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To: karlcohen@earthlink.net

KC

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, IN COLLABORATION WITH ASIFA-SAN FRANCISCO AND THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM, PRESENT



Torill Kove, *Threads*

THE LATEST WORKS OF OSCAR WINNER TORILL KOVE, EVA CVIJANOVIC, AND OTHER FINE ANIMATORS

WITH TORILL KOVE AND EVA CVIJANOVIC IN PERSON DISCUSSING THEIR WORK

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 3:30 PM

WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM

FREE, RSVP karlcohen@earthlink.net

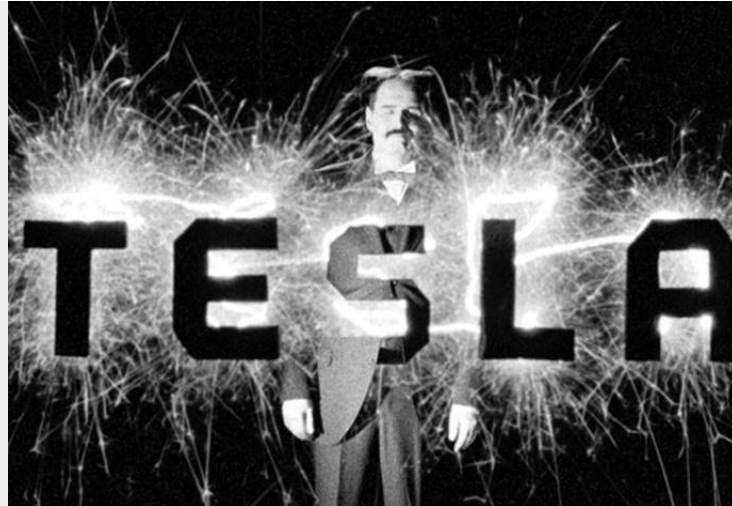
Program

Torill Kove's *Threads*, 2017, the film has been selected to be In the Toronto International Film Festival, Ottawa International Animation Festival, Cinefest, Sudbury; and the Quebec City Film Festival. Torill, who is from Norway, won an Oscar in 2007 for *The Danish Poet*, and her film *My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts* received an Oscar nomination in 2000. *The Danish Poet* will also be shown.

Eva Cvijanović's *Hedgehog's Home*, 2017, has won a Special Mention at the Berlin International Film Festival; the Audience Award and Special Jury Prize at the World Festival of Animated Film, Zagreb; Grand Prix in Animation at the Kinder Film Festival, Kyoto, Japan; and the Young Audience Award, Annecy. It has been also been selected for the Holland Animation Film Festival. the Ottawa

been selected for the Toronto International Film Festival, the Ottawa International Animation Festival, New York Film Festival and for several other major events. Eva's *Seasick*, 2013, will also be shown. She animates puppets and is from Bosnia.

Plus



The Tesla World Light – Matthew Rankin, 2017, Official Selection, Cannes International Critics' Week

Panoramic Chronicle - Lewis Trondheim & Jean-Mathieu Tanguy, (France) 2017

Here and There - Diane Obomsawin, 2007

Mynarski Death Plummet - Matthew Rankin, 2014

I Like Girls – Diane Obomsawin, Ottawa 2016. Grand Prize Winner, Best Narrative Short

Sweet Childhood - Zviane (Canada), 2017

MARK YOUR CALENDARS NOW – TUES. OCT. 24, 8 pm
RON DIAMOND PRESENTS THE ALL NEW ANIMATION SHOW OF
SHOWS,
SF STATE'S COPPOLA THEATRE, FINE ARTS BUILDING
ROOM 101, FREE

ACME FILMS, ASIFA-SF AND SF STATES ANIMATION SOCIETY PRESENT A SNEAK PREVIEW OF

THE 19TH ANNUAL ANIMATION

SHOW OF SHOWS

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 8 PM

SF STATE'S COPPOLA THEATRE, FINE ARTS BUILDING
ROOM 101, FREE

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Joyfully mixing incongruous elements from the highbrow world of horse racing and the "mean" urban landscape, this beautifully designed music video explodes preconceptions of race and class as cultures gracefully collide on the streets and freeways of Los Angeles. The infectious track by L.A. artist Charles X, whose music combines strains of hip-hop, soul and jazz, is perfectly realized in the stylized blend of abstraction and representation, languidness and kineticism, in this evocative nocturnal fantasy.

The program features 16 internationally acclaimed animated short films from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, Switzerland and the U.S. The program includes the extraordinary stop-motion musical *My Burden* from Swedish director Niki Lindroth von Bahr, which won the grand-prize Cristal Award at the 2017 Annecy International Animated Film Festival. Other highlights include Los Angeles-based Irish director David O'Reilly's visually stunning *Everything*, based on a 1973 talk given by the renowned British-American philosopher Alan Watts, and the 1964 classic *Hangman*, by Paul Julian and Les Goldman. It was recently restored by the Animation Show of Shows as part of its film preservation program with grants from the San Francisco based National Film Preservation Foundation and from ASIFA Hollywood. As a special treat, the Show of Shows will also be presenting *Next Door*, a 1990 student film made at Cal Arts by the two-time Oscar-winning Pixar director Pete Docter.





Channeling the spirit of Charlie Chaplin – or perhaps Jacques Tati – this very funny tale of a series of unfortunate events in an Asian mall displays both an impressive attention to detail and great comic timing. Even if you're not a fan of chiropractic, grown men dressed as fuzzy animals, automated conveyances, garish décor, and/or robotic cleaning devices, "Gokurosama" will show you how, when you put all of these together, it spells animated mayhem.

EVERYTHING

The 19th Annual Animation Show of Shows



Based on the work of philosopher Alan Watts, who was instrumental in popularizing Eastern religion in the West, this brilliantly conceived and executed short explores the interconnectedness of the universe and the multiplicity of perspectives that underlie reality. Like Watts himself, the film is both playful and profound, and its unique iconography – from somersaulting bears to interstellar flora – allows it to convey weighty ideas with lightness and lucidity.

MY BURDEN

The 19th Annual Animation Show of Shows



If Ingmar Bergman had made stop-motion animations with singing, dancing animals, they might have looked a little like this. Set in a small commercial park, this melancholy and mordantly funny film (which could have been titled "Existential Anast – The Musical") explores the tribulations, hopes and dreams of the

denizens of this downscale microcosm of Western society. At once bitingly satirical and genuinely moving, "My Burden" is a beautifully realized paean to despair.

If you miss this preview of the The Animation Show of Shows it will be opening in Bay Area at theatres soon.



'LOVING VINCENT' OPENS ON FRIDAY, OCT. 6 AT THE CLAY IN SF AND AT THE SHATTUCK CINEMAS IN BERKELEY. IT WILL ALSO BE SHOWN AT THE MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL Thursday, Oct. 5, Smith Rafael Film Center. *Loving Vincent* audaciously chronicles Vincent van Gogh's life and art, telling the story of a postman's son trying to unravel the circumstances surrounding the painter's mysterious death. This historical whodunit consists of 65,000 oil-painted frames crafted by 125 painters working from live-action footage (rotoscoped). It's immersive and transporting. Poland 2017, 94 min, by directors Dorota Kobiela, Hugh Welchman.

By now I hope you have seen clips and trailers for *Loving Vincent* and have read reviews of this film. If not, Google the film's title and catch up on the information already available on this remarkable work of art. It has been playing at festivals (Nancy has included her comments about this film in a previous newsletter), and was released in NYC and LA on Sept. 22. Website: LovingVincent.com

THE MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL PRESENTS 'UNDER THE RADAR: 70 YEARS OF POLISH ANIMATION' For filmmakers in Poland, "animation has been a creative means of liberation, with films that could go under the radar—

and sometimes over the top—in this unique collection of shorts from the Communist era to the present.” The festival’s advanced information to the press went on to talk about a special guest, not about the animated films being shown. **Mariusz "Wilk" Wilczynski (in person)** is considered an important avant-garde animator and Nancy Phelps, who has been on several animation juries with him at festivals, speaks highly of him and his work. His award winning experimental works have been shown at numerous festivals and at museums including the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the National Gallery in London. He is also a painter, performer, and set designer. He graduated from the painting and graphics department of Łódź Fine Arts Academy in 1986. A biography online says he has created over 200 animated segments for Polish TV. For more information about the artist visit: <http://www.wilkwilk.pl/>

The first screening **Saturday, Oct. 7, 8:45 pm at the Smith Rafael Film Center** features live animation by “Poland’s most treasured animator,” Mariusz Wilczynski, accompanied by live music by Trance Mission. His live performance will only take place at this screening. The program is free but a ticket is required. On **Monday, Oct. 9, 9:00 pm at the CinéArts Sequoia in Mill Valley** the live performance will be replaced with a Mariusz Wilczynski retrospective and tickets will be sold at a regular ticket price.

5@5 Station to Station Shorts Program (Animation) includes *Fabricated* by Brett Foxwell, stop-motion featuring gorgeous machinery and armature creatures; *The History of Magic: Ensueño* by José Luis González, Dano Johnson, a young girl cycles through multiple fantastical deaths in a timely tune; *Hot Dog Hands* by Matt Reynolds, a hilarious and disturbing tube-steak journey into another dimension; *I Don’t Feel Anything Anymore* (Belgium/Canada) by Noémie Marsily and Carl Roosens, a surreal trip through fire and satire in a chaotic land; *My Man (Octopus)* (France) by Stéphanie Cadoret), a woman is pulled into the depths by her needy mollusk mate; *Second To None* (Ireland) by Vincent Gallagher, it’s time to perish while in the company of an aging, bloody-stumped rival; and *Woodswimmer* by Brett Foxwell, masterful stop-motion animation of detailed log shaving.

ANIMATED SHORTS IN OTHER PROGRAMS AT THE MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL

Napalm Mayhem (Netherlands, dir. Oscar) Allegorical film is probably the most bizarre animated film you’ll see all year – in *5@5 All the Madmen*

Spring Jam (New Zealand, dir. Ned Wenlock) A young stag lacking big antlers uses some musical improvisation to make an impression during mating season – in *5@5 A Better Future*

The Reflection In Me (US, dir. Peter H. Reynolds) All kids should know that you are absolutely perfect just as you are – in *5@5 A Better Future*

Sabaku (Netherlands, dir. Marlies van der Wel) A bird goes in search of a new buddy after the water buffalo he hangs out with passes away – in *5@5 A Better Future*

Hedgehog's Home (Canada, dir. Eva Cvijanovic) Hedgehog's love for his cozy home sparks an unexpected standoff with his forest neighbors in *5@5 A Better Future*

Revolting Rhymes (UK 2016, 58 min) is cause for celebration! Come see Roald Dahl's verse in animation! These classic fairy tales aren't quite the same as the Disney movies that made them famous. In truth, there's nothing revolting about these rhymes. Young and old, all will have a great time. Ages 7+ Shown Saturday, October 7, 12:00pm at the CinéArts Sequoia and Sunday, October 8, 11:00am at the Lark Theatre

Liyana (Swaziland/US, 78 min) Creative sparks fly when young Swazi orphans are invited to tell their own story, inspired by harsh life experience and rich imagination. Together they invent Liyana's dangerous quest to rescue her twin brothers, which is brought to life by their own backstory, charismatic storytelling, and gorgeous 3D and 2D animation. Ages 11+, *Fri, Oct. 13, 10 am at the Lark Theatre and Sat. Oct. 14, 12 pm at the Smith Rafael Film Center*

Moana – Free outdoor screening at Old Mill Park, Friday, October 6, 7pm.



THE CARTOON ART MUSEUM WILL REOPEN THIS FALL No date is set yet, they simply say this fall. Their new gallery will be at 781 Beach Street, SF. CA near Fisherman's Wharf.

SINGLE FRAME ANIMATION FROM PORTLAND BY A TRIO OF ARTISTS AT ATA, Saturday, Oct. 28, 8:30 PM, \$7.00, 992 Valencia in SF. Films include Laura Heit's *Rover's Eyes* (Mars imaging), *Apollo Six* (cut outs of the failed flight), *Two Ways Down* (fall into the underworld) and *Deep Dark* (song cycle of projected cycles), Ben Popp's *Coastal Observations* (shoreline flipbook), *Juxtapositions* (a sensual foray), *HearNW* (rhythmic synesthesia), and *East Lake San Souci* (Super 16 in the track area) along with Kurtis Hough's *Cryosphere* (tears against global warming). *Painted Hills* (the geometry of geology). **To See**

More Light (elemental/cosmic) and *Some Trees* (a poetic short). All three artists have works on line.

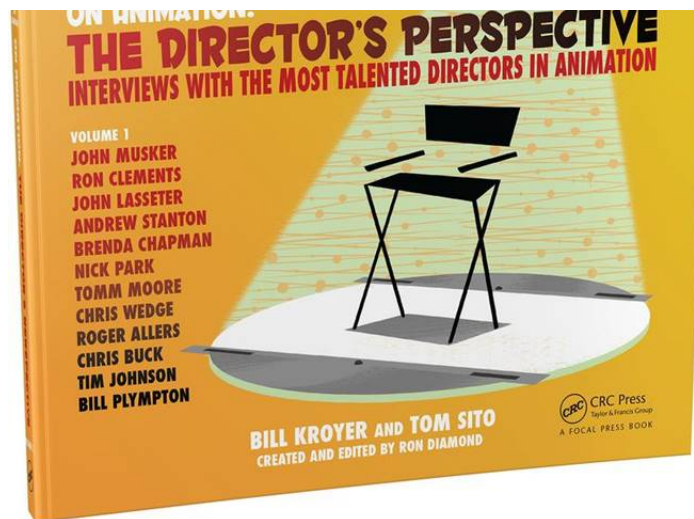


‘SOGGY FLAKES’ JUST PREMIERED AT THE MONTREAL STOP-MOTION FESTIVAL *Soggy Flakes* is a short comedy by the award-winning Affolter Brothers. It tells the story of a group of washed-up, out-of-work breakfast mascots who form a weekly support group to help them deal with the reality of a low-carb, sugar-free and gluten-intolerant world. The chance arrival of Captain Kale, a sell-out ex-colleague, at one of their meetings forces the group to re-evaluate what it means to be successful.

ANIMATION IS FILM is the new festival of independent international animation that runs October 20-22 at the TCL Chinese 6 Theater in Hollywood. The feature films in competition (additional titles to be announced) are *The Big Bad Fox & Other Tales*, France, 2017, by director Benjamin Renner who received an Oscar nomination for *Ernest & Celestine*; *Big Fish and Begonia*, China, 2016; *Birdboy: The Forgotten Children*, Spain, 2015, Best Animated Feature 2017 Goya Awards; *The Breadwinner*, Ireland/Canada, 2017; by Nora Twomey who was co-director of the Oscar-nominated *The Secret of Kells*; *Lu Over the Wall*, Japan, 2017, Cristal Award Winner Annecy International Animation Film Festival; *Mary and the Witch’s Flower*, Japan, 2017, *Tehran Taboo*, Germany, 2017 and *Zombillenium*, France, 2017.

Nancy Phelps says, “The selection listed looks excellent. *Birdboy: The Forgotten Children* is a film that I like very much. I haven't seen *The Breadwinner* yet but I have heard excellent things about it. This seems to be an excellent opportunity for people in the LA area to see excellent European animation that doesn't normally get screened in the US.”





‘ON ANIMATION: THE DIRECTOR'S PERSPECTIVE VOL 1’ *On Animation: The Director's Perspective* is a collection of interviews with 21 animated feature-film directors. These extensive interviews were conducted over the past several years by filmmakers and educators including Tom Sito and Bill Kroyer. Interviews cover in-depth discussion of each director's career -- focusing on their creative development, their films, lessons learned and advice. The interviews were edited and produced by Ron Diamond. Volume 1 includes interviews with John Musker, Ron Clements, John Lasseter, Andrew Stanton, Brenda Chapman, Nick Park, Tomm Moore, Chris Wedge, Roger Allers, Chris Buck, Tim Johnson, and Bill Plympton. Published by CRC Press, 372 pages, \$47.96 paperback, \$119.96 hardback

Ron tells us Vol. 2 will include (subject to change) Brad Bird, Henry Selick, Don Bluth, Pete Docter, Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois, Vicky Jenson, Rob Minkoff, Jennifer Yuh Nelson, Carlos Saldanha and Kevin Lima.

‘SOUTH PARK’ TOOK ON WHITE RACISTS IN THE SEASON OPENER

In the episode *White People Renovating Houses*, protesters armed with tiki torches and confederate flags take to the streets of South Park. Randy comes to grips with what it means to be white in today’s society. So started the 21st season.

Visit asifa-sf.org for last minute news items





EMMY AWARDS The award for Outstanding Character Voice-Over Performance went to Seth MacFarlane as Peter Griffin, Stewie Griffin, Brian Griffin, Glenn Quagmire in *Family Guy*, *The Boys in the Band* episode, 20th Century Fox Television. The winner for Outstanding Short Form Animated Program went to Cartoon Network's *Adventure Time • Islands Part 4: Imaginary Resources* episode, Cartoon Network Studios. The Outstanding Animated Program series award went to *Bob's Burgers*, 20th Century Fox Television and Bento Box Entertainment.



THE SIMPSONS' COMPOSER ALF CLAUSEN HAS BEEN FIRED

Variety broke the news that two-time Emmy winner Alf Clausen was fired from *The Simpsons* after 27 years of providing music for Bart, Lisa, and company. He told the paper that he received a call from *The Simpsons* producer Richard Sakai who said the company was seeking “a different kind of music” and that he would no longer be scoring the longtime Fox hit. Clausen, has won two Emmys and 23 nominations for the show's music. He has scored more than 560 episodes of the series and has won five Annie Awards for the shows music. He is one of the most respected creators of animation music in TV history. Speculation about his dismissal involves cost-cutting measures, which have been ongoing at *The Simpsons* in recent years, despite its massive profits for Fox and executive producer James L. Brooks' Gracie Films.

Clausen uses a 35-piece orchestra every week, something that *Simpsons* creator Matt Groening insisted upon from the start of the show. Including costs of

musicians, recording studios, and orchestration, expenses routinely run into the millions of dollars per year. Danny Elfman's *Simpsons* theme is expected to be retained.

LILY TOMLIN HAS PROVIDED VOICE WORK FOR A NETFLIX EDITION OF "THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS."

'LEAP!' OPENED WITH LUKE WARM REVIEWS AND POOR BOX OFFICE It opened during the slowest box office weekend in 15 years. The reviewers called it bland and unremarkable. The top film for this weekend only grossed \$10 million and *Leap!* Was in 3rd place with a gross of \$5 million. Rotten Tomatoes said it got 41 reviews and 31% liked it. The audience poll gave it a 67% favorable rating. As of Sept. 25 *Leap!* has grossed \$23 million in the U.S. and over \$104 million worldwide.



A TRAILER FOR NICK PARK'S "EARLY MAN" IS ONLINE Nick's very silly, long trailer suggests it is a film Nik's fans will look forward to seeing. It opens in 2019.

<http://www.digitalspy.com/movies/trailers/news/a837436/wallace-and-gromit-nick-park-early-man-trailer/>

BOX OFFICE: 'DESPICABLE ME 3' HAS CROSSED THE \$1 BILLION MARK AND THE SERIES IS NOW THE MOST PROFITABLE FILM FRANCHISE IN HISTORY! *Despicable Me 3* has now made over \$1 billion worldwide (\$785 million internationally and \$262 million in North America), and the four movies in the *Despicable Me* films have now grossed over \$3.7 billion. The four *Shrek* features grossed \$2.96 billion. *Despicable Me 3* is now the biggest animated film of 2017 and the sixth highest-grossing animated film of all time worldwide.

While the *Hollywood Reporter* quoted Illumination's CEO talking about the series enduring success, the crew having extraordinary talent and Illumination being "the world's greatest studio," frankly I assume their success is largely based on the silly, goofy, fast paced humor appealing to the masses. Disney and Pixar have lovable princesses, more refined artwork and other admirable qualities, but it appears the public values a funny silly time slightly more than the more expensive productions of the competition. (KC)

Despicable Me 3 brings the total income from the eight features Illumination's has released since the company was formed in 2007, to \$5.7 billion (worldwide). Illumination's upcoming films include *Dr. Seuss' The Grinch*, coming in November 2018, *The Secret Life of Pets 2* in June 2019. *Minions 2* in July 2020, and *Sing 2* in December 2020.



JEFFREY KATZENBERG MISSED THIS HEADACHE AS HE SOLD HIS PARTNERSHIP IN ORIENTAL DREAMWORKS The Asian studio created by Jeffrey in 2012 was sold to Universal Pictures, owned by Comcast in 2016. Now NBCUniversal is trying to divest its 45% stake in Oriental DreamWorks as their Asian partners in the studio, China Media Capital, Shanghai Media Group and Shanghai Alliance Investment Limited can't agree over the future plans for the studio. The studio created the successful *Kung Fu Panda 3* in 2016 and is working on *Everest* for release in the U.S. in 2019.

The disagreement has the American partner wanting to continue making features for the global market while the Chinese want to focus on products made for an Asian audience. When I was in China at a conference a few years ago a major concern was how to create a distinctive Chinese animated feature (something different from Japanese anime which is quite popular in China). It

appears the non-American heads of the studio want to focus on achieving that dream.

AWN quoted a former employee as saying that “The only way this will be resolved is if someone buys Universal’s share or someone buys CMC’s share. If nothing happens [Oriental DreamWorks] will just die.” One rumor is that China Media Capital has approached Warner Bros. about buying Universal’s interest in the partnership.

WILL HOLLYWOOD FIND NEW WAYS TO CREATE FILMS THE PUBLIC WANTS TO SEE? Producers are faced with a serious decline in box office income, suggesting they’re relying on old formulas for making profitable features is wearing out. *Hollywood Reporter* says the summer Box-office in North America is down by 16 percent over last year, “the steepest decline in modern times and eclipsing the 14.6% dip in 2014.” It was the first time since 2006 that the summer releases didn't clear \$4 billion mark. Also, 2017 hits a 25 year low in terms of the number of tickets sold.

A visit to Box Office Mojo shows a very lopsided picture of what the public spends money on. They list 446 film released theatrically this year with 300 of them grossing under a million dollars in the US, 67 grossing between 1 to 10 million, 33 grossing between \$10 – 50 million, 12 grossing \$50-100 million, 6 between \$200 407 million and *Beauty and the Beast* making \$507 million in the U.S. Only a handful of features and major distributors get the impressive revenues we read about. Today it takes wide releases along with foreign distribution for a film to make a serious profit and there are hundreds of films released each year that we hear very little or nothing about.

Will the Hollywood trend to create multiple sequels continues at a rapid pace, we also see several of them underperform domestically, This year *Transformers: The Last Knight* only took in \$131 million, *Cars 3* only made \$149 million, *The Mummy* made \$80.1 million and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Men Tell No Tales* \$172 million. While *Pirates 5* certainly fared the best, its income paled in comparison to the previous sequels.

Not so long ago the Hollywood features made around 60% of their income at home. Now many of the blockbusters rely on the international box office. *Pirates 5* grossed \$618 million overseas for a global total of \$790 million, *Transformers 5* earned \$474 million abroad for a total gross of \$604 million, \$474 million offshore. *The Mummy* took in \$328 million abroad for a worldwide total of \$407.8 million and *Cars 3* took in \$176 for a total of \$325.3.

Summer titles that bombed domestically include *Nut Job 2* (\$40 million budget, \$26 million box office worldwide), *King Arthur: Legend of the Sword*

(\$175 million budget, \$146 million income worldwide) , *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets* (\$177 million budget, \$172 million worldwide) and *The Dark Tower* (\$60 budget, \$89 million box office). (Note: the budget does not include the millions spent on advertising and promotion and theatres keep around 50% of the gate.)

LUKEWARM SUMMER GROSSES HAVE RESULTED IN THE STOCK PRICES OF THEATRE CHAINS FALLING On the last day of August the *Hollywood Reporter* said, “Woe unto those who have owned stock in movie theaters this summer!” A drop in summer attendance has resulted in AMC, the largest chain (11,083 screens in 1,009 theatres), to fall 45% since Memorial Day. Regal Entertainment (7,379 screens in 566 theaters) has lost 28% of its stock value, Cinemark Holdings (5,926 screens in 529 theaters) has lost 18% of its value and IMAX (1,257 screens worldwide) has lost 31%. Also, National Cinemedia that puts those unwanted ads before features, has lost 25% of its value since Memorial Day.

If you gamble in the stock market it could be a good time to consider theatre stocks if you believe they will make a comeback. On the other hand video on demand may have taken enough of the feature market to prevent theatres from ever regaining the annual income they once expected. The future may see theatre-goers favoring seeing the biggest well-promoted blockbusters in first run theatres and forego the theatre experience in favor of watching the bulk of Hollywood’s offerings at home.



FIVE ANIMATORS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS TECHNICIANS FILE A COPYRIGHT SUIT AGAINST ‘IRON SKY’ PRODUCERS The animators and visual effects technicians who are involved worked on *Nazis on the Moon* are mad as and some of their work was reused in *Iron Sky* without giving them compensation. The case is against the Finnish producers Blind Spot and the Iron Sky Universe, the group that handles rights to the Iron Sky brand. Unfortunately cases related to this one crop up from time to time and

... cases related to the one step up from time to time and producers use carefully written contracts and well paid lawyers to protect their financial interests.



HOW A FAKE RUMOR CAN AFFECT THE PRICE OF A STOCK China's Wanda stock “crashed” due to a rumor that Wang Jianlin was detainment by authorities. Wang, who owns the AMC theatre chain in the US and a special effects house in Hollywood, claims the rumor was “false and malicious” and he denied he was forbidden to leave China. Apparently the rumor had been circulating online on blogs in Taiwan for months according to the *Hollywood Reporter*. The rumor claimed that Wang and his family were stopped while attempting to depart from the Chinese city of Tianjian aboard a private jet bound for the U.K. When several established Chinese tabloids picked up the story the stock fell about 11% on the Hong Kong stock market. Share have since gone back to their normal prices and he still enjoys the free use of his private jet. He flew to Hong Kong in early Sept., a few weeks after the rumor was in the tabloids.

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF THE ANIMATOR INTERNATIONAL ANIMATED FILM FESTIVAL July 7- 13, 2017, Poznan, Poland

By Nancy Denney-Phelps

Over these past 10 years of existence the Animator Festival in Poznan has grown in respect internationally so it was a lovely honor to be invited back this year to help celebrate their 10th anniversary. Animator, which features short and feature film competitions and the special programs, has also become an Academy Award qualifying festival and the Polish film industry conference. It has become an important component of the festival. The 10th anniversary edition also celebrated the 70th anniversary of Polish animation and the 90th birth year of the renowned Polish animator Witold Giersz.

This year’s theme, *Brothers and Sisters Prepare, the Storm Is Coming*, was particularly fitting given what is happening in Polish politics, not to mention in the

particularly fitting given what is happening in Polish politics, not to mention in the rest of the world. The political theme ran through special screenings, retrospectives, and a conference on *Animated Politics from Melies to Mulloy*.


Political Metaphors in the Polish People's Republic screened 10 film, most of which, thanks to the use of metaphor, indirect speech, or the use of parables managed to avoid political censorship. *Tractor A-1* (1950) by Wladyslaw Nehrebecki is a socialist realism story of a tractor helping farmers. The so-called process of tractorisation in the development of the socialist village did not quite disguise its message enough, so the authorities soon relegated it to a storeroom shelf instead of releasing it in the cinemas. Tractorisation refers to the communist regulations that confiscated all private land, tools, tractors, and farm animals and put them and the families onto communal farms.

The 1981 *Solo on the Wasteland* by Jerzy Kalina is a perfect example of the use of sardonic humor to thwart the censors. In the film an old man hitches a horse to a plough. As they begin to till the soil, the hard monotonous work is accompanied by the patriotic song *Beloved Country, Cherished Country*.

Sometimes even pure nonsense or surrealism couldn't save a film from censorship. The principal of "if you don't understand it, lock it away" was applied to Daniel Szczechura's 1968 *Landing*. The film is a funny, pure nonsense story about 2 soldiers who forget to open their parachutes when they jump out of an airplane.

The 2 day *International Scientific Conference: Animated Politics From Melies to Mulloy* was inspired by world events over the past year. With the wars in the Middle East, the refugee crisis, the rise of the fundamentalist movement, and surprising election results in several countries around the world, the conference topic had plenty of food for thought. Scholars, critics, and theorists addressed such topics as *Puppets as a Form of Political Satire in Post-Communist Poland*, *Animation in Islamic Countries*, and *Animated Films by Women in the (Masculinized) Structure of Polish Cinematography*.





No contemporary animator consistently personifies the political animator better than Britain's Phil Mulloy. His biting satirical films have won numerous awards at all of the major animation festivals. Phil's 2016 *Endgame* won the Grand Prix in Zagreb and was also awarded Animator's Bronze Pegasus last year. *Endgame* is a satirical, minimalist 6 minute animation which portrays problems in the second decade of the 21st century: conflicts, terrorism, and computer games whose main objective is to kill.

Phil was an obvious guest for this year's festival. A retrospective of his work was presented as part of the animated politics programs. A series of extremely short trailers based on this year's theme, *The Storm is Coming*, were created by Phil. A different trailer was screened each day before every screening. He was also a member of the short film jury.

In conjunction with the animation department of the University of the Arts Poznan, a student project created one minute long animations in different techniques that presented different attitudes and ways of interpreting socio-political issues. A new one was screened before every program each day.

Five feature films were in competition: *Louise In Winter* by Jean-Francois Laguionie, *Window Horses* by Ann Marie Fleming, *Revengeance* by Bill Plympton, *And We Were Young* by Andy Smetanka and *Have A Nice Day* by Liu Jian. The only feature I had not seen previously was *And We Were Young* by Andy Smetanka from the United States. Smetanka used paper cut outs and a Super 8 camera to bring to life his oral history of American soldiers, known as Doughboys, in France during the last months of World War I. He also used written and recorded words of survivors of the Great War for the dialogue but he never made it clear either at the beginning of the film or in the end credits whether some of the voices were the real soldiers recorded by living history projects or voice actors. The voice overs were fascinating but after a while the cut out visuals became boring and repetitious, making the film seem longer than its 75 minutes.

The 6 Short Animation programs offered a wide variety of stories and animation styles. Estonian animator Ulo Pikkov has created a fascinating anima doc. *Empty Space* is based on the true story of a man who went into hiding during the Russian occupation of Estonia. When he disappeared his daughter was a baby, and during the 11 years he was in hiding, he built an exact replica of his apartment as a doll house for her.

When he finally came out of hiding in 1953 after Stalin's death, his daughter was very happy to find out the father she had thought dead all those years was actually alive. When he was finally able to give her the dollhouse, she was disappointed because by this time she considered herself to be a young lady who

was too old to play with dolls.



Ulo met the daughter, now in her 70's, who told him her story, and the film is told from her point of view. The actual doll house is in a museum in Tallinn and she arranged for it to be moved to Nukufilm Studio where he shot the film using the actual dollhouse. The beautiful girl puppet was created using photos of the daughter as a reference and the lady herself appears at the end of the film along with a description of the real life events that led to the film.

I saw the dollhouse and heard the story from Ulo on a visit to Tallinn so I understood the story from the start. Several people told me that they wished that the written description had been at the beginning of the film because they didn't understand why this puppet was wandering from room to room in the house.



I Don't Feel Anything Anymore is at the complete opposite end of the animation spectrum. Belgian animators Noemie Marsily and Carl Roosens' absurdly delightful film has a very serious message. It is a tale of a couple, he's a magician and she is a firefighter, who are isolated from the chaos of a world in turmoil. They live in a crane basket high in the sky where they go about their daily life.

The drawing style fits the story of the pair who are trying to keep their heads up

in the sky while everything is falling apart down below on the ground. Noemie and Carl created this delightful National Film Board of Canada 9 minute satire of life in a world which has gone off the rails.

A new film by Australian animator Dennis Tupicoff is always an important event for me. His 1997 *His Mother's Voice* moves me deeply every time I watch it. His latest film *A Photo of Me* is equally disturbing and it takes several viewings



to unravel. The ani-doc harks back to the 1950's when Dennis was a baby sitting in his backyard as his father takes a photo with a box camera. Next he is a sleepy child in a movie theatre who wakes up to a film noir movie, watching a doomed man. According to Dennis, "My mind flickers from past to present, in memories and dreams. The man dies. *CLICK!* The photo is taken. I walk home from the pictures fast asleep". In the 10' 48" black and white film, Dennis used animation, photographs, and fragments of an old film to create scenes from his childhood that manage to leave a very disturbing feeling in the viewer.



Animator had an impressive roster of guests this year. Signe Baumann presented a retrospective of some of the 15 short films she has written, directed, and animated over the past 20 years. Her feature film, *Rocks in My Pocket*, appeared at over 300 festivals and won numerous awards including the Best Feature Film Award at Animator in 2014. Signe is currently working on her new

feature film *My Love Affair with Marriage* which I am sure will have all of the wit and wisdom of her previous feature and be another big hit. She was also on the festival's Feature Film Jury.



The Sweater

Sheldon Cohen, a multi award winning animator, director, and book illustrator, has had an impressive 30 year career at the National Film Board of Canada where he brought several children's books to life on the screen. *The Sweater*, his 1980 adaptation of Roch Carrier's classic short story about a young boy who is given an ice hockey sweater with the wrong team's logo and colors on it, earned Sheldon a BAFTA (British equivalent of an Academy Award) as well as numerous other international honors. He told me that he had retired from animating until an unfortunate personal event caused him to come out of retirement in 2015 to make *My Heart Attack*. It is a true story of "a nice Jewish boy with Buddhist inclinations" who should have been the last person in the world to be rushed to the emergency room one sunny afternoon for cardiac surgery.

As part of his retrospective Sheldon also screened *Pies*, a 1983 film about ethnic prejudice and *I Want A Dog*, his 2004 film about a young girl who wants a dog more than anything in the world. He was a member of the Short Film Jury.

David Silverman is no stranger to any fan of *The Simpsons*. He has directed 23 episodes of the show, which has garnered him 4 Emmys. He has also directed the *The Simpsons Movie*, 2007 and directed and co-wrote the short film *Maggie Simpson in The Longest Daycare* which earned him an Academy Award nomination.





David's Masterclasses are always full of humor and fun stories about our favorite Springfield Family. At his Masterclass he showed *Simpson* clips and talked about the evolutionary history of the characters. He also presented some of his more unusual animations frame by frame and talked about his technique and approach to animation. To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the release of *The Simpsons Movie* there was also a special screening of the film, which David introduced.

One of my favorite special presentations was given by Mike Johnson who shared his love affair with the original 1933 film *King Kong*. He said that he has always been fascinated by Willis O'Brien's stop-motion animation in the film and after watching it many times he shared some of the secrets of the making of the film that he has discovered but are not readily apparent to the casual viewer, such as frames where the rod which O'Brien used to move Kong's arm was left in the shot by accident.

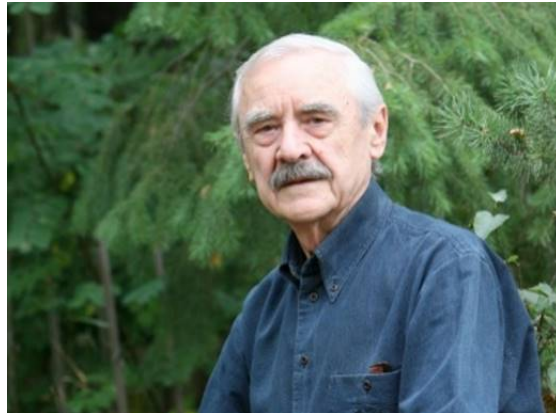
King Kong was declared "culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant" by the Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in 1991. Following Mike's talk there was a screening of a beautifully restored print of *King Kong*. Watching it made me feel like a kid again at the Saturday matinee. All that was missing was the popcorn.

Mike is a director, artist, animator, and educator specializing in stop-motion animation. He got his start in feature films as an assistant animator on Tim Burton's *Nightmare Before Christmas*. He teamed up with Burton again to direct *Corpse Bride*. Mike, who lives and works in Los Angeles, presented a workshop where he talked about the highlights and challenges of his life as a stop-motion animator, director, and designer. He showed clips from *Corpse Bride* as well as artwork and behind the scenes photos from the various television, film, and independent projects he has worked on during his 25 year career.

I was totally fascinated by my visit to Erminio Pinque's *Creative-Creation Invasion Workshop*. Erminio is director of the Big Nazo Lab, an international performance group and creative workshop based in Providence, Rhode Island. I found the group busy with scissors, staplers, magic markers, and thin sheets of foam which they were shaping into creative full head masks. Erminio showed me several very involved large masks that he had brought from his Providence workshop. He told me that the foam which he uses to make his creations is so light and pliable that he brought the masks on the plane to Poland rolled up in a sleeping bag. After the hands-on portion of their work shop, the group took to the streets in their creations to make a video of them interacting with passersby

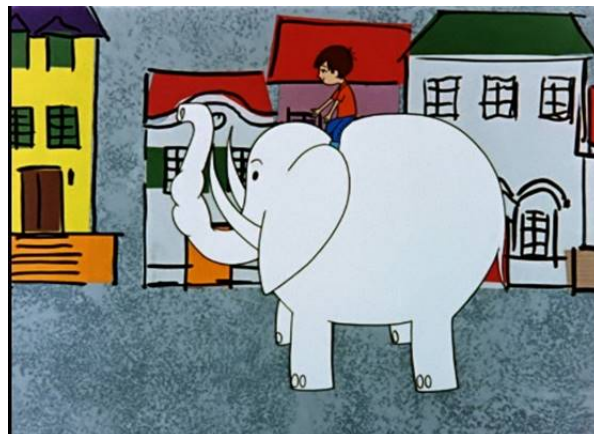
...surreal in their creations to make a place of their interacting with passersby.

One evening the group presented their *Creative Movie Mash-Up* in the festival tent. The special event was a surreal fusion of visual and performance art featuring live music by four young German musicians and the premier of the workshop's funny film. As the band played the "creatures" took to the dance floor in their plasti-foam creations, their own version of the Monster Mash. The audience was invited to join them on the dance floor to become part of the spectacle. It was a memorable event.



At the opening night ceremony Witold Giersz received the festival's Lifetime Achievement Award. To celebrate the 90th birthday of Poland's renowned visual artist, screenwriter, and animation director, Witold presented a retrospective of his work which showed why he is so revered. During his long career he has made over 60 films using a wide variety of techniques.

His 1960 animation *Small Western* is a parody of Westerns and an excuse for Giersz to play with color. The film represents his first attempt to break away from traditional hand-drawn animation and paint figures with a simple steady stroke of his brush. His latest film *Signum*, 2013, was inspired by cave paintings located in France. To recreate the cave paintings in the 14 minute film, Witold made thousands of drawings on a single piece of stone. He erased each drawing after filming it with a digital camera in order to create the next image.



Animator For Children, organized by the Children's Art Center in Poznan in

conjunction with the festival, gave young cinema goers the opportunity to see programs of animated shorts designed especially for them. Witold Giersz's 1978 feature film *Be My Guest, Mr. Elephant* about a small porcelain elephant who takes multivitamins to grow into a full sized elephant was screened for the younger audience. The humor along with the reality of life in Communist Poland in the '70's made this one of the country's most loved children's films.

Each morning there were workshops where young animators could try their hands at various animation techniques. The workshops created films in such techniques as pixilation, rotoscope, and hand drawn animation as well as cut out and puppet animation.

Austria has long been known as a mecca for animated avant-garde films. Austrian professor and animator Thomas Renoldner curated 2 programs representing films made over a 70 year period in Austria. The first program, *Animated Avant-Garde Austria*, covered films made from 1960 to 2000. Many of these films were made on 16mm or 35mm film. Thomas said that his criteria for this program were that the films used single frame technique.

The 2nd program, *Austrian Animation 2000 Plus – The Most Frequently Screened* was a collection of Austrian films that have been selected most often for screening at international festivals. The program reflected the connection between the most popular and accessible films to the public and the strong Austrian tradition of avant-garde films.

Animator Pro has become an important part of the festival. The 2 day conference, held at the University of the Arts Poznan, was designed for professionals in the animation industry to discuss such important topics as Financing Short Films in Poland and How to Sell a Short Film. One morning was devoted to a meeting of Polish animation professionals to discuss the current state of animation. This is a very important topic given the recent changes in the Polish government.

I was invited to chair a Master Session on *What Makes A Good Story?* The members of the panel discussion, Signe Baumann, Anca Damian, Sheldon Cohen, and Mike Johnson, all have very radically different approaches to storytelling. Our topics ranged from "Story wise what does it take to maintain a good story in a TV series as opposed to a one time feature animation?" to "What if anything is the difference between adapting someone else's work to film and telling your own story?" It was an honor to be invited to moderate the hour and a half panel discussion with such august animators.

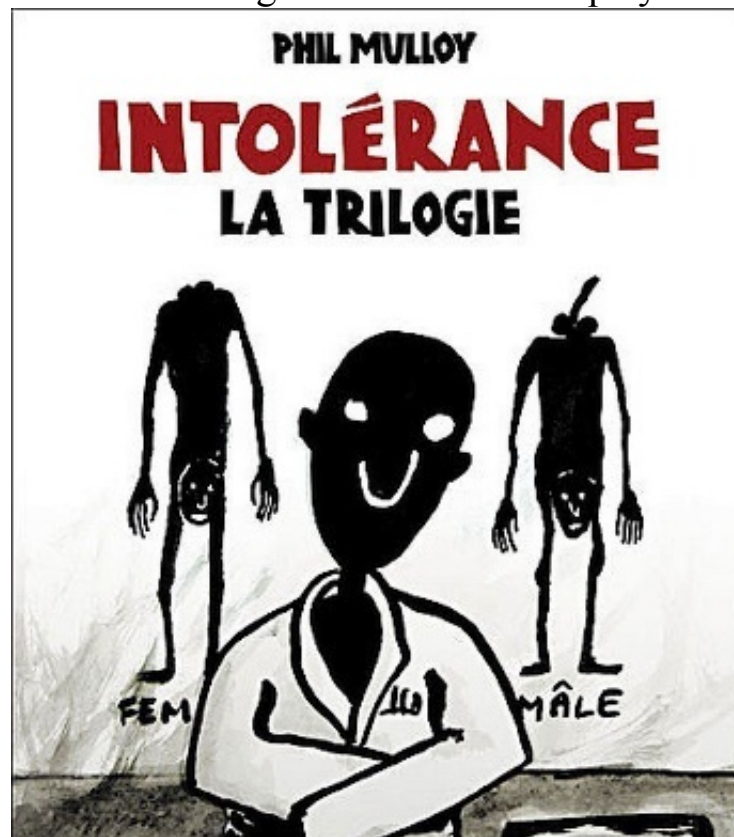
Music is an important part of *Animator*. At the opening ceremony, Polish animator Marta Pajek's multiple award winning *Impossible Objects and Other Stories II* was screened with live music performed by Orkiestra Antraktowa (the

Orchestra of the Polish Theatre in Poznan). The new original score was composed by Szymon Brzoska.

Each evening there was a musical event at the festival tent before the feature film was screened. One night Nik on soprano saxophone and David Silverman and his tuba were joined on stage by saxophonist Ken Field for a program of traditional jazz which they played live to classic American silent cartoons ranging from the *Colonel Heeza Liar* (1915) to *Felix in Futuritzzy* (1928).

On another evening Nik joined Ken Field on stage to perform scores that Ken composed for his late wife Karen Aqua's short films as they were screened. Karen passed away in 2011, leaving a body of work that explored the themes of ritual, journeys, and the human spirit reflecting her interest in symbols. Ken and Nik were joined on stage by two young local sax players for the special tribute to Karen Aqua. Her award-winning films are housed at the Harvard Film Archive

David Silverman loves to play tuba and whenever he and Nik are together they are liable to pop up playing anywhere. Late one night Nik, David, and Ken along with four of young German musicians who had played for Erminio Pinque's *Creative Movie Mash-Up* gave an impromptu concert on the beautiful Poznan Opera House steps. As passersby heard the music they stopped to listen, some joining in dancing on the Opera House steps. Erminio Pinque in his dog head and suit made a guest appearance and joined the band to sing a number much to the delight of the large crowd that had gathered. The band played on until after 2 AM.





Each evening following the music programs an “Adults Only” feature film was screened. The films selected for these screenings all talked about ethical, social-political, or philosophical matters. They included *Fritz the Cat*, *Perfect Blue*, *Waking Life*, *Princess*, and Phil Mulloy’s *Intolerance Trilogy*, a very hard hitting group of very adult animations.



2017 was not only the 10th anniversary of the festival. In 2007 Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski premiered *Madam Tutli-Putli*. Their 10 minute film won the first Golden Pegasus/Grand Prix award at Animator as well as over 50 other awards. To commemorate the event composer, pianist, and visual artist John Kameel Farah created a new score for the classic film. His composition was performed live by a 4 piece ensemble when the film was screened at the closing night ceremony.

Following the announcement of the awards there was a reception at the Palacowe Cinema. Then we all adjourned to the festival tent for the closing night party.

A big thank you goes to Festival Director Marcin Gizycki for inviting Nik and I to Animator and for making our visit so memorable. I also need to give a big thank you to festival programmer Filip Kozlowski for always being there to answer questions. Joanna Stankiewicz, director of Animator *Pro* took care of my travel arrangements and made everything run so smoothly at the panel discussion. Last but certainly not least a thank you goes to Marianna Piskorz who was an invaluable help to Nik at the festival tent. I look forward to my next visit to Animator and hope that it won’t be too long before I am invited back again. Read more about the festival at: www.animator-festival.com

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