non-Hollywood animation, even if it is anime.





**CHRIS ROBINSON'S 'KNOW YOUR INDIE FILMMAKER' HONORS SWISS ANIMATOR GEORGES SCHWIZGEBEL** Georges is a true master of the art and some of his work has been produced by the National Film Board of Canada. <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/know-your-indie-filmmaker/know-your-indie-filmmaker-georges-schwizgebel-2>



THE HAT, 1999

**KNOW YOUR INDIE FILMMAKER: CANADIAN MICHÈLE COURNOYER**

Cournoyer can produce strong, powerful work that can make you uncomfortable, but you recognize she needs to speak up and make others aware of issues that need to be acknowledged. She is a French Canadian who has created several films for the National Film Board of Canada. I still remember how disturbed I felt when I saw *The Hat*, for the first time. Thanks Chris for honoring her work.

<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/know-your-indie-filmmaker/know-your-indie-filmmaker-michele-cournoyer-232907.html>

**SONY WILL DISTRIBUTE 'THE PEASANTS'**

It is the second animated feature from the animators who created *Loving Vincent*, DK Welchman and Hugh Welchman.



**ANOTHER WIN FOR UNION LABOR IN HOLLYWOOD**

Over a year after it was voluntarily recognized by management, the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures' union has officially ratified its

first contract. The new three-year deal sets a minimum wage of \$20 per hour, with workers receiving a minimum of 3 percent wage increases annually. Paid parental leave was established as part of the pact. One-hundred and seventy workers are members of the union, which is allied with AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 126).

**SAG-AFTRA MEMBERS VOTE TO AUTHORIZE A VIDEO GAME STRIKE**

On September 26 members of the performers union voted 98.32 percent in favor of a strike authorization. The strike, if it happens, will support the voice actors who create the soundtracks. The vote does not mean a strike will be called, but it can be called if it's deemed necessary. The union feels the video game companies are not getting serious about reaching an agreement on the contract. They say the companies are making billions of dollars and paying their CEOs lavishly, but they need to better pay their performers.

The employers who might be struck by this strike include Activision Productions Inc., Blindlight LLC, Disney Character Voices Inc., Electronic Arts Productions Inc., Epic Games, Inc., Formosa Interactive LLC, Insomniac Games Inc., Take 2 Productions Inc., VoiceWorks Productions Inc. and W.B. Games Inc.

**NETFLIX IS REDESIGNING THEIR ANIMATION PRODUCTION MODEL. JOBS AT THE STUDIO WILL BE CUT WHEN TWO INHOUSE PTOJECTS ARE SHUT DOWN AND OUTSOURCED**

*Variety* was the first to report that Netflix's inhouse animation unit will scale down resulting in job cuts and two films currently in pre-production will be shut down and outsourced. They will use more outside productions in the future to keep its animated content volume consistent.



**THE ART INSTITUTE CHAIN OF SCHOOLS SUDDENLY CLOSED THEIR FINAL PLACES OF BUSINESS by KC** Once they were a billion-dollar business with campuses in over 40 cities in the US and Canada. In September 2023 the 8 remaining locations suddenly shut down, leaving about 1,700 students stranded. A retired computer animation teacher told me, “They were always fraudsters and now they are bust. Thank heavens. I’ve denounced them for 25 years and I’m only sorry for the students who’ve paid through the nose and got zip.”

It took the US Government years to investigate this chain of schools run as a for-profit business. It turned out politicians, including one or two members of the US Congress and a former governor of Maine, had invested in this profitable corporation. The former governor had even headed the corporation at one point. Did that slow down Congress’ investigation of them?

In any case it took a series of federal hearings to show the chain and other smaller for-profit colleges were guilty of numerous predatory practices including lying to unqualified prospective students to get them to enroll and to help them take out government backed loans.

The chain began in 1970 when the Education Management Corporation (EMC) bought the Art Institute of Pittsburgh (founded in 1921). EMC quickly turned the art and design school into one that offered classes in other subjects including culinary arts, audio production, fashion design and animation.

Business boomed and new campuses were started. The chain eventually reached a peak of \$2.5 billion in 2010. That was made possible thanks to Uncle Sam. They gave the chain’s students about \$1.5 billion in federal Pell grants and

student loans. (Yes, this chain did its part in creating the notorious student loan cruises.)

The Congressional hearings showed the Art Institutes had been plagued with mounting legal issues for years including former teachers successfully suing them. Things finally came to a head in 2015 when the US Department of Justice won a judgment of nearly \$100 million against them due to illegal recruiting practices and consumer fraud.

In 2017 a faith-based non-profit called Dream Center Educational Holdings acquired the schools. However, when the chain lost its accreditation in 2018, the new owners and Education Management Corporation were hit with more legal problems. That forced the chain to close most of its campuses.

In the Bay Area and other locations most of the classrooms were in spaces rented in commercial buildings. That meant the schools didn’t have many assets to sell to pay off legal expenses.



Then Covid 19 struck, resulting in enrollment falling at the remaining campuses. The last centers to close were in Austin, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Miami, San Antonio, Tampa and Virginia Beach.

The final closing means about 1,700 students and the remaining staff were screwed! Students and professors learned the news last month through a short email statement. That was followed by the school’s phones being disconnected and the buildings being locked.

Why did the school succeed? Many for-profit colleges, not just the Art Institutes, marketed themselves as less expensive than Harvard,



Stanford, and other well-respected institutions of higher learning. They offered prospective student the belief that even though they didn't already have the needed talent or skills before they enrolled, the school would provide them the needed education so that they will go on and have a successful career.

To make the schools sound even more attractive to prospective students there were easy to get loans and grants available, and they will be easy to pay off once you start your great, well-paying job (and there are of course there are lots of well-paying entry level jobs). It goes without saying that graduates from these great schools will of course have the education and talent to get those fabulous jobs. (Gosh, it turned out the schools' claims about lots of great jobs, high pay and having great job placement staffs were false.)

As editor of this newsletter (KC), I've focused on reporting on the problems and dangers of for-profit colleges for many years. While one of the biggest schools is gone, others are still in business. A friend who worked at a local for-profit with an animation program once told me she used to cringe when she walked past the desk of an administrator when she heard him praising the work in a portfolio. He always claimed the prospective student was just so talented and would have a wonderful career if they enrolled in his place of business.

Congressional hearings were told over and over about unqualified prospective students being enrolled, just so the school could get the tuition income (often provided by government loans). A local college used to boast on their website that they had over 1,500 students enrolled in their animation program. I have no idea how many of their students find employment in animation, but I suspect the percentage is quite low. I do know that in the last 30+ years I've invited each year all local students to send their films for our open screenings. In that time I've only seen a few works from that school (under five) and none from other local for-profit programs.

The US Department of Education has a well-researched website, *College Navigator*, that is a free consumer information tool designed to help students, parents, high school counselors, and others

get information about over 7000 educational institutions. You can compare educational programs offered by state educational institutions, private non-profit colleges and universities with for-profit schools. <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

I have had a negative opinion about for-profit animation programs for several decades as most are predatory businesses that are driven by strong impulses to make a profit. As an alternative I've suggested that going to state universities or community colleges is a far less expensive way to get a solid animation education. Many students from these schools go on to fill entry level jobs *if and when they are available*.



**16th ANIMASYROS and the 9<sup>th</sup> AGORA  
26 September to 1 October 2024  
Syros, Greece  
ANIMATION AND ANCIENT GREECE  
by Nancy Denney-Phelps,**

The first animated short created in Greece was *The Duce Narrates (O Duce afighete)* by Stamati Polenaki. The film, an anti-fascist satire, was designed in 1942 on the island of Sifnos during the World War II Italian occupation of Greece. The actual film was shot in Athens in 1945.



### **The Duce Narrates**

After the liberation of Greece there was a bloody civil war (1946 -1949), followed by a severe economic depression. Although one or two animated films were made each year, Greek animation did not thrive.

The Ancient Greeks often decorated pots with figures in successive stages of action; spinning the pot creates a sense of motion and action. Greek-born animator, writer, and Professor Emeritus at ENSAD in Paris Georges Sifianos has written extensively about movement on early Greek pottery.

His most recent research in this field concerns animated figures found on the Parthenon's Frieze. During this year's AnimaSyros' Agora, Professor Sifianos gave a presentation on *Phidias the Animator: Movement Analysis in the Parthenon's Frieze*.

It is widely acknowledged that Phidias was one of the greatest sculptors of Classical Greece. What was not realized until recently is that he also seems to have been an expert on movement analysis. This expertise was used in the construction of the Parthenon's frieze as a basic structural feature. The positions of the figures remind the viewer of the actual "key positions" of an animated film according to Professor Sifianos.

During his presentation at the Agora he, with the aid of specially prepared films, presented the "hidden animations", which revealed that Phidias created animation in Greece over 2,000 years before there was animated cinema.

When I was invited to participate in my first Agora, which was held in Athens in 2018, I didn't know much about Greek animation and I was not very impressed with most of the Greek films and projects that were pitched at the Agora. With the exception of one or two animators, like Joan

Zhonga, their work was seldom seen at festivals. Zhonga is a specialist in stop-motion animation primarily with puppets and plasticine. He began his career in 1982, after graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Tirana, Albania. Over the years his films have won awards at many international animation festivals such as Annecy, Hiroshima, and Fantoche to name but three.

This invisibility in the animation scene has all changed, and Greece is now producing some very strong films. In 2023 at the Annecy International Animation Festival, the oldest and largest gathering of animators in the world, the Greek national delegation was well represented with their own booth at MIFA, the market arm of the festival.

*Gegone in the Museum of Eufyros* by Joan Zhonga, competed in the Annecy Television Series Competition. The film is set in the Kerameikas Museum in Eufyros where the tomb of a young boy is located. In the film the image of the boy on the top of the tomb comes to life and talks about his dream of becoming a worthy citizen of Athens. The film was produced by Greek Public Television (ERT).

In the Commissioned Films competition, *A Flammable Planet* by Yannis Konstantinidis and Christos Lefrakis was screened. The film was commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and NOMINT, a London-based creative house, specializing in thought-provoking content and visual production. The film's aim is to raise awareness about catastrophic wildfires, which are increasing in intensity and frequency every year. They are wreaking havoc on people, nature, and animals throughout the world. Along with the two films in competition the ASIFA Hellas Pavilion at MIFA screened thirty projects in development, production, or distribution.

The 2023 edition of AnimaSyros screened 270 films. The eight competition sections were for feature films, international short films, TV and commissioned films, the student competition, Hellenic films, the K.I.D.S. competition, and the animapride competition. Sixteen films competed in the Hellenic competition. *Claw Machine* by Georges Salameh was named the Best Greek Film. The film is a 13-minute immersion into the experience of being uprooted. The city is under



siege - do you fight back or migrate? This is a topic that is all too relevant today.



My favorite Greek film this year was *Cat Postale* directed by Zacharias Mavroeidis. It is the story of Chantal, a young female cat who has grown up in a seaside tourist village. When tourist season ends, the village becomes a ghost town, and the tourists who have been feeding all the stray cats during the summer have disappeared.

Chantal embarks on an odyssey across the small island in search of a peculiar monk named Aquarelle whom she believes is destined to be her foster parent. The story is based on Mavroeidis' book *Seven Souls in the Mouth*.

Ermoupoli, the capital of the island of Syros is full of friendly stray cats who lounge on soft chairs at bars, in store windows, and at restaurants. They are fed by store owners, restaurants, and tourists. Most of the cats are plump, healthy, and have good glossy coats. The island is home to several cat gardens where felines can get food and water and rest in the shade during the heat of the day. There is also God's Little People Cat Sanctuary for sick or injured cats and abandoned little kittens. When visiting the island, if you are lucky enough to be adopted by a cat, you can legally take it home with you, but first, you must have it fully checked out by one of the island's vets who will also give it the necessary vaccinations. Then you must obtain an animal passport for your new family member."

Twenty-two films were in the Animapride Competition and for the 5<sup>th</sup> year the "This Is EU Award – European Values" was presented by the Representation of the European Commission in Greece. All films in the festival which promote the fundamental values of the European Union are eligible for the award whether they are from an EU

country or not. According to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, there must be respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.



This year's winning EU Award film, *My Name is Edgar and I Have a Cow*, by Filip Diviak from Czechia (The Czech Republic) is a particular favorite film of mine. Edgar's ordinary life is disrupted by a newborn calf that he sees on a tourist trip to a slaughterhouse. When he learns that the calf is destined to become schnitzel, he buys it and takes it home. As the calf grows into cowhood, Edgar's comfort zone is pushed to the limits by his love for his cow.

For the fourth year in a row, AnimaSyros and radio station Melodia 99.2 cooperated on an animated biopic about the life of a much-loved Greek singer/songwriter who has left a distinct mark on Greek music history. The biopic, created by an up-and-coming young director, is created around one of the musician's best-known songs.

*Ninety Seconds for Manos Loizos* utilizes mixed animation techniques to portray significant moments in the songwriter's life and work. The film centers around his beloved song *Everything Reminds Me of You*. The song was originally sung by Haris Alexiou with lyrics written by Manolis Rasoulis and music composed by Manos Loizos.

The film was made in collaboration with the Department of Multimedia and Graphic Arts at Cyprus University of Technology. It was based on a script written by Melodia 99.2 and AnimaSyros. The directors were Panagiotis Christou and Sokratis Sokratous. The animators were Dimitris Zonias, Stavros Kazakos, Eleftheria Papadopoulou, and Despina Sorrokou. Professor Charalambos

Margaritis oversaw the film's direction and animation and edited the film.

Along with the many animation programs, AnimaSyros believes in giving back to the local community with the Media Literacy Program. Led by Greek animator/educator Elena Pavlaki, the program for people with disabilities was inspired by ancient Greek painted pottery. The group brought well-known images on pottery to life with animation.

The workshop in collaboration with the Elderly Care Center of Syros-Hermoupolis for senior citizens recreated familiar images from Greek history and animated them. In a two-day workshop for children, the young people learned the basic techniques of stop motion and sand animation. Teenagers had the opportunity to learn sand animation by creating their own interpretation of Ulysses' Odyssey.

Netherlands animators Jantiene de Kroon and Remco Polman led a three-day adult workshop where the participants revised and distorted Ancient Greek myths using cut-out animation that they created and filmed.

Manos Mastonakis conducted a ceramics workshop where participants could make a replica of an ancient Greek frying pan. Dating back to around 2700 -2200 BC, the early Cycladic artifacts were found in the Aegean Islands. They are flat, circular disks with a handle usually made from earthenware. The pans were usually decorated with incised designs associated with the sea, stars, and female fertility.

Along with the workshop held on the island during the festival, AnimaSyros organizes activities for all ages year-round in Athens, in other Greek cities, and on the Greek Islands.

## THE AGORA

Running concurrent with the festival is the four-day Agora. It is spearheaded by Marineta Mak Kritikou, known as Mak, a multi-media director, specializing in documentaries. The Agora is now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year. Created to serve as a networking opportunity, not just for Greek animators, but for professionals from around the world, the Agora fosters collaborations between directors, producers, and distributors worldwide.

Meaning an assembly of people, agora is defined as the marketplace in ancient Greece. Agora Syros presents masterclasses, individual presentations, and round table discussions. The heart of the Agora is the Pitching Forum. The Forum features a three-day pitching workshop, led this year by Tunde Vollenbroek, co-owner and producer of the Dutch animation house Studio Pupil. Three projects from Greece, and one each from Lebanon, Romania, and Israel were selected for presentation to the audience and pitching jury. Unfortunately, Maria Brudasca from Romania had to cancel at the last minute, so only five projects were presented.

The pitching jury was made up of Belgian producer Viviane Vanfleteren, creative producer Agne Adomene of Lithuania, and Portuguese animator Bruno Caetano, with Mak and I rounding out the pitching jury.

After much deliberation, the jury selected *The Fall* by Greek animator Stefanos Pletsis. The film charts the journey of a child who, as he grows up, uses the knowledge and way of thinking that his father taught him to achieve his goals in life. The narration is done through two parallel stories, one set in 1972 and the other one in 2008. In 1972 the viewer follows a child and his father as they go to watch the launch of a NASA manned space mission. In 2008 the action takes place on a space station where an astronaut is in danger. The connection between the two stories is slowly revealed.

The award for winning the Pitching Forum is a presentation of the winning project at MIFA 2024 as part of a three-year strategic partnership between Anney and AnimaSyros with the support of the French Institute of Greece.

This year there was a lineup of events dedicated to Greek animation at the festival as well as the Agora. Renowned animator/director Joanna Quinn and her partner writer/producer Les Mills are both extremely talented and very witty, so the two sessions of Greek Animation Talks with animators who had films in the Greek Competition they moderated were very entertaining. During the Greek Animation Talks, animators had the opportunity to talk about their films and the challenges that they encountered during their creative process.



French producer Ron Dyens, who founded Sacrebleu Productions in 1999, gave a delightfully humorous presentation about his company's wide range of short and feature films which have won numerous awards, from the short film *Sunday Lunch* in 2016 to *Marona's Fantastic Tale* in 2020. When I see that a film is a Sacrebleu Production, I know that it will be a quality work.

At Annecy 2023 I had the opportunity to watch Sacrebleu's latest feature film *Sirocco and the Kingdom of the Winds*. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Apparently, I wasn't the only person who liked the film; it received the Annecy Audience Award and will open in theatres on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2023.

Each year at the Agora I host 'In Conversation With ...'. This year I had the privilege of talking with Viviane Vanfleteren, the founder of Vivi Films, an independent Belgian film production company based in Gent. The company's credits include *The Triplets of Belleville* and *The Secret of Kells*, which were both nominated for an Academy Award.



In 2009, Viviane and her coproducers from Les Armateurs and Cartoon Saloon won the Cartoon Movie Tribute Award for European Producer of the Year. She is also one of the producers of the hit feature film *Titina* which screened at AnimaSyros. The film is the mostly true story of Italian airship engineer Umberto Nobile and his beloved dog Titina, the first pet dog to go to the North Pole in a Zeppelin.



The Koi Mansion Ceiling

Of course, we talked about the film, how Viviane became involved in the project, and how and why the decision was made to tell the story of an airship expedition to the North Pole in the 1920s from the perspective of a dog.

We also talked about how Viviane got into producing animation; The advantages and disadvantages of being a female producer, and how she juggles work with her home life. She is a delightful person and I thoroughly enjoyed our talk, which was much more a conversation than an interview. You can listen to our conversation and other Agora presentations on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgNBjRlpPdw&list=PLSKSCdKA8Cyj4xVOIQzkqiMvK8c8sddkDi>

New this year at the Agora was Animation Speed Dating. The sessions were powered by Enterprise Greece, the official investment and trade agency of the Greek State. Fifteen Greek creators participated in 15-minute meetings with prominent members of the animation community. Participating professionals were writer/director John Musker; writer/director Ron Clements; Producer Ron Dyens; Viviane Vanfleteren, producer; director/producer Bruno Caetano; producer Amit Gicelter; Agne Adomene, producer; and distributor Laure Goasguen. Quite an impressive group!

John Musker and Ron Clements were at the festival to talk about the making of the 1997 Disney film *Hercules* which they wrote and directed.

Unfortunately, Clements did not appear because he became sick while at Syros, but Musker had plenty of stories to keep the audience fascinated. John brought rarely-seen drawings, rough animation, and visual development art. In 1985 John, Ron and members of the production team took a research trip to Greece for the film and John showed us photos of them mugging for the camera at historic sites on that trip.



Musker's new 4-minute short film, *I'm Hip*, was also screened in the Short Film Competition. John took David Frishberg's song *I'm Hip*, as the soundtrack for the film. In the short film, a self-absorbed cat, in a jazzy song and dance routine, proudly proclaims how hip he is. The world is less than impressed. The in-joke is that Musker, who is well known for his caricatures, has scattered many of his renderings of friends, family, and colleagues throughout the film.

The Agora was a chance to hear wonderful speakers steeped in knowledge. Anyone who has the opportunity to attend the business arm of Anima-Syros and the festival itself should be sure and take advantage of this valuable opportunity.

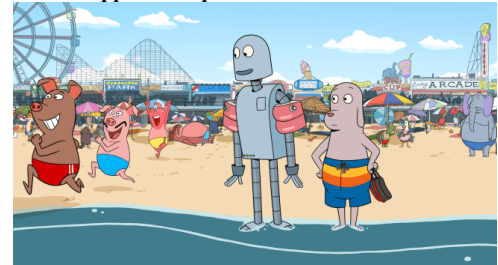
I can't thank Festival Director Maria Anestopoulou and Vassilis C. Karamitsanis, Festival President enough for making me a member of Team AnimaSyros, as the International Program Consultant and a member of the International Selection Committee. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Agora Coordinator Marineta Mak Kritkou, who invites me to have stimulating conversations on

stage with interesting people every year at the Agora as well as serving on the Pitching Jury. I am already looking forward to AnimaSyros 2024. It will take place from 24 – 29 September.

## 'CHICKEN FOR LINDA!,' 'ROBOT DREAMS' AND 'LETTERS FROM A PIG' TAKE TOP HONORS AT ANIMATION IS FILM 2023



*Chicken for Linda!* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=OtuvTdCsWCM>



Search for *Robot Dreams*, several fun clips are online

In the shorts competition Tal Kantor's *Letter to a Pig*, a mixed media short about a Holocaust survivor who writes a thank-you letter to a pig that saved his life, was best short.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4G37KERv7us>

A Special Jury Prize went to *Wild Salmon* by Saul Freed and Karni Arieli. <https://vimeo.com/785571183> It follows the dramatic life cycle of the wild salmon in human form. <https://variety.com/2023/film/news/animation-is-film-winners-1235767373/>



'THE CANTERVILLE GHOST' OPENED IN TIME FOR HALLOWEEN The feature is based



on an Oscar Wilde short story. Blue Fox is distributing it along with *The Inventor*. It opened with a very limited run (NY, LA and streaming). Trailer at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2403439/> It got a rating of 60 from Rotten Tomatoes. <https://www.bluefoxentertainment.com/films/the-canterville-ghost>



**‘SOUTH PARK’ MOCKS KATHLEEN KENNEDY, DISNEY DIVERS** Hollywood Reporter says *South Park* just “mocked Disney brass for diversity ‘pandering’ in franchises like *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* — while simultaneously criticizing trolls who attack Lucasfilm's Kennedy — as right-leaning celebrities ranging from Elon Musk to Carano weigh in.” Read the report at <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/tv/tv-news/south-park-disney-kathleen-kennedy-gina-carano-1235632407/>

**AN INTELLIGENT ANALYSIS OF THE WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST ANIMATED** by Fiore <https://markfiore.substack.com/p/cartooning-about-reprisal-retaliation>



**ACTAVISION BLIZZARD WAS BOUGHT BY MICROSOFT FOR \$66.8 BILLION**  
A RECORD SALE PRICE FOR A GAMES COMPANY



**ROTTEN TOMATOES GIVES ‘BLUE EYED SAMURAI’ A 100% - THE ACTION-PACKED SERIES STARTS NOV. 3 ON NETFLIX** Google the title to see action packed trailers/clip

**BARBIE’S SUCCESS INCLUDES HER BECOMING ONE OF THE WORLD’S TOP 20 MONEY MAKING FEATURES** *Barbie*, the movie is has now (as of October 27) grossed \$1,441,330,004!

Mattel reports a 27% jump in doll sales, which has been driven by demand for toys from its Barbie, Monster High, Disney Princess and Disney Frozen lines.

**THE MISSION, A NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC DOC. THAT USES ANIMATION TO TELL PARTS OF THE STORY** Local filmmakers Jesse Moss and Amanda McBaine tell a gripping story of how in 2918 a young missionary was killed with arrows while attempting to contact one of the world's most isolated Indigenous peoples on remote North Sentinel Island (Bay of Bengal). Foreigners are prohibited from going to this island. Trailer at <https://youtu.be/afg1V6WOM80?feature=shared>

**Opens November 10** at Landmark Opera Plaza,  
and at the  
Smith Rafael Film Center, San Rafael

**ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION**

*Newsletter Editor:* Karl Cohen

*Contributors* include Nancy Denney-Phelps, Paul Naas, Jim Middleton and other friends of ASIFA

*Proofreaders* Jim Middleton, Scott Kravitz and Paul Naas

*Special thanks* to Nancy Denney-Phelps who represents our chapter on the international ASIFA board. Emily Berk is our webmaster, and Eihway Su keeps our email list and does a dozen other things.

ASIFA-SF is a chapter of: Association Internationale du Film d'Animation with over 40 chapters around the world. Membership is normally \$21 a year with the e-mailed newsletter, but right now we have a **COVID 19 SPECIAL OFFER**. We are only asking \$15 a year or \$30 if you wish to help the international association.

*Our website and blog is:* [www.asifa-sf.org](http://www.asifa-sf.org)  
[karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net)