ANIMATION AEROBICS’ An Interview with Ed Counts
by M.L. Haynes

Editor’s Note: Ed Counts is a long time ASIFA/Central member. Ed was a presenter at the ’99 ASIFA/Central Conference and Retreat.

MLH: We thoroughly enjoyed viewing ‘ZOETROBICS’, your animation and music collaboration with Stephen Webber, at ASIFA/Central’s 7th Annual Midwest Animators Conference & Retreat. What was your inspiration to create this animation?

EC: I am fascinated by animation that does not come from a narrative or theatrical tradition - in other words, animation that flows in time and space and motion instead of being tied to a narrative structure. "Zoetribics" simply emerged from some art that I was creating with simple software such as SuperPaint.

MLH: How long did it take to complete from inception?

EC: I began saving drawings in about 1991 or 92. At that time I was working on other projects, so this one did not get a lot of attention for a long time. The final edited version was completed in June, 1998. So, off and on, about 6 years or so.

MLH: How did your daughter assist in the process?

EC: Katie spent many hours adding color to the drawings. That consisted of

Report of ASIFA/Central Board Meeting, May 1, 1999
by Deanna Morse (ASIFA/Central President)

This year’s annual board meeting was a chance to recognize and applaud the achievements of the many active volunteers in our organization. It was an energetic meeting, with several positive ideas for future projects.

Jennifer Eldred reported on her work designing and editing our quarterly newsletter, and asked for suggestion about content and future articles. Several people asked for more interviews with member animators and feature articles with members that spotlighted the various stages of their production process. There was some discussion about listing festivals and grant opportunities, but it was felt that these were better covered elsewhere. Thanks to Jennifer on continuing her volunteer efforts to provide us with a timely and useful quarterly newsletter!

Randy Rockafellow gave a presentation on our award winning ASIFA/Central web site. He discussed the history of the web site, and described changes that are currently in place. He asked members to look at the site and give him feedback on what works and what could be improved. The most visited sections of the web site are the festivals pages, followed by our member’s listing. A couple of people told about making positive professional contacts through their member’s
Letter from the Editor by Jennifer Eldred

Well another successful conference and retreat has come and gone! For those who weren’t able to attend, WOW what a weekend! Good friends, great animators, wonderful weather and Barbeque!

Next year’s ASIFA/Central conference and retreat is April 21-23 and will once again be chaired by Mary Lou Haynes and Dave Daruzska who did a terrific job at this year’s event. Presenters and volunteers are being accepted. If you would like to be considered please contact Mary Lou at morgpk@aol.

If you are interested in submitting an article for the Summer 1999 edition the deadline is July 15.

Jennifer Eldred

ASIFA/Central's First Midwest Animator’s Reel is Available for Purchase

The ’98 ASIFA/Central Animators Retreat was the premiere showing of the first demo reel of ASIFA/Central members. The enthusiastic reception for the reel (also the request for a copy by a few conference attendees) prompted us to make a limited quantity of tapes available for purchase. The 17 members who entered work for the reel have received a free copy for their contribution.

The cost of the reel is $22 for ASIFA members, $32 for non-members. Shipping and handling charges are included. To order: please send a check (payable to ASIFA/Central) to Deanna Morse at the address on the back of the newsletter.

What’s in it for you? An hour of delightful animation for your viewing pleasure. Place your order today!

Animate Illinois

Animate Illinois and Kinetics is looking for animators interested in helping to promote animation education, working with students in the public schools as an animator-in-residence or a day guest.

Animate Illinois has several initiatives underway, including: working with Gallery 37 this summer with an animation tent project on state street; visiting elementary school art classes and working primarily with 5th grade students to make them aware of animation as an art form and possible career. Their two year goal is to develop an animation academy in a central location.

They are open to ideas from the animation community and welcome all thoughts on how they can promote animation education in the Chicago area.

For more information, please contact:
George Eastman
Kinetics
401 West Ontario Street
Chicago, IL 60610
tel 312-944-2900

ASIFA/Central Mission Statement

ASIFA: Association Internationale du Film d’Animation

The purpose of ASIFA/Central is to promote the art of animation locally and internationally and to promote communication among animators and between animators and devotees. — adopted 3/92
ANIMATION AEROBICS continued from page 1

thousands of lines of concentric circles and took over a year.

MLH: What was the final budget?
EC: The cash budget was about $10,000 but that does not include the many hours of time invested by myself and Stephen. [Editor’s note: Stephen Webber, Musician]

MLH: What are the different animation styles or techniques that were used?
EC: It is a combination of techniques but primarily Zoetrobics consists of line animation created on a computer. The "beat" or pace of the film is based on a graphic change every second. That is, I used 12 drawings, filmed "on twos" per second with each second containing a complete action, or idea. Although I did not actually cycle the drawings in the film, each second of film could be removed, placed on a zoetrope, and then would cycle smoothly over and over.

MLH: What advice would you give beginning animators? Seasoned animators?
EC: That is a hard question! I need advice! I am an independent animator and I have a day job, so I have a lot of freedom in deciding what projects I want to work on. I have learned that the "life" in animation comes from ideas and motion. That is, what happens between the frames is more important than what is on the frames. I would advise anybody with a serious interest in animation to view and study a lot of independent work from animators such as Deanna Morse, Karen Aqua, and others. The tools are important of course, but again, animation is still driven by ideas and life (animation.) For example, an animator who understands that concept can create lively, engaging works with nothing more than a pencil and index cards.

MLH: What technical tools or advances are on your WISH LIST?
EC: Again, another hard question! I am interested in the expressive potential of the "newer" technologies because they give us more creative room to wander around in.

However, I believe animation is driven by ideas and life and (can) be achieved with all kinds of materials and tools. The real power of the evolving digital technologies is that they can be combined with and enhance the "traditional" forms and methods of animation techniques. But to answer the question at last, I would like to have access to high quality editing and post production equipment such as a Media 1000 Ix, lots of gigs, multiple tracks of audio, batch digitizing, betacam tape decks, etc.

MLH: How did you first hook up with music composer Stephen Webber?
EC: We worked on "Joey Learns to Fly" several years ago. He recorded and mixed the sound for that film. During that process, we decided that we should collaborate on a project some day. Plus, I knew Stephen from his reputation as a performer and composer.

MLH: Since you and Stephen reside in different cities, how did you collaborate? What were the logistics? Describe the process.
EC: Simple answer - by phone, by airline, by UPS. Was not a problem at all.

MLH: What would make 'virtual' collaborations easier?
EC: Probably some application of the Internet. In fact, I created some interactive animation for a museum web site in Montreal and that was done mostly by email and file transfer. Check it out at: http://www.madm.org/checkbox/english/activities.html

MLH: What new projects are on your TO DO list?
EC: Stephen and I want to create another film but this time, he will write the music first, and I will create the animation to accompany it. For Zoetrobics, I created the film first, and Stephen then wrote the music. Of course, we will need to raise money. I will have to put that on hold for a while because I have accepted a position at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville so I am now in the process of moving.

MLH: Ed, thanks for agreeing to do this virtual interview with us. And best of luck on the new animation project!

To be continued in the next Frame by Frame issue:
The STEPHEN WEBBER INTERVIEW.

Mary Lou Haynes is a longtime member of ASIFA / Central. A musician & computer software developer, she has coordinated many events, programs and ASIFA/ Central's first COMPUTER ANIMATION program. She coordinated the 7th Annual Midwest Animators Conference & Retreat with Dave Daruska. They are now working on next year's Conference and WORLD PEACE Storyboard & Animation Scholarship Competition. A couple since 1970, they reside in Chicago with their cat, Terr and a bunch of fish.
Puppettime, Inc. Announces Preview Release of Puppettime Director

New Internet Company Demonstrates Easy-To-Use 3D Storytelling Technology, Invites Potential Customers To Make Requests

SAN FRANCISCO (March 25th, 1999) - PuppetTime, Inc. announced today that it has released a preview of its revolutionary 3D storytelling application, PuppetTime(R) Director, on its web site http://www.puppettime.com/. PuppetTime Director allows users to manipulate 3D puppets using PuppetTime's patent-pending 3D digital actor plug-in architecture, which is built on top of Apple's QuickTime. Downloading the free preview will allow Mac users with QuickTime to create and view 3D movies. Playback for Windows users is also available.

PuppetTime itself is built on top of QuickTime, which is the dominant cross-platform multimedia architecture. By leveraging QuickTime, PuppetTime can be combined with other media types, like video, sound, text and music. PuppetTime movies store only commands and metadata, so they are quite small, and easily stream-able across today's standard modem connections.

PuppetTime's COO, Tal Fried, feels their technology is needed because, "the biggest barrier to consumer 3D animation is the steep learning curve. Nobody wants to spend hours learning a how to create 3D characters and then learn how to animate those characters to tell a story. With our technology, anyone can create fully animated 3D stories with just 3 click of their mouse."

Visitors to the web-site are encouraged to make requests for new features and characters (accessible from the front page in the "Requests" section). Mr. Cooley says, "the initial response to PuppetTime has been phenomenal, and we'd like to ensure we're delivering real customer value. Tell us what you need to tell us your story."

Screenshots are available at http://www.puppettime.com/screenshots/. Requests can be made at http://www.puppettime.com/requests

this year, including the building of a revamped ASIFA International web site (www.asifa.net). We discussed whether we would like an English-only version of the ASIFANEWS, and the consensus was "no": that we liked receiving the multi-language version. In addition, I talked about the ASIFA International concern about members fees: see related article in this issue.

Jim Schaub was recognized for his work editing together the ASIFA/Central Reel, and Melissa Bouwman was recognized for her design of the table of contents. We recently received donated dubs of the reel, which will be mailed soon to all members who had work included on it. Jim announced that he is interested in pulling together another reel, and asked members to mail in their tapes this fall, so we can have it edited for next year's retreat. Thanks to Jim and to Missy for their work on this project!

It was a wonderful year for ASIFA/Central, and it was great to see us having fun volunteering for our organization. Thanks to everyone at the retreat! It is your volunteer efforts that keep this organization alive and vital.

The Purpose of ASIFA/Central is to promote the art of animation locally and internationally and promote the communication among animators and between animators and devotees.

-Deanna Morse
Tom Brierton
In 1972, Brierton Productions co-founder, Tom Brierton, began interest and work in filmmaking, music composing, and stop motion animation effects. Since that time, Brierton has worked as a sculptor, stop-motion animator, and ink and paint artist for a number of animation houses in the Chicago area, as well as a computer animator for a Chicago-based gaming company. An animation instructor at Columbia College in Chicago, Brierton holds both a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in Music Theory/Composition, and composes music for both film and the concert hall.

Ed Counts - Filmmaker, Director, Animator
Ed is an independent animator and teacher of media and technology at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green. His work has been screened in numerous film festivals including Ann Arbor, NY Film Expo, Sinking Creek, USA Film Festival, Dallas, Chicago International Festival of Children’s Films and others. His films have been aired on PBS stations, SHOWTIME, The Movie Channel, and others. He was a 1994 recipient of an Al Smith Artist’s Fellowship in Media Arts, Kentucky Arts Council.

As a Professor of Education, he teaches all aspects of educational technology including multimedia, instructional design, evaluation, and utilization. His interest in animation is based on his experience and view that animation artists and educators share enthusiasm for the creative, expressive, and communicative potential of new and emerging technologies. That is, he seeks to integrate education, art, and technology in creative and expressive ways.

Through his association with a department of education in a university, he has many opportunities to share and celebrate animation with diverse groups of K-12 students - from special camps for children from housing projects to year long projects in high schools and elementary schools. He also teaches an animation course once a year for the WKU Department of Communication and Broadcasting.

Kim Roberts
Kim is a video installation artist often examining the impact of myths and ancient beliefs upon contemporary society, especially as they relate to gender and cultural privilege.

Kim is a visiting instructor at Grand Valley State University in the Film and Video program within the School of Communications.

Roberts received her BFA from Kendall College of Art & Design; and her MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Randal Rockafellow
An ASIFA/Central member since 1996. He is the organization’s current web master and membership directory coordinator. Graduate of Eastern Michigan University. Founder and former president of Animators at Eastern Michigan (a student organization). Through which he started the Uncooked Student Animation Festival. For the past two years he has been working at a small post-production house in Southfield, Michigan, playing volleyball, ballroom dancing, and doing volunteer work for ASIFA/Central.

He is presently free-lancing his Art and Animation talents.

Stephen Webber - Composer, Musician
Stephen teaches at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. He has composed music for numerous film and video productions, recently winning an Emmy for the PBS documentary, “I’m in the Truth Business”. The music he wrote for “Zoetrobics” was recorded under his direction at Skywalker Sound, a division of Lucas Digital.

He is writer for a number of audio magazines, an award winning composer, and recently served as a visiting artist and lecturer at the University of Leeds in England. Webber is a recording artist for Willow Shade Records (www.willowshade.com). His education includes post graduate studies at Harvard University and intensive training at the Dolby Labs.
ASIFA International Membership Fund by Deanna Morse

There has been a great deal of discussion among the ASIFA International Board recently regarding the fee structure for members. In the United States, we have regional chapters, and when you join one of these as an international member, the chapter gives $20 of your membership to ASIFA International. In other countries that don't have a national group, members join as individuals, which costs $33 US, plus $5 to cover the bank conversion charges.

Because the global economy has been so uneven this last few years, this fee structure has caused difficulties for many animators who live in countries where their currency is weak against the US dollar, and where their salaries are less than what we are receiving here. Our "minimum wage" in the US is significantly higher than most countries, and the dollar is strong in exchange with most countries right now.

There is an ongoing discussion about letting animators donate artwork which ASIFA could sell in lieu of their fee; there is general support for this idea, but there are logistical problems. Another idea was to ask animators who can pay more to donate monies to a fund that would help cover the fees of animators who cannot pay their dues.

If you are interested in contributing to such a fund, please send me a check made out to ASIFA/Central. We talked about this at our board meeting, and two people have already made contributions. I will combine our donations and send them off to the international treasurer at the end of June, 1999.

Thanks for your support of animators around the world!
-Deanna Morse (ASIFA/Central President)

In Memorial: Elfriede Fischinger

It is with great sadness that I write to inform you of the passing of one extraordinary person, our dear friend, Elfriede Fischinger. Widow of the acclaimed filmmaker Oskar Fischinger, Elfriede died peacefully in her sleep at her home in Long Beach, California.

She was 88 years old.

Memorial services and tributes are being planned. News of these events will be posted on the iota Center's website as they are announced.

(www.iotacenter.org)

With warm regards,
Larry Cuba
iota Center

Sheridan College invites candidates to apply for the post-graduate Animation Filmmaking Program, which provides you with the opportunity to produce your own animated film under the guidance of professional faculty and staff. To be eligible, you must be a graduate from an accredited College or University in a relevant program, be a graduate from Sheridan, or have a minimum of 5 years professional animation-related experience.

For information, a brochure, and program guidelines, contact:

Sheridan Animation Filmmaking
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Oakville, Ontario, L6H 2L1
Canada
tel 905-845-9430 ext. 2579

Animation Web Site Operators:

Please note the debut of a redesigned Web presence for Character Builders, the Columbus, Ohio-based independent animation studio, at www.cbuilders.com.

Character Builders is a 13-year-old premier studio providing high-quality, traditional hand-drawn animation. It has been a significant contributor to "Space Jam," "Anastasia," "Bebé's Kids," and many more films, TV series, and commercials.

The site offers a studio profile and photo tour, a resume of past projects, bios of studio principals, summaries of current projects, a gallery of video clips, and a glossary of animation terminology.

Please visit the site and consider adding it to any Web links you may maintain. Direct any inquiries to Executive Producer Leslie Hough via email at leslie@cbuilders.com.

Thanks!
Christopher Galvin
G2 Creative Services
WEB: http://www.g2creative.com/
EMAIL: chris@g2creative.com
ANIMATORS "DO LUNCH" WITH ANIMATION TOOLWORKS
Video LunchBox used in production of top animated shows

March 15, 1999, Sherwood, Ore. -- Stop-motion animation is experiencing a resurgence on television, thanks to a "little black box." Hit stop-motion TV series such as "The PJs" (Fox), "Celebrity Deathmatch" (MTV) and "A Little Curious" (HBO) are all created using Animation Toolworks' Video LunchBox. This revolutionary device is literally changing the way stop-motion animation is done, making it easier, faster and more viable as a TV production medium.

Created less than two years ago by Sherwood, Oregon-based Animation Toolworks, the Video LunchBox is a device used to capture still images from a video camera and playback this sequence of images at the same rate as film images or television video. It enables animators to instantly test their work in progress, monitoring pacing, lighting, and registration. This early, rapid testing eliminates time-consuming errors and allows for confident, rapid progress during animation. The LunchBox's instant feedback also makes it possible to quickly and cheaply try alternatives, resulting in bolder animation. Besides the productivity and quality improvements, the instant feedback makes animating fun again. Hundreds of the devices have been installed in animation studios and educational facilities around the world, including MTV Animation, Will Vinton Studios, Tippett Studios, Curious Pictures, the National Film Board of Canada, as well as the California Institute of the Arts, the USC Film School, UCLA Animation Workshop, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and Philadelphia University of the Arts.

Will Vinton Studios in Portland, Oregon uses 2 dozen of its 35 LunchBoxes in the production of its weekly stop-motion animated series, "The PJs," which has been garnering winning ratings on the Fox network since its debut in January. John Logue, a director on the series, says "No reservation, the Video LunchBox is one of the greatest tools available. It is helping our schedule, is so handy for training, and is a big help towards improving the quality of the animation. I'm sure we wouldn't be able to do this weekly series without the Video LunchBox."

At MTV Animation in New York, animators on the outrageous animated series, "Celebrity Deathmatch" use Video LunchBoxes to test animation as it is shot digitally. Using the Video LunchBox, "Deathmatch" animators have as much as doubled their output speed. Supervising director Marc Lougee says he is shooting one and one half seconds per hour, whereas his previous record, before the Video LunchBox, was one second per hour. He explains: "Shots that took 14-15 hours now took 7 hours and looked great. The Video LunchBox saves huge amounts of time, saves huge amounts of work and speeds up the whole production."

Sarah Meyer, an animator on Celebrity Deathmatch concurs: "I couldn't survive without a LunchBox...my animation has improved greatly. I can't believe I even survived as long as I did only being able to scroll through my frames in the "truncate movie" option of the stop motion capture in Premiere. Now, I can get the timing exactly the way I want it."

children's museums, high schools, universities and art schools.

For further information, please contact Howard Mozeico at Animation Toolworks, Inc.
Phone: 877-625-6438
Fax: 503-925-0221
email: howardm@animationtoolworks.com
www.animationtoolworks.com
18484 SW Parrett Mountain Road, Sherwood, OR 97140

"You know, I heard this described as an animator's vacation, but it seems more to me like an animator's workout!"
-Mike Allore

"You don't have to be crazy to do animation, but it helps."
-Ed Counts

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ASIFA/Central
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Allendale, MI 49401
e-mail: morsed@gvsu.edu

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c/o Deanna Morse
School of Communications
Lake Superior Hall
Grand Valley State University
Allendale, MI 49401
e-mail: morsed@gvsu.edu

Jim Middleton
201 Arcadia Blvd.
Battle Creek, MI 49017