

July, 2023



Signe dances for joy in the Paris Metro

**'MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH MARRIAGE' IS FINALLY COMING TO U.S. THEATERS** *My Love Affair With Marriage* was released on June 7th in 25 French cities, including Paris. Signe traveled to six cities to promote the film and connect with audiences. The film received great reviews from top French papers like *Le Monde* ("Un voyage fantastique!") and *L'OBS* ("C'est beaucoup, et enthousiasmant!"). The biggest surprise for Signe was to encounter posters for the film in the Paris Metro. It made her dance with joy!

**SIGNE GETS A US DISTRIBUTOR!!!** On October 6th, 2023 *My Love Affair With Marriage* will have its North American theatrical premiere in New York City at the Quad Cinema. A week later it will have its West Coast theatrical premiere in Los Angeles at a Laemmle Theatre. Addition booking are planned. The two bookings will qualify the film for the Academy Awards which means she is going to run a campaign for a nomination in the Best Animated Feature category. To qualify the film has to have a theatrical run of at least seven days, four times a day in a New York or L.A. cinema. That's 28 screenings in New York! For the daytime NY screenings they are planning free or discounted tickets for groups. The distributor is Jon Reiss of 8 Above.

Signe expects to spend in the neighborhood of \$125,000 on the campaign to get a nomination. She will travel to openings and other promotional events across North America. She says, "We have already raised over \$40,000 with the help of generous donors who believe in the power of the film." If you can contribute visit

<https://www.myloveaffairwithmarriagemovie.com/donate-1>

To make a tax-deductible gift contact her  
[MyLoveAffairWithMarriage@gmail.com](mailto:MyLoveAffairWithMarriage@gmail.com)



**BETTY BOOP SPOTTED AT COLUMBUS AND BROADWAY** The work is by Mark Bode, a comic book artist. He studied animation at SF State and his work includes art for *Heavy Metal*, *Cobalt 60*, *Miami Mice* and several years working with Kevin Eastman drawing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. He also has had a career creating murals with spray can paints in Europe and the US.

**FIRST TRAILER FOR PIXAR'S 'ELIO' HAS BEEN RELEASED** *Elio* is a kid's adventure in outer space that has a March, 2024 release date.  
<https://www.cartoonbrew.com/feature-film/elio-trailer-pixar-disney-adrian-molina-229639.html>



**A DELIGHTFUL TWO HOUR TRIBUTE TO BILL SCOTT IS ONLINE** *Bill Scott: The Portrait of a Moose* is a delightful documentary about an

important, but not too-well-known Hollywood voice actor. Bill's best-known character was Bullwinkle the Moose from the Rocky and Bullwinkle series. He was a president of ASIFA-Hollywood in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The film includes interviews with noted animation talents and lots of film clips and historic footage. - The filmmaker is Amber Jones, a British voice actress who made the tribute while still in her late teens.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=A9v8ISDSI4>



## PIXAR'S 'ELEMENTAL' IS A BOLD EXPERIMENT THAT TAKES THEIR ANIMATION IN A NEW DIRECTION

Unfortunately the advanced publicity concentrated on Pixar's special effects which are said to be the studio's most technically challenging character animation to date, but it said very little about the story. It is a love story between two dissimilar characters, one made of fire and the other water. It was intended to be a metaphor that promotes positive race relations, but apparently that point wasn't made clear enough. That resulted in the press giving it lukewarm reviews. Had the publicity said more about the film's content it might be doing better at the box office.

Mick La Salle began his review in the *SF Chronicle* by saying, "In *Elemental* we have a visually splendid and absolutely gorgeous rendering of a half-baked idea. For some of its running time it can get by on its looks. But ultimately things like story and making sense start to matter and that's where the movie starts taking on water. Still it's Pixar. There are no bad movies, just ones that are successful to greater or lesser degrees."

The review by Stephen Council in *SF Gate* wasn't much better as it recognized there was a problem with the character's relationship, but then it

bogged down in a discussion of technique. It said, "The movie is tightly focused on the duo, whose 'Romeo and Juliet'-style romance is layered atop a story about the expectations of Ember's immigrant family. It's set in Element City, also home to wind- and earth-based characters, but it's water and fire that move in practically every shot."

Bjll Desowitz began his review in *IndieWire* by saying, "After a disappointing premiere at Cannes, mixed reviews, and low box office forecasts (below \$40 million), Pixar's ambitious *Elemental*: heads into theaters with a big question mark: Will



audiences embrace this ultimate opposites-attract love story between Ember (Leah Lewis) and Wade (Mamoudou Athie)? After all, fire and water don't mix... If fire and water can overcome their differences and co-exist, then so can humanity."

In Pixar's *Elemental*, fiery Ember works in the family shop, Fireplace.

*Elemental's* four-day holiday gross was an estimated \$33.4 million in the US and overseas it earned \$17 million from its first 17 markets (\$50 million worldwide). As of June 26 its worldwide gross was \$122 million.

## SPIDERMAN CENSORED FOR HAVING A SHOCKING SUBVERSIVE IMAGE IN IT – ARE THESE CENSORS NUTS? The *Hollywood Reporter* says the feature *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* has been "blocked from release in the United Arab Emirates after failing to pass local censorship laws. The film has apparently fallen foul of the country's censors due in part to the blink-and-you-miss-it protect trans lives poster featured in the background of one frame, according to a source familiar with the situation." The film was set to debut on June 22 across the Middle East.

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**MILES MORALES HAS A PANIC ATTACK** *In the Spider Within: A Spider-Verse Story*, that premiered at Annecy, Miles (aka Spider-Man) battles with mental health issues. The teen web-slinger feels overwhelmed with school, upcoming exams and relationship drama. In the short his anxieties are visualized as a dark figure that represents his alter ego. He imagines an invasion of spiders into his bedroom, but by reaching out for help from his father Miles is able to conquer his inner demons. Jarelle Dampier who directed the short told the audience, “The day that I was offered this job to direct this film I had the largest panic attack I remember in my life. I spent the night in the hospital. I was so excited and happy at the opportunity and yet my whole body shuts down.”



**“AHAHAYY!! VIVA MEXICO, CABRONES!”** With that battle cry, Academy Award-winner Guillermo del Toro and Mexican director Jorge R. Gutierrez presided over Annecy’s tribute to Mexican Animation. The festival was expecting over 250 Mexican animators and producers to attend their nine programs honoring the work from their nation.

Jorge R. Gutiérrez directed *The Book of Life* and the Netflix series *Maya and the Three* which has won four Emmys and an Annie. He presented a Master Class and screened *The Book of Life*. Del

Toro showed his *Pinocchio* and also presented a master class.

Reflecting on the rise of Mexican animation on the international stage, Del Toro said, “Particularly in stop motion, Mexico has been working its way into the medium stronger and stronger. My partner Rigo Mora and myself started experimenting with stop motion formally in the 1980’s and that jolted the interest of the community in my home town of Guadalajara, Mexico. A very strong contingent of stop motion animators came from that and a decade or so later, a few groups started in Mexico City and Monterrey, etc. and eventually started getting recognized in festivals around the world.”

He likes to point out that Marcel Delgado, a Mexican from Coahuila, worked with Willis O’Brian on *King Kong*. “I think this medium is natural to us, and allows films to be done with relatively smaller resources,” he says.



**AFRAID OF THE DARK?** Dreamworks Animation announced at Annecy that their production of *Orion and the Dark*, an animated feature penned by Charlie Kaufman. It is being made for Netflix for a release in 2024. It is based on an offbeat story by Emma Yarlett, whose writing credits include *Being John Malkovich*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Anomalisa* and *Synecdoche, New York*. It will have an illustrated, hand-drawn look “with warmth and texture.”

**THIS SUMMERS BOX OFFICE** *Spider-Man: Across the Spider Verse* has already out-grossed the Oscar-winning 2018 original at the box office, both domestically, where the new film movie has earned \$317 million and internationally, where it has grossed \$243 million (#569 worldwide).. Other impressive international grosses this year are *Mario*

(\$1.4 billion), *Guardians* (\$822 million) and *Fast X* (\$679 million).

**WILL COMIC CON IN SAN DIEGO BE THE SAME WITHOUT MARVEL?** Marvel Studios won't be headed to San Diego Comic-Con for its customary Hall H presentation in July. The studio has long maintained it will only attend the con when it can truly deliver. This year's convention, to be held July 20-23, comes as Marvel has pressed pause on a few titles, including *Thunderbolts*, *Blade* and *Daredevil: Born Again*, due to the ongoing writers' strike.

**'INSPECTOR SUN, CURSE OF THE SPIDER WOMAN'** The feature is an Agatha Christie-style murder mystery that unfolds on a seaplane journey from Shanghai to San Francisco in the 1930s. Animated in Spain. <https://www.cartoonbrew.com/feature-film/inspector-sun-trailer-viva-kids-230011.html>



**STEVEN SPIELBERG DONATES CLASSIC ANIMATION ART COLLECTION TO THE ACADEMY'S ARCHIVES** The gift is a choice selection of 157 hand-inked-and-painted animation cels.



**ADULT SWIM BRING BACK OLD FAVORITES INCLUDING 'DEXTER'S LAB,' AND 'COURAGE THE COWARDLY DOG'** The new programming block will begin August 28 on

Cartoon Network at 6 PM, Monday through Friday. The lineup will include *Dexter's Laboratory*, *The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy*, *Courage the Cowardly Dog*, and *Ed, Edd n Eddy*.

**28 NEWLY RESTORED DISNEY ANIMATED SHORTS WILL BE RELEASED ON DISNEY+** They are rarely seen classics and groups of them will appear monthly.



**HOUSE FOR RENT, ONLY \$40,000 A MONTH, BUILT IN 1932 FOR LILIAN BY WALT**



**ADAM ELLIOT'S NEXT FEATURE WILL BE 'MEMOIR OF A SNAIL'** Adam, who won an Oscar for *Harvie Krump*, sent a note saying "I'm busy making my new feature film stop-motion due for release next year. It's called *Memoir of a Snail*. It is a bittersweet memoir of a melancholic woman called Grace Puddle, a hoarder of snails, romance novels, and guinea-pigs." Adam has a wonderful and rather unique sense of dry humor. If you are not

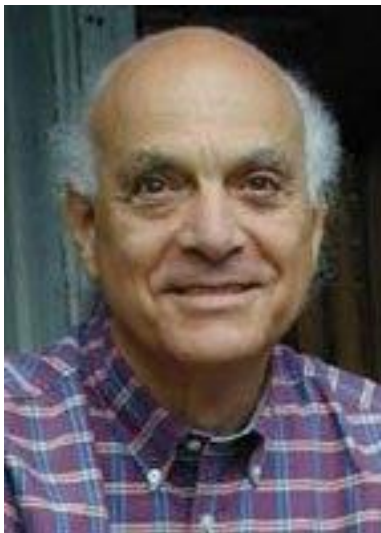
familiar with Adam's work, treat yourself to discovering his friend Harvie who won an Oscar in 2004.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3CIRsCpQfTQ>

*Memoir of a Snail* is, "The poignant tale of a young lonely misfit." It is Adam's second feature after the award-winning 2019 animation for *Mary and Max*. After Grace's family "is ripped apart and she's separated from her twin brother, she finds herself in a spiral of anxiety and depression until her life is filled with color and hope again when she strikes up an enduring friendship with an elderly eccentric woman called Pinky."

Adam said, "After such a long and intense writing process my team and I are now immersed in the magical process of breathing life into inanimate blobs of clay. Inspired by several people in my life, I hope *Memoir of a Snail* will be a potent and nourishing cinematic experience that will both tickle your funny bone and bring a tear to your eye."

"We instantly fell in love with Adam's story, the uniqueness of his craft and moreover the delicate balance of sweetness, humor and emotions he brings together to describe and enlighten human condition," said Louis Balsan of Anton EVP, International Distribution & Acquisitions.



**MEET DAVID EHRLICH, A CELEBRATED ABSTRACT ANIMATOR, INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION STATESMAN AND A WELL TRAVELED TEACHER** I've known of David for almost 50 years as his work was in the Tournee of Animation. He has made over 40 abstract animated films that have been shown around the world in festivals and by major art museum. He has also been

in several programs organized and presented in commercial theaters.

David arranged for A Da from China to visit San Francisco and to introduce ASIFA-SF members to classical Chinese animation. Half of the films he showed were made before the Cultural Revolution closed down the Shanghai Animation Studio. I still remember A Da talking about how poorly he was treated including being sent to work on a pig farm to be "reeducated." The films shown were wonderful sensitive works of fine art. I've met David several times since then including my spending time with him at conferences in Wuhan and Beijing.

David's biography suggests he thought about being a foreign service officer when he got his BA from Cornell, but then he received a MA in Drama from UC Berkeley and after that a MFA in Film from Columbia. His background served him well as he was a member of the international board of ASIFA at a time when ASIFA was playing a role in creating friendship and understanding between Soviet Bloc nations and the West. He also organized several films made by animators from around the world creating short segments that were spliced together including *Animated Self Portraits*, *Academy Leader Variations*, and *Perpetual Revival*.

As a teacher he taught for many years at Dartmouth College and the Communications U of China (CUC) plus he has taught workshops in dozens of places around the world and numerous classes for kids.

To see films by David and to learn more about him visit <https://www.ehrlichanim.com/>



**DAVID EHRLICH RECOMMENDS TWO STUDENT FILMS** These are personal films from China that have been shown at Stuttgart and other festivals.

*Elegy of Elephant*, directed by Lu Sijie, 2022, CUC School of Animation and Design A Dai elder rescued Nana, a wounded elephant calf from fierce poachers. He mended Nana's scars, nurtured

her back to health and ultimately released her back into the wilderness. Years later Nana, who had grown and was the leader of a herd, sensed the elder's passing. She guided her kin through rugged terrain, only to honor the elder with a final, heartfelt elegy. To see it type ***Elegy of Elephant*** in your search bar.

***Fish in the Bus*** by Yue Yulin, 2022, CUC School of Animation and Design The little girl was accidentally separated from her father on a bus and forced to step into an unfamiliar abstract environment. Everything around her was distorted by her escalating fear...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFnbHxEYc6k>

## **INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF ANIMATION** by David Ehrlich

From 1979 until 1992, when I began teaching at Dartmouth, I was an "Artist-in-Schools" for the Vermont Council on the Arts, teaching animation workshops in public schools throughout Vermont. This gave me the welcome opportunity to get State grants to bring my friends from Socialist countries to join me in leading an animation workshop and screening their work at schools and museums around Vermont. Then I would take them on screening tours from the Cinematheque in Montreal down through Harvard, RISD, ASIFA-East and MoMA in New York, then to schools in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Adrian Petringenaru (Romania), A Da (China), Nikolai Todorov (Bulgaria), Yuri Norstein (Soviet Union), Priit Parn (Estonia,SSR), Jerzy Kucia & Piotr Dumala (Poland), Bordo Dovnikovic (Yugoslavia) and Istvan Antal (Hungary) all introduced their nation and its culture through their animation to multi-generations of folks along the east coast. I thought of these tours as the "Mini-Tournees" that opened American eyes to what was going on in studios 'behind the Iron Curtain'.

In 1986, I was on the Jury of the Stuttgart Animation Festival that awarded a top prize to Jane Aaron's ***Traveling Light***. The ensuing discussion around independent animation in the U.S. led the festival director to ask me to organize an entire program of American Independent Animation for the next edition of their festival. I returned to the U.S., asked George Griffin to help me program the show, and we titled it ***Streams of Consciousness***. Then Ron Diamond became interested in distributing it

throughout schools and museums in the U.S. and took it on after its Stuttgart showing.

In 1987 and 1989, the Int'l collaboration animations, I produced, ***Academy Leader Variations*** and ***Animated Self-Portraits***, gave 10 American independents (George Griffin, Jane Aaron, Al Jarnow, Skip Battaglia, Paul Glabicki, Bill Plympton, Candy Kugel, Sally Cruikshank, Maureen Selwood and me) the opportunity to show our stuff in the company of some of the finest directors in Europe and Asia and to audiences throughout the world.

In 1998, Annecy asked me to program a show of American Student Animation for its 1999 festival. By then, I had been teaching for a few years at Dartmouth, and in addition to works from the top animation schools in the country, I selected 3 from my Dartmouth students: ***Patronized*** by Zack Lehman that had won the 1997 Student Animation Academy Award, ***Man Bites Breakfast*** by Phil Lord and ***Sleazy Goes to France*** by Chris Miller. Well, Zack went on to Harvard Law School and beyond, but Phil and Chris kept on with animation, and the next article is their story that Karl had earlier asked me to include.



## **STORY OF PHIL LORD AND CHRIS MILLER** by David Ehrlich

My second animation class at Dartmouth College began in spring of 1994. Among the 16 students in the class were two very unusual first-year boys, Phil Lord and Chris Miller. Early on, I could see these two liked comics and could sketch well. I sat them next to each other and had them do

a simple project together which turned out remarkably well. For the next 3 years, I continued always having them do their individual projects sitting next to each other, both in the classroom and in a special room I finally gave the two of them for their senior graduation projects. Phil's work was always very original, the crazier of the two, very, very free, maybe sometimes too free for others to grasp at first. Chris's work was funny, creative, and weird, but his work just had more clarity and brevity. As time went on, Phil helped Chris to open his thinking and in return, Chris helped Phil to keep his work within the bounds of understanding and humor. More than anything, for each of these artists just to have had a creative partner who admired and supported the other with honest feedback has been the secret for these two, both as college students and well beyond.

Their graduation films won prizes at festivals, and they went first to Disney-TV, then to MTV, where they landed their own animated sitcom, *Clone High*, wherein teenage genetic clones of historical figures attend the same high school. The boys finally created their first feature animation for SONY in 2009, *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*, whose very creative approach was most successful and made SONY a very large profit. They then were given the



project no one else wanted to take on, of making toy legos into a feature animation, *The Lego Film*. The result turned out to be a surprising commercial and artistic success, and the boys gained a reputation of turning lead into gold, moving on to *The Lego Film, No.2*. After their live-action success with *22 Jump Street*, Phil and Chris were given the chance to direct *Solo, A Star Wars Story*. However, they were fired when the studio decided the boys were becoming too creative with the characters, something that might

endanger the secure fanbase for the Star Wars franchise. No problem, though, for these two guys. Phil and Chris went right on to co-direct and produce *Spiderman in the Spider-Verse* for SONY in 2018 for which that same great creativity earned them Oscars, and then *Mitchells vs. the Machines* that landed them an Oscar nomination. And so it continues, Phil and Chris have been working together creatively for nearly 30 years now. And their new *Spiderman Across the Spider-Verse 2* opened the beginning of June and is an amazing model of creative thinking in multiple dimensions that has been breaking records at the Box Office!! It's even No.1 in China where it's helping my animation students to break out of their traditional molds and push into more personal creative work.

### SOME 'ACROSS THE SPIDER-VERSE' ARTISTS ARE SPEAKING OUT ABOUT UNSUSTAINABLE WORK CONDITIONS

As I finished writing about Miler and Lord, *Cartoon Brew* posted a news item that four artist who worked on *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse* reporting that labor conditions on that feature were bad enough that about 100 workers quit their jobs before the work was completed. They claimed "working conditions required to produce such artistry are not sustainable." The major issue seems to be that Lord's management style resulted in artists at times being asked to make revisions



of fully rendered work. Some of the instances resulted from last minute script changes. Lord apparently has become a perfectionist and he was asking for changes late in the production instead of catching most of them at an earlier stage. That resulted in a film originally set for release in 2022 being released about a year later. The last minute changes resulted in 70 hour work weeks. Sony has told the press that about 1,000 people worked on the production so about 10% were dissatisfied.

<https://www.vulture.com/2023/06/spider-verse-animation-four-artists-onmaking-the-sequel.html>



**‘BOB’S BURGERS’ VOICE ACTOR JAY JOHNSTON CHARGED BY DOJ FOR STORMING U.S. CAPITOL ON JAN. 6**

Johnston, who also appeared on *Mr. Show* and *The Sarah Silverman Program*, was arrested in Los Angeles in June. He was a stalwart of Hollywood’s alternative comedy scene best known for his work on HBO’s *Mr. Show* and for voicing Jimmy Pesto, a pizzeria owner on Fox’s *Bob Burgers*. He was arrested by the FBI for his alleged participation in the Jan. 6 riots at the U.S. Capitol. His charges include civil disorder, entering or remaining in a restricted building or grounds, disorderly or disruptive conduct in a restricted building or grounds, and impeding passage through the Capitol grounds or buildings.



**VINCE COLLIN’S NEW ‘RETINA PSYKOSIS’ IS A MIND BENDER “It is beyond far out”**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D99wOJqHhFk>

**THREE FILMS IN THE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL INCLUDE ANIMATION.** The films are *The Conspiracy*, *Burning Off the Page* and *The Prince of Egypt*. *The Conspiracy* takes on the current alt-right and mass media proliferation of anti-Semitism by debunking old myths, misinformation and other controversial material. “Uniquely brought to life with hand drawn 3D animation and punctuated with archival footage,”

*Burning Off the Page* is a documentary about Russian-born American Yiddish poet and fiction writer Celia Dropkin (1887–1956) whose unabashed writing about the female body and sexual liberation was considered radical during her lifetime. She shocked readers with sexually explicit depictions of lust boundaries. Her poems invoked violent and erotic imagery as well as Christian iconography to describe passion, yearning, and death. In this film, powerful dramatic readings, archival footage, historic recordings, and dazzling animations bring her pioneering poems to life.”



**KABOOM ANIMATION FESTIVAL**  
**24 March – 2 April 2023 Utrecht and Amsterdam, The Netherlands**  
**A TALE OF TWO CITIES**  
**By Nancy Denney-Phelps**

Kaboom Animation Festival has a split personality. The first four days of the festival are held in Utrecht and are primarily devoted to professional work for The Netherlands film industry. Then the festival moves 48 kilometers up the road to Amsterdam to the beautiful Eye, home of the Museum for Film and Moving Image,



for another four days of festival fun. This means that the festival had two opening nights.



**The Eye**

Kaboom kicked off in Utrecht with a unique audiovisual tour of the city. The Hamburg based collective A Wall is a Screen has been transforming walls and other structures around the world into screens as part of its short film and animations walks.

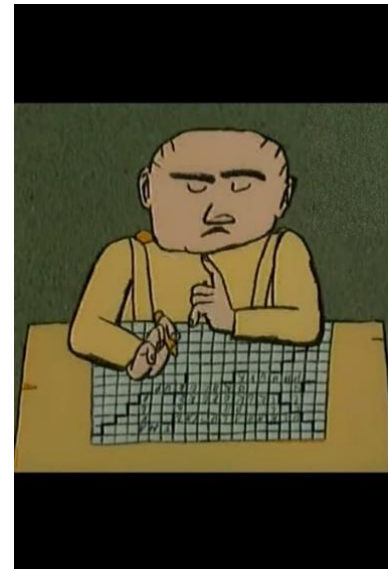
Only the starting point was known by the audience. The films and locations were a surprise. The audience followed the projection team from location to location, a splendid way to open a festival.

For the Amsterdam opening at The Eye we were treated to Portuguese animator Jose Miguel Ribeiro's first feature film, *Nayola*. The film is a moving, thought-provoking depiction of three generations of Angolan women marked by the long civil war the country suffered at the end of the last century. The film has won numerous awards including Best Feature Film at the prestigious Quirino Awards, an annual event honors the best Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin American animation.

The theme of this year's Kaboom was Beyond Perfection. First films by animators who go on to become masters of their craft are not shown very often. Although they may not be the works of genius that their later films achieve, it is interesting to see how their careers began.

The Start Me Up: Debuts of Masters screening took the audience back to the beginning for acclaimed animators Paul Driessen, Michael Dudok de Wit, Emma Swaef, Gil Alkabetz, Julia Pott, Evert de Beijer, Alison Snowden, Monique Renault, Georges Schwizgebel, Koji Yamamura, Michaela Pavlatova, Sabrina Nihei, Regina Pessoa, and Signe Baumann. Quite an impressive roster of animators!

Before Emma Swaef and partner Marc James Roels created the multi-award winning *Oh Willy*, Emma introduced us to Willy in her 2008 film *Soft Plants*. In the film, chubby office worker Willy rides through the forest, naked, on the back of a sheep. His body is still in the office, but his mind wonders between dangerous flowers and an imaginary friendship with a soft sheep. I had never seen this film before and it was interesting to see the "birth" of Willy.



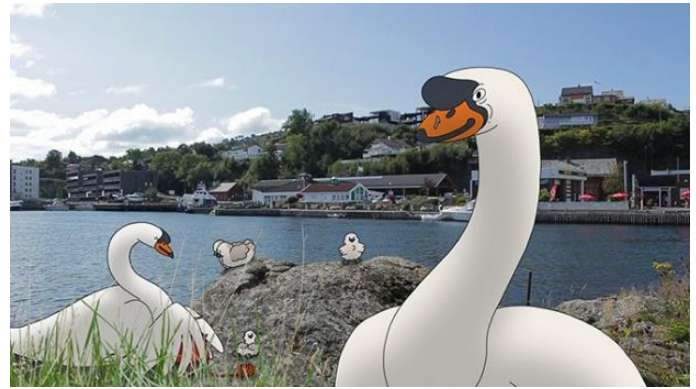
I am always entertained by Czech Republic animator Michaela Pavlatova's feminist approach to relationships and sex. Before her Academy Award nomination in 1992 for *Reci, Reci, Reci*, she made *The Crossword Puzzle* in 1989. The film is a domestic farce which unfolds as a woman tries to assert her sexual needs. She is driven to despair by her husband who is completely absorbed in his crossword puzzle and not paying any attention to her. Every film in the Debut of Masters' program was a little gem. They all deserve to be seen more often.



Another program in the Beyond Perfection screenings, Everything Everywhere Perfect All At Once, featured two films that I am very fond of, *Rabbitland* and *Learning To Walk*. In their 2013 film *Rabbitland*, Ana Nedeljkovic and Nikola Majdak, Jr. from Serbia created a "perfect world" where rabbits live. They are shocking pink in color, have holes in their heads, and are happy regardless of what happens to them. They have reached the highest state of evolution that has ever been achieved. Their life is completely fulfilled and they are always happy. The rabbits spend their days lining up to vote in free and democratic elections, which take place once a day,

every day, because *Rabbitland* is an ordered democracy. In the end we discover that the elections are organized by the “Evil Girls”, just for their own amusement.

*Rabbitland* is dripping with dark humor and irony. It is also a bit too close to the truth of what is happening in many parts of the world today. The film won numerous awards including the Crystal Bear at the Berinale. Ana and Nikola are now working on their first feature film. The rabbits will return in *New Rabbitland*.



**The Harbormaster**

The two programs of short documentary films in competition included some of my favorite films. Two recent graduates of Volda University in Norway, Mia L. Henriksen and Konrad Hjemli, created *The Harbormaster*. The film starts out as a sweet story about a beloved small male swan who is an icon around the town’s harbor. Over the course of the seven-minute film, he becomes a wanted criminal. Going from loving mate and father to a menace to the community, he begins to attack people on land and in the water. The Harbormaster as he is called becomes the scourge of Animal Control.

Based on a true story, *The Harbormaster* met a sad end when local authorities decided to put him down after he attacked a group of daycare children and dragged a little girl into the water. The story of his planned euthanasia stirred up Norway’s most polarizing debate in 2017. Using a mixture of live action footage and animation, the film raises many questions about how wild animal living in cities should be treated.

Also in the Short Docs program was *Blush – An Extraordinary Voyage* by Iiti Yli-Harja who specializes in documentary puppet animation. For 18-year-old Finnish/Kosovan Fatua, a simple visit to the grocery store feels as nerve racking as a lunar expedition. For the first time in his life, he is wearing make-up out in public. Luckily his best friend Rai, a



**Learning to Walk**

In 1978 the legendary Croatian animator Borivoj Dovnikovic, better known as Bordo, created *Learning to Walk*. Using simple drawings, often on plain backgrounds, his films frequently portrayed the plight of the “little man”. In *Learning to Walk*, Svojslav is used to walking the way he was taught to walk by his mother. His four friends, each convinced that theirs is the only way to walk, try to teach him their style of walking. Svojslav has a difficult time getting away from his friends, but once he does he continues to happily walk the way his mother taught him. Bordo sadly passed away in 2022, but he has left us with a collection of wonderful films and his work lives on. Kaboom Animation Festival doesn’t have a separate student film category. Working on the principal that a good film is a good film, student films are part of the regular competition. In the twenty-five films that made up the two Dutch shorts competition programs, twelve of them were made by students. The future of Dutch animation looks bright.



young woman who is slightly autistic, is there to ferociously support him from blast off, landing, and the return voyage.

Iiti's puppets are roughly made and fit the characters in *Blush -An Extraodnary Voyage* perfectly. Her portraits of Fatua and Rai are an excellent reflection of the traumas and dilemmas that so many young people are facing today.

If you needed a good laugh after facing too much real life in Short Docs, Bonkers Shorts was the place for you. From a giant feline in Andre Almeida's *Carisfaction* to Thomas Stellmach's hilarious *The Sausage Run*, the late night adult program was a great opportunity to sit back, laugh, and watch films that you didn't have to think about too much or search for a deeper meaning in them.

One of the most entertaining events at Kaboom was a live performance by the band Money For Your Whale who improvised live music while animator, illustrator Sjaak Rood drew what he heard. Nothing was rehearsed or planned in advance. At this entertaining performance, Rood and the musicians let us "hear" what drawing sounds like. Not only did we see the images that Rood was drawing reflected on the big movie screen, but the sounds that the artist made also influenced the performance.

Singer and voice artist Han Buhrs performed his own lyrics in existing and invented languages. By adding rubbers, clothes pins, magnets, and some unidentifiable objects to his piano strings, Albert van Veenendaal created some unique, other worldly sounds with a wide variety of timbers.

Last, but far from least, Robert van Heumen captured all of the sounds live, which he then manipulated and added back into the performance. It was an extremely unique event that both Nik and I thoroughly enjoyed.

Kaboom is the perfect mixture of silly fun and serious film watching. You could go from a program of Poetry in Motion to getting a permanent tattoo, all in the space of a couple hours without ever leaving the Eye. Poetry in Motion took viewers way off the beaten track with such films as *King's Garden* by noted Iranian director Iraj Mohammafi Razini. The film is a tragic fairy tale about a lover who goes to the King's garden to pick red roses to win the heart of a young lady. The film was created by moving pine tree needles on a back lit piece of glass which gives a strange silhouette effect.



The tattoo artistry was provided by the talented animator/tattoo artist Veronica Martiradonna. Along with her skin artistry, Veronica is known for her graduation film *Underwater Love* which screened at Annecy and many other festivals.

Kaboom festival is very near and dear to my heart. I have been a part of the festival since 2008. During those early years it was known as KLIK and held at the student run Kriterion Theatre. In those days everyone would have gotten a big laugh at the thought of the festival ever being held at the prestigious Eye Film Museum.

Three years ago the festival gave me the great honor of bestowing The Nancy Award upon any film in competition of my choice. Along with a trophy the winner gets to go wine tasting with me at the next edition of the festival. Last year I presented my award to Jantiene de Kroon and Remco Polman for their dystopian thriller *Camouflage*. The film follows office clerk Amouf as he desperately tries to hold his life together while the world around him gets darker and darker as a brutal regime systematically prosecutes certain groups of people. Sounds familiar doesn't it! This year at the festival Nik and I had a lovely time and good conversation with Jantiene and Remco over several glasses of very nice wines.

My 2023 award went to David Doutel and Vasco Sa for their haunting 14-minute film *Garrano*. David and Vasco have made four films together and each one grows stronger, more intense, and delves deeper into loss and sorrow. Their films are inspired by events in their native Portugal but are universal in the tragedies that they portray.

*Garrano* was inspired by the forest fires that raged through Portugal in 2018. Garrano is the name of an ancient breed of horse from Northern Portugal. I have seen the film several times and it never fails to move me.

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*Special thanks* and congratulations to Nancy Denney-Phelps who was given the Giannalberto Bendazzi Award in Paris. She 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** As we get back in action we are only asking \$15 a year, or \$30 if you wish to support the international as well. And get access to their magazine/newsletter.

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