

# ASIFA

THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION ASSOCIATION

August 2020



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**DISNEY OPENED THEIR HONG KONG PARK JUNE 18 AND CLOSED IT AGAIN ON JULY 15** They say the virus is rearing its ugly head so the theme park is again "temporarily closed." The resort will remain open.

Disney in Florida is partially reopened despite pandemic cases skyrocketing in the state. Disney does warn the public on their website that the virus is dangerous and guests assume all risk of visiting. They also claim there are no lines for rides, but the *Hollywood Reporter* said that over the weekend pictures and video shared on social media showed lines appeared to exceed an hour wait on some rides. The most popular ride was said to be Splash Mountain with the wait time averaging between 30 and 45 minutes.

Disney reopened Shanghai Disneyland on May 11, and a pair of Disney parks in Japan, Tokyo Disneyland and Tokyo Disney Sea, reopened on July 1. Disneyland Paris is scheduled to reopen on July 15.

**WHEN WILL THEATRES REALLY REOPEN? AND HOW QUICKLY WILL IT BE BEFORE THEY CLOSE AGAIN?** I doubt many will have reopened by the end of July or in August if COVID-19 continues to spike around the world.



**'BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD' ARE RETURNING WITH TWO NEW SEASONS AT COMEDY CENTRAL** Mike Judge is heading the project at 3 Arts. Judge also has *Jodie*, a new show on Comedy Central's *Adult Swim*. It too is designed for teenage couch potatoes. *Jodie* is a spinoff of *Daria*, which is a spinoff of Judge's *Beavis and Butt-Head* which first aired on MTV's Liquid Television in 1992. The feature *Beavis and Butt-Head Do America*, premiered in 1996 and grossed \$63 million and was produced on a \$12 million budget. Judge's career also includes his writing and directing the features *Office Space* and *Idiocracy*. He also has created the shows *King of the Hill* and *Silicon Valley* and has overseen the production of lots of merchandise including comic books and video games.



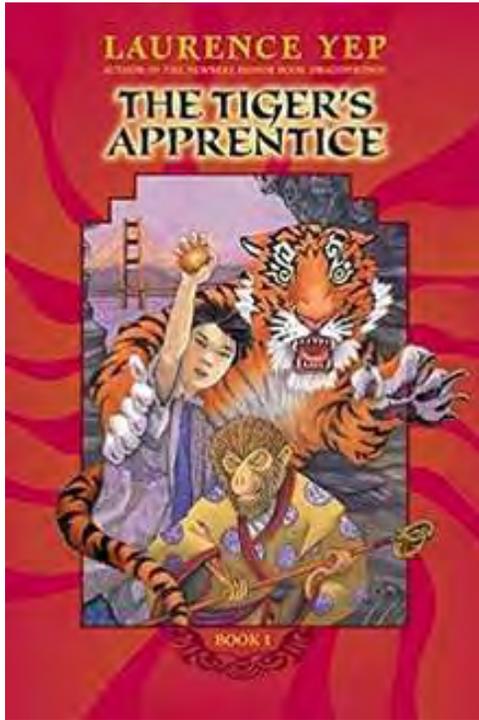
**A NICE REVIEW OF 'ANIMATION OUTLAWS'** *'Animation Outlaws': How Spike & Mike Turned Indie Shorts Into a Cultural Phenomenon.* The new doc pays tribute to the "animation outlaws," who made it "something more dangerous and fun than it was ever supposed to be." Read the article at <https://www.indiewire.com/2020/07/animation-outlaws-spike-mike-indie-shorts-1234574728/>



**MATTHEW CHERRY'S OSCAR-WINNING 'HAIR LOVE' SHORT TO BECOME A HBO MAX SERIES** Matthew A. Cherry's acclaimed Oscar winning short film is getting an animated TV adaptation for WarnerMedia's new streaming service. The 12-episode show will be titled *Young Love* and will be based on the

characters in the short. He has had remarkable success with *Hair Love*. He turned his best-selling children's book into an animated film with a record breaking Kickstarter project that raised nearly \$300,000. Now Sony Picture Animation are backing him in the TV series.

SEE A NEW SCENE FROM 'MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH MARRIAGE' <https://vimeo.com/424415579>  
Password: AnnecyFest7



**CARLOS BAENA, A FORMER PIXAR ANIMATOR AND FOUNDER OF ANIMATION MENTOR, IS DIRECTING 'THE TIGER'S APPRENTICE' FOR PARAMOUNT** Carlos Baena, a Pixar animator who worked on *Wall-E* and *Toy Story 3*, is making his feature directing debut with the animated feature *The Tiger's Apprentice*. It is based on the best-selling children's book of the same name. The book was published by HarperCollins in 2003. In it a boy in San Francisco meets a "shape-shifting talking tiger" named Mr. Hu. Under his tutelage and protection he is introduced into a magical world that includes an ancient phoenix, a dragon, and a clan of evil-doers. Paramount has set Feb. 11, 2022 as the release date.

**DISCOVER LYNDA GREER'S EXPERIMENTAL ANIMATION** Lynda is a Bay Area artist who works with an unusual range of techniques and does live performances of her work. See her Viemo page to discover her unusual experimental work. Her work has been performed at the Exploratorium. <https://vimeo.com/lydiagreer>



**'THE MIDNIGHT GOSPEL' PREMIERED APRIL 20 ON NETFLIX AND IT TRIES HARD TO BE TOTALLY TRIPPY** Can you make sense of this published description of this show? "The bohemian Clancy is an earnest inquirer of the human condition. He is also pink, and the owner of an illegal simulator, shaped rather like a giant vagina, that facilitates his investigation of a psychedelic multiverse. *The Midnight Gospel* (on Netflix) is a truly original and truly bizarre collaboration between Pendleton Ward, the animation virtuoso behind *Adventure Time*, and Duncan Trussell, the host of the *Duncan Trussell Family Hour* podcast and the voice of Clancy. In each episode, the philosopher-vagabond Clancy conducts a conversation with guests for his 'spacecast' as they navigate mazes of trippy peril. In one episode, a tiny President, voiced by Dr. Drew Pinsky, protects Clancy from a zombie invasion as they discuss the moralization of drug-taking. In another, a wise bird in a Dantean jail teaches Clancy about Tibetan Buddhism, and about death as 'the relinquishing of the self.' The contrast between substance and image bombards the viewer delightfully; watching the show is like skimming Schopenhauer with a tab on your tongue."

Wikipedia's explanation isn't much better. "*The Midnight Gospel* revolves around a spacecaster (video podcaster in space) named Clancy Gilroy who lives in a dimension called 'The Chromatic Ribbon,' where simulation farmers use powerful bio-computers to simulate universes to harvest technology. Each episode revolves around Clancy's travels through planets within the simulator, with the beings inhabiting these worlds as the guests he interviews for his spacecast. These interviews are based on the real interviews derived from Trussell's podcast, *The Duncan Trussell Family Hour*. The episodes typically end with an apocalyptic event from which Clancy barely manages to escape."



**ALSO TRYING TO BE FAR OUT** The *Hollywood Reporter* calls *Solar Opposites*, “pushing adult, Sci-Fi animation beyond the subversive *Rick and Morty*,” *Solar Opposites* celebrates “the absurdity of four dumb aliens assimilating with a group of shrunken humans trying to survive inside a bedroom wall.” It was created by *Rick and Morty*’s co-creator Justin Roiland,

electron microscope that he built using spare parts from plans published in *Mad Magazine*. When it is over stay tuned for other surreal trips that Vince has created. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIKHdB2r64c>



**A NEW USE FOR ANIMATION ON QUIBI** The short-form content streaming service Quibi now proudly presents an animated *Your Daily Horoscope*. There are 12 new two-minute episodes every weekday, one for each of the 12 Zodiac signs.



**A STOP-MOTION TRIBUTE TO RAY HARRYHAUSEN**

[https://player.vimeo.com/video/433289454?fbclid=IwAR1nTfghbBBq5\\_Vbzt6wE-ItjlibdxXI3zmDuIllfhrG7bGpX-S3ZQx1eIE](https://player.vimeo.com/video/433289454?fbclid=IwAR1nTfghbBBq5_Vbzt6wE-ItjlibdxXI3zmDuIllfhrG7bGpX-S3ZQx1eIE)



**'PETE'S DRAGON' HELMER DAVID LOWERY WILL DIRECT PETER PAN AND WENDY FOR DISNEY** The live action fantasy will star Jude Law as the villainous Captain Hook. It will be a retelling based on Disney’s animated *Peter Pan*, 1953.

**THE RAY HARRYHAUSEN TRIBUTE AT THE RAFAEL CENTER IS ONLINE** The conversation with Phil Tippett, Dennis Muren, Craig Barron and Ben Burt is something fans of Ray’s work should enjoy. <https://rafaelfilm.cafilm.org/harryhausen-home/>

**VINCE COLLINS HAS CREATED ‘NO MORE NORMAL,’ A MOST UNUSUAL CORONA VIRUS EXPERIENCE** His new movie is of course a scientifically accurate work made using plans for an



## PETER JACKSON'S WETA LAUNCHES AN ANIMATION STUDIO

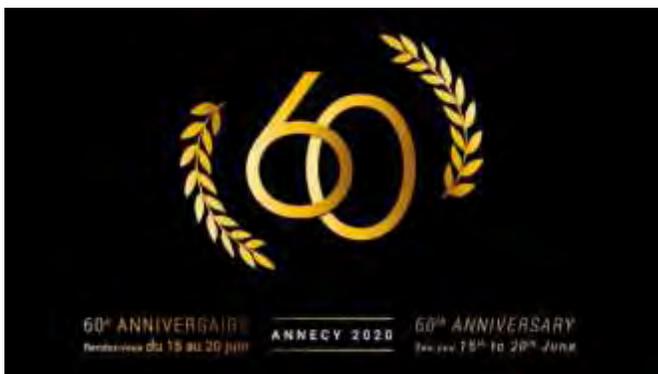
Weta Digital in Wellington, New Zealand has won six visual effects Academy Awards, ten Academy Sci-Tech Awards and six visual effects BAFTA Awards. Notable and upcoming projects include *Avaengers: Infinity Wars*, *Avengers: End Game*, *Game of Thrones*, *Space Force*, *Mulan* and *Black Widow*. Director Peter Jackson and producer Fran Walsh's credits also include *King Kong* (2005 version), *Avatar*, *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* series of features (plus lots of other special effects features). They are expanding to create an animation studio, but they have not yet disclosed details about their proposed projects.



## AARDMAN HAS CREATED AN IMPRESSIVE PSA BASED ON 'CREATURE COMFORTS'

*Creature Discomforts: Life in Lockdown*

<https://www.bornfree.org.uk/>



## ANNECY INTERNATIONAL ANIMATION FESTIVAL ONLINE

15 - 30 June 2020, Annecy, France  
Life on the Couch – Again  
By Nancy Denney-Phelps

I finally finished watching every film and program that Annecy Online had to offer by the end of

the two-week online festival. This is something that I could never possibly do if I were in France. Instead I spent sixteen hours a day on my couch staring at a screen.

Once I figured out how to navigate my way through the system, with much help from my technically savvy husband Nik, everything worked fairly seamlessly. Although a few programs were missing that are important to me such as *The Big Sleep* screening which pays tribute to members of the animation community who have passed away since the previous Annecy, by and large I found the quality of the programs to be quite good this year. I think the addition a couple of years ago of four women to the previously all-male selection committee has led to more balanced programming.



I watched the 37 films in the 5 Short Film Competition programs all in one day. Then I went back and watched many of them a second time over the week. The film that made the greatest impression on me was *The Physics of Sorrow* by Theodore Ushev. Every new film by him that I see makes me think that he can't possibly top this one and then he does. With *The Physics of Sorrow*, the man with a thousand techniques and stories has created a masterpiece.

Theodore's film about Bulgaria's lost generation, empathy, and the end of the world is based on a book by Bulgarian writer Georgi Gospodinov. The book tracks an unknown man's life as he sifts through memories of his youth in Bulgaria through to his increasingly rootless and melancholy adulthood in Canada. I feel like it is difficult to tell where the book ends and Theodore's life begins as they seamlessly meld together.

To tell such a densely layered story he used the encaustic painting technique, better known as hot wax painting. This ancient technique employs heated beeswax with color pigments added. *The Physics of Sorrow* is the first animated film to use this technique.

Ushev's film received the 2020 Annecy Cristal as well as the prestigious *FIPRESCI* International Critics Award. Upon receiving the news that he had

won the Cristal from festival director Marcel Jean at the online Awards Ceremony, the visibly moved animator said “In every profession, there is one award or achievement, which marks a kind of peak. Climbers have their famous peaks, writers, mathematicians and physicists have their Nobel and journalists have their Pulitzer. In animation, this peak is the Grand Prize of the Annecy Festival, or just the Cristal. This is our Everest. Thank you!”

At the National Film Board online press conference, Theodore was asked why do you work in animation? He replied, “I love being the creator of the world”. He is currently in production on his first live-action film. He says that he always works on 5 or 6 projects at once because if one fails there are always more. He certainly has many more worlds to conquer. It will be interesting to see what he will do after a live-action feature. Whatever it is, I am sure that it will be amazing.

The Spanish short film *Carne (Flesh)* is a strong debut film by Camila Kater. In it she shows 5 different women at different stages in their lives. The stories of their relationship with their bodies and how they feel other people see them range from being overweight, menstruation, menopause, and aging. I was particularly struck by a trans woman who spoke frankly about her attempts to come to terms with men who act aggressively toward her. She says that because she has a voluptuous black woman’s body men often turn her into an object of lust.

The 5 story titles are taken from the 5 stages of meat roasting, from rare to well done. Each story is told in a different technique ranging from paint to claymation as well as watercolor and stop-motion to accompany the voice-overs by the women. One segment uses manipulated old black and white 35 mm film footage.

*Hot Flash*, the debut film by Canadian Thea Hollatz, treats a serious topic that concerns every woman with a great deal of humor. A weather forecaster is due to go on the air live on a local television station in the middle of a hot flash.

Thea said that she got the idea for the film when she was thinking about how ineffective oscillating fans are, “They don’t really cut it in desperate times. This sparked the idea of a protagonist in the throes of menopause, trapped indoors during a snow storm and how she might navigate cooling off”. Any woman who has been caught in an embarrassingly funny moment while experiencing a hot flash will relate to this heroine’s plight.

*The Town* is the debut film of Chinese animator Yifan Bao. The film about family and conformity to society’s rules is a complex story that needs its full 27 minutes to unfold. The story revolves around a sister, brother, and their dead mother. The brother and sister

live in a village where social status and happiness are determined by a lottery to select who can have the right to have their face replaced by a mask that gives them “the perfect features”. The sister works in a factory hand carving the masks which are surgically implanted onto “the lucky chosen ones”. This story of a society where your fate is predestined by the actions of your ancestors is beautifully animated with lovely detailed backgrounds.

This year the Feature Film Competition had something for everyone. From giant black cats from outer space attacking earth to a South Korean operetta about Buddhism versus Christianity, it was all there on the screen. Three feature films, *Kill It and Leave This Town*, *The Nose or The Conspiracy of Mavericks* and *My Favorite War*, are right at the top of my favorites list. They are such intriguing and complex films that I watched all three of them twice. That is a total of 7 ½ hours of feature film viewing, but I did not get bored.

*Kill it and Leave This Town* and *The Nose or Conspiracy of Mavericks* were in the Feature Film Competition. They are unique in style and take a good deal of hard work and concentration, but the effort is well worth it.

*Kill It and Leave This Town* by Polish animator Mariusz Wilczynski is an extremely personal film that took 14 years to make. It is certainly not your usual Annecy film! Using paper cut-outs, drawing on lined notebook paper, and various sorts of mixed media techniques, Mariusz, our hero, a self-professed loner, flees from despair after losing those people dearest to him. He hides in a safe land of memories, where time stands still and all those dear to him are still alive.

Born in Lodz, Poland, and growing up in the 1970s, Mariusz was raised by his grandmother and a divorced mother who worked hard to make ends meet and had little time for her son. He has said that making this movie became very therapeutic, giving him the opportunity to finish conversations with his mother and father along with other friends and relatives who have passed away.

He also said that he wanted the movie to be very emotional, but to avoid exhibitionism. “I wanted to be authentic”. For instance, the last conversation with his dying mother in the hospital is “. . . unfortunately almost the way it really happened”.

Mariusz began work on the film by writing the dialogue. Many of the voices that you hear were very elderly when he recorded them, in their 90’s or so, and he knew that he would not have a chance to redo any of the recordings later. The voices are an important cornerstone of the film since they are the actual voices of the grand history of Polish culture. The late theatre and film director Andrzej Wajda, who passed away in 2016, is heard as a man on a train for instance.

The first 7 years Wilczynski worked on the film primarily by himself. Then he realized that if he went on that way it would take him 100 years to complete the project. As a professor at the Lodz Film School many of his students have gone on to win awards worldwide, including at Annecy, so he put together a team of ex-students to help complete the film.

The music for the film was composed and performed by Mariusz's friend Tadeouz Nalepa. The founder of the first Polish blues band, Break Out, Nalepa passed away in 2007; however, he left the filmmaker with tapes of music that had never been heard in public before. This music became the soundtrack for the film and set a perfect tone for the images.

At Annecy *Kill it and Leave This Town* received a Jury Distinction Award. If you have the opportunity to see this film do not miss it. In fact, see it twice!

*The Nose or The Conspiracy of Mavericks* was so rich in visual images and layers of history that I also had to watch it twice. Multi-award-winning Russian director Andrey Khrzhanovsky combined drawings on paper, cutouts, 2D and live-action to create his 90-minute film. He combines historical settings, biographies, and masterpieces from Russian Avant-Garde artists from the era of Stalin's reign of terror in this a delightful, imaginative work of art.

Based in part on the short story *The Nose* by Nikolai Gogol, the film is a study of oppression from the rise of the Russian Avant-Garde, the Soviet Regime, and Stalin's purges of intellectuals. The film plays heavily on the 1928 opera *The Nose* adapted from Gogol's story by Dimitri Shostakovich. It was Shostakovich's first opera.

The story takes place in three separate parts. Beginning with the interior of an airplane where the passengers are all looking at different films from classic Russian cinema to Harry Potter. The first sequence, based on the Gogol story, switches to a social-climbing civil servant who has his nose accidentally cut off by his barber. The nose becomes lost and grows and grows until it is a separate extremely large character. The gigantic nose, and the lack of it, cause the civil servant no end of trouble.

The second setting is at the time of Stalin's regime. The celebrated playwright Mikhail Afanashevich Bulgakov (*The Master and Margarita*, which was published posthumously) dared to write to Joseph to complain that his work is neglected by the official Soviet Russian scene.

The third act again returns to Shostakovich and the extremely harsh review that he received from Pravda (the official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party) when his opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsenk District* premiered in 1935. The opera was

based on a novel by Nikolai Leskov. When Stalin attended a performance of the opera at the Bolshoi Theatre his reaction appeared in an anonymous editorial in Pravda under the heading of "Muddle instead of Music".

Director Khrzhanovsky's love of history and world culture shines through in his films. It was produced at SHAR School Studio as was *Message to Mankind* which won the Special Jury Prize at the Hiroshima International Animation Festival in 1996. You may not catch all the visual puns and jokes in one viewing of the film, but you will get a very entertaining look at a grim period of Russian history. *The Nose or the Conspiracy of Mavericks* received the Jury Award at Annecy this year.

In 2018 Annecy announced a new feature film competition category, the Contrechamp Award. Replacing the Out of Competition Feature Film selection, the award is designed to honor emerging young directors who are making their debut at the festival with their first feature film.



The 2020 Cristal in the Contrechamp category went to *My Favorite War* by Latvian/Norwegian animator Ilze Burkovska Jacobsen. It was also one of my three favorite feature films. Although not as complex as the other two films, it tells a compelling true story.

The 1hour 15-minute film uses paper cut-outs to tell the personal history of Iize who grew up in Latvia from 1970 to 1990 during the Soviet Occupation. It traces her passage to adulthood when she decides to escape the conditioning exercised by an authoritarian and powerful regime. Speaking of the decision to leave Latvia Ilze said "I had to make a choice then – who do I want to become and what do I want to believe in".

Beginning in 1944 the Soviet Union, under the provisions of the 1939 Molotov – Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany which lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union, occupied Latvia. The country's sovereignty was finally fully restored in 1994. The Soviet Union used World War II as an ideological weapon to intimidate and oppress the population during the cold war. When Ilze discovers the remains of a German soldier in her backyard sandbox, she

begins looking for other stories buried underneath the propaganda.

In awarding the Contrechamp Cristal to *My Favorite War* the jury stated, “We were touched by this memoir that is part of a bigger story. It gives a vivid feeling for a young girl growing up and evolving in a small Latvian town during the Soviet occupation. *My Favorite War* teaches the global value of freedom and demonstrates how a very personal story can be of universal interest”.

Given the state the world is in now, this is a very relevant film for all of us. I hope it receives a wide international distribution.

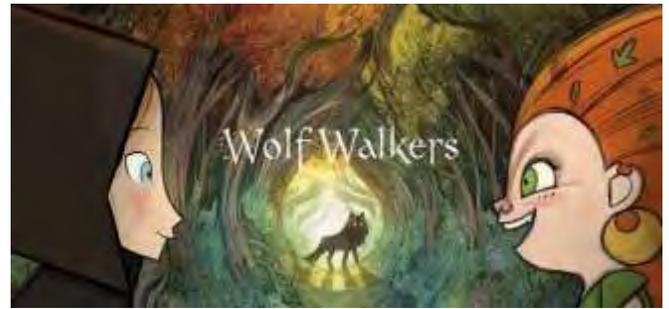


If we couldn't all be together the next best thing were the Work in Progress and Master Class presentations. I am not usually excited about the announcement of a sequel, but when Nick Park and Peter Lord announced that chickens will fly again in a *Chicken Run* sequel, I couldn't help but break into a big smile. The big announcement came on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of the original film.

As we all remember *Chicken Run* was based on *The Great Escape* but *Chicken Run 2* will be more like *Mission Impossible* with the chickens breaking in instead of out. The film will take off not too long after where the first film left off. At the heart of the new film is the next chapter of Ginger's story. With Rocky, and the rest of the flock they find a peaceful bit of paradise far from the dangers of the modern world. She and Rocky have hatched an egg, a little girl named Molly. Like any teenage girl, Molly wants to “fly the coop” and venture out into the world. But back on the mainland, the entire chicken population faces a new and terrible threat. In the first film, Ginger had nothing to lose, now she has everything to lose.

Peter and Nick revealed that all of the chickens from the original film will be back along with some new ones. They said that the idea of a sequel had been in the back of their minds for a long time but they could never quite come up with the right story. Now they have it so it is the right time. *Chicken Run 2* is being storyboarded right now. The film will be directed by Sam Fell (*Flushed Away* and *ParaNorman*).

Aardman is currently shooting *Radio Robin*, a 25 minute Christmas special directed by its creators Dan Ojari and Mikey Please.



Another eagerly awaited film is *Wolf Walkers* from two time Academy Award-nominated director Tomm Moore (*The Secret of Kells* and *Song of the Sea*) and the team at Cartoon Saloon. During their Work in Progress session, the film's co-directors Moore and Ross Stewart along with production designer Maria Pareja, gave the audience a look into *The Wolf Walkers'* world.

Wolves once roamed freely throughout Ireland. During Oliver Cromwell's regime, he offered rewards and bounties which attracted professional wolf hunters to Ireland from England. The film is set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a time of superstition and magic. It follows Robyn Goodfellowe, a young apprentice hunter, who travels to Ireland with her father to wipe out the last wolf pack.

Robyn befriends a free-spirited girl, Mebh, a member of a mysterious tribe rumored to have the ability to transform into wolves by night. As the two girls search for Mebh's missing mother, Robyn uncovers a secret that draws her further into the enchanted world of the *Wolf Walkers* and risks turning into the very thing that her father has come to Ireland to destroy.

Tomm told the audience that the film is based on legends from around Kilkenny, the town where Tomm grew up, and where Cartoon Saloon is located. The wolf walker legend is similar to the myths about werewolves.

Production designer Pareja said that the design of the buildings in the film is based on the actual ancient buildings in Kilkenny. We also learned that it took quite a while to arrive at the final animal designs because Cartoon Saloon has never had such detailed animals in their films before. The wolves' expressions and the way their hair moves when they are running took a lot of work to achieve the perfect effect.

*Wolf Walkers* is now in post-production. It should be released in autumn 2020. From the clip we were shown at the Work in Progress session, it looks like another beautiful film from a studio that is known for creating masterpieces.

I had a hard time imagining what MIFA online would be like but it seems to have been very successful. The film market still offered opportunities to network, discuss co-production possibilities, and for distributors the chance to check out the latest films and secure distribution rights. I did not spend as much time at MIFA On-Line as I normally do at the live version but I did tune in for the MIFA Pitching Sessions.

This year 631 projects were submitted and 38 were selected to be pitched during the sessions. The categories were short films, feature films, television series and specials, and digital experiences. There is also an animation du monde category open to projects from countries with limited production capacities such as Jordan or the Philippines. This year a new category, pitching comics, was inaugurated.

The selected projects not only received free MIFA accreditation, but the participants also attended a day-long workshop to learn pitching skills. An added plus is that the pitchers got feedback from a panel of professionals along with the opportunity to have prospective investors see their work. They also vied for 15 partner prizes. These ranged from the Arte France Prize of the pre-purchase of a short film to be broadcast on Court-Circuit, an Arte short film program, to a feature film Ciclic Prize of 25,000 Euros along with a 2-month residency at Vendome. You can find out all the winning projects along with a list of all the prizes by going to: [Annecy.org](http://Annecy.org) then click onto MIFA and go to MIFA pitches.

The annual Women in Animation Virtual Summit at Annecy chose *Reimagining the Future: Race, Solidarity, and the Culture of Work* as its theme. The day-long summit covered two topics that affect us all, the pandemic and the recently reinvigorated global call for social justice and their momentous effects on the animation industry.

Following a short welcoming speech from WIA President Marge Dean, the first 70-minute panel discussion was *Black Women in Animation: Looking to the Future*. Led by moderator Jamal Joseph, Film Professor at Columbia University the panel consisted of Jade Branion, writer; Camille Eden, Vice President of Animation Recruitment and Talent Development at Nickelodeon Animation Studio; Misan Sagay, Netflix writer; and Karen Rupert Toliver, Executive Vice President of Creative Sony Pictures Animation.

Along with sharing personal stories and experiences, the ladies addressed what it means to be colorblind versus color affirmative, the importance of finding a voice on both the executive and creative sides, and the power of animation to make an impact, given the freedom of imagination to create a more ideal and representational world. This very thought-provoking discussion left me thinking about what direction animation will take in the future, not just in

presenting role models of all nationalities in children's programming but in adult animation as well.

The other two panel discussions dealt with *Intersectionality and Solidarity* and *Producing in a Rapidly Changing World*. A series of *Home Studio Visits*, a collection of pre-recorded clips offering a glimpse into the workspaces of women in animation from around the world, were shown. With over 60 different visits to select from it was lovely to get a glimpse into the working lives of so many different women from every branch of the animation industry.

One visit was with Joanna Quinn who is waiting for the quarantine to end so that she and her partner Les Mills can go to Montreal to finish the post-production on her latest Beryl film at the NFB. There were also executive producers, 3D camera artists, and CG supervisors, and many others. You can still see the entire 2020 Online Summit and learn how to become part of Women in Animation at: [womeninanimation.org](http://womeninanimation.org)

Annecy Online offered more than 200 films, 32 meetings and 40 MIFA events with 15,570 accreditations from 111 countries. Congratulations to every member of the festival and MIFA staff. You pulled off an amazing feat in such a short time. I want to give a special thank you to Laurence Ythier and everyone in the press office for all of your hard work. You all did such a wonderful job of keeping me informed about special events that I should not miss.

I realize that we all feel that nothing can match the experience of watching films on a big screen with other people not to mention the socializing with friends, but when that is impossible Annecy Online was the next best thing. Hopefully next year we will all be back at the lake to finally celebrate Annecy's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and a salute to African animation. The dates for 2021 are 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June. Hope to see you there.



**ANNECY ONLINE WAS AN OUTSTANDING EXPERIENCE!** BY DAVID CHAI, David heads San Jose State's animation program. Several of my colleagues and I joined a group of incoming new students, current students, and alumni and agreed to take a virtual trip to the festival. We met on Zoom the night before it started and gave a Powerpoint presentation describing what our international trips are like and sharing information about the festival and the city. We then met every morning at 9:55 am for a different short

program, sometimes with croissants or a baguette for breakfast, and then pushed our play buttons at the same time. Afterwards, we turned our Zoom cameras back on and assigned a different student to act as the moderator to discuss the films as a group. The shared perspectives were very insightful and enlightening. And I found the discussions to be much more rewarding than ones we have at the actual festivals, which are sometimes held on a bus, the sidewalk in line for the next screening, or at a table in a crowded, noisy bar. We also recorded the video discussions for the students who couldn't join a particular screening. And on several evenings, we met up for a feature or to catch one of the short programs that we couldn't fit in the mornings.

There were too many great films to list. But I ended up watching 158 shorts and 2 features, which came out to cost only 10.625 cents per film! The best \$17 I ever spent!

For those who can't afford the cost of attending in person, this was a wonderful alternative. And in some ways, it was even better. I never would have been able to bring a group of this size to a festival. But online, the students were able to experience these beautiful films they would never have seen otherwise. Plus getting to spend time together each day and know each other better was a real treat. I hope they continue to offer this option every year. And I'm already ready to "go" to Ottawa this fall (online)!



## **MOVE SUMMIT, SCOTLAND'S PREMIER ANIMATION GATHERING**

**February 19-21, 2020, Edinburgh, Scotland by Nancy Denney-Phelps**

For the second year in a row, I had the honor to participate in MOVE Summit. I delivered a paper and participated in the peer review process. I also really enjoyed teaching a session on pitching techniques.

MOVE is just as inspiring for the guests as it is for the audience. Not only do I come away

knowing much more about the Scottish animation industry, but I also get to listen to conversations with internationally renowned figures in the animation world. The symposium brings together creatives from film, television, advertising, games, and the visual arts.

From its humble beginnings in 2017 as a one-day event attended by 240 people, MOVE Summit has grown into a major event on the Scottish animation calendar with roughly 1,000 participants this year. There were as many as five separate rooms filled to capacity with workshops and presentations in the Pleasance Compound. This historic compound is also one of the main venues of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and it derives its name from the Scottish word pleasance, meaning a park or garden.

The first day of the symposium was Emerging Talent Day, devoted to college and university students from throughout Scotland along with their course leaders. The morning got off to a rousing start when Pixar Graphic Art Director Craig Foster took to the stage to talk about how *It's All in the Details*.



Craig joined Pixar in 2004 as a graphic designer on *The Incredibles* and has worked on nearly every Pixar feature since, including *Toy Story 4*. His attention to detail was obvious as he spoke about how, just like in real life, everything in a film, down to the tiniest detail, has a story. He and the team that he works with do extensive research to make sure that the label of every can in a kitchen cupboard, everything in an antique shop, is accurate and believable down to the smallest detail.

Craig told the packed audience that "by building in rich detail into all of the things that you see on screen, we (at Pixar) are making the world

more believable and authentic, so that you the viewer can relax a little and accept that you're not watching a movie about toys that talk, but rather are being led into this hidden world and going on an adventure right alongside the characters". He emphasized that this concept weaves itself into all aspects of Pixar films. To illustrate his points, Craig showed us close-ups of objects in the antique shop sequence from the then not released *Toy Story 4*.

On Thursday Foster's presentation was titled *Behind the Lamp*. For this talk he gave the audience a look at his career and told how he ended up at Pixar. He is a very entertaining speaker who liberally peppered his talks with numerous pictures which made them extremely entertaining presentations. Craig was kept busy during his visit to MOVE. Along with his two talks he also gave a workshop about art direction for the screen.

I enjoy being part of Emerging Talent Day. The room seemed to throb with energy, crowded with young people eager to soak up knowledge. My contribution to the day was my talk on *How to Pitch Your Animation Idea*. It was exactly what the title suggested. Beginning with how to structure your presentation, I stressed the importance of visuals such as a storyboard, puppet, etc. I also gave basic common sense tips that beginners often seem to forget such as don't turn your back on the audience and talk when you put a visual on the screen.



Students at work on The Creative Challenge

My presentation was followed by the *Creative Challenge*. Students were asked to form into groups, preferably with people that they did not know. Working together in these groups they had to create a pitch for an animated television series that filled an untapped niche in the market. They were

given 1 ½ hours to come up with an idea and create a pitch and visuals. Then each group took to the stage to give their pitch to the audience. During their working time, professionals circulated between the different groups to get them back on track if a group seemed to be stuck. It was very rewarding to see the students go from their initial reaction of "oh no, I can't do that" to being proud of what they had accomplished in a short period of time.

As well as my work with the students I gave another presentation on the final day of the summit. *Breaking the Celluloid Ceiling* was about the present state of women in the animation industry. Although things are slowly getting better there is still a long way to go to achieve equality. I am happy to note that MOVE has achieved almost 50/50 representation in the gender of its speakers. It is also nice to note that of the three directors of the festival two of them are women.

MOVE Strategic Director Caroline Parkinson is also a freelance consultant currently on contract as section leader for Creative Industries with the University of Edinburgh's Data Driven Innovation Program. Lucy Teire, Summit Curation Director, in her other life is Head of Production at Interference Pattern Animation Studio in Edinburgh. Last but not least is Tom Bryant. He is the Operations and Finance Director of MOVE as well as a co-founding member of MOVE Summit. Tom is also the founder and Managing Director of the Edinburgh based animation and visual effects studio Interference Pattern.

One of the most entertaining and informative presentations was given by James Baxter, Director of Character Design at Netflix. He used the entire stage to demonstrate *My Top Five Animation Tips*. They are:

1. The only sin that you can commit is to fail to communicate.
2. Performance – Pose big, strong, and crisp. Acting is behaving truthfully under imaginary circumstances.
3. Timing and Spacing – How you are relating a movement to the next one is vitally important.
4. Inertia – How the world really moves.
5. For a more realistic performance, weight and balance must be a major focus to get right.

British born James certainly knows what he is talking about. He left college after 2 years to

work on *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* in London. He then moved to California to work at Disney as the Supervising Animator on such classic characters as Rafiki in *The Lion King*. As well as having his own studio, he also worked at Dreamworks before joining Netflix.

His other session was a live animation class on Emerging Talent Day. The full audience of students was treated to James taking them through making a character move step by step. As he talked and demonstrated his technique, he and his drawing board were projected onto the big screen behind him so we would not miss seeing the smallest detail of his work.

I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know Chris Musselwhite and Paul Hambin of Treehouse Digital in Bournemouth, England. As well as being great fun to hang out with, their MOVE presentation on *Visual Production Using LED screens and the Unreal Engine* was fascinating.

Saying that I am not a technical person is a vast understatement, so I was afraid that I would not understand a word that they were saying. Instead, I found their presentation totally fascinating. First, I learned that the Unreal Engine is an advanced real-time 3D creation tool.

The example that the pair used was a car crash scene that they shot for *The Biker*, a series that is in production. As Chris later explained to me, “We shot *The Biker* car crash sequence against a large LED screen background displaying a moving environment we built and ran in the Unreal Engine from Epic Games. Our car, bike, and characters were all the live-action foreground elements.”

“Using the screen is great for capturing your effects directly in-camera by eliminating long hours in post VFX” he said. “This is helped by the screens actually lighting the live-action assets and actors which makes for a much more immersive environment and again saves hours of post lighting in VFX. The live-action foreground assets add the depth that really helps sell the look and this extends to the use of set extensions that the actors interact with, e.g. they may be sitting on a rock against a rocky hillside environment or climbing the first couple of steps on a thousand step pyramid.”

Chris went on to enumerate some of the advantages such as they can shoot a sunset all day long, the LED screens make perfect green screens at the touch of a button, and they can shoot in any landscape which might otherwise be inaccessible, dangerous, or just pure make-believe.

As for other advantages, he said “As far as rendering goes, changes can be made in real-time so no more rendering and hoping that it looks good. For example, if the director wants to change the position of an assist in the environment it takes seconds!”

“By combining real-time rendering, LED’s, and advanced camera tracking, the background perspective shifts relative to the camera’s view,” According to Chris. “This means that the background looks and acts like reality: a moving parallax shifting thing of beauty!”

He went on to say “Lastly and possibly the most exciting for us at Treehouse is the process of combining miniature models and set extensions with the more advanced technologies. This delivers an incredibly awesome look and feel. It really sells the reality of anything that you can imagine up! Our mantra at Treehouse is “Old Tricks, New Tools.”

You can watch a behind the scenes video about the making of *The Biker* car crash scene at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N05t5eLER> A and <http://youtu.be/wM5ZOsFluEM>



MOVE is a platform for anything and everything to do with animation from the highly technical to model making. A special treat was the Ray and Diana Harryhausen Foundation Collections Manager Connor Heaney’s presentation *Celebrating 100 Years of Stop-Motion Magic*. It was as informative as it was entertaining.

When he passed away in 2013 he left his collection which includes all of his film-related artifacts to the Ray and Diane Harryhausen Foundation (established in 1986). The foundation looks after his extensive collection and furthers the art of model stop-motion animation. Ray’s wife Diane had strong ties to Scotland and was the great-granddaughter of the legendary Scottish explorer David Livingstone so the foundation is

located in Edinburgh. Foundation Collections Manager Connor Heaney gave a presentation at MOVE titled *Celebrating 100 Years of Stop-Motion Magic*. 2020 is Ray's centenary and the foundation is planning a series of special commemorative events to celebrate the occasion. The largest exhibition of Harryhausen's work ever put on display titled *Ray Harryhausen – Titan of Cinema* will be mounted at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art this summer. Unfortunately, as of this writing, the opening date is uncertain because of the quarantine we are all experiencing.

During Ray's lifetime, he threw almost nothing away so the foundation's collection contains a treasure trove of over 50,000 items. These include his original models with armatures, hard rubber stand-in models, armatures, original models, artwork, miniatures, stills, and negatives, as well as his original equipment. There is also paperwork, screenplays, various tests, and dailies footage.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a book titled *Ray Harryhausen – Titan of Cinema* written by his daughter Vanessa Harryhausen will be published. In this memoir, she selects 100 creatures and objects that are most memorable to her as well as relating her personal memories growing up with the master of stop-motion puppets. Vanessa, who is one of the foundation trustees remembers that "Growing up around dad's fabulous creatures was just everyday life for me. I even had the T-Rex Gwangi in my dolls pram". Learn more about the foundation, exhibition, and to order *Ray Harryhausen – Titan of Cinema* at: [www.rayharryhausen.com](http://www.rayharryhausen.com)

Along with the numerous talks, presentations, and workshops there was an Exhibition Hall where you could try out VR demonstrations, and visit the recruitment desks for Axis, Blue Zoo, Industrial Light and Magic, Interference Pattern, and Heehaw. Creative Europe Media, the European Union's support program for the film, television, and digital media industries was there. There was also a display case with some of Ray Harryhausen's models.

One of my favorite parts of MOVE is participating in the Creative Portfolio Reviews. Students and recent graduates can sign up for one on one meetings with many of the speakers at the summit. The students seek advice on all matter of things from career opportunities to a review of their portfolios. Sometimes they just want the

opportunity to talk more to a speaker about their presentation. This year the Creative Review was expanded to cover all three days of the summit. I feel it is a privilege to take part in the Creative Review process.

The MOVE Summit team is well organized and takes excellent care of their guests. Lunches were in a beautiful former church which is now a performance space close by the Pleasance. One evening there was a dinner with a speaker at an Indian restaurant and on another night Drink and Draw was held at a local pub. For the closing night party, we took over yet another pub.

Learn more about the summit at: <https://ti.to/move-summit/move-summit-2020/en>



**Signe Baumann's Work-in-Progress "My Love Affair With Marriage"** for Annecy International Animated Festival:

<https://vimeo.com/424415579>. The password is: AnnecyFest7

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

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