

Stop Motion

Magazine

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THIS ISSUE:

Harry Walton
-The Unsung Hero

Stop Motion Magazine™

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Letter from the Editor:

By John Ikuma

This issue was a major challenge in the fact that it almost didn't happen. That's right, you heard correctly. Even though I put together this publication every two months, the amount of work it takes to achieve such a thing is still a major task add to that a bunch of animation I need to get rocking on and balancing all that with a family. It makes for a very tight schedule.

I first would greatly like to thank Mr. Harry Walton for contributing his time and energy to making this issue happen. The title of his article is labeled with "Unsung Hero" and I feel I must explain this. Many people around the world including myself often attribute a character, or shot, or even a movie to one persons efforts. But in reality it takes many people to get through a single project especially in the field of major motion picture productions. Harry Walton has done so much animation in the field of visual effects with most of the work being in Stop Motion and Optical Effects area and he is easily one of the worlds living masters of this field.

I would also like to thank Audrey Holand for allowing us to venture into her world an get to know her work better. You should definitely take a look and can see her work on Indieflix.com. The Snow Princess will also be playing at the Stop Motion Magazine Film Festival August 28th 2010.

Anyway, got to get back to animating.

All the Best
John Ikuma

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\$9.99 MOVIE REVIEW

By Pike Baker

\$9.99 is an odd film in the fact that it's so far out there and that there is some kind of moral story but yet leaves you questioning the message and clamoring for more. When I watched the film for the first time I was in amazement at how real the sets looked and how twisted and distorted the puppets felt against their environment. It occurs to me now that this must be part of the message that director Tatia Rosenthal intended. The characters in the film seem so uneasy with themselves and the world they live in. Each puppet looks like it's painted with broad strokes of oil paint while they exist in this perfectly modeled world. This aspect makes it truly beautiful and can at times give the sense that you are observing their world and not being a part of it. Which is very similar to going to a gallery and looking at fine art paintings, you see them but are you truly looking at them?

This film is extremely philosophical and visually unique. It leaves you questioning everything with in the film and quite possibly in your own life. There are some adult moments in this film which leads me to say that I wouldn't recommend children viewing it. But I would highly suggest anyone interested in the art of stop motion to watch it numerous times due to the level of detail and complexity of the sets. The puppet design was very unique and in a sense poetic with its moments of striking paint strokes to their smooth but textured appearance. Overall a great film and I can't wait to see what Tatia does next.

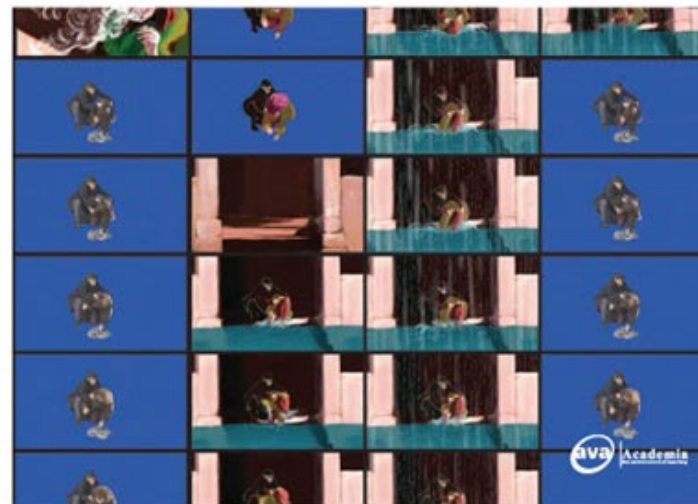
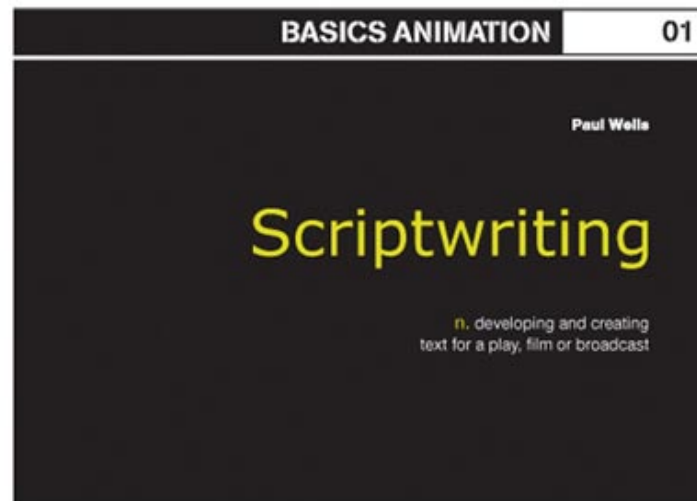
Basics Animation: Scriptwriting by Paul Wells

Book Review by Melissa Piekaar

Basics Animation: Scriptwriting is part of a very helpful series of handbooks by AVA publishing that is geared toward animators, which includes volumes on stop-motion, animation production, and performance. In this volume, scriptwriting for animation is examined in thorough, scholarly detail. Author Paul Wells asserts that animation writers must not only master traditional (live action) screenwriting skills, but also have an acute vision of how the story will be communicated via a specific animation genre (computer generated, stop-motion, etc.) He provides constructive, explicit detail on the unique issues that animated screenwriting encounters, and states that animation is not merely a genre of filmmaking, but its own unique language of expression, with its own unique artistic considerations.

Animation as an artform has its own genres (3D, hand-drawn, stop-motion, etc) and the animation writer must consider the specific genre in-depth during the writing process in order to know how to write the script. As in any scriptwriting, the animation writer must also know exactly who the intended audience is. Wells explains that the animation writer must be extremely visually imaginative, since the more subtle facial expressions, body language and other visual cues used by actors in live action filmmaking do not read well in animation. The animation writer must understand how to deliver the story visually, in an explicit and concise manner.

The book itself is arranged methodically with prominent chapter headings and section introductions for ease of reference. Examples (mostly from modern, working animators) and script extracts help demonstrate the points covered in the text and highlight core ideas (and inspiration). Wells explores and uses examples from all animation genres and also the language possible within those genres, including experimental, abstract, and even commercial animation. This book is a must-have for the independent animator's bookshelf.





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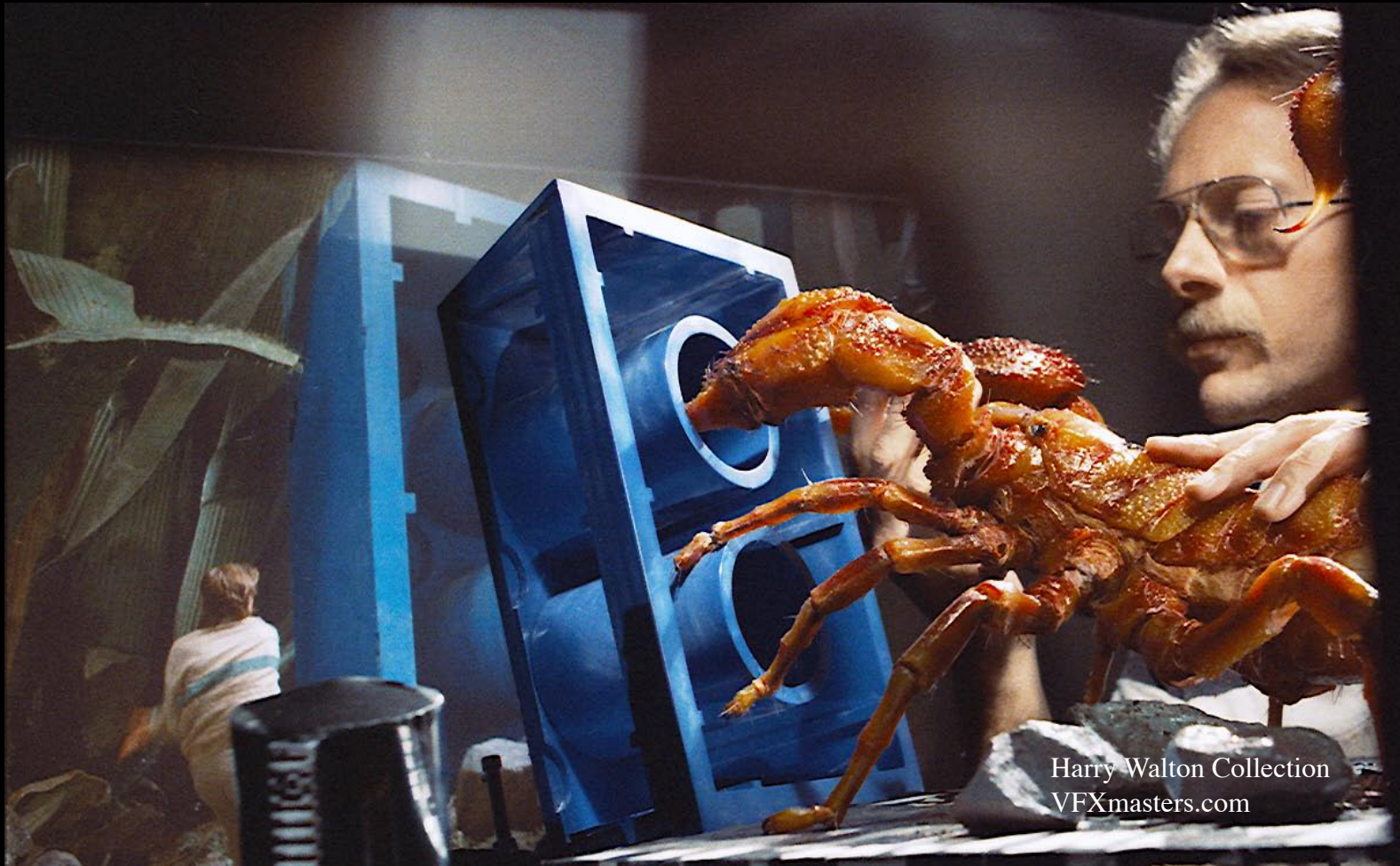
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HARRY WALTON

The Unsung Hero



Harry Walton Collection
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GoldenChild_v22 – Harry Walton at the ILM stop motion/go motion stage in San Rafael, Marin County. I am animating Sardo for the movie THE GOLDEN CHILD, circa 1986.



Davey&Goliath_v08 – Harry Walton at left and Peter Kleinow at right. This is at Clokey Prods. in Glendora, CA circa 1968.

Many times in television and film, craftsmen and artists stay within the boundaries of their chosen field. But some individuals stray from the narrow path of their profession and broaden their reach and understanding by practicing and studying other forms and techniques related to their field.

Harry Walton is one of those individuals who has become a Master Animator in both Stop Motion and CGI along with becoming a well defined and inspirational Matte Painter and Optical Effects Artist. His resume stretches across the spectrum of legendary Stop Motion Productions, like “Gumby”, “Robocop”, “Willow”, “Honey I Shrunk the Kids”, “James and the Giant Peach”, and “A Nightmare Before Christmas”, just to name a few, while his matte painting and optical effects work can be seen in the films “The Fantasy Films of George Pal”, and “Indian Jones and the Last Crusade” along with a contributing optical effects and animation to a large array of commercials and movies.

He’s animated so many legendary characters and yet is still somewhat of an unsung hero. For example he animated the dragon in “Willow”, the Evil Robot in “Robocop”, and the Scorpion in “Honey I Shrunk the Kids”. He’s both an inspiration and a legend. Currently Harry just wrapped up work as one of the CGI animators on the remake of the feature film cult classic “Piranha”.

Harry was kind enough to allow us to interview him about his career and what follows is a wonderful and inspiring interview.

To see the full list of his work along with some amazing photographs from his career please checkout www.vfxmasters.com.



DoBoy_v01 – Harry Walton animating the DoBoy at CPC Associates circa 1981.



DoBoy_v23 – Harry Walton animating the “belly poke” at Cascade Pictures on Stage 6 in Hollywood circa 1972.

SMM: How did you get into stop motion?

Harry Walton: I started in my first year of High School in 1962 or 63. I was doing home movies and experiments on the weekends with the neighborhood kids, grabbing wads of clay and making little creatures. My first movie camera that I had was a Kodak Brownie that wasn't even mine. I borrowed it from a neighbor. I shot some stop motion animation with it. Of course it didn't have a single frame button on it. It was for shooting live action so I would have to press the button and let it go really fast. If I was lucky I would only get two frames. But mostly it was only three frames at a time.

So I did a lot of experiments with animation. I went to a lot of movies on the weekends. You know science fiction and monster related movies with my brother and neighborhood kids. I did that all through high school. At about two years out of high school I had my movies and I found out where Clokey Productions was in Glendale, which wasn't far from where I lived in West Covina at the time. I took my movies down there and it was my first professional film job in 1968 working on Gumby along with Davey and Goliath.

SMM: When did you start using ball-in-socket armatures?

Harry Walton: That was at Clokey Productions. When I first started there they were just finishing up on the last three Gumby episodes. Actually I didn't do any animation on those episodes, I was building little props. When that finished Davey and Goliath started. Of course those were Metal Armatures with Foam Rubber casted characters.



DoBoy_v63 – Harry Walton with the DoBoy and the “belly poke” replacement series at Gene Warren’s Excelsior! Animated Moving Pictures in Hollywood circa 1971.



MeteorMan_v01 – Harry Walton animating the star of the movie THE METEOR MAN at ILM’s Vistacruiser stage circa 1992.

SMM: What was the first feature that you worked on?

Harry Walton: Before I worked at Excelsior I assisted Rick Baker and Doug Beswick on a movie called Octaman which was Rick’s first suit that he ever made. But I never really listed that in my credits as the first movie since I was assisting him. I consider the first movie The Legend of Hillbilly John at Excelsior which was about 1971-72.

SMM: Is there a film that you did stop motion on that stands out more than others?

Harry Walton: Probably Young Sherlock Holmes because that was at ILM and it was my first job there and I did the whole Harpy sequence. I worked on that with Dennis. It was a special because of the history going back. Dennis had asked me to work on the first Star Wars which I turned down. I said to him “I’m not going to leave Excelsior, where I’ve worked for 7 years to go work on some science fiction movie that you tell me might only last for a few months and I don’t even know who this Director (George Lucas) is”. So I turned that down and then I turned down working on Empire Strikes Back for other various reasons. Because of all that I always had this thought in my mind about working someday at ILM because I had turned these jobs down with all these years going by. I had always pictured in my mind what ILM looked like because I heard all this stuff about it. I finally said yes when Dennis called about working on Young Sherlock Holmes. Going up there was really cool. I couldn’t believe I had finally made it there.

Just that whole situation made that movie and my whole experience there really special.



HelpingHand_v32 – Harry Walton setting up for a stop motion shot of the Hamburger Helper at Gene Warren's Excelsior! A.M.P. in Hollywood. I also designed and built this stop motion character.



HowardTheDuck_v08 – Harry Walton at left and Phil Tippett at right circa 1986 at the ILM stop motion/go motion stage. I am assisting Phil by animating the tail while he animates the rest of the "duck monster".

SMM: Having worked on the first three RoboCop's you most likely have a great understanding of movement with mechanical machine style puppets. Can you tell us the difference there may be in animating a robot versus animating a humanoid creature?

Harry Walton: Well the difference is of course there are very different moves. You're kind of doing robotic mechanical moves. Even though there are those differences there are also similarities because you are putting in human characteristics, even in a robot like Cain. There are similarities and differences. The main thing is giving it more of a mechanical feel as opposed to an organic feel.

SMM: Did you animate the ED-209 gun robot in RoboCop?

Harry Walton: We had two setups going on that film. Phil Tippet was doing his own setups and animation. I was making process setups for Randy Dutra and he would animate those shots. I actually setup and animated the stairwell sequence where the ED-209 falls down and is on his back that was my animation and my setup. That's how the shots were broken down for that film.

SMM: How would you describe your feeling towards stop motion having been such a legendary animator? Has your view changed at all since CGI has come into existence, or do you have a different feeling about how visual effects should be done?

Harry Walton: I miss stop motion and everything about it. Having the actual physical sets, the backings, working with the lights and cameras, setting up the shots, handling the characters, and doing process work and optical work.



LOTL_v292 – Harry Walton animating Emily for the LAND OF THE LOST tv series at Gene Warren's Excelsior!, circa 1974.



MagicChef_v27 – Harry Walton setting up this “Dynamation” shot for a Magic Chef commercial. I designed and built this character for CPC Associates circa 1982.

Harry Walton (cont.) - It's just such a huge world of difference working in that medium as opposed to CG Animation. I don't think you could ever use stop motion for a realistic creature nowadays in a big budget motion picture. But stop motion certainly still has its place, especially for stylized animated features or shorts which are still being done. But in CG animation a lot of the stop motion skills or even the 2D cartoon skills carry over, using the same artistic skills to give performances.

SMM: As a stop motion animator did you work long days and nights animating?

Harry Walton: In my younger days, especially like at Excelsior they always seemed to have tight schedules on the stuff we were working on there. I would work sometimes 24hours straight. I'd come in at 9 in the morning and then finish 9 or 10 in the morning the next day on a shot. Probably I would come home 11 o'clock or 12 midnight most nights when I worked at Excelsior.

SMM: What was the last stop motion job you worked on?

Harry Walton: Well the last that you might say of any notoriety was The Nightmare Before Christmas. But then when I came back down here (Los Angeles, California) at the end of 1993 I did one last little stop motion thing. It was a Thrifty car commercial where I animated some flying pterodactyls that I did in my garage.

SMM: Do you remember what format you filmed that commercial on?



Mdtwins_v25 – Harry Walton animating the twins at Cascade's Stage 6 when it became CPC Associates circa 1978.



Mdtwins_v28 – Tom Scherman at left and Harry Walton at right, circa 1979. Tom and I are setting up this stop motion set for another MD Tissue commercial at CPC in Hollywood. Tom is building the set and trees and I painted the background sky and trees and I am lighting the set.

Harry Walton: I used my Standard 35mm Mitchell movie camera. I was working at Dream Quest Images at the time in Simi Valley and this commercial came up and they asked me to do it on the side, so I did the animation in my garage. Set up the green screen and a movie camera, a little flying rig for the pterodactyls and comp'd it into the live action scene.

SMM: Do you remember how long it took you?

Harry Walton: Oh yeah it wasn't too long. It was probably about two weeks at the most.

SMM: What did you make the pterodactyls out of?

Harry Walton: Actually, I didn't make the pterodactyls Thomas Dickens made them. He was a stop motion guy and we wound up working at Sony Image Works together. He got the job of making the pterodactyls through Dream Quest and then he gave them to me and I animated them.

SMM: How big was your garage at the time?

Harry Walton: We had a 4 car garage at our house in Simi Valley. But I was just using one of the car stalls for this.

SMM: What interested you about getting into stop motion?



MeteorMan_v01 – Harry Walton animating the star of the movie THE METEOR MAN at ILM's Vistacruiser stage circa 1992.



NBC_v04 – Harry Walton animating Jack Skellington for the movie THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS at Skellington Prods. in San Francisco circa 1993.

Harry Walton: From 7 or 8 years old I was interested in science fiction movies, monster movies, super heroes. Growing up as a kid in the 50's, I'd watch the George Reeves Superman on television. Of course seeing King Kong and Mighty Joe Young and Seventh Voyage of Sinbad and all the Ray Harryhausen Films, those are my inspiration. When I started out I didn't know how that stuff was done, but I figured out how to do makeup from looking at Famous Monsters magazine and I would do makeup. I would makeup my brother and the neighborhood kids on the weekend and take pictures of them. I'd make them up like Frankenstein, Dracula, and all these creatures and stuff. So I kind of started out doing makeup stuff.

Rick Baker and I went to the same High school. I had a mold I was doing for my art class of the mooncalf from First Men in the Moon. I left my mold up on the shelf and then Rick Baker had the same art class but a different hour of the day and he saw my mold up there. He asked the teacher "Hey! Who made that mold that's the kind of stuff I'm interested in doing!" So our art teacher got us together and that's how we met in something like 1965 or so. I would go over to Rick's house when we were in high school, almost every weekend and he would do makeup experiments on me, making all these masks and stuff. So I got all these photos of Rick's early masks. That's kind of where I started doing all this makeup stuff.

Then when I was older and a little more inquisitive I kept looking at Famous Monsters magazines and looking at the pictures. They never really described that much how stuff was done, not like the Cinefex magazines nowadays which tell you how everything was done. I would kind of figure out through doing experiments along with talking to friends Rick Baker, Doug Beswick. So it kind of just bloomed and blossomed from there. I figured out how to do animation and build characters, even doing early 8mm rear projection stuff.



Robocop_v06 – Phil Tippett at left and Harry Walton at right circa 1987 at Phil's studio in Berkeley for ROBOCOP. We are setting up for the stairwell sequence.



Robocop2_v07 – Harry Walton animating Cain at Phil Tippett's Studio circa 1989 for ROBOCOP 2. I did all my own "Dynamation" set ups and other optical duties as well.

Harry Walton (Cont.) - I was just very influenced by Harryhausen and all those movies. Especially the 50's, I love the 50's science fiction and horror films. The 50's were such a prolific decade for those movies. The Tarantula and Spider, Seventh Voyage of Sinbad and all those great movies of the 50's.

SMM: How did the different types of directors you worked with in the past effect the stop motion/live action films you've worked on? Did they understand the process of stop motion and visual effects?

Harry Walton: It's a big mixture. There were some directors that weren't stop motion animators that were very savvy about the animation and had a good understanding. They had the correct expectations about what could be done with in a certain budget and time. I've worked with ones that totally had no clue at all and ones that were very in tune with the stop motion techniques and what was possible.

SMM: DO you think that Monster Effects using Stop Motion has a place in independent movies?

Harry Walton: Sure, if you can get a really top notch artist like Jim Danforth. I can look back at Phil Tippett's Dragonslayer, especially the sequence where the dragon was in the cave. Everything was great about that. Not just the animation but the composition of the shots and the lighting. I could see some shots like that working today in a big movie, but in a limited fashion. Certainly if you had a really good artist you could achieve a very high quality for an indie film.



UglyBird_v11 – Harry Walton constructing the “ugly bird” stop motion puppet for the movie THE LEGEND OF HILL-BILLY JOHN. This was for Gene Warren’s Excelsior! circa 1970.

Willow_v05 – Harry Walton animating the two-headed Eborsisk dragon at ILM, circa 1988. This is a “Dynamation” shot utilizing VistaVision masked plates.

CG has allowed so many people to get into the business and do this work. Mostly because the computer does so much of the hard work for you. Not to take away the fact that there are great CG artists that when they lend their hand to the computer the creation of CG images, they have the eye and the skill to produce something very realistic or a great animation or whatever they are striving for. The point I’m making is that this is what CG has allowed people to do, whereas before CG if you wanted to be a Stop Motion Animator or VFX person you had to learn all these techniques and do stuff by hand, along with learn all these little tricks and put stuff together, how to make things with very little money, or if you had a lot of money, you can do things on a large budget. You had to build stuff and figure things out using mathematics. There was so much stuff that you had to learn and you could only learn by being on a job and being an apprentice. It just took years and years to develop all these skills. Where as all this stuff is packaged up in software program and you load it into a computer, sort of. That has allowed people to do things that could take you years and years to learn, to just learn it very quickly. It’s just a whole different world and it’s incredible.

When we were doing stop motion stuff in the 70’s there was just literally a dozen of us in Hollywood that was it. Now there are thousands of animators.

I actually feel sorry for people that are CG artists now days. Especially the ones that don’t know the old techniques or have never experienced ever doing any traditional stuff. I think they are sort of at a slight disadvantage, because there is so much that you can use of the old skills that you develop that you can bring into the CG world. It’s a way of thinking too. Processing and figuring out how to do stuff. Because if you use cameras and understand how lenses work and depth of field and focus and all that stuff it all applies, as well as a lot of other stuff to the CG world. A lot of people just don’t know that.

SMM: Did you ever animate water using stop motion?

Harry Walton: I did a little bit at Clokey's using Saran-wrap. Just very minimal stuff. But you know who was really good at doing stuff was Sneaky Pete Kleinow. He did a lot of animated water stuff by animating Saran-wrap.

SMM: Since you now work in CG have you stopped making art with your hands?

Harry Walton: No, I love painting. My other love in this field was matte shots and matte painting. I've done a lot of matte paint work. So I've carried that into doing fine art paintings. I like painting landscapes and sea scapes.

SMM: Have you ever wanted to go back to stop motion and do a short film?

Harry Walton: I've always thought about it. But it would kind of be a big deal. If I got money or something to do it I would. But just to do it for fun I probably wouldn't because I've gotten rid of most of my stuff. I don't have the machine shop anymore. I got some armature parts but I got rid of my foam injector and all the foam kit stuff. If there was a budget or something I would do something if it was a neat idea.



YoungSherlockHolmes_v07 -
This was my first job at ILM
in 1985. I animated the entire
happy sequence. Dennis Muren
and I went to the San Francisco
Zoo and shot reference footage
of some parrots flying.

-End

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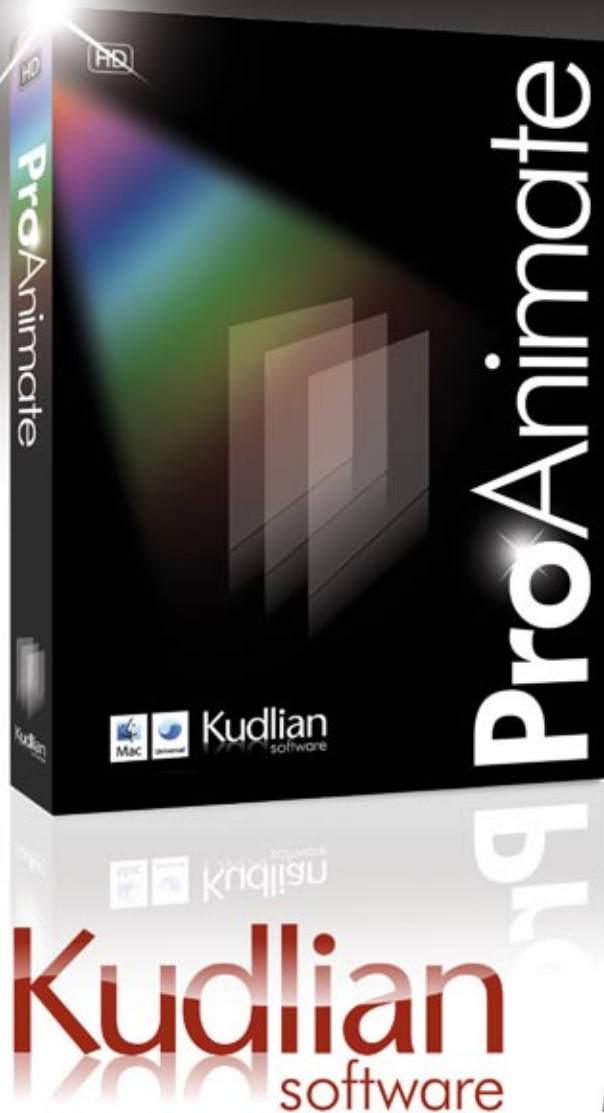
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The Snow Princess

A Film By

Audrey Holland

Interview by John Ikuma



The Snow Princess is a lovely short film about a little girl made of snow who dreams about the world outside of her castle. Once she is given the chance to explore the world beyond her domain she faces an uncertain end. The beauty and style of the snow princess is charming and shows artistic talent of Audrey Genevieve Holland who wrote, directed, animated, and built this charming film.

The Snow Princess has been seen at numerous film festivals and has won a number of awards. We were pleased to meet up with Audrey and ask her a little about her film and her background. What follows is a fun interview and look into the mind of an upcoming artist.

SMM - Tell us about yourself...

Audrey - I studied filmmaking at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey and at New York University. While still working on my B.A., I spent a summer at Laika Entertainment and worked on Coraline. Later I was hired to be part of the famed DreamWorks Animation SKG where I worked on such feature films as Kung Fu Panda, and last spring's How to Train Your Dragon. My first exposure to stop motion was at the Disney Institute when I was 9 years old. I saw Jack Skellington's house (From The Nightmare Before Christmas) and fell in love with the whole medium right then and there.

SMM - What inspired you to make The Snow Princess?

Audrey - I was inspired by a left-over Halloween makeup kit from a drug-store clearance section. It was a palette of white paint with sparkles that you would use to turn a child into an ice queen.





SMM - What are the puppets made out of?

Audrey - Izumi, Gwyneira, and her mother are wire armatures with clay forms and silicone skin and the butterflies are made out of fabric and floral wire.

SMM - How long did it take you to finish the movie?

Audrey - I'm lucky that I had such a wonderful crew that donated all of their nights and weekends towards this project for nine months.

SMM - Why did you choose stop motion as your medium for the film?

Audrey - The project started out as a children's book, but as the story developed, it became clear that The Snow Princess needed to be an animated film first. Stop motion was the only medium that had the right charm and magic necessary to create the world of the Snow Princess.

SMM - What did you use to hold the puppets in place? What kind of tie-down method?

Audrey - The puppets were all tie-down armatures, but there were also a lot of hanging wires that we painted out in post-production.



SMM - What has been the response to your film?

Audrey - I have been so fortunate to have such a great response to the film. It's been played in over 25 international film festivals and has won several awards like the Golden Ace award from the Las Vegas International Film Festival. Everyone I've met so far has had nothing but wonderful things to say about how they relate to the film.

SMM - Do you plan on making another film and what might we expect?

Audrey - Yes, my team and I are working on another stop-motion short called "Ticket to Hell." We are in pre-production on it now – in fact, we currently have some stuff about it up on Facebook and Myspace and are looking forward to maturing the story and sharing it when it's ready. You can expect a lot more disquieted whimsy from us in the future.

-End

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