

August 2022



**WALT DISNEY'S 'THE JUNGLE BOOK' MAKING A MASTERPIECE AT THE WALT DISNEY FAMILY MUSEUM** Over 300 rare works of art and pieces of ephemera are on display in this immersive special exhibition. It includes original animation drawings and cels, along with an array of maquettes, model sheets, pencil tests, story sketches, concept art, behind-the-scenes photos, documents, domestic and international movie posters, plus merchandise. To add to your knowledge and enjoyment the show also includes clips of archival film footage and interviews. It was guest-curated by animator and Disney legend Andreas Deja. The show fills the Diane Disney Miller Exhibition Hall and it ends January 8, 2023.

*The Jungle Book* was the last animated feature that Walt was involved with. He died while it was in production and Frank and Ollie oversaw it to completion. In designing the film Walt distanced his production from the original source material, Rudyard Kipling's children's novel *The Jungle Book*, 1894. Walt created a wonderful light musical-comedy for families. Much of the DVD on Frank and Ollie focuses on their work on the feature.

Running concurrently with this exhibition is Creative Conservation: The Art of Endangered Animals. It is in the museum's Lower Lobby and Theater Gallery, and is free to view for all museum ticketholders.

**SMITHSONIAN MAGAZINE HAS AN IMPORTANT ARTICLE ON DISNEY'S WWII PROPAGANDA CARTOONS** The informative article, inspired by a traveling show organized by the Walt Disney Family Museum in SF, includes illustrations, WWII posters, a racist anti-Japanese cartoon by Dr. Seuss and links to 3 animated

propaganda shorts. Google [how-disney-propaganda-shaped-life-on-the-home-front-during-wwii-](#)



**'SPAZ' IS A NEW DOCUMENTRY FEATURE ABOUT AN UNSUNG PIONEER OF VISUAL EFFECTS** Steve 'Spaz' Williams is a little-known pioneer of computer animation. *Spaz* is an intimate story that takes place during the creation of the development of believable computer animation, the creation of his digital dinosaurs that walked onto the silver screen in *Jurassic Park*. Steve and a chorus of expert witnesses, including Phil Tippett, recount his dramatic tale of rebellion and revolution at Lucasfilm's Industrial Light & Magic in the early 1990s, a time when creating realistic creatures with a computer was considered impossible.

As the industry changed at breakneck speed, Steve's longing for acknowledgement "triggers a humble reckoning with his chaotic past." A comment on Rotten Tomatoes says *Spaz* is "a snappy, sad, and irreverent portrait of a tragically unsung pioneer of modern blockbuster filmmaking."

IMDb says, "Steve 'Spaz' Williams is a pioneer in computer animation. His digital dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* transformed Hollywood in 1993, but an appetite for anarchy and a reckless disregard for authority cost him recognition he deserved." See the trailer at [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15095920/?ref\\_=vp\\_close](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt15095920/?ref_=vp_close)

**VINCE COLLINS' 'CUBER' IS IN THE UPCOMING OTTAWA INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL** Have you ever wonder what is inside a Rubik's Cube? *Cuber*, his new film, may or may not reveal the dark secrets that scientist have been pondering through the ages. It is one of eight films competing for the best non-narrative award that takes place Sept. 21 – 25 at Ottawa's animation celebration. See *Cuber* at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNXpMCGLGZ4>



**THE RISE OF GENTLEMINIONS** A TikTok trend known as #GentleMinions, has amassed more than 61 million views on the platform. It encourages *Minions* moviegoers to photograph themselves dress up in suits and sunglasses when they attend screenings of the latest installment of the *Despicable Me* franchise. A recently released music video titled *Minions: The Rise of Gru* and *The Lyrical Lemonade Trailer* that uses Minion footage, has also wetted the appetite for member of Generation Z to rush out and see the film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fX2kMaiMGI>



The result of all the hype is lots of young people are going to theatres in formalwear. Besides taking selfies they have taken to speaking gibberish loudly, and doing other off the wall things. Since they are probably wanting more to do more audience participation will this lead to special screenings like the ones held for *Rocky Horror Picture Show*? But is seeing this stupid film a cool cultural phenomenon? Time will tell.

For movie goers who are non-Gentle-Minions, attending a noisy screening has been a turn-off. Some have walked out and demanded their money back. *The Guardian* in England said, "They are having to issue thousands of pounds' worth of refunds to appalled non-Gentleminions in attendance."

This unusual and unexpected phenomenon has resulted in a much needed flow of revenue to an ailing cinema industry, but teens and young adult goofing around in public has some theater managers running scared. The BBC reports, "A cinema in Cornwall posted a notice banning 'children wearing suits' from screenings. Odeon cinemas have erected signs noting that 'any groups of guests in formal attire will be refused entry' to the film. Two teenagers in white shirts were initially turned away from a showing in Mansfield, until their parents turned up with jumpers for them to wear."

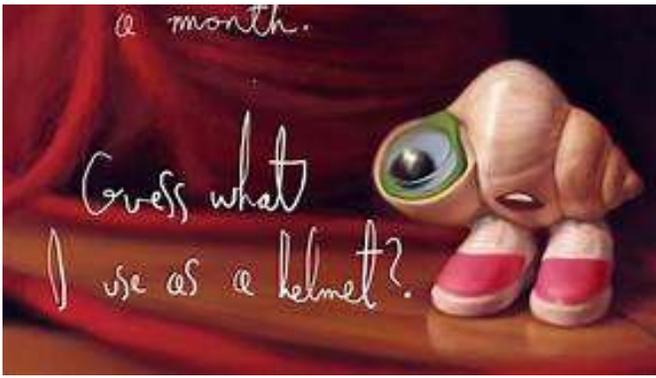
**Minions box office:** The film had a production budget of \$80,000,000. After ten days in distribution it had a worldwide gross of \$258,242, 545. On July 24 the worldwide gross was over \$640 million. That is the biggest showing for a family title since COVID-19 struck. It is now one of best the top 10 openings of all time for a Hollywood animated film. (The 2025 *Minions* made 1.159 billion.)

The movie is playing to a very broad audience of young people. According to PostTrak, 34% of the opening weekend audience was between ages 13 and 17 which was an unusually large showing as that is an age group less likely to attend animated films. 25% of attendees were 12 or younger. Only 10% of the audience who saw it were older than 25. That means 90% of the film audience are generation Z people who grew up with the franchise. The film was almost even in terms of gender, with 51 percent female and 49 percent male.

Despite the success of *Minions*, the post-Covid box office remains shaky. Pixar's *Lightyear* struggled to draw much of an audience. Its \$51 million debut was disappointing and on July 17 it had only grossed \$115 million at the domestic box office. *Lightyear's* worldwide gross was \$212,998,750. Meanwhile *Jurassic World: Dominion* opened with \$143.3 million. On July 17 the worldwide gross was almost 903 million.

**THE NIHILISM OF THE MINIONS** That was the topic of an opinion piece in the *NY Times* that discussed the lack of moral messages that most films aimed at kids contain. The author was concerned that this current children's movie is nearly devoid of artistic and moral values. It seems Gru, the film's villain, becomes its hero. Are we OK with that?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/07/opinion/minions-movie-nihilism.html>



**'MARCEL THE SHELL WITH SHOES ON' IS A SURPRISE BOX OFFICE HIT** A22, the distributor, is finding more theatres willing to show it. It is a feel-good film that a lot of people like despite the trailer looking like it was made with almost no budget and it is minimally animated. It also has an amateur soundtrack that I find hard to listen to. KC

Roger Ebert posted a glowing review of the film. It read, "*Marcel the Shell with Shoes On* will make your spirit soar and remind you to enjoy those you love, inhale a bit of fresh air, and respect the earth every second as though it were your very first time. It's a reminder to embrace all the stages of grief and see our dark chapters as changes that somehow make us better on the other side."

It opened in 6 theatres in late June with a gross of \$159,403. The second week it was shown on 22 screens and grossed \$307,739. At the end of three weeks it was in 46 theaters including two in San Francisco. It had a cumulative box office total of \$963,000 and was the 8<sup>th</sup> most profitable film that week. **On AUGUST 4 it was \$4,494,011 million** from over 150 theaters!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k98Afd7Nf3Y>



**'MY OLD SCHOOL' HAS ANIMATEED MEMORIES** It presents a strange true story of a mysterious new student who may not be who he says he is. His Scottish classmates and teachers don't know what to believe. Almost half of the film is animated flashbacks of memories and recollections in this documentary by Jono McLeod.

It had its world premiere at the 2022 Sundance Film Festival.

<https://www.indiewire.com/2022/01/my-old-school-review-alan-cumming-1234693601/>



**'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' GETS A LIVE TREATMENT** Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is getting a live two hour special on ABC to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this beloved Disney version of the story. The live-action/animated special will air on Dec. 15.



Jean Cocteau, the surrealist artist, directed an enchanting live action feature of the story in 1946 that you might enjoy seeing. I used to show it in the film series I ran for about 15 years and audiences loved this classic. It too is beloved. Free prints are available online

<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&ei=UTF-8&p=beauty+and+the+beasy%2C+Jean+Cocteau&type=C211US978D20160907#id=3&vid=f50e486f8f0d21d9fef54975cf857229&action=click>



**ILM, THE VISUAL EFFECTS STUDIO THAT TRANSFORMED MOVIES FOREVER** Disney+ has a new documentary series that tells the story of Industrial Light and Magic, the pioneers who

brought so many incredible things to life. See the official trailer at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-Y99sxocZY>



## **The Art Institutes®**

### **IN JUNE THE US GOVT. FORGAVE \$6 BILLION IN STUDENT DEBT by Karl Cohen**

The new action includes film and animation students who went to The Art Institute chain of for-profit schools and to other for-profit colleges. (The San Francisco Art Institute was not part of this chain, nor was it a for-profit institution.) The latest grant relief action, announced on June 22, is only a tiny fraction of the \$1.7 trillion in student loan owed by 43.4 million Americans. It is only one of many actions that will be needed to keep our nation's economy going in the right direction.

Under President Trump people who applied for debt relief from student loans were mostly turned down, but now President Biden's Department of Education is coming to the rescue, knowing full well that if they don't do the right thing the student loan crisis could cause an economic meltdown of the nation's economy. The situation could become as bad or as worse as the subprime mortgage crisis that caused a recession in the economy in 2007. That slump lasted at least until 2009.

The current round of debt relief is going to students who attended many of the for-profit schools that promised great educations and job placement, but failed to do so. For-profit schools saw the potential in making enormous profits by recruiting student with false promises. Recruiters were hired and were trained to tell every prospective student whatever was necessary to get them to enroll in a fabulous education that will lead to a well-paying job. Some students did have the aptitudes needed to succeed and did get well-paying jobs, but others were accepted who weren't qualified and failed. The recruiters were coaxed in how to deceive potential students into believing they would become great artists if they got the

needed education at the school they represented. Yes, they sometimes knowingly lied to people who didn't have the needed abilities. That was well documented in a series of Congressional hearings into the abuses of the for-profit school industry.

To make it easy to attend the schools, potential students were told they could take out loans that would be easy to pay back as there were lots of great well-paying jobs awaiting them on graduation. I once knew a teacher who had a desk down the hall from such a recruiter. She said she cringed every time a student show their portfolio to the recruiter. My friend knew she would hear the recruiter make the same false claims that the potential student had wonderful samples of their work. That would often be followed by a discussion of how to get a great low cost loan with no payments due until...

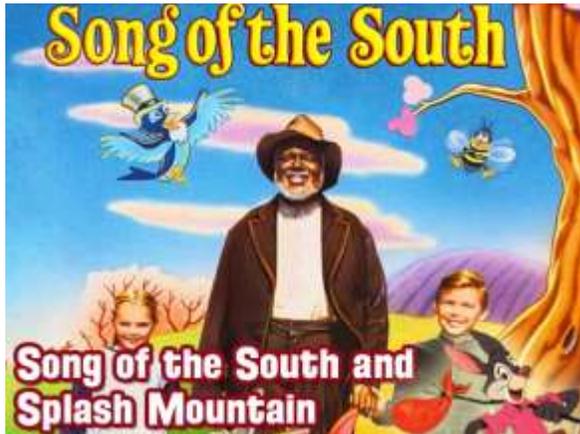
Of course how many people understood the small print in the contract for the easy to obtain, low interest rate loan. It said the loan had to be repaid and there were almost no exceptions to that clause.

Statistics have shown that students who attended less expensive community colleges and state universities, and borrowed fairly small amount to get their education, were most likely going to be able to repay their loans. The area where the greatest repayment problems occur is with former students who attended the more expensive for-profit colleges. Sadly, the government let schools abuse the system for several decades.

Senator Elizabeth Warren says the \$1.7 trillion student debt crisis was caused by 'deliberate policy decisions.' Fortunately the nation finally has a president that is working to reverse the problem by creating an aggressive loan forgiveness program. He has already forgiven over \$25 billion and on June 22, he added another \$8 billion. Unfortunately it took years of hearings to get congress to understand the problem. Gosh, the actions to correct it seemed to have stalled under Trump. Now at last progress is being made to make partial or complete student loan cancellations.

The government is making slow, but steady progress. Student loan borrowers can obtain relief by filing "borrower defense claims" with the Department of Education. They should claim they were misled or defrauded when they applied for their student loan. The proposed settlement announced June 22 will provide student loan debt

relief to students from more than 50 mostly for-profit colleges. If you or somebody you know might benefit from this information, they may need to apply by October for financial forgiveness.



**DISNEY IS CHANGING A CONTROVERSIAL THEME PARK RIDE** Come late 2024 Disney will open a rebranded attraction. The old Splash Mountain ride that was vaguely related to the 1946 movie *Song of the South*, will become *Tiana's Bayou Adventure* a musical adventure that follows characters from *The Princess and the Frog*, 2009, as they prepare to host a "one-of-a-kind Mardi Gras celebration" in New Orleans.

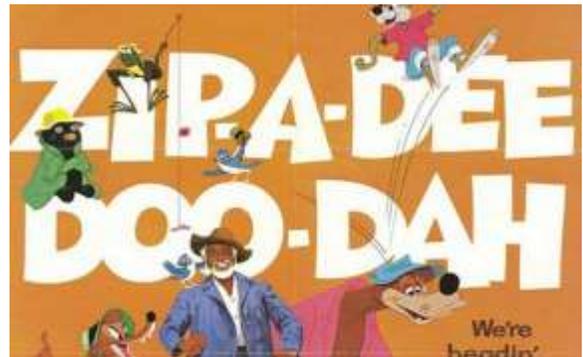
When *Song of the South* opened some critics felt the film was racist. I wrote at length in my book *Forbidden Animation* about how Walt had ignored his advisors who were hired by him along with the Production Code Office to make sure the film would not be controversial. Maurice Rapf, who was hired to rewrite the script, told me that he cleaned it up and that Walt understood his suggestions, but many of his changes were ignored.

When *Song of the South* was released some critics pointed out the film included racist elements and had other serious problems. It was also picketed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in several cities. They sent telegrams to newspapers that pointed out that the film "helps to perpetuate a dangerously glorified picture of slavery" and "gives the impression of an idyllic master-slave relationship which is a distortion of the facts." Rapf told Walt to make sure the film goes knew the film depicted the South *after* slavery was abolished but that suggestion was ignored. Instead the film is seen by most people as showing a master-slave relationship when slavery was legal.

Despite the negative criticism Disney rereleased it several times. The studio finally

decided not to show it after the 1986 rerelease. It supposedly has remained in the so called Disney Vault since then, but the studio permitted it to be released in English in Japan on laser disc in 1990. Also they failed to renew copyright on it so you can see nice copies of the entire film online for free.

So what does Splash Mountain have to do with the 1946 film? Not much. It is basically a fun log flume ride that opened in 1989. It starts as a dark ride in a nice setting that relates to the film, and it ends with the log you are riding in going down a chute, a 52.5 foot drop. To make it seem like a special Disney attraction, the ride's setting includes references to the animation in film. The ride was originally going to be called the *Zip-A-Dee River Run*, a reference to the Oscar winning song *Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah* from the film, but the ride's name was changed before it opened to refer to the film *Splash*, a Disney film from 1984 that stars Tom Hanks.



See the *Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah* sequence from the film. It is a delightful finale and James Baskett is a charming Uncle Remus. It was one of the first major roles in a Hollywood feature for a Black actor that wasn't comic or demeaning. He was given an honorary Oscar in 1948.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bWyhj7siEY>

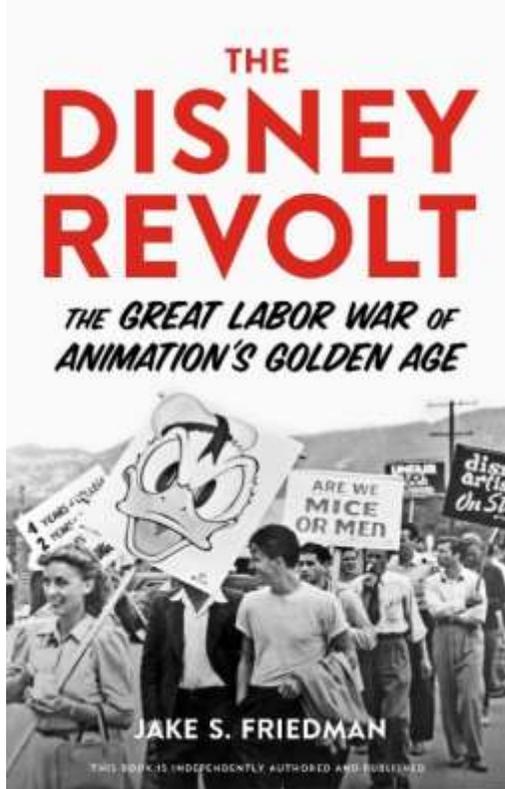
Now, to further erase any reference to *Song of the South*, Disney has announced the Splash Mountain rides in Orlando, Florida and Anaheim, California will be redesigned (but not the ride in Japan) to celebrate *The Princess and the Frog*. That film is about the first Disney Black princess.

The change happens to come at a time when Disney and other corporations have a lot of pressure to become more racially inclusive. Disney workers just fought a losing battle to prevent the Don't Say Gay bill from passing in the Florida legislature. They also received a petition signed by more than 20,000 people to change the ride's theme.

*South of the South* is just one of the many Disney films with overtly racist or ethnic themes.

There have been questionable depictions of Blacks, Jews and other groups that are seen as being politically incorrect today. I just learned that the song *What Made the Red Man Red?* from *Peter Pan*, 1953 is now on the list of offensive images.

There are lots of politically incorrect films on the internet. Several have disclaimer notices that say the film contains objectionable content. I think that is a much healthier way of dealing with outdated content rather than censoring things.



**“HOW THE HELL CAN WALT RUN A STUDIO WITHOUT US?”** In 1941, Disney animators went on strike for five weeks to protest the huge inequities of pay and privileges between staff. The often overlooked strike marked a turning point for Walt Disney's growing empire, and Hollywood's labor organizing efforts.

Listen to an excerpt from Jake S. Friedman's new book *The Disney Revolt: The Great Labor War of Animation's Golden Age*. Amazon has a voice reading excerpts of the book <https://www.amazon.com/Disney-Revolt-Great-Animations-Golden/dp/164160719X>



**THE ANIMATION GUILD IS EXPANDING WHO THEY WILL REPRESENT** The Guild, which is the industry's union, is opening its membership to production and IT workers on *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* and *American Dad!*, if they agree to unionize. The Animation Guild already represents workers at all three shows in other roles. Now the union will accept as members: production assistants, production coordinators, production managers, IT technicians, office managers and supervisors if they vote to join the guild. The present non-union worker have to meet the same tight deadlines and work the same long hours, but they do not share the same basic protections and benefits as the artists they spend those hours with. They deserve the same respect and dignity as their fellow Union-protected workers.

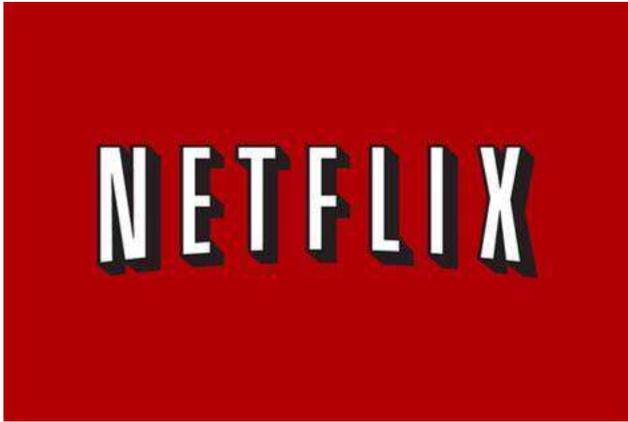
In a recent vote members of The Animation Guild ratified a new three-year deal with the studios and streamers that establishes new job tiers for animation writers and it solidified an approach to remote work. Eighty-seven percent of members who participated in the process voted to ratify that agreement.



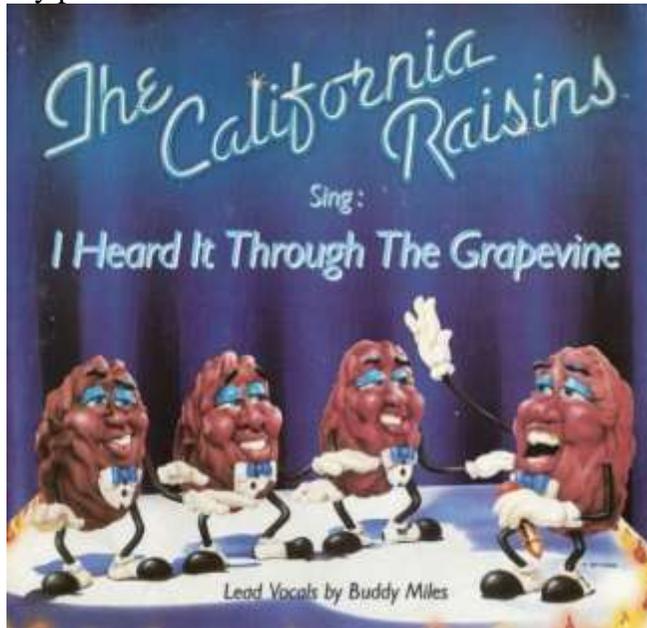
Pre-born patriots

**MARK FIORE CONTINES TO CREATE HIS WEEKLY ONLINE ANIMATED POLITICAL CARTOONS** Each week Mark's cartoons take on the worst right wing political news and that means

he has lots of awful news to inspire his wit. Take a peek at <https://www.markfiore.com/>

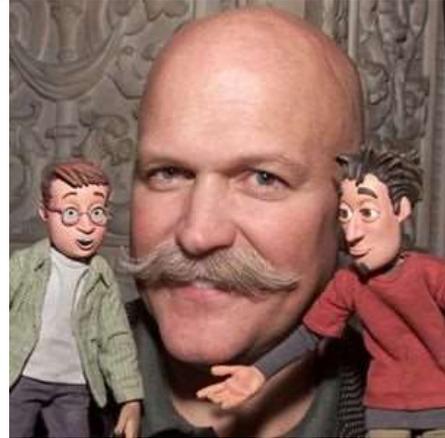


**NETFLIX STOCK IS STILL IN TROUBLE** It was at a high a few months ago around \$700 a share. Then this year's first quarter report came out and the number of subscribers had fallen. The stock plunged to a low of \$162. It slowly went up to just over \$200, but the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter report was just released and they have lost another million subscribers. Will this hurt the amount of animation they produce?



**'CLAYDREAMS' IS A LOVING TRIBUTE TO WILL VINTON. IT ALSO INCLUDES HIS UGLY FIGHT WITH PHIL KNIGHT WHO PUT HIM OUT OF BUSINESS** Will Vinton is known as the 'Father of Claymation.' He invented the word and he revolutionized stop-motion using clay, but after 30 years of being the unheralded king of clay, his dream came crumbling down. Before his death in late 2018, animation legend Will Vinton hadn't worked in the

medium for over a decade. He had been fired from the company he created, Will Vinton Studios.



In the new documentary *Claydream*, director Marc Evans presents a loving portrait of Vinton's genius. *Claydream* features extensive clips of Vinton's work and in-depth discussions of his themes. We see how Vinton funneled his energy into his work.

He also explains how Travis Knight, and his father Phil Knight, a co-founder of Nike Shoes, took over the studio and turned it into the renowned stop-motion studio Laika that has produced several technically brilliant stop-motion features.

In 1998, Vinton's studio was doing well and Phil Knight saw it as a profitable investment. Soon after, Travis was given a job as an animator at the studio. When the studio's business ran into trouble, Vinton asked Phil to invest further capital. Unbeknownst to Vinton, Phil bought out other shareholders and became the majority shareholder and director of the studio. He also introduced a clause into Vinton's contract that made it legal for him to be removed without cause.

Video of the legal depositions in the ensuing Knight vs. Vinton case, which implies the removal of the founder was premeditated, serves as the film's framing device. As Evans lays out Vinton's pioneering history and the series of decisions that had weakened the studio by the late 1990s, he also calls into question the Knights' actions. Father and son come off as villainous and their predatory approach appears beyond opportunism, even when taking into account Vinton's costly missteps.

Evans started working on this project prior to Vinton's passing, so it includes exclusive interviews with him. He also interviewed many of Vinton's collaborators and other personalities within the industry, including Bill Plympton, Craig Bartlett, and animation historian and former Cartoon Brew editor Jerry Beck.

The film covers Vinton's early collaborations with Bob Gardiner who co-directed and animated much of the Academy Award-winning short *Closed Mondays*. He also discusses how Bob's relationship with Will turned sour. Gardiner's mental health issues and substance abuse drove him to become vindictive, and he carried out a long spree of attacks against his onetime partner that lasted for years. Bob died in 2005.



I knew Bob as he lived in SF from time to time. I presented an evening with Bob talking and showing his work years ago at Intersection, where I presented an unusual film series for about 15 years in North Beach. I had no idea that Bob would display his animosity towards Will on stage both in words and song.

On another occasion Bob showed me his Oscar. It was scratched up as he was letting it roll around on the floor of his car. When I knew him he would spend part of the year earning money by repairing boats in Southern California. When he came to San Francisco he sometimes slept in a loft above a bookstore on Irving that his sister managed.

It seems the reason Bob grew to hate Will as far as I could tell, was due to communication problems with the press. Bob, who graduated from the College of Arts and Crafts (Will attended UC, Berkeley) said Will didn't give him credit for his work on *Closed Mondays* in published interviews. Will told me Bob wasn't comfortable talking to the press so reporters interviewed him, not Bob. As a result most articles mainly mentioned Will and some left Bob out completely.

One major revelation in the film is that it gives Bob the credit for creating Claymation, not Will. Bob was an animation major in college. Bob told me will studied architecture.

The film also mentions another problem Will had. His only feature, *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, was intended for a mature audience,

but the distributor sold it to the public as a children's production, so it failed. The studio's economic prosperity came from doing commercials including the California Raisins, and the talking M&Ms.

As a boss Vinton treated his workers to benefits rarely seen today in the animation industry. I'm told he hired every one of his more than 300 employees as full-time workers with health benefits.

Footage of the legal battle in the documentary exhibits the disdain the Knights had for Vinton. Vinton believed they were bent on taking the studio from him so that Travis, whose career as a white rapper hadn't panned out, could have something to do. Travis' father doesn't come across favorably.

The film's director suggests the way the Knights acquired the studio seems vile. In his final days, Vinton showed grace by not denouncing the Knights but instead praising their advancement of stop-motion animation. Though Evans tries to end his film on a sweet note by showing this, the bad aftertaste from the details of his demise is hard to shake.

*Claydream* premiered at the Annecy Int'l Animation Film Festival and the Tribeca Film Festival. No U.S. release has been announced. The cast includes Will Vinton, Bill Plympton, Bob Gardiner, Melissa Mitchell, Chuck Duke, Jerry Beck and Craig Bartlett. Much of the information in this article comes from an article published on Cartoon Brew and written by Carlos Aguilar.



**CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF ANIMATED HISTORY: ANIMAFEST ZAGREB**  
6-11 June 2022, Zagreb, Croatia by Nancy Denney-Phelps

What if they threw a party and everyone came? That is exactly what happened at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the World Festival of Animated Film. The guest list read like the who's

who in the animation world. This was the first festival many people had attended in two years, which added to the specialness of the event.

As befits the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the festival dedicated a great deal of screen time to looking back at what has become known as the Zagreb School of Animation. Five separate screenings were dedicated to the animators who made the city of Zagreb such a major name in the creation of animated films.

Unfortunately, many of the earliest films have not been preserved in the Croatian State Archives. The earliest fragment was the 1-minute 1928 trailer for the Andrija Stamber School of Public Health made by Stanislav Noworyta.

The first fully preserved film strip with animated drawings made in Zagreb is the 1932 experimental film created by Viktor Rybak and Miroslav Modic. Rybak was the author of numerous film reports and documentaries between 1923 and 1930. In 1931 he founded his own film production company and film processing lab in Zagreb. The 15-second experimental piece was created because of Rybak's amateur enthusiasm for animation. It was never intended to be shown to the public or used in any commercial way. According to Rybak, the film was made in cooperation with employees of his company and Miroslav Modic was the cartoonist.

The Zagreb School of animation, characterized by stories told with an economy of line, developed in a large part due to the shortage and cost of cels and other materials. As a result, animators had to resort to making as few drawings as possible to tell the story. It is said that the animators washed cels when they completed an order so that they could use them again for the next commercial.

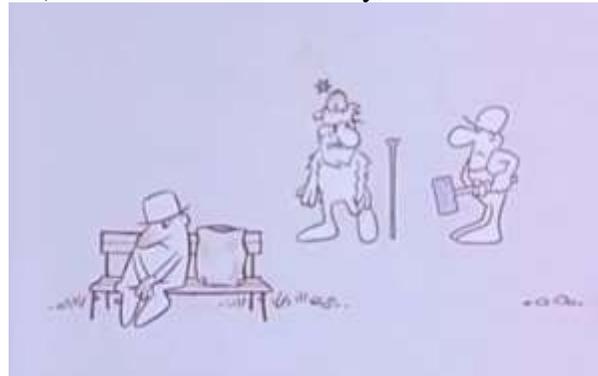
Each of the 5 programs covered an important period in the history of the Zagreb School of Animation. The first screening was devoted to the very beginning with films that laid the foundation by the people who brought animation to Zagreb. The Bonjour Cannes 1958 program recreated the legendary screening from 1958 at the Cannes Film Festival. It showed the same 7 films that introduced the world to the fresh ideas and style being created at Zagreb Studio. It was after this screening that the noted French film historian Georges Sadoul and film critic Andre Martin coined the term the Zagreb School of Animated Film.

The Golden Age of Zagreb Film from 1960 to 1970 screened beloved classics in two programs. Last but not least there was a program of children's films.

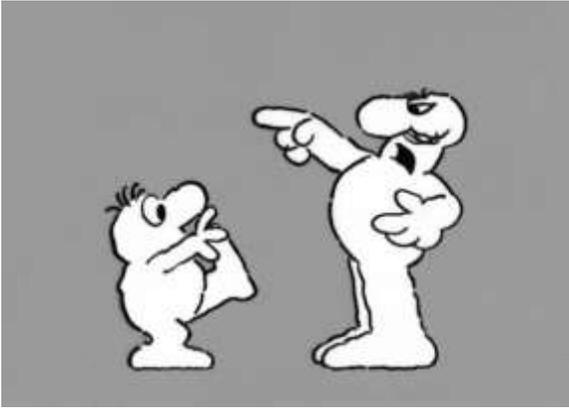


In 1951 Dusan Vukotic created Kico. This was the first attempt at Zagreb Studio to create a reoccurring character. Kico first appeared in *How Kico Was Born*. With this film, Vukotic attempted to create his own style and separate himself from the traditional Disney formula of animation. Dusan had a long and prolific career. In 1962 his film *Surogat* (aka *Ersatz* in the US) won an Oscar for Best Short Animated Film. It is a satire on civilization's superficiality and humanity's preference for convenience above practicality. In the film a man brings a collection of inflatable objects to the beach, literally everything, including his inflatable girlfriend, is a blown-up object.

No tribute to Croatian animation would be complete without the work of Borivoj Dvornikovic, better known as Bordo. Sadly he passed away in February of this year but as one of the founders of the Zagreb School of animation, he has left a legacy of his wonderful animated films. Simple and often based on gags, Bordo's films champion "the little man". As part of the Golden Age of Zagreb Films, two of Bordo's films were screened. *Curiosity* (1966) is about human curiosity, a disease for which



a cure has yet to be found. While a man is trying to rest on a park bench, passersby are curious about what he has in the bag on the bench next to him.



In *Learning to Walk* (1978) Bordo tells the story of a man who has always walked the way his mother taught him to walk. Four of his friends take turns trying to teach him their style of walking, convinced that each one's way is the only way to walk. The little man has a difficult time getting away from his friends but eventually, he does and then he goes back to the way he has always walked. *Learning to Walk* is a particular favorite of mine and it was lovely to see it on the big screen again.



No Zagreb program would be complete without a Professor Balthazar film. Created by Zlatko Grgic in 1967, the Professor became the Zagreb Studio's first successful animated series. The *Professor Balthazar* adventures ran on television from 1967 to 1978. It centered around a white-haired professor who solved people's problems using his knowledge and logic. He would then activate his magical machine and produce an invention that would solve the problem.

The festival showed the 9-minute *Professor Balthazar: Lighthouse Keeping*. In this episode, the Professor goes to the Alps and meets a man who has been yodeling all of his life. His problem is that his yodeling causes avalanches. Next, the professor meets a lighthouse keeper on a South Sea island who loves ice cream but can't eat it because it is so hot that it melts before he can get it to his mouth. The professor solves their problems by having them swap. One can safely yodel on the island and the other can eat all of the ice cream he wants in the

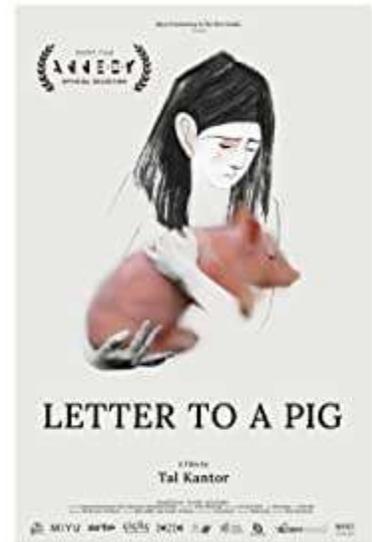
Alps. The film was made in 1969 by Zlatko Grgic, Boris Kolar, and Ante Zaninovic.

Professor Balthazar has become a symbol of the city of Zagreb and his bowler hat the symbol of the Zagreb Animation Festival. At one time or another, every animator at the Zagreb Studio worked on an episode of *Professor Balthazar*.



Zlatko Grgic also created the *Maxi Cat* series which ran from 1971 to 1973. These mini-films are only one minute long. Each featured an ungainly feline, Maxi Cat, who has brief encounters with ordinary objects such as doors, a hat, or a broom with surprising results. The animation is very simple, the backgrounds nonexistent and the only objects are those needed for the short story. The festival screened three *Maxi Cat* episodes: *The Lunch, Fishing, and The Door*.

The Zlatko Grgic Award at Animafest Zagreb pays tribute to this great Croatian animator. It is awarded to the best first film produced apart from educational institutions.



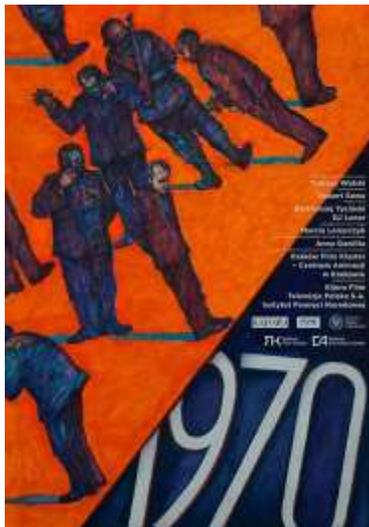
The short film competition was particularly strong this year. My personal favorite film was Tal

Kantor's *Letter To A Pig*. The Israeli filmmaker confronts memory and how we perceive it, usually fragmented and incomplete. In her 17-minute film a Holocaust survivor reads a letter to a classroom full of young people that he wrote to the pig who saved his life. A young schoolgirl hears his words and sinks into a macabrely twisted dream where she confronts questions of identity, collective trauma, and the extremes of human nature. Tal used a mixture of hand-drawn animation, live-action, and acrylic paint on paper to tell this very moving story.



*Letter To A Pig* won the Zlatko Grgic Award. In giving it, the jury, made up of Paul Driessen, Les Mills, Alex Dudok de Wit, Ana Nedeljkovic, and Igor Grubic said, "We counted many pigs among this year's films. A pig can be repulsive and sweet, brutal and smart, and this film places this complex animal at the heart of a richly ambiguous, elegantly designed story with an unusual perspective on the Holocaust"

I find animated documentaries to be fascinating, and the 70-minute feature film *1970* about the protests in Poland that year was no exception. Director Tomasz Wolski made the unusual choice to tell the story from the point of view of the bureaucrats who made up the crisis team rather than through the protester's eyes. It was the team's job to "handle" the protesters and shut down the revolt.



The whole thing began in December of 1970 when shelves in Polish supermarkets were empty and food prices became sky high. The Gdansk shipyard workers had had all they could take and called a strike. The original dozen protestors quickly multiplied and eventually swelled to tens of thousands of people.

The Communist rulers of Poland were determined not to allow a repeat of the 1956 Prague uprising. At first, they tried propaganda pamphlets which didn't work. Frustrated and angry they sent in militias, army units, and tanks. After 8 days the revolt was finally crushed leaving 41 protestors dead and 1,164 people wounded, some seriously.

Wolski uses archival recorded telephone conversations between Communist leaders as the backdrop for *1970*. The crisis team is portrayed in stop-motion while archival live-action footage of the riots shows the terrible effects of their "crisis control". As I watched the film, I felt like I was in that smoke-filled room. Anyone interested in history will find this inside look into how power corrupts extremely fascinating.

Each year Animafest gives a Lifetime Achievement Award; This year the festival honored one of its own, Nedeljko Dragic. This was very fitting on the festival's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Dragic is not only a director, he is an author of animated films, a caricaturist, an illustrator, and an acclaimed comic book artist. He is also one of the greatest authors of the Zagreb School of Animation. His animation style is unique and as one critic observed his style has "lavish drawings imbued with a linear, caricaturist method".

Dragic's films frequently have a philosophical component about a man in the world. *Passing Days* (1969) is about an ordinary man who tries to lead a simple life but his efforts are thwarted by the world around him. The 1974 film *The Diary* was inspired by his experiences in America along with his intimate thoughts. He skipped the conventional screenplay and storyboard for this film and just sat down at his desk and started animating.

In a career that spans from 1965 to the present Nedeljko Dragic is a worthy winner of a Lifetime Achievement Award. The Masters of Animation: Nedeljko Dragic screening presented 10 of his films.

The beautiful 2022 poster was designed by Michael Dudok De Wit. His bluebirds also flitted in and out of the trailer which was created by the cream of the animation world. Contributing to the

Exquisite Corpse piece were: Michaela Pavlatova, Koji Yamamura, Joan Gratz, Daniel Suljic, Xi Chen, Marta Pajek, Frank Dion, Spela Cadez, Juan Pablo Zaramella, Paul Driessen, and last but not least Joanna Quinn. Nik had the great honor to be invited to create the music for the trailer.

The festival took advantage of its all-star cast this year to offer 12 master classes. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about evolving and developing short films from Joanna Quinn and Les Mills. Marta Pajek took her audience through the process of writing her triptych of films *Impossible Figures and Other Stories* from her first idea to developing the final concept.

Other workshops were presented by scriptwriter Pedro Rivero, producer Jelena Popovic, Michael Dudok De Wit, Spela Cadez, Anastasiya Verlinska, Juan Pablo Zaramella, Veljko and Milivoj Popovic, Aya Suzuki, and Paul Driessen. A special panel discussion, Queer Creative Voices, discussed the evolution of diversity and inclusion within the animation industry.

As part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festival, producer Paola Orlic curated an elaborate exhibition, Animafest Zagreb 1972–2022, at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The exhibition is so extensive and rich in content that it deserves its own article. Due to the high attendance, the exhibition date has been extended to the 28<sup>th</sup> of August.

I suggest if you have the time and money to take a summer holiday trip to Zagreb to visit the exhibition and then a trip to the Croatian coast to cool off in the beautiful, clear water. I will soon write a piece dedicated strictly to the exhibition next.

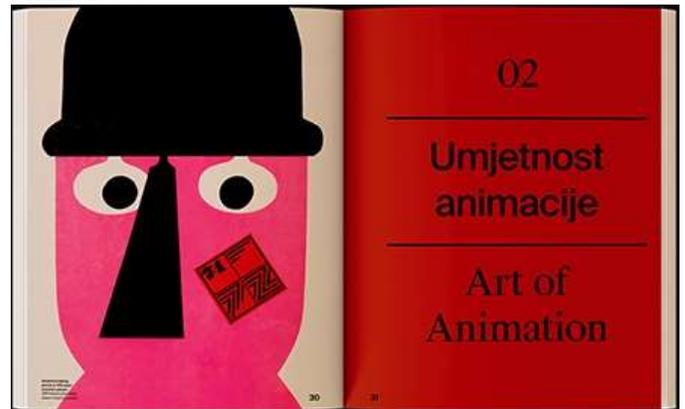
Every year a highlight of the festival is the picnic. For the previous 2 years, the picnic was held at the beautiful City Botanical Gardens within walking distance of the festival since it wasn't safe to put us all on a bus and drive for an hour to the countryside due to Covid. This year the picnic location was quite a surprise.

Before the picnic, we were all taken to the Museum of Contemporary Art to visit the exhibition. Rain was forecast for that day so instead of taking us to an outdoor area, the picnic came to us. It was set up on the wide-covered veranda at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Even though it felt a bit more formal than usual, the catered buffet was delicious as always. Festival Artistic Director Daniel Suljic is not only an animator, he is also a musician and a DJ. He showed his prowess at the

turntable by providing music for the picnic. Nik also played for us.



For the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Margit (Buba) Antauer, President of the Animafest Zagreb Council and Festival Producer Paola Orlic headed an editorial team that published *Fifty Years of World Festival of Animated Film – Animafest Zagreb*. The 535-page book is chock full of memories for anyone who has ever attended the festival. As someone who has been there for over 20 years, the hundreds of photos alone are a treasure. You can find out more about the book and order it at: <https://www.upi2mbooks.hr/trgovina/upi2m-books-izdanja/akcija-upi2m-books/pedeset-godina-animafesta/>



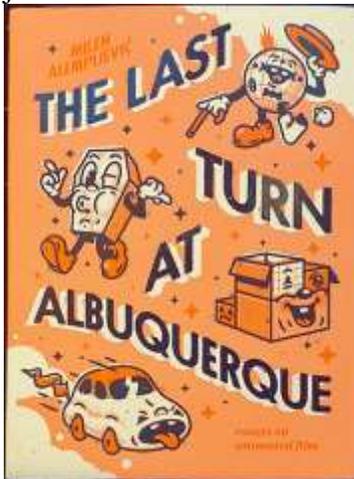
The book is normally 300 Kuna (around 40 euros) but there is a special discount available on the website of 240 Kuna (30 euros). Unfortunately, the English language version of the website doesn't work but there is always Google translate and it is very easy to order. The book is in both English and Croatian.

I had the pleasure of presenting the English language book chat at the festival. This year I had 3 authors with widely different but fascinating books. Milen Alempijevic from Serbia wrote *The Last Turn At Albuquerque*, the prolific writer and head

of the Ottawa International Animation Festival, Chris Robinson presented his latest book *Mad Eyed Misfits, Writings On Indie Animation*, and Finish photographer Timo Viljakainen talked about *Behind the Eyes the World*.

The first thing that I asked Milen was where the title of his book came from. It turns out that it came from a conversation that his wife had with a monk at a monastery church. During their conversation, the monk asked her if she watched cartoons. This came out of the blue without him knowing Milen's involvement with animation. When she said yes, he asked "Have you watched *Kung Fu Panda*?" Again, she said yes. He went on "Well, there is a scene when the old turtle says "yesterday is history, the future is a mystery, but today is a gift. That is why it is called the present." The monk went on "It seems that 'I should have made the turn at Albuquerque' is not of much use in life".

His book is a collection of short essays, several influenced by his keen interest in jazz. I especially enjoyed his writings about the link between animated film and jazz and his piece on animated documentaries of jazz musicians. Milan's writing is very readable and the book covers a wide range of subjects.



*The Last Turn At Albuquerque* is published by the Students' City Cultural Center/Academic Film Center in Serbia. You can find ordering information on their website: [www.dksg.rs](http://www.dksg.rs). It is in Serbian but our old friend Google translate will help you get all of the information that you need.

In *Mad Eyed Misfits—Writings on Indie Animation* Chris Robinson looks at a wide range of films and filmmakers that include such familiar names as Don Hertzfeldt, Adam Elliot, Masaaki Yuasa, Wong Ping, Bruce Bickford, Jodie Mack, Rosto, Suzan Pitt, Clyde Henry (aka Chris Lavis

and Maciek Szczerbowski) and Cartoon Saloon and many more in the 34 chapters in the book. Chris' interviews, especially a never before published conversation with the late great Rosto (d. 2019) make for especially good reads. Whether you agree with his opinions or not *Mad Eyed Misfits* will give you a lot of food for thought.

*Mad Eyed Misfits—Writings on Indie Animation* is published by CRC Press. You can purchase the paperback edition on Amazon for 22.44 Euros, 22.00 Dollars, or 18.99 pounds. It is also available in a hardcover edition and as an eBook.

Finish photographer Timo Viljakainen began taking portraits of animators with their eyes shut in the early 1990s. He has collected 81 photographs into a lovely book titled *Behind the Eyes the World*.

Explaining the title Timo said "When a person closes his eyes, he breaks the connection with the viewer. He retreats into himself, with his eyes closed, it is easier for him to think, dream, or reminisce. Seeing a photograph of such a person, you wonder what he is thinking about and you look for the answer in the background. By so doing you turn the picture, which was a portrait, into a story. Eyes closed, but mind open."

*Behind the Eyes the World* is a perfect gift for anyone who loves animation. Each photo gives a special glimpse into the individual personalities of the animators and because many of the photos were taken at festivals it also brings back memories of where we were. The book can be ordered directly from Timo by contacting him at: [timo.viljakainen@icloud.com](mailto:timo.viljakainen@icloud.com) The price in Europe is 40€ including shipping costs. Overseas the price is 45€ shipping included.

The 9<sup>th</sup> edition of Animafest Scanner, a symposium for contemporary animation study, was held on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of June in conjunction with the festival. Over the two days, the 16 speakers focused on three topics: Global Animation and its History—A Tribute to Giannalberto Bendazzi, The State of Contemporary European Animation and its Future, and Gender and Diversity.

The Scanner keynote speaker is always the recipient of the Animafest Zagreb Award for Outstanding Contributions to Animation Studies. This year the festival honored Rolf Giesen with the award. Giesen is a German film historian, screenwriter, lecturer, critic and scholar with a very

broad knowledge ranging from animation history to the latest advances in the digital age.

Unfortunately, he was not able to be present but he delivered his keynote address, *Caught Between Two Stools: Star Wars vs The Art of Animation*, via the big screen. In comparing the difference between European and American animation he noted that *Star Wars* opened the era of the blockbuster, of movies that make a billion dollars in the international market. He went on to point out that European animation is as different and varied as the individual European countries and that none of the big global players are in Europe.

Gieson feels that “our strength should be content and animation quality. Zagreb was and is a good example that we have something to say, that we value the art of animation higher than commercial standardization”.

New this year at the festival was *Rise and Shine*. It is a unique animation pitching lab for young animators, organized as a collaboration between CEE Animation, Animafest Zagreb, and Animateka International Animation Festival. It is aimed at directors and producers of short films in development. Ten projects were selected to be presented.

The participants benefited from one on one sessions with some of the leading names in animation. Among the tutors were noted animator Joanna Quinn; writer and producer Les Mills; screenwriter, director and producer Pedro Rivero; writer, script editor, and lecturer Anna Vasova and Matthieu Darras, who has designed and led several programs for film and talent development.

Time seemed to fly by at the festival and it was over far too soon. A very big thank you goes to Buba, Paola Orlic, Meta Milic, and Daniel Suljic for inviting Nik and me to be part of the festival and making our stay in Zagreb such a pleasure. I am already looking forward to next year’s festival which will be held from the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. You can learn more about the festival at: [www.animafest.hr](http://www.animafest.hr)

**KAREN FOLGER JACOBS IS PRESENTING A PROGRAM ON ACTRESS/DIRECTOR GRETA GERWIG** The afternoon class is on Tuesday, August 26<sup>th</sup> 1:30 to 4 pm. Karen says, “It isn’t animation, but she is a great filmmaker. We will study Greta Gerwig, director of *Lady Bird* and *Little Women*. We will carefully view and analyze her early films to identify qualities which

foreshadow her future, revealing her values and the abilities which she used wisely, routing herself to optimize opportunities to create a brilliant career despite multiple barriers. Tracing her life and her career trajectory, we will discover how she developed as a person, evolving a skillset which facilitated future as a film director.” Non-members are welcome to register. For details

<https://www.campusce.net/sfsu/course/course.aspx?C=876&pc=110&mc=0&sc=0>

### **BEWARE, ROBOTS CAN TAKE REVENGE!**

Russian media outlets report that a chess-playing robot, apparently unsettled by the quick responses of a seven-year-old boy, unceremoniously grabbed and broke his finger during a match at the Moscow Open. An official said the incident probably occurred because the child ‘violated’ safety rules by taking his turn too quickly.

### **HINT THAT NETFLIX IS INCREASING ITS USE OF ANIMATION**

It acquired the Australian animation and visual effects studio Animal Logic in July. Mike Moon, Netflix’s director of adult animation, has left the company “to pursue other opportunities.” The changes suggest a move toward more outsourcing under different leadership.

#### **\*\*\*\*LAST MINUTE ITEM\*\*\*\***



**IF THIS NEWSLETTER HAD BEEN MAILED OUT ON TIME YOU WOULD ONLY HAVE READ:**

### **SKYDANCE’S ‘LUCK’ PREMIERES AUGUST 5**

Will this be the beginning of an exciting new production company that the public loves? Under John Lasseter’s leadership they grew from a small studio of 65 people to a staff of 900 strong including the amazing Brad Bird. The feature premieres on Apple+ on August 5.

Will this be the start of a company with an animation department as great as Pixar/Disney? Their second animated feature will be a musical with a score by Alan Menken who has created several magical music

moments for Disney. Their live action division's best-known film so far is *Top Gun: Maverick*.

**BUT ON AUG. 4 SEVERAL PEOPLE WROTE THAT LASSETER'S 'LUCK' IS IN TROUBLE.** One person wrote me "Maybe they should have left Lasseter stay in retirement." Another who attends press previews said, "I saw the film. It starts out nicely, but it becomes quite a mess." I was also sent a review that ended, "The target audience deserves better." And another person sent me a link to the Rotten Tomatoes review pages:

[https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/luck\\_2022/review](https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/luck_2022/review)

As of Aug. 4<sup>th</sup> there were 34 reviews and only 47% were favorable.

On the positive side *Variety* called it a mixed bar, but "while the new studio's debut can't touch *Toy Story*, it's an auspicious start for a talented group of storytellers."

*The Wall Street Journal* said "this movie, from John Lasseter's production company, features the voices of Jane Fonda, Whoopi Goldberg, Simon Pegg and others to tell the convoluted story of an orphan who finds herself transported into the world of leprechauns."

**VOLUNTEERS WANTED TO PROOFREAD PARTS OF FUTURE NEWSLETTERS**

Pete Davis has done a fine job for several decades catching my typos and other mistakes, but his responsibility as his mother's caregiver is taking up more of his time. This issue was delayed getting to you as we like sending out issue free of errors, so please consider helping out if you can.

Depending on how much help is available it might be just a few pages. David, who has also been pitching in on the proofreading, only has so much time available to help getting it out.

We are sorry to get this issue out late, so we need to expand our volunteer staff to avoid delays in the future. If you can help in the future please contact Karl Cohen (415) 386-1004 or [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net).

**ARE THERE ANY DESIGNERS WHO WANT TO REDESIGN FUTURE ISSUES or ANY ARTISTS WHO WANT TO CREATE A COVER?**

**ASIFA-SF: PROGRAM DIRECTOR(S) NEEDED!** Due to my present mobility issues, age, and the amount of time it will take to complete the animation appreciation book I've been working on, ASIFA-SF will need new volunteers to organize and present future live and/or online programs. We need fresh ideas and help to revitalize our chapter. The program directors job could be split into two parts with one person arranging for the space and the other booking the programs.

In the near future Ron Diamond is going to release the next edition of the **ANIMATION SHOW OF SHOWS** and he would like ASIFA-SF to be involved in some way. Marty McNamara has lots of exceptional films from International film festivals that he would like to share with us. The National Film Board of Canada also has new films to show us and we would like to revive our annual program of work made during the Covid 19 crisis by our members, friends and students.

We need help presenting these and other programs. Please contact Karl Cohen (415) 386-1004 or [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net).

**MY SPECULATION ON WHERE ASIFA MIGHT BE HEADED.** By KC I can imagine our holding national and even international programs online using Skype or a future software system. National chapters and even international chapters may participate. Topics may range from new works, one person and/or group shows to theme programs and retrospectives. Skype also works well for presenting lectures illustrated with films on historic topics. Demonstrations of new hardware, software and traditional methods might also be shown online. ASIFA's use of the internet could be amazing.

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

*Newsletter Editor:* Karl Cohen  
*Contributors* include Nancy Denney-Phelps  
*Proofreaders* Pete Davis and David Gladstein  
*Mailing Crew:* Denise McEvoy, Shirley Smith  
Special thanks to Nancy Denney-Phelps who has been having a wonderful time once again going to festivals in Europe. She also 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**. Due to the lockdown we are only asking \$11 a year while the virus lasts or \$26 if you wish to help the international association. Let's hope it is a limited time offer. We want to hold in-person events again.

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