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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lc4xoRzZU_Q



MICHAEL JANTZ IS CELEBRATING THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HIS COMIC STRIP 'THE NORM' He posts his "daily sanity" at

<http://gocomics.com/studio-jantze> You can see what his first strip was like at <http://gocomics.com/thenorm> He has cool stuff for sale at <http://jantze.com>



BRAD UYEDA IS DEVELOPING AN ANIMATED FEATURE ABOUT HIS GRANDFATHER WHO WAS IN A WWII INTERMENT CAMP He writes his "next project underway is a personal one for me about my grandfather from whom I get my artistic talent from. He was one of the Japanese Americans that were relocated into internment camps in 1943 following the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
I will be hiring artists in the winter of this year for pre-production work." If anyone has questions and or would like to submit their portfolio they can send it to savmo.studio@gmail.com

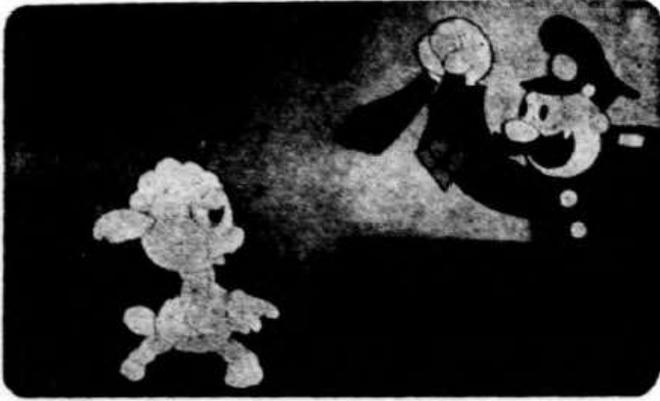
"They did more than defend America. They helped define America at its best...Rarely has a nation been so well served by people it has so ill-treated."
-BILL CLINTON



MARK FIORE HAS NEW COVID 19 AND OUR WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGANISTAN CARTOONS

ONLINE THAT ARE EXCELLENT You might enjoy seeing his latest critical comments about anti-vaxxers and work about our withdrawal from our 20 year war on his website. Lots of animated work to contemplate. www.markfiore.com

THE FIRST COMMERCIAL MADE FOR TV BY KARL COHEN



The captain holds a Botany tie in his hand

In the early 1990s I was interested in finding out what was the first animated ad made for TV. It took several years to track down the answer. Several pioneers of TV thought they made it shortly after WWII ended, but I finally found what I believe was the correct answer in an obscure magazine from 1947 called *Television Magazine*. Copies are in the NY Public Library. (*Animation Magazine* ran my article on the first ads ca. 1992).

It turns out that Otto Messmer, who created Felix the Cat, animated it in 1941 for Douglas Leigh. It was the world's first animated commercial made especially for TV. The Botany Tie ads aired just 2 months after NBC in NYC was permitted to change their status from an experimental to commercial station. The cartoons advertised Botany Mills "wrinkle-proof" wool ties and the company's mascot was Lambie, a white lamb that wore a tie and could stand and walk on his back legs. The ads also included tomorrow's weather at their end, giving people a reason not to turn off the ad.

The most elaborate script for an ad that Douglas Leigh could recall when I met him in 1991 was a man proposing to a woman in the park and being rejected. He then meets the lamb in the park, takes off his old tie and tries on a Botany. He then goes back and the girl says yes.

Another ad started with the lamb stranded on an island (pictured above). He thinks a boat's captain is coming to the rescue, but he just wanted his ties. In another ad a robber is trying to steal a suitcase. When the lamb sees him the thief says he doesn't want your money, just your ties. Leigh recalled a silly ad showing a giraffe wearing not one but seven ties. Leigh also

recalled one ad began with Lambie, the mascot, jumping through the letter "O" in the word Botany.'

All the ads ended with the lamb looking through a telescope to see tomorrow's weather. A question mark would appear over the telescope's lens followed by the answer. The weather forecasts were on cards with simple artwork on them. If it was going to be sunny there was a round sun with rays emanating from it. Another card had an animated lightning bolt on it.

Leigh also recalled that a young woman did the voice of both the lamb and Mary and that there were 14 different ads made the first year. According to an article in *The New York Times* the first ad was scheduled to appear daily starting Sept. 1, 1941. They continued to run on NBC's station in New York City until January, 1949.

I talked to Norman Kersta who was the sales manager for NBC-TV when Botany was planning to advertise on TV. He told me that while walking through Times Square he noticed that almost all the signs were owned by the Douglas Leigh Sign Company including the EPOK sign that featured silhouette animation created with light bulbs. He told me, "I thought my god, if a guy has that sort of imagination what can he do for TV?"

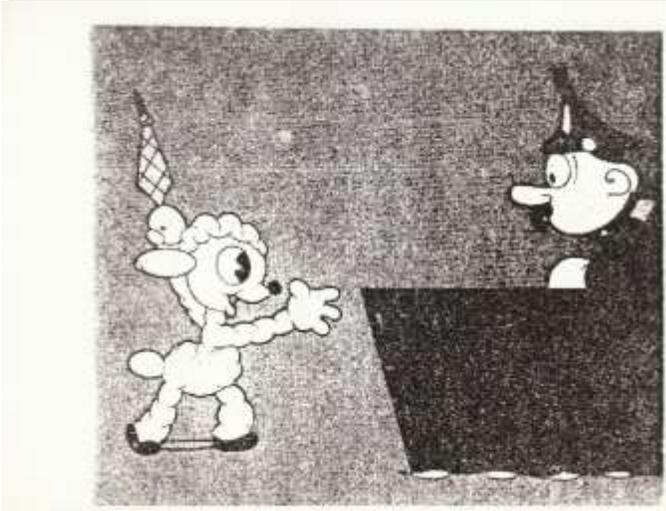
TV went commercial July 1, 1941 and the first ad was *Boluva Time Check*, for Bulova Watches. NBC's station WNBT was run as an experimental TV station from 1928 to June 30, 1941 in NY. The next day they became the nation's first commercial station. <https://www.businessinsider.com/watch-the-first-commercial-in-tv-history-bulova-watch-2016-7>

Commercial TV got off to a slow start. *Variety* found much of the programming dull and no better than what was available when NBC was as an experimental station. In September of 1941 there were only five regular sponsors, Botany Mills, Adam Hats, Bulova, and two department stores. *The New York Times* estimated that by the end of the first month of commercial TV there were 4,500 TV sets in homes, 600 in bars and other places. CBS in NY became the nation's second commercial station on September 1. (The first TV sets available for purchase were demonstrated at the NY World's Fair in 1939.)

Running the network wouldn't become profitable until several years after the war. During the war the stations were only on the air for a few hours each week. Only a few TV sets were sold as materials to build them including aluminum were rationed. In July 1948 there were 350,000 sets in the US but by the end of the year there were around two million sets sold. NBC's antenna was on top of the Empire State Building.

Television Magazine wrote in Jan.1947 that "Botany, the oldest sponsor of weather forecasts, is probably the most consistent sponsor in television." They noted that "the economy of filmed commercials is demonstrated by the length of time these commercials

have survived.” They reported that Reid’s Ice Cream was now running animated 60 second ad/weather spots on CBS. “In advertising imitation is often a sign of success.”



BOTANY ADS WERE A TV FIRST, BUT NOT THE FIRST CARTOON ADS Several animated advertising films were shown at the NY World’s Fair in 1939 including *A Coach for Cinderella*. It was also shown on NBC’s experimental TV station set up at the fair.

Short ads on film date back to the beginnings of the medium, long before Walt Disney’s first film that promoted Newman’s Department store in Kansas City. Otto’s work for Botany grew out of this long largely forgotten tradition. As mentioned in my article about the Botany ads, they ended with tomorrow’s weather followed by one of several answers as to what to expect.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMDh5Ln5J_0

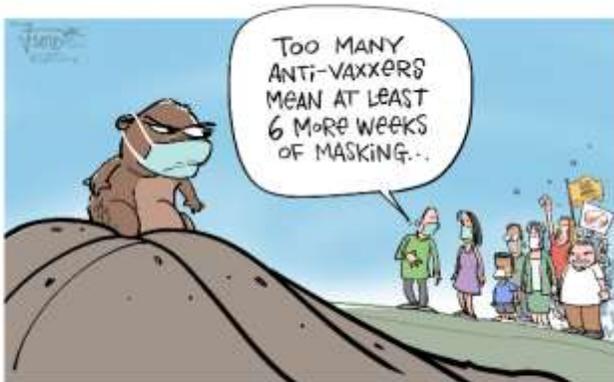
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BRAD UYEDA IS FINISHING HIS STOP-MOTION HOROR FILM He spent the long year of Covid keeping busy doing non-stop freelance work, but he also found time to finish up doing the animation of his powerful, evil looking creature, The puppet was created with Midnight Studio FX in Scottsdale, Arizona. He says he is very pleased with the results as well as the quality of the animation. “It really comes alive on the screen.”

Brad is a graduate of SF State’s animation program and he has gone on to work as an animator on a series of projects for other directors and on personal projects.

PHIL TIPPETT PREMIERED ‘MAD GOD’ AT THE LOCARNO FILM FESTIVAL His experimental feature set in the “ghost world of mankind,” took 30 years to make. In his experimental film individuals descend in a corroded diving bell into a ruined city where they emerge to explore a labyrinth of bizarre landscapes inhabited by freakish monsters, mad scientists, and war pigs. Phil made it in segments over a thirty year period and funded parts of it with Kickstarter campaigns. He premiered the final cut at Locarno, Switzerland in August with two other films he did special effects for, *RoboCop* and *Starship Troopers*. The festival also gave him a lifetime achievement award.

Phil says much of it is based on his subconscious. He kept notes of his dreams and found many had beginnings, middles and resolutions. In *Variety* he said that “not everything gets resolved.” He adds that the visuals somehow make sense to him, but they might not make sense to everybody.

He admitted he can’t clearly define the film’s premise, but he is pleased that at a work in progress screening years ago a few people walked out of it and they told him it gave them anxiety attacks. “I wanted to make something that grabs people’s attention and takes you some place where you had never been before, and you have no idea where it’s going. That’s very clear to some people. Others who are in it for a more conventional theatrical experience are going to be disappointed. I’ve moved through these different environments before, and I’m thinking what’s next.”

A review in *Film Stage* calls it taking place in a dystopian wasteland, where individuals descend below the surface of the earth to explore a hellish environment full of god forsaken things including demons, a Minotaur, and other disgusting creatures. “The world is at various times an industrial nightmare, a psychedelic C.S. Lewis mushroom garden, a scene from a torture movie, and a pseudo-WW1 battlefield. If there is an arc, it involves those unfortunate explorers being harvested by psychotic surgeons who relieve them of a strange cargo that is then offered as a sacrifice to a nightmarish alchemist who might be the devil—or something else.” The reviewer concludes, “It is a unique achievement; a mad opus from one of American cinema’s liveliest minds.”

High on Film calls it “A bizarre, surrealist cinematic experience (that...) squarely falls in the league of the rare posse of films that redefine and stretch the bounds of filmmaking. It would not be amiss to put it in the same breath as *2001 Odyssey*, or even *Koyaanisqatsi*.”

He thinks his next project will be something “I could complete in a couple years. It’s designed to be a lot more audience friendly with characters and plot. In vibe, it’s like a 1940s Warner Bros. color cartoon. It has that savage insanity to how the energy flows. I spent a good chunk of COVID time writing a narrative, I’ve designed all the characters, drawn all the storyboards, so it’s just sitting there in case I get any traction.”

<https://www.zippyframes.com/index.php/feature-animation/mad-god-phil-tippett-review>

ALVY RAY SMITH TALKS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF COMPUTER GRAPHICS

This is an hour talk on the subject of his new book on the history of the pixel. The last 10 or 15 minutes of it focuses on his pioneering work for George Lucas and the little company he helped found. When they needed major funding they brought on Steve Jobs who arranged for them to get it. It ends with the release of their first feature,

Toy

Story

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dvHDXUV7hmQ>

KABOOM! David Hurwich, a design and animation instructor from the Bay Area has started Kaboom! An online internet channel dedicated to animation. Think of Kaboom! like the Cartoon Network, but delivered via the internet in a browser as opposed to cable wire or through satellite dishes.

David’s goal is create an alternative to Cartoon Network showcasing classic animation as well as work from independent animators. He wants to showcase all forms of animation including long and short form works, and not just those that fit into a 30-minute time slot.

SHOW YOUR WORK ON KABOOM!

At the moment the channel is showing mostly classic public domain cartoons, but David wants to reach out and get involvement from independent and student animators to include their work as well. He wants this channel to be a reflection of all types of animation, not just the type found in main stream television. If you are interested in showcasing your work please contact David Hurwich at kaboom.tv.415@gmail.com



ANIMAKOM

28 June - 04 July 2021, Bilbao, Spain

By Nancy Denney-Phelps

Each year AnimaKom in Bilbao is the place to see the best Basque animation. Along with the professional and student animation competitions there are always special screenings of the region’s work. To reflect this, Basque animator and AnimaKom jury member Sonia Estévez presented a program of Basque Country and Spanish films by women in the country’s animation industry.

Basque Country artist Rafael Ruiz Balerdi’s work is little known outside of Spain. He is an abstract painter who made a four-minute animated film, *Homage to Tarzan, Chapter One* in 1969. For the project Balerdi selected parts of a Tarzan film and traced them by hand, frame by frame, directly onto celluloid. The film ended with the words “to be continued”. It never was continued by Balerdi, but Hauzkena Taldea’s *Ehiza (Hunting)* takes up where Balerdi left off.

The five-minute film accepts the original aesthetic proposal, but steps away from *Homage to Tarzan’s* colonial perspective to show the harshness of our own present-day reality where harassment, violence, and destruction have become part of everyday life. The film left me with a very unsettled feeling, which is what it is designed to do. *Ehiza (Hunting)* won the Laboral Kutxa Award for best Basque Film.



From the humorous *Cinderella Swing* by Myriam Ballesteros to *Ehiza (Hunting)* from Hauzkena Taldea, Basque animation offers up something for every taste. *Cinderella Swing* is based on characters from

Myriam's mystery/comedy television series for young people, *Masked Cinderella*. The three-minute film takes place at the Brothers Grimm high school where all of the teenage characters from the Kingdom of Once Upon a Time study. It is the night of the big prom but right in the middle of the dance Prince Charming is kidnapped by a giant. Of course, Cinderella goes to the rescue.

AnimaKom jury member Ines Intxausti is also the General Secretary of Zinebi, the Bilbao International Film Festival. Held in the city since 1959, it features documentaries, animation, and other short film formats. Ines presented a program of animated film from the Zinebi Festival. All of the films in the program were made by women.

One of my favorite films this year, *Elo (Tie)* was in the Zinebi program. Portuguese animator Alexandra Ramires created a haunting film about a man and a woman with two different physical impairments who find each other and discover that one's shortcomings is the other one's strength. The film is about adaptation and existing and adapting to your surroundings without any other external help.

Alexandra created the film on white paper with a pencil and graphite powder. The drawings were scanned and inverted to create a negative of the original, giving the film its engraved look. *Elo*, produced at the prestigious Portuguese studio BAP in Porto, has won numerous awards including a Special Jury Mention at AnimaKom.

Founded in 2009 and located in four French cities, Paris, Valence, Angoulême, and Arles, MIYU has become a powerhouse in film production and distribution. Their roster of well-known animators include Paul Driessen, Simone Massi, Boris Labbé, Florence Miailhe, Georges Schwizgebel, and Koji Yamamura.



Blue Fear

Luce Grosjean, producer and distributor at MIYU, introduced a program of short films directed by women and distributed by MIYU Productions. The program included Marie Jacotey and Lola Halifa-Légrand's hand drawn *Blue Fear*.

Nils is taking his girlfriend Flora to meet his parents when their car gets ambushed by a group of women on horseback. Flora is taken prisoner and transported to the women's camp. During the next few

hours, the plot takes several strange twists as Flora learns some unpleasant truths about Nils. Catalogues list the film as a comedy/drama and the bloodbath is definitely black humor. The International Jury awarded *Blue Fear* the International Grand Prix.



Another really quirky film that I still enjoy watching even after multiple viewings is the Belgian/Czech Republic film *Carousel*, which MIYU also distributes. Jasmine Elsen's visually strange but intriguing film is about a girl who lives in a park with her pet snails. The only threat to their peaceful existence is from snail-eating blackbirds. When two lovers arrive, the girl feels threatened. She withdraws into herself and becomes aggressive as she tries to protect herself and her way of life. It is a film about how fear can dehumanize a person.

We are all aware of the terrible events happening in Belarus. Minsk born animator Yulia Rudistaya brought together fifty animators from nineteen countries to create *Animators for Belarus/Long Live Belarus*. The animators portrayed their impressions and feelings about this disastrous chapter in Belarus history. A white flag with a broad band of red running vertical across it is a historical symbol of peace, protest, and hope for the people of Belarus. Those colors also figure prominently throughout the seven-minute film.



Each year the festival bestows The AnimaKom Award, and along with Festival Director Pedro Rivera, I had the honor of bestowing the award on Olga Parn and Priit Parn. Since becoming a couple, they have created six films together. *I Feel A Lifelong Bullet In The Back Of My Head* (2007) was created for the Estonian Poetry Project. *Life Without Gabriella Ferri* (2008) and *Divers In The Rain* (2010) followed. *Divers In The Rain* (2010) is the most successful Estonian animated film of all time, winning numerous international awards

including the prestigious Animafilm Zagreb Grand Prix in 2011. *Pilots On the Way Home* (2014) was made in conjunction with the National Film Board of Canada. *The Eyeless Hunter, A Khanty Story* (2016) is based on a Khanty legend. The Khanty are an indigenous people living primarily in



Daniel Suljic, Javier Ramos Escapa, Priit Parn, Nancy, Olga Parn, and Pedro Rivero

Siberia. Their latest project was to create the *Summer* segment for the *Four Seasons* project (2017).

The first five films that they made together were screened at a special program. *Summer – Vivaldi's The Four Seasons Animation* was shown right after the presentation of their awards at the closing ceremony.

Koji Yamamura was the *Four Seasons* project supervisor. The other three seasons were animated by Russian animator Anna Budanova, who created *Spring*, Atsushi Wada from Japan created *Fall*, and Bulgarian/Canadian Theodore Ushev animated *Winter*. The project was spearheaded by faculty members at Tokyo University of the Arts where Yamamura teaches. The complete *Vivaldi's The Four Seasons Animation* premiered on 19 November 2017 in a live performance in Japan and since then has been shown at animation festivals throughout the world.

While I was at AnimaKon I recorded interviews with Basque animator Sonia Estévez, screen writer Ana Hormaetxea, and festival director Pedro Rivera. Sonia talked about the inherent difficulties in becoming a female animator in the Basque Country. She did point out that while she can do what and do it anywhere, most Basque Country animators do not receive the recognition that they deserve.

Ana spoke about a script she is working on that is about a part of history that most people are not aware of. During the Spanish Civil War, Basque Country children were shipped to England. It was a private initiative and the British government did nothing to help the children integrate into life in the United Kingdom. After the war, some of the children, especially those who had lost all of the members of their families, decided to stay in England, while others opted to return to Spain. Both groups of children had a very difficult time and

never felt as though they fit in anywhere. Ana is currently looking for a producer for this fascinating project.

As well as being AnimaKom festival director, Pedro is an award scriptwriter and director. He is best known for his script work on the multi award winning live action film *The Platform* (2019) as well as co-directing



the animated hit films *Birdboy* (2011) and *Birdboy: The Forgotten Child* (2015).

Pedro is a consummate host; his hospitality and generosity know no bounds. One day he took the entire group of guests to Frentealagua, a lovely restaurant run by his friend Ana De Arriba. Along with the delicious food, the restaurant is located overlooking the River Nervion which runs through the center of Bilbao. The sumptuous meal was followed by a special guided tour of the Getty Museum.

Another day we took a boat trip down the Nervion River to the town of Getxo near the mouth of the river. On the boat we passed under the unique Vizcaya Bridge. It was designed by the Basque architect Alberto de Palacio and was completed in 1893. The 45-meter-high bridge spans 160 meters, merging 19th century iron working traditions with the then new lightweight technology of twisted steel ropes. It was the first bridge in the world to carry people and traffic on a high suspension gondola. The Vizcaya Bridge was the model for many similar bridges throughout the world, however today very few of the others are still in operation. The bridge was considered one of the outstanding architectural iron constructions of the Industrial Revolution and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Bilbao is a wonderful town for dining. Being a late-night city there are plenty of bars for late night drinks and tapas. Each evening Pedro took us to various watering holes in the heart of the old town.

I can't thank Pedro enough for inviting Nik and I to be part of AnimaKom again this year. I also want to thank Isa Molinos who took good care of all of us and made sure that we didn't get lost. A big thank you also goes to the entire crew of AnimaKom. They all worked hard to make sure that everything went off without a hitch, preparing the Bilborock Theatre by blocking off

every other seat and making sure when we all wore masks and used the hand sanitizer before entering the screening room. The Bilborock Theatre is a former church that is now a music and theatre venue, as well as being home to the festival.

I'm looking forward to AnimaKom 2022 which will be held at the end of June/beginning of July. You can learn more about AnimaKom 2021 and how to submit your film to the next festival at: www.animakom.com



AN UNEXPECTED TREAT by KC Several months ago I was contacted by a scholar seeking information about Bill Scott, a man I wrote about in my book *Forbidden Animation*. He had worked at Disney and then at UPA until he was blacklisted (ca. 1953). He then worked on conservative political animation before becoming Jay Ward's partner on *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. At Ward's studio he was talked into doing the voice of Bullwinkle. That led to his becoming a major voice actor in LA and president of ASIFA-Hollywood.

It turned out the scholar, who calls herself Amber the Fangirl, was researching and producing a project with the working title of *Bill Scott: The Portrait of a Moose*. I provided the needed information, but nothing led me to believe the film would be something special. When the preview was postponed I assumed the project might be running into problems.

When the rough cut was finally screened in early August I was amazed at what I saw. Amber presented two hours of footage that she will post on YouTube. The film was well researched and it included lots of historic footage, interviews with key figures and excellent film clips of Scott's work.

The biggest surprise for me is that Amber Jones is a stylish looking 17 year old who lives in England. She has a great enthusiastic speaking voice and does an excellent job narrating the film. I'm amazed that somebody that young has the talent and wisdom to produce a serious intelligent documentary. It turns out she entered college when she was 16 and is in a performing arts/acting program.

I was also impressed by who was present at the zoom screening. There were 23 of us and I assumed most had helped her as mentors or advisors in some way. There was Bob Kurtz who had been a governor of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science and who heads an important LA animation house named Kurtz and Friends. He also had created storyboards for Jay Ward's *George of the Jungle*.

There were several voice actors including Keith Scott, the Australian who does the voice of Bullwinkle and dozens of other characters. Keith is also the author of *The Moose That Roared*, an exceptional book on the history of Bill Scott and Jay Ward's work.

Also present were Jay Ward's retired film editor (the last surviving member of Ward's studio), several noted animation historians, Bill Scott's children, a daughter of Jay Ward, and one or two other people connected with the project.

It was a wonderful gathering and I was amazed by just how much Amber has already accomplished. She took on a complex subject and is creating a well-researched and directed, intelligent documentary about a man who deserves to be remembered and honored.



Amber's first voiceover job was for a coin operated ride for kids.

Amber told me "I really wanted to do this film because the other Jay Ward folks like June Foray, Paul Frees and Daws Butler have autobiographies, books, documentaries etc. about them, but Bill has NOTHING! I wanted to do him justice and give him the legacy showcase he deserves."

"I've had the blessing and approval of Bill's children so that inspired me to go at full speed and pour my heart and soul into this 2-hour long showcase. I essentially call it my baby as I've been keeping it in for over 9 months 😊. As an autistic person it really inspired me to keep going with all the support I've had."

"I've been working on the documentary since April 2020. One thing that got me going was meeting voice artist Frank Welker in Liverpool just before the pandemic. I showed him a photo of him with Bill Scott taken by Robert Stone II at an ASIFA reading in 1984 😊."

Amber has also created an online series of interviews with voice actors. See Amber's recent

interview with Daniel Ross, who voiced Donald Duck in *Mickey's Mixed Up Adventures*. His credits also include the Leprechaun from Lucky Charms Cereal. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDVTuEZ2e6Y>

PES HAS CREATED A COMPUTER GENERATED MONSTER His computer generated film *Mosquito Week* is unlike his previous work, so enjoy the surprise. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWc7T7ajcyQ>



WHAT WILL THE NEXT OSCAR RACE LOOK LIKE? The early favorites are Netflix/Sony's *The Mitchells vs. The Machines*, described as a "hilarious family road trip through the robot apocalypse," and Pixar's *Luca*, "a gentle coming of age story about two sea monsters becoming human on the Italian Riviera." Both are said to be quirky, personal stories and exceptionally animated with a retro appeal.

Almost nobody got to see *Luca* in theatres. It only opened in one theatre in LA to qualify it for the Oscar and Annie awards. It is now on Disney+.



Luca from Pixar

Disney is releasing *Encanto*, a colorful musical set in Mexico, in late November. It might get nominated. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oTjDvLgFZcU>

The rest of the choices include:

Vivo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPHJnsW18Lw>

Sing 2

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_BfvWUNLhM

Paw Patrol: The Movie

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LRMTr2VZcr8e>

Hotel Transylvania

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOlhzKPX0KU>

Ron's Gone Wrong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCqGfjBSk0I>

The Addams Family 2

https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-tro-freshy&ei=UTF-8&hsimp=yhs-freshy&hspar=tro&p=Addams+Family+2&type=Y225_F163_207315_012821#id=6&vid=a1d28a50f9c02816d111be2784b59043&action=click

Perhaps one or more foreign productions will get a shot at being nominated.

FRANCE GAVE TEENAGERS \$350 TO SPEND ON CULTURE. THEY'RE USING A LOT OF IT TO BUY MANGA. Young people can buy books, tickets and classes via a government smartphone app, but rather than discovering highbrow arts, many are choosing what they already love, comics. When the French government launched the smartphone app that gives 300 euros to every 18-year-old in the country, they could buy anything cultural including tickets to performances. It turns out most chose to buy Manga!

Two months after the program began books represented over 75 percent of all purchases made through the app and roughly two-thirds of those books were manga, according to Culture Pass, the organization that runs the program. When President Macron announced the program he envisioned young people enjoying going to theaters, cinemas and music festivals as they emerged from their restricted life during the pandemic. They have up to two years to spend their money with over 8,000 businesses and institutions that are participating in this program.

Critics argue that letting 825,000 teenagers loose with free cash and expecting them to be nudged away from the nearest multiplex and into an art-house movie theater is a naïve waste of tax money. The project cost €80 million (nearly \$95 million) this year, and that is expected to double next year, although it will remain a fraction of the Culture Ministry's nearly €4 billion budget.

COVID 19 HAS DISRUPTED THE FILM DISTRIBUTION BUSINESS AND SCARLETT JOHANSSON'S LAW SUIT AGAINST DISNEY GIVES A HINT AT HOW SCREWED UP THINGS HAVE BECOME Johansson was to get a percentage of the film's box office and while *Black Widow* opened well (\$80 million weekend), the take the second week was 67% less (\$26 million), partly due to it becoming available from Disney+ for a \$30 rental fee. The hybrid release along with the very real dangers of contracting Covid in a theatre resulted in box office disasters. Disney+ and the other streaming services are showing new releases to be profitable as they are seeing an

enormous increase in their numbers of members, but by making the films available online the film pirates are also making out like bandits. Johnansson's suit named TorrentFreak for their contribution in making *Black Widow* the most ripped film of July.

The third weekend of *Black Widow* the take was \$11.6 million (domestic), a drop of another 55%. The steep drop-off in box office was also a problem for Warners' *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, and other new releases. *Space Jam* has a worldwide gross of \$195 million while *Black Widow* has made \$325 million worldwide. *Black Widow's* reported production budget was in excess of \$200 million so it probably has to take in over \$500 million before it breaks even (*Space Jam's* budget was estimated to be around \$150 million so it too has a long ways to go. As of August 31 the film had made \$264 million worldwide.

Johansson's original contract guaranteed her a share of its box office receipts which are now far less than expected, which may reflect unfavorably on her future career. Disney will release the Ryan Reynolds comedy, *Free Guy*, exclusively in cinemas in August, but with the rise in Delta variant cases, will many people actually see it in theatres? When will viewing habits shift back to the multiplex? Will Disney and other production companies be willing to risk producing mega-million dollar features in the future?

ACTIVISION BLIZZARD IS BEING SUED FOR DISCRIMINATING AGAINST WOMEN The computer game company that makes *Call of Duty*, *World of Warcraft* and *Candy Crush*) is accused of having a good old boy white male culture that discriminates against women in pay, job advancements, and allowing a culture to exist that allows sexual harassment. There was a two year investigation by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing before charges were filed in LA Superior Court.

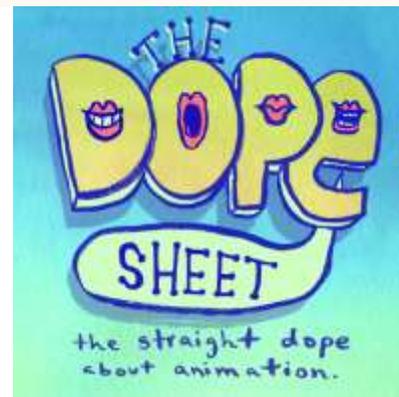
The company, said to be worth about \$70 billion, denies the charges. They are located in Santa Monica, have almost 10,000 employees and their CEO had a pay package worth about \$155 million. He was one of the nation's highest paid executives, but the company's president and head of human resources stepped down after hundreds of employees staged a walkout and thousands signed a petition demanding a response to the scandal. The company has hired an anti-union law firm to represent them.

The lawsuit alleges female employees were routinely kicked out of lactation rooms so men could hold meetings in them. They were criticized for leaving the office to pick kids up from daycare while men played video games. One female employee noted that male employees would frequently approach her at the office and comment on her breasts. An unconfirmed rumor is

the company has a cocktail machine for afterhours use (two drinks maximum).

The lawsuit suggests the alleged "frat boy" atmosphere exists and they have a workplace tradition called the "cube crawl." in which male employees drink copious amounts of alcohol as they "crawl" their way between office cubicles and engage in inappropriate behavior towards female employees.

This lawsuit reveals what is possibly the tip of the game industry's problems. It has a fairly long history of serious problems of not paying overtime, (especially during crunch time), long work hours, poor work conditions and a slew of other problems. The current issue also addresses the company having a staff that is 71% white male, 23% female and less than 2% Black.



'THE DOPE SHEET' IS AN ANIMATION PODCAST Join host Willy Hartland every Sunday at noon, as he interviews the most fascinating people from the world of animation. Episode 24 is a conversation with Howard Beckerman who worked for Terrytoon, UPA, his own studio and others. <http://Radio Free Brooklyn>

Willy Hartland is a director/ animator who has called NYC his home for the past 36 years. A NYFA recipient, and winner of international film awards, his latest *New York City Sketchbook* was screened at major festivals including the Oxford International Film Festival in England where it won Film of The Festival and Best Animated Short. Other honors include the Woodstock Film Festival, The Black Maria Film Festival, LAAF in Los Angeles, *The Palm Springs International Animation Festival*, and *Animatou* in Geneva Switzerland. Professionally he has worked as an animation artist on 3 features, and numerous TV shows, among them *Beavis and Butthead*, *Daria*, and *Doug* for Disney. Over the past decade he has also taught animation at Parsons, MICA, and CUNY. www.willyhartland.com

VIDEO ON ILM'S USE OF VIRTUAL SETS IN THE MAKING OF 'THE MANDALORIAN'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ufp8weYYDE8>

DID YOU FIND RICHARD WILLIAMS' ANIMATION BOOK AND DVDS USEFUL? People who admired his book and/or videos might enjoy Joanna Quinn chatting with his widow, Imogen Sutton, about a new version of the *Animator's Survival Toolkit*. <https://www.britishanimationawards.com/animator-survival-toolkit/>

GET READY TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE NEWEST GENERATION OF DISNEY ROBOTS Sunday's *NY Times* business section (Aug. 22) had 3 full pages on the robotic developments underway in their animatronics division. *Ready For Sentient Robots?* tells about robots that walk freely, a Spiderman robot that flies through the air, and others that do seemingly impossible things. The article also discusses the studio's philosophy about developing animatronics for the future. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/19/business/media/disney-parks-robots.html>



**ANIMAFEST ZAGREB
June 7 – 12, 2021, Zagreb, Croatia
By Nancy Denny-Phelps**

Animafest is always a special treat because I enjoy the programming and Zagreb is one of my favorite cities. This year it was even a greater event for me as it was the first festival I attended in person this year.

The festival was chocked full of viewing opportunities as the three hundred fifty-page catalogue attested to. The theme for this year's festival was love, in all of its forms. The eight programs began with *When We Met to The Fire of Love* and then *The Heartbreak of Love*. Lust and Passion also had their

own programs. Three screenings were devoted to couples that animate together.



'When the Day Breaks'

Many of my all-time favorite films were in the couples' programs such as Wendy Tilby and Amanda Forbes' beautiful and bittersweet *When the Day Breaks* (1999). It is the story of Ruby, a pig, whose life takes an unexpected turn after she witnesses the accidental death of a stranger. It moves me no matter how many times I watch it.

I also always appreciate Czech born British animator Vera Newbauer's films. Her 2019 *The Mummy's Curse* is no exception. Known as a feminist activist, her films pull no punches. *The Mummy's Curse* is an exploration of the myths our culture is based on and an examination of power in personal relationships that meld into wider political powers that dominate us all. Vera's partner, the well-known animator Phil Mulloy, created the sound and music for this film. From Alexander Alexeieff and Claire Parker's 1933 classic pinscreen film *Night on Bald Mountain* down to the present, all 44 films in these programs were gems.

Each year the festival presents a lifetime achievement award. This year's recipient was the American director and producer Ralph Bakshi. He and the nine feature films that he has made during a career that has spanned over seventy years are the true spirit of independent adult animation. His films such as *Fritz the Cat*, *Coonskin*, and *Lord of the Rings* have become classics and pioneered an adult alternative to main stream animation. If Bakshi put a princess in his films she would be a hard drinking, cigar smoking woman.



In giving the award to Ralph, the festival said “Just like the world renowned and influential Zagreb School of Animation authors, Bakshi was conditioned by modest budgets and had to resort to experimentation and reduced animation. Success came. Artistic freedom was not conditional. This is a lifetime achievement award that Zagreb understands”.



Unfortunately, Ralph was not able to be with us in person but he did join us on the big screen from the United States. Three of his feature films were also screened as part of the Masters of Animation section of the festival, *Fritz the Cat* (1972), *Heavy Traffic* (1973) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1978). *Fritz the Cat*, the subversive anti-establishment film, was Ralph’s directorial debut. It was the first animated film to be given an X rating because of its political content, sexual imagery, and depiction of drug use.

Heavy Traffic is an adult animated comedy-drama and *The Lord of the Rings* is based on J.R.R. Tolkien’s book of the same name. It was a rare opportunity to be able to see all three of these films on the big screen.



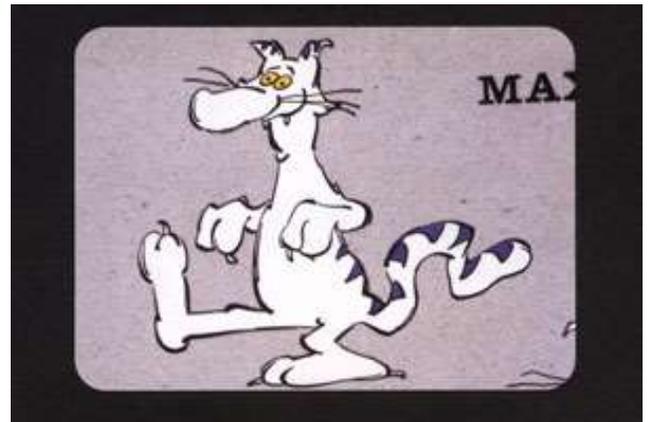
Bordo

The Zagreb School of Animation in the 1970s was loaded with talent. This year the festival presented a program of films created in 1973 curated by the

renowned animator and member of the Zagreb School Borivoj Dovnikovic, or Bordo, as he is better known.



I knew Zlatko Grgic as the creator of Professor Balthazar. The series for children features the beloved genius Balthazar who uses his brain to solve problems for people with the aid of his magical machine which would produce an invention to fix the situation. The series was produced from 1973 to 1975 and many of the great names of the Zagreb School worked on it.



I was not familiar with Zlatko’s award-winning *Maxi Cat* films. The series of twenty-four one-minute films feature a goofy looking cat with a very big nose who encounters all sorts of dilemmas and deals with them in very creative ways. As part of Croatian Animation 1973 five episodes of *Maxi Cat* were screened.

The most interesting film in the Zagreb program was *Man: The Polluter*, 1973. The fifty-three-minute film, made by a team of fifteen Canadian and Yugoslav animation artists was produced by the National Film Board of Canada and Zagreb Film. It delivers strong ecological messages with in-your-face humor and satire. The animated segments ask, “How much longer can humans foul their own nest and ignore the

consequences?" The film answers by showing us many different ways.



In between the individual segments Dr. Fred H. Knelman, Professor of Science and Human Affairs at Montreal's Concordia University, comments on the importance of what is being shown on the screen and what lies in store for the planet if more responsibility is not taken on a global scale to conserve what is left of our vital resources.

Tracing how humans have destroyed our planet, the film goes straight back to the discarded apple from the Tree of Knowledge to Dr. Knelman predicting that we will go to work in gas masks. Given the pandemic and the fact that we are all wearing masks now, this hit close to home.

Man: The Polluter was very forward thinking for all of its wacky, zany humor in 1973. It is even more relevant today than when it was made. It should be shown more often and not just at animation festivals where it is primarily preaching to the converted.

CEE Animation brings together regional activities for the promotion and development of animation and animators in more than twenty countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Through the CEE Animation Forum, the largest industry and pitching platform for animated projects in the CEE region, the forum helps to increase professional expertise, showcase the abilities of filmmakers and producers, and improves the content and visual side of projects. CEE organizes masterclasses and conducts the yearlong CEE Animation Workshop, an advanced training program for animated film producers.

CEE has put together three programs which will be presented at festivals such as Animafest Zagreb that are members of the CEE Animation Network. The first of the two programs that I saw, CEE Animation Talents, presented films made by the most talented young animators from Central and Eastern Europe.

The six films in the screening included the multi-award winning *I'm Here* by Julia Orlik from Poland. In this very touching film, an elderly man is trying to take care of his paralyzed wife at home. Their daughter, who is busy at work and at home, tries to help but she has totally different ideas about how to care for her mother.



As the woman lies in the bed, her life slipping away, she is unable to move, but she can still hear the arguments that go on around her.

People often have different ideas of how to care for the seriously ill. Anyone who has lost a beloved relative will understand the feeling of helplessness this film invokes. *I'm Here* is a sensitive and touching film.

The second program was devoted to films for children from Central and Eastern Europe. I had already seen most of the films in competition several times but there was one interesting new surprise, a film from Pakistan. *Swipe*, a fourteen-minute film by Arafat Mazhar and Puffball Studio, is a direct confrontation of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, extrajudicial violence, and decreasing space for differences and self-expression.

The film is set in Pakistan's technologically advanced dystopian future where political oppression is the norm. Jugnu, a ten-year-old boy, is addicted to iFatwa, an app that crowdsources religious death sentences. He spends all day every day swiping on the lives of strangers as he attempts to get a top spot on the Ajar Board. It's no surprise that there are no happy endings in this film and that the boy's addiction to the app finally results in tragedy.

Arafat launched Puffball Studio in 2019. It has now grown into an interdisciplinary team of more than twenty Pakistani artists, designers, writers, musicians, illustrators, actors, and creators; *Swipe* is the studio's second hand drawn short animation. The first film was *Shehr e Tabassum*, also set in futuristic Pakistan where the Supreme Leader criminalizes all facial expressions except smiles. *Swipe* is currently on YouTube.

For the third consecutive year in a row festival co-producer Paola Orlic curated Behind the Scenes, a group "making of" exhibition of works from the films in the Grand Competition of Short Films. Paolo believes that the artwork that goes into making a film, whether it be drawn, sculpted, or mixed media should be shown in a gallery setting just like any other work of fine art. Thirty-two filmmakers' works on display ranged from installations of sets, filmstrips, video projects, collages, puppets, numerous drawings, and character designs. The idea behind the exhibition is to promote a broader platform to give the festival audience an insight into the creative process. It provides glimpses of behind-the-

scenes moments from various stages of works they see on the screen.

This year Behind the Scenes was expanded to include pieces from the Student Film Competition. Thirty student filmmakers were represented at a separate gallery. Each work at both exhibitions was accompanied by an artist's statement.

Since 2015 at Animafest, stop motion animator Thomas Johnson has created a live performance animation work. Usually outrageous and always entertaining, this year Thomas created himself as a stop motion puppet. Over the course of ten hours, he animated the puppet to create a spontaneous work that included drawings of festival goers who posed for him.

For the second year in a row for obvious reasons the festival couldn't put us all on a bus and drive us for an hour up into the mountains for the traditional picnic. Instead, we all walked a few blocks to the beautiful botanical garden where a delicious spread of food and drink was laid out for us. Music was provided by Nik and the Popovic Brothers, Milivoj and Veljko.

Running concurrent to the festival was Animafest Scanner, a two-day symposium for contemporary animation studies. Each year at the opening night ceremony, an award for an Outstanding Contribution to Animation Studies is presented and the recipient is also invited to deliver the keynote speech at Scanner. This year's award was given to French historian, author, and critic Xavier Kawa-Topor.

The four Scanner sessions were divided into specific topics, Animation and the Living: How Animated Films Can Invite Us to Rethink Our Relationship with Biodiversity; Animation in Public Spaces; Depicting Emotions; and Scriptwriting in Animation.



Vesna Dvornikovic, Bordo, Paola Orlic, Daniel Suljic, and Nancy

My deep gratitude and thanks go to Artistic Director Daniel Suljic, Hospitality Coordinator Zdenka Domacinovic, and Buba for many acts of kindness. A very special thank you goes to Paola Orlic for being such a good friend.

Animafest Zagreb is the second oldest festival in the world that is dedicated solely to animation. Next year it will celebrate its 50th birthday and I am sure that the festival will be more wonderful and special than ever. I am looking to being there 6-11 June, 2022.

You can find out more about the festival at: www.animafest.hr



YOU MIGHT ENJOY AN INTELLIGENT ARTICLE ABOUT GENNDY TARTAKOVSKY'S 'PRIMAL,'

He challenged himself to create a series that has no dialogue, one that depends on his skills to use powerful visuals to tell his stories. It goes into how the concept evolved and the challenges he took on to develop this successful series.

<https://www.indiewire.com/2021/08/adult-swim-primal-genndy-tartakovsky-second-half-season-1-1234659436/>

'CRYPTOZOO' The film opened on 45 screens and received decent reviews, but due to Covid 19 still being around, the lack of mainstream publicity and other factors the box office gross was reported as a pathetic \$12,891 for the opening weekend. It was reported it had grossed \$20.108 as of Aug. 31.

Indie Wire said, "The husband and wife team of Dash Shaw and Jane Samborski have made the wildest, most surreal animated feature of the year with their menagerie of mythological creatures." Later in the article Bill Desowitz says, "Shaw's inspiration came from seeing footage of Winsor McCay's unfinished feature *The Centaurs*, and its iconic thin-line style and adult, sexy quality with half-nude centaurs. He was also drawn to the Art Nouveau line drawing of underground magazines of the '60s."

https://www.indiewire.com/2021/08/cryptozoo-animated-beasts-jurassic-park-1234659601/#recipient_hashed=c200e535ea1b4889a91658650c9f5e143b812067c1f26cfe20556dc647b46f50

ASIFA-SF IS A VOLUNTEER RUN ASSOCIATION

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Special thanks to **Marty McNamara** for his article on Annecy that Eihway send you recently, to **Nancy Denney-Phelps** for representing our chapter on the international ASIFA board and her monthly contributions to the newsletter, to **Emily Berk** our webmaster, to **Gary Meyer** for constant tips and to **Eihway Su** who keeps our mailing list and does a dozen other things.

Shaw's inspiration came from seeing footage of Winsor McCay's unfinished feature "The Centaurs," and its iconic thin-line style and adult, sexy quality with half-nude centaurs. He was also drawn to the Art Nouveau line drawing of underground magazines of the '60s.

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. Let's hope it is a limited time offer. We want to hold in-person events again.

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