Exposing Yourself: It's All In the Timing
by Jim Middleton

One of the most intimidating challenges to face either as a writer or an animator is nothing more than a piece of pure white, plain, blank paper. Nothing can begin until you make that first mark. One of the means I find helpful in coming to grips with a project is to approach it indirectly, to toy with fussy details. To this end, I turn to the venerable exposure sheet.

Generally unnecessary if doing the "straight ahead" approach to animation, the exposure sheet is indispensable if you are doing anything involving lip-synch, musical timing, or pacing. It's one thing to animate a walk—it becomes much easier if referring to an exposure sheet tells you the cycle has to be completed in 82 frames. Similarly, endless repetition of a piece of music will automatically tune you to the necessary timing or make you absolutely sick of the tune—or both.

An exposure sheet is generally tied in with a storyboard. The storyboard serves as an outline. The exposure sheet fills in every animated. For multiple cel animation, each layer of animation is given its own column. However, for this brief discussion, I will approach the exposure sheet from the viewpoint of the enthusiast, or student, working within the constraints of both limited time and money.

I have tried several varieties over the past years. Initially, I made a modification of the example given in Kit Laybourne's excellent reference, The Animation Book (the 1998 edition still available and published by Three Rivers Press, 201 East 50th Street, New York, NY 10022, $24.95; mine was from the earlier 1979 edition). I stayed with the basic format, first frame on top, running to the bottom. Keeping things as simple as possible, there were only a couple of rows to indicate sound and image, and of course a column to indicate the frame number (figure 1). With this approach, I was able to squeeze four seconds onto each page. For brief sequences this worked, but the difficulty in keeping track of the specific frames became a problem (I found that I could quickly lose count and drop several frames at inopportune places). I also found that the top to bottom

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IMAX Cyberworld 3D
Reviewed by Charles Wilson

Honestly folks, while Cyberworld was a wonderful film, I could have lived without the Cyberworld Galleria segment where the hostess Phig (voiced by Jenna Elfman) introduced the animated segments while fighting computer bugs. I didn't feel that the film needed an animated vehicle to tie the segments together, especially one that became distracting after the first couple of minutes. Because this film was all about showcasing some truly intriguing technology, I would have been happy with simple titles, or even a Fantasia 2000 style live-action host to introduce the animations. While the concept was interesting at first, it was difficult to understand what Phig and the computer bugs were saying during their interludes. I found myself wishing for the next animated segment whenever Phig or the bugs came onscreen.

Well, now that I have stated the only thing that I didn't like about the movie, let us talk about what I did like. I truly loved the other animation clips and found myself wishing to see these short films in their entirety. I realize that these were older films, retooled following IMAX's specifications, but I loved watching them just the same. The stereoscopic imaging process left me at the edge of my seat during Flipbook, Krakken, and Tonight's Performance. These films had a good balance between rich backgrounds and lively characters. I found the 3D effect easier to see during the long shots of waterfalls and flying fortresses. But by far, the easiest

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Letter from the Editor by Jennifer Eldred

Members be sure to renew your ASIFA/Central membership. All 2000 memberships are up for renewal on December 31. The renewal application can be found on the back of this edition.

Don’t miss a beat, renew today! (Membership for 2001 starts on January 1 and continues till December 31, 2001.)

Plans are underway for the 2001 ASIFA/Central Conference and Retreat so be sure to mark your calendars for the Conference being held April 27 - April 29, 2001. If you would like to contribute, volunteer or apply to be a presenter at the Conference please contact the Conference Chair, Melissa Bouwman at asifa_central@hotmail.com. See future Frame by Frames for Conference registration forms and agendas.

As we come to the end of another year, I would like to thank all of the contributing writers who help keep ASIFA/Central members informed and connected throughout the year. Keep those great articles coming!

Happy Holidays!

Jennifer Eldred


ASIFA Opens First Indian Chapter by Michael Saltzman

(October 16, 2000) It was announced today that ASIFA Central in Zagreb, Croatia, the only internationally sanctioned organization for animation, will open a chapter in India. This new chapter will be located in the city of Trivandrum within the Indian state of Kerala, home of Toonz Animation India. The first meeting of ASIFA India will occur during The 2nd Annual Week With The Masters Animation Celebration, Toonz Animation India's high profile animation festival, held October 30 - November 3, 2000.

Heading up ASIFA's newest chapter is Bill Dennis, president and CEO of Toonz Animation India. Dennis comes to ASIFA's chapter with almost three decades of experience in the animation industry, having worked on such animated classics as, "The Lion King," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin," and "The Little Mermaid."

The Indian chapter, which will be devoted to the encouragement and dissemination of film animation as an art and communication form, opens with 20 members. Tentatively, the new chapter's board includes; Bill Dennis as president, Suhael Merchant from Toon Sens Studio as vice president, and Cathy Peza, Toonz Animation India's studio manager, as treasurer.

ASIFA, an organization for professional animators, has grown to over 1700 members in 55 countries during its 40-year history. The national chapters maintain the most immediate and direct contact with members, many, like the American regional groups, with their own monthly newsletters and screenings. ASIFA provides the linkage between all the chapters as well as a direct connection to International events such as animation festivals and seminars. For more information on ASIFA, refer to their website at http://asifa.net.

For more information on The Second Annual Week with The Masters please visit their website at www.toonzanimationindia.com

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

Printed in the U.S.A on recycled paper.
approach was awkward. This led to the next version. This one concerned itself less with the number of seconds and drew instead on the number of frames. Each sheet is now able to hold 50 frames; in addition, I added a thumbnail box for each frame to allow for sketching in random notes on what should be going on with the synchronization. I also chose to arrange things left-to-right, to keep with the feel of “reading the soundtrack” on the exposure sheet. This format also allows me to consolidate a storyboard approach with the exposure sheet.

With this method, I am able to haul around a few sheets and sketch in ideas when time permits before settling down to a stack of animation paper or a computer terminal. Still, the most time consuming part of the project is the filling out of the sheet itself. Presently, I take the soundtrack and pump it into my wonderfully temperamental Autodesk Animator Studio (version 0.5, I believe, when Windows was still The Chicago Project), and play it bit by bit, generally in 10-15 frame increments, until I have the entire thing transcribed onto paper. Right now, the 2220 frames for “Good Garbage 2001” take up 45 pages and represent the better efforts of the La Scala Orchestra’s recording of “Il Segreto di Suzanna” from 1921. This sounds substantial, but using my previous format without the advantage of the thumbnail sketches would still take up 37 sheets, and the earlier still version, based on the classic format, would represent over 90 pages. When working on solo projects, it makes a difference.

Earlier, I mentioned the use of a computer. Granted, most of this activity has been supplanted in commercial studios with computer programming, and most of the newer 2D software integrates exposure sheets with their complete package (the CTP software being an excellent example). Stand-alone programs do exist for storyboard and timing, however. One recent example, “Board Master” (www.boardmastersoftware.com) from Canada, also markets itself as a means to assist presentations beyond those involving animation. While it may be of use in a commercial house setting, I found it fairly cumbersome for independent usage. Also, its exposure sheet printout was of the classic format, making for a ponderous print time without presenting any clear advantage for viewing the soundtrack. The demonstration file did have some nice touches and would probably work well as an alternative to a slide show for a production house; however, I think that many of its functions must already be available in completely-packaged animation software. Much of what it offered for presentation could be replicated with Power Point or Corel’s Presentation software. The retail of $179 isn’t too bad, and it is available online, but I am not sure if it’s for everyone—the amount of time I spent scanning in images, converting to appropriate formats, tweaking *.wav files, and typing in comments (not to mention the crashes) could have been spent in actual animation. But then, it was less intimidating than that pure white, plain, blank paper! - Jim Middleton

IMAX (Wilson) continued from 1

characters to see in 3D were the ones who fit completely within the boundaries of the theatre’s viewing screen. These characters (ranging from underwater seal-like critters to flying heads) jumped out into the visual space between the screen and myself while characters that intersected one of the boundaries lost their 3D effect. As some of the larger creatures and machines passed across the screen, they had a tendency to flicker into and out of 3D.

The animation segments themselves were produced by a variety of studios all around the world. The segments were as follows: Pacific Data Images showcased two joint effort films, Antz from DreamWorks/PDI, and the Simpsons from 20th Century Fox/PDI. Monkey Brain Sushi was from Sony Pictures Imageworks. Joe Fly and Sanchez was entered by Spans & Partner. Krakken came from Ex Machina and Liberation was from Pet Shot Boys Partnership/Eye Development. Finally there was Out of the Box created by RezN8, Flipbook from Inertia Pictures, and Tonight’s Performance directed by Paul Sidlo. The Cyberworld Galleria segment was produced at IMAX using their SANDEE (Stereo Animation Drawing Device) system. All of the older animations were re-rendered using the specifications set up by IMAK in order to get the appropriate camera angles necessary for converting the images into a format suitable for stereoscopic viewing. The conversion process was performed using IMAX Corporation’s patent-pending 3D process and since the process was done on computers running Intel Pentium III processors, the microchip giant graciously helped IMAX Corporation fund this film.

For those of you who would like to learn more about this film and the SANDEE process that created it, there are two excellent articles in the October 2000 issues of Animation Magazine and Animation World Network’s Animation World Magazine. IMAX also has a review of their SANDEE system on their website at http://www.imax.com/innovations/latest_devs/sande.html. In the final analysis, I would recommend watching this film at least once, if for no other reason than saying “oo” and “ah” at the technology that made this film possible. IMAX is currently planning some joint ventures with PDI and Mainframe in the future, including a special release of PDI’s Shrek. So if Cyberworld is any indication, IMAX is gearing up to take us on a wild ride in the not too distant future.

About the Author
Charles Wilson is an independent animator and the president/lead animator of Smudge Animation, located in Bath, Michigan. In 1997, Charles graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology’s Film/Video department where he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Computer Animation. Since then, he has worked as a web designer/programmer also doing freelance multimedia projects until the summer of 2000 when he created Smudge Animation. He can be reached at Smudge_Anim@yahoo.com and his work can be viewed at www.geocities.com/Smudge_Anim
Ottawa: Bad Craziness
by Jim Middleton

The pumpkins were there, the animators were there, the Chez Ani was there, and the weather was mostly cooperative. So why did this festival have such a sour feel to it this time? The "Best of Show" was the German entry "Ring of Fire," a black and white orgiastic allegory with a literal bump and grind background of sexual imagery. Considering that "The Old Man and the Sea" was casually dismissed from the competition, it seemed like giving "Porky's" an Academy Award while tossing aside "Citizen Kane" because "everyone has seen it." Sexual imagery seemed to be a guaranteed way to obtain screen time as well, as if to further the stereotype that animators are mostly males who didn't get to date much in high school. One night's competition was bracketed by two films dealing with sexual abuse—"The Hat" was an eternal succession of images that included a little girl astride an enormous phallus, while "Daddy and I" brought a less abstract presentation of a similar message from Korea. Even the excellent "Four Minutes" and "Crime and Punishment" couldn't shake the pall of the evening.

Chris Robinson provided a message at the beginning of the festival's program that said "cradle elsewhere." He also introduced the evening's showings with some more-than-indelicate comments and gave the proceedings more the atmosphere of a bad frat party than a good animation festival. His intent was lost on most of the audience. Was it sarcasm? Was it an Andy Kaufman knock-off? Was there real booze in his hip flask? And why this venue to put on his show? (The "Spike and Mike" showing was already booked, after all.) This is especially sad in light of some of his fine essays that have appeared in various Animation publications and even in the festival program, where he also wrote, "I know when to tell lies that ring of truths. I wish he had chosen to do it somewhere else. It took the wonderful mimicry of David McCallum, as the "Voice of the Festival," to salvage one evening with his inspired reading of Shakespeare's 18th Sonnet, using the voices of Presidents Kennedy through Clinton.

Having vented thus, much of the festival remained noteworthy. The retrospectives were very fine, highlighted by the Computer panorama (with the latest innovation test from Pixar, this year being the feathers in "For The Birds," however, "Bunny" and "Fishing" were the jaw-droppers for that show), a phenomenal tribute to jazz in animation (with an outrageous, and probably never to be televised "Tin Pan Alley Cats" by Clampett), and an overdue tribute to Paul Fierlinger. "Muratti and Sarotti: The History of German Animation" was a well-crafted documentary, if somewhat heavy on technique (I wanted to see more rather than hear about the films). The workshops on distribution and portfolios quickly became a Q and A about Why Aren't You Hiring meeeeee? (hungry animators in their 20s, nervous animators in their 30s, frantic animators in their 40s...oh no! I'm passe!) but the presentation on puppet animation from the production team that brought "The Periwig Maker" to the festival was great. One of the workshops was held in a room painted completely black, prompting one of the panelists to comment, "Welcome to our review of Austrian experimental cinema."

On a tourist note, I have to state that Ottawa remains one of the finest stops for a vacation. When it rains, umbrellas are everywhere and inexpensive, the National Gallery is still FREE FREE FREE and the presence of a bikini store in the Eaton mall seems almost like wishful thinking. And how many cell phones can one group of people have? And what is it with Exhaust Industrial Strength jeans? Do you want that logo on your derrier? And where can I find a "I ! my Lithium" T-shirt?

And, finally, at the Cafe Supreme, it took the coordinated efforts of three people--an off-duty manager, a woman assistant manager, and a trainee--to make a mocha for me. The young man who had taken my order had forgotten what I ordered by the time he went to ring it up, and then he had to refer to the register twice as he tried to make change for me (it was $3, I had given him a ten). He looked at me with the eyes of a lost puppy and said, "I'm sorry about this. I am really very stupid." You don't get sincerity like that in the United States.

- Jim Middleton
Calendar for Show:
Independent Voices: The Art of Animation

An exhibit of animated films and animation artwork featuring five American independent animation artists.

February 26 - March 30th, 2001 in the Art Gallery at Louis Armstrong Performing Arts Center Grand Valley State University, Allendale Campus

Overview of dates:
February 26, 5-7 p.m. Gallery, opening reception
February 27, 10 - 11:30 am, 174 LH: Karen Aqua screens her work
February 27, 1-3 p.m., 114 HRY: Karen Aqua meets with students
March 15, 1-3 p.m., Gallery: Faith Hubley speaking to students
March 15 & 16, 7-10 p.m., UICA: Faith Hubley film screening and Q&A
March 17, 7 p.m. & 9 p.m., UICA: Faith Hubley film screening
March 29, 5 p.m., Gallery: Gallery talk led by Deanna Morse
March 30, Show closes

Gallery hours:
Monday through Friday 10-5, Thursday 10-7
Tel. 616-895-2564 (The gallery will be closed the week of March 5-9th during spring break.)

Featured artist/animators:
Karen Aqua
Joan Gratz
John Canemaker
Faith Hubley
Deanna Morse

Be a Presenter at the 2001 ASIFA/Central Animator’s Retreat

Call for Presenters: Looking for a Good Time?

Interested in rubbing elbows with some of the finest folks the midwest animation community has to offer?

Want to attend the 2001 conference and not have to pay for your registration, PLUS see your name on an attractive certificate?

BE A PRESENTER for the 2001 ASIFA CENTRAL ANIMATOR’S RETREAT!

Your responsibilities would include:
30 to 60 minute presentation (Q&A time included).
Supplying a written bio for the conference brochure.
Providing for your own transportation to the conference site and possibly housing at or near the lodge.

What you get in return:
A weekend of FUN! Animation Screenings, Hands on activities, Networking, Intellectually stimulating conversations

that get those creative juices flowing, Miles of hiking trails to waterfalls and beautiful scenic overlooks, Campfires, Hot Tub...You get the idea.

Exposure to a great group of people! The folks that attend the retreat are supportive, friendly, and want to hear what you have to say. The retreat is generally a smaller venue, so if crowds are not your scene, you're safe with us!

This year the retreat takes place April 27 - 29, 2001. Mark those dates on your calendar!

If you would like more information please call Melissa Bouwman at (616) 813-5211 or e-mail her at asifa_central@hotmail.com.

If you would like to propose a presentation, send your proposal (topic you wish to present, how much time you will need, A/V requirements, bio, etc.) to:

Melissa Bouwman
121 Madison SE #7
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Stressed Out Animation Part II  
by Charles Wilson

Authors's Note: My animation studio is centered on a PC-based computer system. While all my pre-production work (storyboards & model sheets) are done with pencil and paper, everything else is done in computer. Over the past few years, I've refined the process that I use for producing animated shorts. The process is composed of six stages: modeling, set-design, animation, sound recording & layering, image touch-up, and editing & video output.

The Animation Process

1. Modeling
All characters were modeled using Macromedia Flash. This decision was made so that the characters could be resized and still maintain a high level of resolution. I would have had Stress finished back in March except I was trying to figure out a solution to my modeling problem. In Macromedia Director, when bitmaps are resized there also can come a loss in resolution. Color banding occurs, as does improperly sized features. Since Flash is vector-based, I could resize the characters as much as I wanted content in the knowledge that the fish would look just as good in the small poses as the large.

I also modeled and animated the clock's poses in Photoshop. Using Photoshop's lighting filters, I was able to create a 3-D-looking clock. Then, using layers and the lighting filters, hands were added in each position including the anticipation and follow-through positions. So when I was finished, I had one file with every pose. These individual poses were then exported into separate bitmaps and imported into Director just like the fish models.

2. Animation
Once I had all the fish and clock bitmaps in each pose, I assembled the character animation. Moving body parts were animated by creating multiple copies of the body part in each pose. Take for example, the bored fish's eyes blinking. I created several sets of eyes and modified each set slightly so that they were in the correct poses to blink shut and then open again.

After creating all the moving body parts, I placed them in the appropriate location for each pose. Using this limited style of animation, I didn't have to recreate the entire fish for each action, only the parts that moved.

The character movement was then tested in each scene using Director's animation playback controls. If the motion didn't work, it was recreated. All the motion was tested and completed for every scene before I created the background and props.

3. Set design
Once the character animation was finished, I built the backgrounds and props and placed them into the appropriate scenes. In my animation process, I'm still toying with where set design belongs. Sometimes I want to build the sets first just to get an idea of scale. Other times I want to jump right into the animation and start working with motion. Since I already had an idea of what size the characters needed to be, I left set design until the end.

Each background would be created and layered behind the moving characters until all twenty-two scenes were finished. Since all the assembling and motion tests were done in Director, I used Director's paint tools to build most of the sets: the wallpaper, the tiled counter, the blender, etc.

Finally, the motion was tested once again as a completed scene. And, if it worked, then the scene was exported as sequential bitmaps.

4. Image touch-up
Due to a problem in either Adobe Premiere or Macromedia Director, Premiere cannot import bitmaps that were exported from Director. No problem there, Jasc Paint Shop Pro to the rescue! Using PSP's batch conversion option, I converted all the bitmaps from Windows BMP files to TIFF files which were then imported into Premiere. I also used this opportunity to touch up any image that picked up artifacts during the export and conversion process. Thankfully, there weren't many since I ended up with over one thousand images.

5. Sound Recording & Layering
When I build the animation during the pre-production phase, all sounds are recorded using Sound Forge and then layered in Premiere. So what I end up with is my storyboard images synchronized with my soundtrack. This is key, because when I start importing the images and building the animation in Premiere, I visually line up the sequenced images with the appropriate storyboard scene in the animate.

6. Editing & Video Output
Once the bitmaps are synchronized with the layered sound files that compose the soundtrack, I compile the movie into an AVI file. Then the animation is viewed, edited, re-compiled and reviewed until I get it right. What I'm looking for is timing issues. Does the scene flow fast enough into the next scene? Does the scene need to be cut shorter? Does the sound remain

Stressed (Wilson) continued on 7
Call for Sponsors

Corporate Sponsors sought for the 9th Annual Conference & Retreat

The annual Midwest Animator's Conference and Retreat could benefit from financial support. We would like to be able to offer a paid housing package to presenters, and would like to find sponsors for the Saturday afternoon picnic.

Donors will receive acknowledgement in all promotional materials, as well as complimentary registration at the conference. All donations to ASIFA/Central are tax deductible.

Please contact: Melissa Bouwman at (616) 813-5211, or 1-877-702-8601 ext.4510, or via e-mail: asifa_central@hotmail.com

Stresses (Wilson) continued from 6

synchronized with the action? All these questions and more go into my thinking as I watch the movie over and over again until I'm satisfied with the final animation.

Finally, after the film is edited, I review it at several resolutions. I usually go for 640x480 for video output and 200x150 for Internet viewing. Once I was satisfied that the film was finished, I recorded it to video and downloaded it to my website.

Wrap-up

In my next article about Stress, I will be talking about how the film worked out. Between now and the next issue of Frame-by-Frame, I will have had the opportunity to show Stress to an audience as well as see it on a large screen. My final article will discuss audience reaction, what worked, what didn't, and what I will do differently on my next film.

- Charles Wilson

INTERNET WORLD MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT FESTIVAL (ME FESTIVAL) CALL FOR SHORT FILM AND MEDIA ENTRIES FOR INAUGURAL ON-LINE COMPETITION.

Hollywood, CA Penton Media's Internet World's Media & Entertainment Festival (ME Festival) seeks short live-action films, animation, web commercials, web series, experimental works, under 15 minutes in length, for inaugural on-line competition. Winners will be announced March 13, 2001, during the two-day Internet World D2ME Spring Conference, at the Regal Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles.

Joy A. Kennelly is the Event Producer for the ME Festival which will debut selections LIVE on-line February 7th running through March 16th at www.internetworldmefestival.com.

Viewers, who log on, can vote for an Audience Award of their favorite short. StreamSearch, "The Remote Control of the Web", (www.ss.com) is responsible for the on-line production and distribution.

Filmmakers will vie for five prizes that include cash and all-expense paid trips to national and international Internet World 2001 conference sites.

Entry fees and deadlines are $40 by November 4; $60 by November 15; and $75 by 5pm on December 4. Forms and guidelines are available by calling the ME Festival hotline at 310 558-6691 or reviewing the web-site, www.pentonevents.com/Internetworldspring.

For additional information contact:
Marcia N. Groff (Event Publicist) 310/855-0498
Joy A. Kennelly (Event Producer) 310/558-6691
Molly Molloy (Streamsearch Publicist) 310/315-1808

Member News:
In December, Deanna Morse will travel to Korea to be a juror at PISAF 2000: Puchon International Student Animated Film Festival.
You can read about the festival at http://www.pisaf.or.kr
Information on the jury is at:
http://www.pisaf.or.kr/ehc4.htm

ASIFA.net

A new stART animation on ASIFA.net was created by ASIFA/central treasurer Deanna Morse, who is also a Professor in the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University, Michigan.
You can see her animated Phenakistoscope in action at:
www.asifa.net. You can read about her at http://asifa.net/+morse/index.html

ASIFA.net has started a new service for international members - offering free webpages for members.
You can read about it at http://asifa.net/freepages/index.html.
If you are interested in being a stART animator (providing an animated gif to go on the front of the webpage), please contact the editor, Thomas Renoldner. editor@asifa.net

Dear ASIFA Central Members:

Now that I am settled in at the University of Tennessee, I am working with a local film festival called Valley Fest. We would really like to receive some animated works if you are interested in submitting.

Submission instructions are at:
http://www.valleYfest.com/
Happy Animating!

Ed Counts
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2001

NAME: ____________________________________________

ADDRESS: _____________________________________________

CITY: __________________ STATE: ___________ ZIP: _______

PHONE: __________________ FAX: __________________

EMAIL: ____________________________________________

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: __________________

____ STUDENT ($15)

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INCLUDES GENERAL

____ CORPORATE ($300)

PLEASE PRINT MY NAME AND ADDRESS IN:

____ MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

____ WEBSITE LISTINGS

Make checks payable (US dollars) to ASIFA/Central and send to:
Deanna Morse
ASIFA/Central
School of Communications
Lake Superior Hall
Grand Valley State University
Allendale, MI 49401
email: morsed@gvsu.edu

JOIN TODAY!

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