

December 2024



**The Fireside Angel, Max Ernst, 1937**

**THE ART MOVEMENT SURREALISM HAS TURNED 100 YEARS OLD**

In October 1924, French writer Andre Breton published what's now known as the *Surrealist Manifesto*. The seminal text—which argued for a new style of art and literature that would be “free from any control by reason, exempt from aesthetic or moral preoccupation”—helped give rise to a new, avant-garde movement that spread around the world. To mark the manifesto's 100th anniversary, a new exhibition in Paris is examining

Surrealism's enduring global impact. Titled *Surrealism*, the show incorporates more than 500 artifacts and artworks, including poems, drawings, sculptures and paintings. The show opened in Brussels in February, is currently on display at Paris' Pompidou Center and it will move on next year to Madrid, Hamburg and Philadelphia.

## **WELCOME TO A NEW SEASON OF ANIMATION RELEASES**



**JOHN LASSETER HAS PRODUCED 'SPELLBOUND,' A DIRECT-TO-VIDEO PRINCESS FEATURE FOR NETFLIX. APPARENTLY, THEY THINK IT IS MORE PROFITABLE FOR THEM TO BYPASS THEATRICAL RELEASES** *Spellbound* is the second animated feature from John Lasseter-led Skydance Animation (part of the impending Paramount-Skydance Media merger). It is a modern musical fairy tale that takes

place in the mythical kingdom of Lumbria as Princess Ellian embarks on “an invigorating quest” to break the spell. It is not your typical family drama as the mysterious spell has transformed Ellian’s parents into massive, rampaging *monsters*. It opened on Netflix on Nov. 22. Watch the new *Spellbound* trailer <https://www.indiewire.com/news/trailers/spellbound-trailer-animated-netflix-musical->

**THE NEW ANIMATION FORMULA FOR THE PRODUCERS OF SOME FEATURES** It seems to be: going directly to video streaming, avoiding spending too much \$\$\$ on detailed artwork since they bypass the big screen (so why bother), and sticking to bankable formulas (like using the Disney princess formula). In the future it will probably include using AI as much as possible to reduce the amount paid to animators and writers. Cutting costs can be more important than quality to the bean counters in the front office. They know people come for the story, not for an aesthetic experience so they skimp on details.



**‘FLOW,’ BY GINTS ZILBALODIS FROM FRANCE IS AT THE ALAMO DRAFTHOUSE.** “When the cat’s home is devastated by a great flood, he finds refuge on a boat populated by other creatures, including a dog, a bird, a capybara, and a lemur. Sailing through mystical landscapes, they must navigate the challenges, dangers, and wonders of this new world.” There is no spoken dialog. It is visual story telling at its best.

After Jim Middletown saw *Flow* at the Ottawa Animation Festival he said, “*Flow* was a jaw-dropper. If this is the possible future of independent production, then Pixar, Disney et al, will have to do serious jogging to catch up - a new level of imagination is reached with this one. It's a film for someone wanting to see a fine movie, not an afterthought for promoting special products at Burger King.”





**‘VENGEANCE MOST FOWL’** Wallace and Gromit are back starting January 3 on Netflix. Read a long informative article about the construction of the puppets, the story and other facts, plus see a full trailer at

**1235067418/**

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## **THE BIG GAME HAPPENING ON MONDAY DEC. 9 WILL BE 'THE SIMPSONS FUNDAY FOOTBALL'**

Disney, the NFL and ESPN are teaming up to present an important Monday night football game, *The Simpsons Funday Football*. Monday, Dec. 9, Disney+ and ESPN+ will stream the Dallas Cowboys-Cincinnati Bengals matchup, direct from Springfield's Atoms Stadium. The players will include characters from the *The Simpsons*.



**'The Day the Earth Blew Up: A Looney Tunes Movie'**  
is a 2D  
animated feature shot in a widescreen format. It will have a

limited run starting December 13 to qualify it for an Academy Award, and it will open theatrically across the nation Feb. 28, 2025. Daffy Duck and Porky Pig (both voiced by Eric Bauza) “discover a secret alien plot to take over the world via mind-control and chewing gum, gumming up the works with their inimitable antics in the process.” Ketchup Entertainment produced it.



**GREENPEACE GETS ANIMATED! ‘MY PET FOOTPRINT’ IS THEIR NEW TV SERIES TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE**

Fifteen-year-old Bella and a friend embarks on a surreal adventure through time and space, experiencing firsthand the most significant climate change impacts created by Big Oil. **Greenpeace East Asia Unveils ‘My Pet Footprint’ Animated Series Trailer | Animation World Network**





**‘PADDINGTON IN PERU’** *The Guardian* says the new animated feature is “just as jolly as the previous two films, but not really as funny.” When I looked Rotten Tomatoes gave it a 92% rating from the critics and 88% from the public. The trailer makes it look like a delightful Indiana Joes type of adventure. [https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/nov/04/paddington-in-peru-review?utm\\_term=6728c581e16dd9ad774a0e3de6ee2ba1&utm\\_campaign=GuardianTodayUS&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=GTUS\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2024/nov/04/paddington-in-peru-review?utm_term=6728c581e16dd9ad774a0e3de6ee2ba1&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTUS_email)

## MOANA’S RECORD BREAKING START





## **OFF TO A FANTASTIC START IN ADVANCED TICKET SALES**

The Walt Disney Animation Studios tentpole *Moana 2*, that opened Nov. 27, set records Monday Oct. 28 in terms of first-day advance ticket sales, according to online retailer Fandango. It sold more tickets than any other 2024 animated film, including fellow Disney/Pixar summer 2024 blockbuster *Inside Out 2*. It's also the fourth-best showing of the year for any movie behind *Deadpool & Wolverine*, *Wicked*, and *Dune: Part 2*.

## **MOANA 2 'S AMAZING OPENING WEEKEND**

**MOANA 2** Sets Disney Animation Record With \$13.8 Million in Tuesday previews. On Thanksgiving it continued on its record-shattering path, earning a massive \$28 million in the US. *Variety* said, "The animated sequel is on track to gross at least \$175 million over the five-day holiday." It didn't seem to matter that the reviews from 145 critics gave it a rating of 65% (Rotten Tomatoes). The *SF Chronicle* review said "at least three quarters of this movie is utter confusion. mind numbing, incomprehensible." On Sunday night The *Hollywood Reporter* headline read **Moana 2 Tops Best Thanksgiving Ever, Opens to Record \$221M in U.S. and \$386M Globally.** It smashed numerous records. It was the

**biggest five-day debut in history!**



**THE FINAL TRAILER FOR ‘MUFASA: THE LION KING’ IS OUT** It opens Dec. 20 <https://www.awn.com/news/disney-drops-final-trailer-mufasa-lion-king>.



**PIXAR’S ‘DREAM PRODUCTIONS’** Pixar has created a TV series for Disney+ that is essentially an 82-minute movie told in four episodes, but with a much smaller budget than the typical Pixar film, according to its director, Kelsey Mann. It is a spinoff of *Inside Out*, “another story about managing a healthy relationship with your emotions.” “*Dream Productions*” premieres on Disney+ December 11. Google [Dream Productions](#) | [Official Trailer](#)



**DISNEY HOLIDAY SHORT ‘THE BOY AND THE OCTOPUS’** “The boy comes to understand the extent of the octopus’ desire to explore everything the world has to offer.”  
**<https://www.awn.com/news/taika-waititis-disney-holiday-short-boy-octopus-debuts>**

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## **‘VENOM 3’ LED THE QUIET POST-ELECTION WEEKEND**

With no new releases the weekend after the election, Sony’s *Venom: The Last Dance* stayed on top of the domestic box office chart for its third weekend with an estimated \$16.2 million from 3,905 theaters for a domestic total of \$114.8 million. *Venom 3* earned another \$33 million overseas for a foreign total of \$279.4 million. Its world-wide box office total was \$394.2 million on Nov. 11. What does this say about the public’s taste?





## **‘ARCANE’, SAID TO BE THE MOST EXPENSIVE TV SERIES EVER MADE, IS NOW ON NETFLIX**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> season of the TV series *Arcane* returned to Netflix on Nov. 9. The first season won four Emmy Awards in 2022, including outstanding animated program. It was also the No. 1 TV show in the 85 countries served by the streaming service. It was based on their franchise *League of Legends*, an adult animated steampunk action-adventure television series. It was created by Christian Linke and Alex Yee, and was animated in France under the supervision of Riot Games. The budget was \$ 250 million. [Watch Arcane | Netflix Official Site](#)

**IN DEVELOPMENT**



**DISNEY IS GEARING UP TO PRODUCE ‘ICE AGE 6’** Cast members Ray Romano, Queen Latifah and John Leguizamo announced the news that *Ice Age’s* sixth sequel is being developed. It will be the first film in the series to be released in theaters since Disney bought 21st Century Fox’s film and television units in 2019. The assets include the rights to the *Ice Age* franchise.



**‘EMILY THE STRANGE AND HER FOUR CATS’** is being developed by Warner Bros Pictures Animation. The studio is collaborating with producer Bad Robot to adapt the illustrated character that was created 30 years ago by artist Rob Reger and the Cosmic Debris team. *Emily the Strange* is said to be a multimillion-dollar franchise that includes books, comics, games and an apparel line. Screenwriter Pamela Ribon, known for *Nimona* and *My Year of Dicks*, will write the movie’s script according to *Variety*.



**‘HALLOWEEN VS DAY OF THE DEAD’** It is in development. It will be set in a steampunk world and it delves into the traditions of Halloween and Day of the Dead. The rivalry of the two towns Halloween Ville and Day of the Dead Town, that broke relations hundreds of years ago, can only be resolved by the most unlikely and



years ago, can only be reserved by the most unlucky and innocent residents, the children. The story centers around Pumpkid, a boy from Halloween Ville, and Bony Lu, a girl from Day of the Dead Town. Together with a group of friends they go on a journey to reunite their feuding towns and people. No release date is set.

Munich based Studio 100 Intl. has teamed up with Mexican animation studio Lunch Films to develop *Halloween vs Day of the Dead*. It will blend 2D and 3D animation and the director is Celso Garcia whose credits include *The Thin Yellow Line*. The producer is Guillermo del Toro.

## NEVER MADE



**THE UNTOLD STORY OF A CANCELED DISNEY ANIMATED FEATURE: 'WHO KILLED FRAIDY CAT?'** It was in development at Disney, first with Piet Kroon working with several writers at different times, and later with Disney vets John Musker and Ron Clements. A long, well-illustrated story about the production is online. It is by David Mahler, a cartoonist and writer from Melbourne, Australia.

The story outline and the first treatment looked



promising, a Hitchcock-like crime story about a cat and a parrot in London. It was going to be a 2D work, but it went through several revisions during the first years of this century when Disney was moving into computer animation. The article about this failed project includes lots of drawings and paintings capturing different styles and moods. <https://animationobsessive.substack.com/p/who-killed-fraidy-cat-or-Who-Killed-'Fraidy-Cat'?-by-Animation-Obsessive-Staff>

Piet Kroons, the film's first director, created an exceptional animated short, *Transit*, 1998. It deserves another viewing or a first screening if you haven't seen it yet. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le\\_u6s8-4lk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le_u6s8-4lk)

Kroons also created *Dada*, 1994, which may just be one of the weirdest animated films ever made.

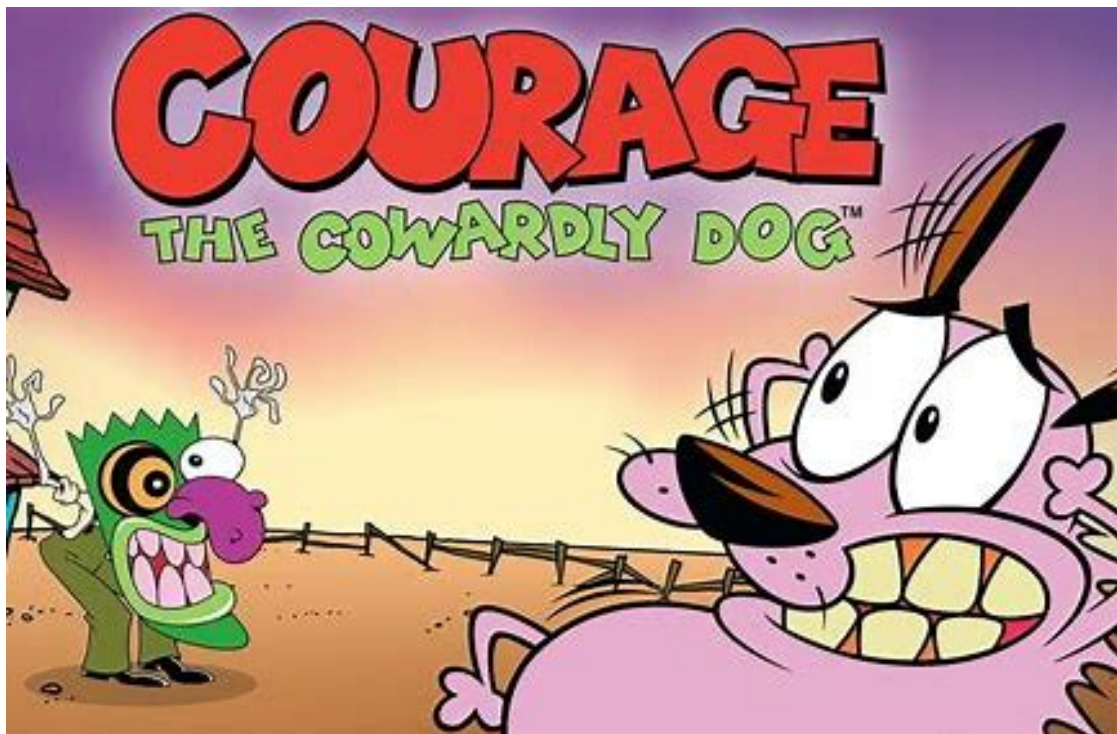
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLBb9MePDRs>  
His credits also include work on several features including *Iron Giant*, *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West*, and *Osmosis Jones*.

## OPENING WEEKEND GROSSES

**WICKED** Grosses, Domestic (69.2%) \$112,508,890; International (30.8%) \$50,001,000 Worldwide; \$162,509,890 (3 days, opened Nov. 22)

**MOANA 2** smashed several records, taking in \$221M in U.S. and \$386M Globally. It was the biggest five-day debut in history! The critics were not impressed with the film, but will the box office reports influence the Academy members who select which films gets an Oscar nomination?

**INDEPENDENT ANIMATION**  
**DISCOVER THE STOP MOTION WORK OF AMANDA STRONG** Amanda is a Native American from Canada who has gained considerable recognition for her contributions to contemporary Indigenous cinema. She is an Indigenous filmmaker, media artist and stop motion director whose work has explored ideas of blood memory and Indigenous ideology. The Pacific Film Archive recently presented a retrospective of her films. Her three National Film Board films, *Hipsters Headdress*, 2017; *Inkwo for When the Starving Return*, 2024, and *Four Faces of the Moon* trailer are at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbBky38MCQY>  
Her impressive demo reel is <https://www.storyhive.com/creators/68069>



**YOU MIGHT WANT TO READ “25 Years Later, Looking Back at ‘Courage the Cowardly Dog’ and Its Heady Mix of Jungian Concepts, Nietzsche, and Angry Eggplants”** John Dilworth, the creator of the beloved Cartoon Network series, tells IndieWire about treating his animated show like an indie film. **25 Years Later, Looking Back at ‘Courage the Cowardly Dog’ and Its Heady Mix of Jungian Concepts, Nietzsche, and Angry Eggplants : r/television**



**AN INFORMATIVE DISCUSSION ABOUT MEMOIR OF A SNAIL WITH ADAM ELLIOT** “I get emails from angry parents all the time telling me, ‘Your films are not for children!’ and I say, ‘Of course they’re not! Why are you taking your children to my R-rated film?’” says Elliot “I mean we have an orgy in the

... says Elliot. "I mean, we have an orgy in the story, swingers, alcoholics and child abuse."



Elliot insists that their team's use of sexual lubricant for character tears is not meant as an innuendo. Though, he adds, "I suppose it could be. It's great stuff because it doesn't evaporate," Elliot explains of the lubricant. "If you film a tear coming down the face, which we drag down with a toothpick, it'll stay there for a day without drying up. If we put it all in there, in the eyes, and we take that toothpick and wiggle it around, it looks like the tears are shimmering."

Elliot says. "And one day, when I was young, at three o'clock in the afternoon, this film called *Alice* came on and I watched Jan's version of *Alice in Wonderland* in stop-motion. I was mesmerized. It was dark. It was disturbing. And I thought, 'I want to do that.'"

"It's a medium. There's room for all types of animation. I mean, the reason I even became an animator is because you get to play God. You're not restricted by anything. Characters can look however we want them to



look, and we get to be megalomaniacs and control freaks.” This marvelous film has 200 characters, 200 sets and 5,000 snail pieces. It had its world premiere at the Annecy International Animation Film Festival.

I think the film is a finely produced masterpiece. I hope you get to see it as it is extremely funny, sad at times, thought provoking, wonderful... (KC)

**SEE ‘MEMOIR OF A SNAIL’ ON ANIMATION SHOWCASE, NOW UNTIL CHRISTMAS**



The Animation Showcase is a streaming platform featuring outstanding recent shorts and features from around the world. It promotes hard to see works to the animation community that you may have read about winning recognition at international festivals and the Academy Awards, but you never thought you would ever get to see them.

The showcase started in 2016 with the goal of helping upcoming creative talents in the animation industry get exposure. Their streaming platform, which was developed during the COVID years, has enabled them to reach our community worldwide. They not only

stream the films for free, but they make available making-of and featurettes about some works.

The films available include *Letter to a Pig*, *Affairs of Art*, *War is Over*, *The Flying Sailor*, the feature *Chicken for Linda* and dozens of other exceptional works made recently. There are also several making-of features including Henry Selick's *Wendell and Wild*, Guillermo del Toro's *Pinocchio* and Aardman's *Chicken Run: Dawn of the Nugget*.

To connect to the platform: [https://  
watch.animationshowcase.com/](https://watch.animationshowcase.com/)

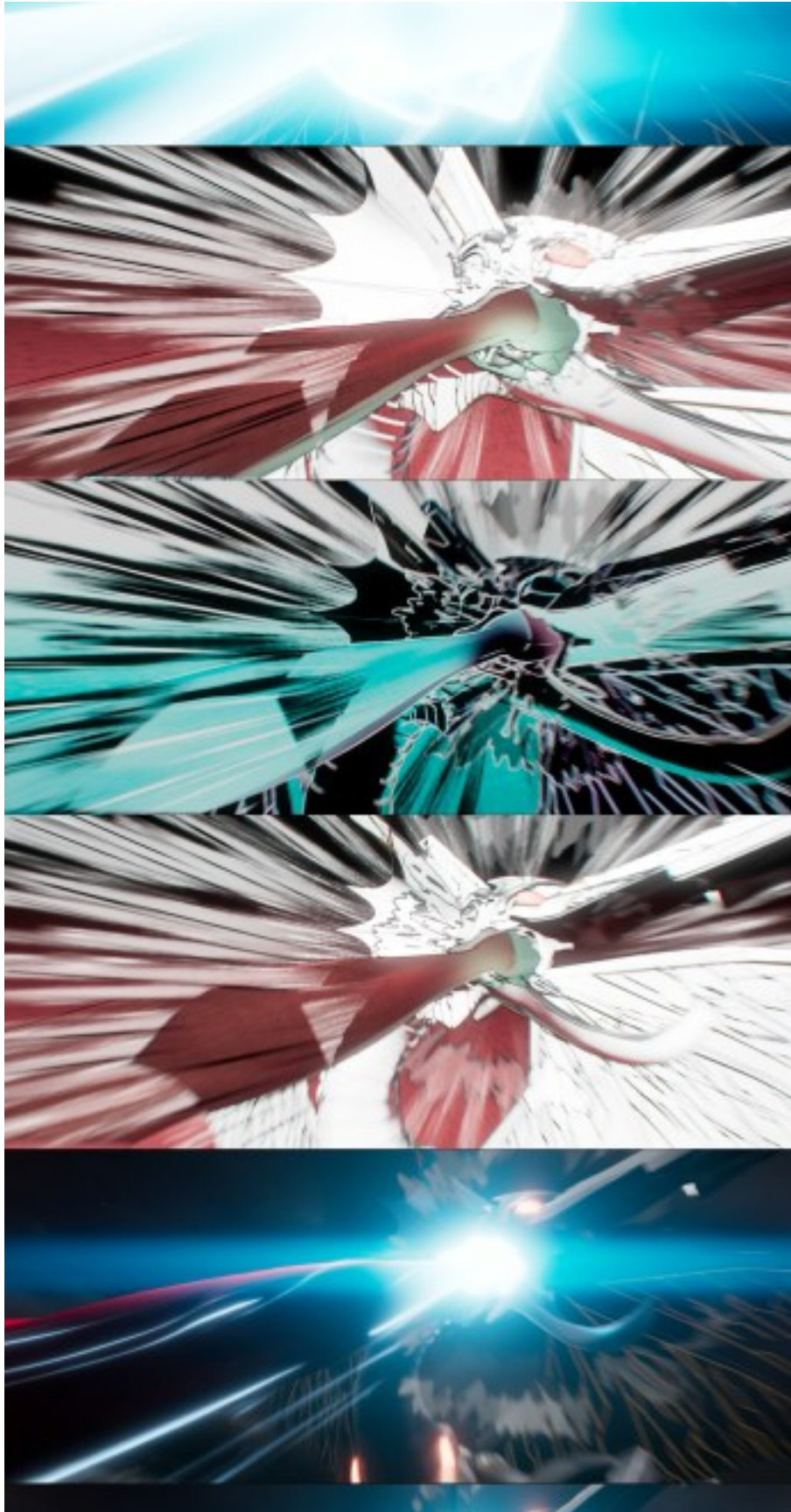
Logon with your address and the password is **asifasf2020** (no cap letters for the password please).

**The Animation Showcase** is also available on your TV or Home Cinema system via Apple TV & Roku.

Special thanks to Benoit Berthe Siward, founder of the showcase.

## IMAGES THAT GO INTO A SOLID PUNCH IN YOUR FACE FROM ULTRAMAN







The above images are part of what ILM flashes on the screen as Ultraman delivers a whopping blow. The images include heavy duty “impact frames” when Ultraman runs forward and throws a punch directly into the camera. There are also flares, acid green-colored skies with purple lightning, speed lines, frames that flash black and white and other element that will hopefully jar the minds of the viewer. [https://](https://webmail1.earthlink.net/folders/INBOX/messages/353486)

[webmail1.earthlink.net/folders/INBOX/messages/353486](https://webmail1.earthlink.net/folders/INBOX/messages/353486)

## **THE ANIMATION GUILD (TAG) IS PRESSURING PRODUCERS FOR A BETTER CONTRACT**

TAG has been in negotiations with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) as contracts expire Dec. 2. They have been demonstrating their strength to producers since this past summer in order to get the best deal possible for animation workers. The issues include fair wages, job security, and common-sense guardrails around Generative AI use. As for AI animation workers say, “We do not have to resign ourselves to a future where the only job is the mundane checking of AI outputs. GenAI will never be able to do what we do, and by organizing, we can ensure a future where our art, stories, and work remain beautiful,



meaningful, and human.”

TAG held a “March on the Boss” on November 12 where members gathered outside Glendale's DreamWorks Animation offices to present a petition to executives, signed by more than 58,000 members and their public supporters. The petition reminds the bosses that while animation workers kept content production alive during the COVID lockdown, and animation is outperforming live-action on screens and in merchandise sales, they face unprecedented levels of unemployment, losing their healthcare, homes, and livelihoods. There were also large demonstrations in November at Warner Bros and Cartoon Network.

The “March on the Boss on October 24 at Netflix again showed the employers that TAG members will stand together for as long as it takes to get the contract they deserve. They presented Netflix a petition with almost 2000 signatures.

In early August an impressive group of unions and guilds issued a joint statement of solidarity with TAG, supporting their efforts to negotiate and reach an agreement. The statement read, *“We stand with the members of TAG as they seek contractual provisions that set fair wages and working conditions, prevent overwork, and safeguard workers from the impact of artificial intelligence. TAG negotiates independently of IATSE’s West Coast Studio Locals to address the unique priorities of animation workers, and they do so with our full collective backing.”*

The statement was supported by The American Federation of Musicians (AFM), Directors Guild of

Federation of Musicians (AFM), Directors Guild of America (DGA), International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 40 (IBEW), International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 399 (IBT), Laborers International Union of North America Local 724 (LiUNA!), Operating Plasterers & Cement Masons International Association (OPCMIA) Local 755, Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA), United Association Plumbers Local 78 (UA), Writers Guild of America East (WGAE), and Writers Guild of America West (WGAW). The producers are represented by the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP).

**LAST MINUTE NEWS - ON NOV. 25 ‘VARIETY’ REPORTED THAT TAG AND AMPTP REACHED A TENTATIVE AGREEMENT** The guild announced that the tentative agreement for a three year contract includes AI protections “that include notification and consultation provisions,” increases to the health and pension funds (consistent with those in the IATSE Basic Agreement that was negotiated earlier in the year), as well as wage increases of 7% in the first year, 4% in the second year and 3.5% in the third. TAG also reported that it includes protections for remote work, “improved” terms for new media, new bereavement leave terms, additional sick days and recognition of Juneteenth as a holiday.

## **DISNEY ENDED ITS FISCAL 2024 ON A HIGH**

**NOTE** Thanks in large part to its theatrical film division and growth in streaming, Disney reported revenues of \$22.57 billion in its fiscal Q4 which ended Sept. 30.

That was up 6 percent from the same quarter a year ago. The growth was driven by entertainment, where revenues were up by 14 percent to \$10.8 billion thanks to *Deadpool & Wolverine* and *Inside Out 2*. Streaming improved its profitability, with operating income of \$321m between the company's DTC offerings. Disney+, meanwhile, added more than 4m "core" subscribers, and now has more than 120m core subs. Revenue in DTC was \$5.8b. from *Hollywood Reporter*

Disney expects to spend \$24b in content in its fiscal 2025, up slightly from 2024 when the company says it spent \$23.4b. The company disclosed its planned content spend in its annual report. Don't expect a flurry of additional movies or TV shows, however, as sports programming expenses are set to rise next year thanks to contractual rate increases at the NFL, the start of the new NBA contract — which nearly doubles the previous fee — and the launch of the new ESPN flagship streaming service.

Although testimony sited several cases where woman were paid less for the same job and men with less experience were advanced to better paying jobs over women with more experienced, a Disney executive told the press Disney CEO Bob Iger said the company has already undergone a great consolidation, after acquiring the assets of 20th Century Fox in 2017. While noting

that Disney will “always look opportunistically at opportunities,” Iger said the company does not have immediate plans for acquisitions under the new administration.

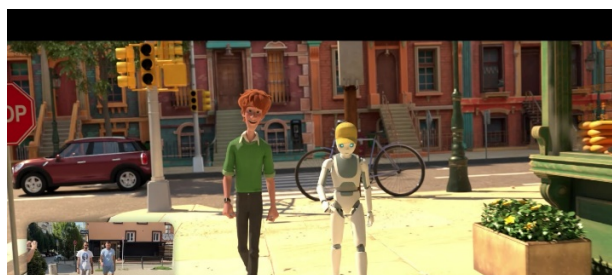
## **DISNEY AGREES TO PAY \$43 MILLION TO SETTLE A CLASS ACTION SUIT OVER WOMEN’S PAY DISCRIMINATION**

The company has also agreed to hire experts to address compensation disparities impacting roughly 9,000 women who said they're being paid less than their male counterparts for similar work. A Disney spokesperson issued a statement that said, “We have always been committed to paying our employees fairly and have demonstrated that commitment throughout this case, and we are pleased to have resolved this matter.” Then why did the lose?



**SIGGRAPH ASIA 2024 TOKYO RUNS DEC. 3 – 6**

You can read information about the full program at







**WONDER DYNAMICS UNVEILS AI TOOL** It turns live-action footage into 3D animation. The company co-founded by Tye Sheridan launched Wonder Animation, co-founded by Tye Sheridan, creates 3D CG animation using AI reconstruction. On October 30, they launched the beta version of Wonder Animation that lets artists shoot a scene with any camera, in any location, and then turn the footage into an animated scene with CG characters in a 3D environment via AI reconstruction.

Wonder's flagship, Wonder Studio, has already demonstrated their technology that industry for tech that allows users to place CG characters over live action footage. Their technology allows editors to put multiple cuts and various shots together and then use AI to reconstruct the scene in a 3D space.

It can work with images created using various software including Maya, Blender, or Unreal.

"There is a current misconception that AI is a one-click solution, but we know that's not the case," said Nikola Todorovic, co-founder of Wonder Dynamics. "That's why with the beta launch of Wonder Animation, our focus is on bringing the artist one step closer to producing fully animated films while ensuring they retain full creative control. Unlike the black-box approach of most current generative AI tools on the market, we're empowering artists to shape their vision instead of just relying on automated outputs."

Wonder Dynamics was founded in 2017 and in May was acquired by Autodesk, expanding the

company's reach and offering more access to its tech to provide studio-level films with VFX and CGI that can be done on an indie film budget.

## **Can Watching Movies Rewire Your Brain? A**

Stanford research study confirms what we assume, that when people lose themselves in a story, they become more empathetic. The idea for the study resulted from producer Scott Budnick meeting Barack Obama in Washington in 2019 at a screening where Obama screened an early cut of his legal drama ***Just Mercy***.

The film is about a man in Alabama man who is wrongfully convicted and sentenced to death. At the time, Obama was in the midst of setting up his production company, Higher Ground, and he mused to Budnick that perhaps “a film could literally change somebody's brain matter.” Months later, Budnick mentioned Obama's comment to Stanford psychologist Jennifer Eberhardt and the seeds of an intriguing new piece of research were planted. Scott had received a MacArthur genius grant for her research on racial bias and says “you don't have to wonder. You could actually study that. ”

Five years later she did that using Stanford's psychology department's MRI machine to see if watching ***Just Mercy*** changes brains patterns. It was part of the first academic study using a specific cultural product to measure empathy. The study is still underway, but the first phase of the study that had

participants watching videos online, hints that movies do have the potential to change minds. The findings were published Oct. 21 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The study made with 60 participants suggests that watching ***Just Mercy*** increased participants' empathy for the incarcerated and decreased their enthusiasm for the death penalty. This story appeared in *The Hollywood Reporter*.



**DO YOU ENJOY SEEING WILD TAKES IN CARTOONS?** See lots of outstanding examples in this collection of clips. *A Thrilling Tour Through The History Of Wild Takes In Animation* by Vincent Alexander is on Cartoon Brew 11/13/2024. It covers takes a wide variety from Ub Iwerks' Mickey to Ren and Stimpy. al (VAF)





**I have finally completed my book, it will be published on 18 December.**

**Published by Routledge**



**VIBORG ANIMATION FESTIVAL**

**9 - 15 September 2024**

**Viborg, Denmark**



9 – 15 September 2024      Viborg, Denmark

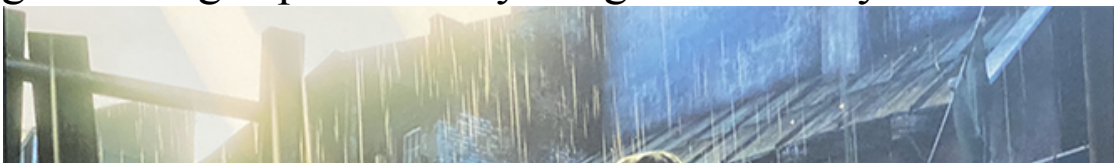
By Nancy Denney-Phelps

## EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF ANIMATION, DIGITAL ARTS AND GAMING

When I was invited to be on the Short Film Jury of the Viborg Animation Festival I knew a great deal about their Animation Workshop, having seen many excellent films made by their students, but I didn't know anything about the festival. It turned out to be a learning experience and I had a lovely time.

The festival focuses on digital arts and gaming along with animation. They also honor a Festival Ambassador for the week, an artist who is pushing the boundaries of film or gaming. Their works challenge the status quo and personify the spirit of the festival by breaking down visual walls and inspiring the artistic community.

This year the VAF Artist was the Austrian art and filmmaking collective Total Refusal. The pseudo-Marxist media guerilla collective focuses on the artistic intervention and appropriation of mainstream video games. By upcycling AAA video games like *Red Dead Redemption*, *Battlefield*, and *Grand Theft Auto*, the collective aims to reveal the political apparatus beyond the glossy and hyperreal textures of video games. Through in-game performances, exhibitions, and Machinima short films, Total Refusal challenges the game designs produced by the game industry.





### **Photo from Total Refusal's exhibition of *Hardly Working***

About selecting Total Refusal as this year's Ambassador VAF, Festival Director Jane Lyngbye Hvid Jensen said, "Films and games are much more than just entertainment – they are a reflection of our society and values, and they are a powerful force that shapes us as human beings. That is why we are very keen to share Total Refusal and their work with our audience at this year's festival, to openly discuss and talk about what we consume and produce and how that feeds into the world we live in and into the future we are building".

The six-member collective was represented at the festival by two of its founding members, Michael Stump and Leonhard Mullnere. They presented two screenings of the collective's work along with an art exhibition featuring stills from their projects. They also screened ***Knit's Island***. ***Knit's Island*** is based on an exploration of the communities which exist inside the survivalist online video game ***Day Z***. The 96 minute animated documentary takes the viewer somewhere on the

internet, into a space where people gather in a community to simulate a survivalist group.

Under the guise of avatars, a film crew enters the site and makes contact with the players. The film endeavors to find out who these people are and are they actually playing or do they believe that they are really survivalists?

I had seen two or three of Total Refusal's films before and I thought that they were interesting but too long. I am not into video games so I missed the reference points when I saw the films the first time. After seeing their exhibition followed by a screening of several of their films, the full impact of what they are doing hit me square in the face and I am fascinated by it.



**The festival gaming center**

The noted writer, director, and producer Jim



Capobianco was a guest at the festival. After five years at Disney, Jim joined Pixar and in 2008 he was nominated for an Oscar in the Best Original Screenplay category for the delightful film *Ratatouille*. He went on to direct the short film *Your Friend the Rat* which can be found on the *Ratatouille* DVD. It went on to win the 2008 ASIFA Hollywood Annie Award for best short film.

At his presentation Jim took us behind the scenes of *The Inventor*. He wrote, produced, and directed the 2023 project. The film is a stop motion and 2D hand drawn feature. In the film the great inventor Leonardo da Vinci leaves his native Italy to join the French Court, where he can experiment freely and invent flying contraptions and other amazing machines, and study human anatomy. In the film he is joined by the intrepid Princess Marguerite as he endeavors to uncover the answer to the ultimate question, “What is the meaning of it all?”





## **With Portuguese animator Alex Siqueria and Jim Capobianco**

For his second talk, A Story Artist's Journey, Jim told a packed audience about his career path from his early interest in animation to working in the story department of Disney, then moving to Pixar where he worked on the stories from *A Bug's Life* to *Coco*.

In 2009 he formed Aerial Contrivance Workshop which he calls "a story design studio". He was awarded his second Annie Award for creating and directing the 2D sequences in Disney's *Mary Poppins Returns*. Jim is an engaging storyteller who kept his audiences completely enthralled.

Running concurrent as part of the festival were several conferences. The two-day CAGA, in its seventh edition, is an AG animation conference. AG is an academic platform for animation scholars, professionals, industry artists, and fans to explore and discuss the latest trends, advancements, and research in the field of animation. The topic this year was The (R)Evolution of Animation: Current Challenges and Future Directions. Topics covered included The Influence of Technology on Animation, Political and Ecological Challenges Arising from Animation's Growth, and Ethical Questions Raised by Emerging Technologies. Keynote speakers included Uri and Michelle Kranot.

As well as creating their own award winning films and VR projects, Uri and Michelle are an important part of the ANIDOX:Lab which is part of The Animation Workshop/VIA University College. ANIDOX is an education, production, and research program for

education, production, and research program for animated and new media non-fiction projects. The program includes training courses, VR, and animated film production, a residency program, youth programs, masterclasses, and workshops.

Since 2019 Uri and Michelle have been curating ANIDOX:VR as part of the Viborg Animation Festival. Michelle explained to me that it is “. . . an important branch of our ANIDOX activities and a direct offshoot of the lab and our own artistic VR research projects”.

This year’s ANIDOX:VR exhibition, located at the Gallery NB near to the festival site, showcased four works of non-fiction story telling in emerging technologies, focusing on the craftsmanship of animation and impactful experiences.

I watched *Empereur* directed by Marion Burger and Ilan J. Cohen. The interactive narrative VR takes you inside the brain of a father suffering from aphasia, a language disorder affecting a person’s ability to speak. It is inspired by Marion’s personal story of her father, who has suffered from aphasia for fifteen years. As a result of his condition, he mixes up words and struggles with every syllable. His cognitive functions and understanding are intact but he can no longer communicate normally. The VR follows Marion’s attempts to teach her father how to speak again as well as showing flashbacks into his past life.

*Empereur* won the Achievement Award in the Immersive section of the Venice Film Festival in 2023. I found the 30 minute piece upsetting, moving, and mentally exhausting, but it was well worth the time and

effort. I am still haunted by the project's images, it had a great impact on me.

Three other immersive projects were also available to watch. *Letters From Drancy* directed by Darren Emerson tells the story of a mother and daughter separated by the Holocaust. *Maya: The Birth of a Superhero* takes the viewer into the world of a South Asian girl's coming of age and the awakening of her sexuality. When her first period arrives, her world is turned upside down as she is confronted with the traditions and taboos of her conservative family. The piece was created by Poulomi Basu and C. J. Clarke.

The third project, by Ben Joseph Andrews and Emma Roberts, *Turbulence*, explores a condition called vestibular migraines. Ben Joseph lives with this condition which begins with a strange lapse in reality and goes on to impact his sense of orientation, balance, and special awareness.

I was fortunate to be given a tour of The Animation Workshop. Housed in former military barracks, the campus is spread out in a u shape with a grassy area in the center. The Bachelor of Arts Department offers three programs: Computer Graphics Art, Character Animation, and Graphic Storytelling.

Computer Graphics students explore methods of computer graphics production from conception, design, and story boarding to compositing. Character animators focus on classic animation principles, studying 2D, flash, and 3D animation. Graphic Storytelling goes into drawing, sequential storytelling, layout, scripting, and

storyboarding.

When I visited the school, it was a beehive of activity with students working in groups, at computers, or drawing. The hall walls were full of student's drawings and models sat on window sills. It felt like a very creative atmosphere. I have seen many films by TAW students that have impressed me with their originality and quality. After my visit to the school, I now understand how they can do such excellent work.

I was invited to the festival to be on Short Film Jury along with Danish filmmaker Pernille Kjaer and Steen Bille, a writer and member of the West Danish Film Fund. We selected ***Shoes and Hooves*** by Victoria Traub from Hungary. This love story about a centaur girl and a crocodile shoe salesman is a perfect tale of a relationship gone wrong and no matter how much you want to change yourself for the other person, in this case a crocodile becoming a vegetarian, it just doesn't work. Animation depicts relationships in many ways, but this was one way the jury had not seen before and we were charmed by the film.







### **Shoes and Hooves**

We also gave a Special Mention to *Nun or Never*. The film by Heta Jaalinoja of Finland displays a great sense of humor. In it we follow a nun as she questions her choice of vocations and discovers that everyone in the convent has their own hidden universe.

A big thank you goes to Festival Director Jane Lyngby Hvid Jensen and her entire team for inviting me to be part of the festival. They all went out of their way to make my visit enjoyable and I appreciate their warm hospitality. If you ever have the chance to visit the Viborg Animation Festival be sure to do it. The town is charming and the festival is the perfect place to explore the dynamic intersection of animation, digital arts, and gaming all in one place.

**November 26, 2024**

**Dear ASIFA member,**

**Thank you for being part of our world-class organization, ASIFA, the International Animated Film Association. Your membership is a wonderful step towards supporting our animation community, globally.**

**In 2025, ASIFA will celebrate our 65th Anniversary, 65 years young. Our Association International du film d'Animation was founded at Annecy, chartered under UNESCO, with the**

goal of connecting animator to animator, worldwide, and celebrating the art of animation.

We recently created a short snappy video that gives an overview of our organization. Please view it, feel free to share it, use it. Six and a half minutes long, it is on [asifa.net](https://asifa.net), [www.deannamorse.com/community](https://www.deannamorse.com/community), or here [vimeo.com/954009443](https://vimeo.com/954009443)

Coming up in 2025 — Your chapter will continue to facilitate your vibrant work and activities. And, the international ASIFA will continue our regular activities - offering a website, supporting international connections, coordinating International Animation Day, promoting the Animation Workshop Group (where artist-teachers work with children), coordinating the ASIFA Student Award, and giving our lifetime award, the ASIFA prize. These are all volunteer run initiatives, with volunteers around the globe.

In addition, we will offer a few new activities around our anniversary celebration. There will be another call for postcard art early in 2025. And we will have our General Assembly, our global members meeting held every three years. We will elect new officers, and take

stock of our organization - past and future.

More information will be shared in 2025, please check our website at [www.asifa.net](http://www.asifa.net).

If you want to participate in a specific activity, or connect with another chapter, you can find details on our website, or feel free to email one of us directly.

It's holiday time in the USA, a time where we pause and say what we are thankful for. I am thankful for you, for this global community of animation artists who believe that there is power in connecting with each other, across borders, to share our love of the art of animation, to build bridges, across cultures, to seek mutual understanding. To work for peace.

I am thankful that ASIFA will celebrate our long heritage next year recognizing that we are 65 years young. Honoring our past, and and moving forward with new ideas and initiatives.

Thank you for being part of our global community of animators.

In peace,

Deanna

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

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

**ASIFA-SF** is a chapter of Association Internationale du Film d'Animation with over 40 chapters around the world. Now that we are supposedly post-Covid we had hopes for a rebound with live events once more, but that isn't happening yet.

**TO KEEP OUR CHAPTER ALIVE, WE NEED TO  
FIND VOLUNTEERS TO DEVELOP LIVE AND/  
OR ONLINE PROGRAMS  
UNTIL THAT HAPENS WE ARE OFFERING  
FREE MEMBERSHIPS  
NEW MEMBERS WANTED, TELL OTHERS TO  
SIGN UP TO GET FREE ISSUES OF OUR  
NEWSLETTER**



**NEWSLETTER**

**AND WHATEVER SCREENINGS THAT ASIFA-SF MEMBERS GET INVITED TO.**

Contact [karlcohen@earthlink.net](mailto:karlcohen@earthlink.net)