

MOTION PICTURE SCREEN CARTOONISTS & AFFILIATED OPTICAL ELECTRONIC & GRAPHIC ARTS

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, JULY 1998

VOL. 27, NO. 7

DOWNTURN? WHAT DOWNTURN? STRONG OPENING FOR "MULAN"

Amidst much nail-biting of execs and crew, Disney's new animated feature "Mulan" opened to big numbers the weekend of June 19-21, reeling in \$22.7 million at the nation's box offices, outpacing its predecessors "Hercules" and "Hunchback of Notre Dame" in its initial numbers. Overseas, "Mulan" enjoyed a big opening weekend in Singapore, the best ever for an animated feature. There were also strong openings in Columbia and Israel.

Back stateside in the crucial second week-end, "Mulan" dropped only 24%, the least drop-off of any Disney animated film this side of "Lion King." After two weekends, the Chinese epic ran up a total of \$54.5 million, well on its way to the \$100 million club. The analysts and experts tell us that "Mulan" will outperform Disney's last two animated features.

WHERE ANIMATION PROSPERS

Last month we reported how animation has been retrenching in Hollywood... but that doesn't mean it's in worldwide decline. THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER announced on the front page of their June 5-7 issue that C.G. Animation is bigger and feistier than ever.

As Disney is begetting "A Bug's Life" — due out this December - so DreamWorks is producing "Antz," featuring the voices of Woody Allen, Sharon Stone and Sylvester Stallone." Also in production is "Frankenstein," through ILM/Universal (up in San Rafael), and "Toy Story II" (at Pixar) slated for a Christmas '99 release. Then of course there is the ambitious "Dinosaurs," being produced at Disney Feature Animation's Northside facility in Burbank.

"INVASION AMERICA" TRIUMPHS

The DreamWorks mini-series "Invasion America," ended up surprising the Warners network by garnering strong numbers in the crucial 18-34 male category. It was also a contender for other age groups.

"Invasion" enjoyed the best ever WB launch for episodic ratings among Males 18-49. It was also best ever for males 18-34 and 1234. The show more than doubled the males 18-34 ratings of its "Buffy" lead-in. "Invasion America" also grew in share among key adult and male demos, while holding household and key female shares.



From the Business Representative *MISMANAGEMENT, CALIFORNIA STYLE*

If you've ever been to the Screen Cartoonists' office, you know that we are located at 4729 Lankershim Boulevard in beautiful North Hollywood. If you've been to the office recently (like in the last two years), you know that the Metropolitan Transit Authority has torn up the street and

driven a few dozen businesses into bankruptcy as it digs a long, expensive hole under Lankershim Boulevard. Sidewalks have sagged. Floors of various buildings have abruptly sunk.

This lengthy hole is sometimes known as the Red Line subway, and it has been a source of never-ending delight for your servants at Local 839. Summer after summer there is dust and jackhammers. Winter after winter there are torrents of muddy water pumped from the tunnel into the street. In all seasons there is cracked asphalt and settled foundations, big construction cranes with men and women in hard hats holding up signs saying SLOW and STOP.

All this activity and bustle costs money, big money. And this past week (as I write) the L.A. TIMES finally blew the lid off the M.T.A.'s digging and building frenzy, pointing out on page one that through mismanagement and general incompetence, the MTA has managed to dig itself ANOTHER deep hole amounting to seven BILLION dollars worth of debt. Even for L.A., this is a pretty good size chunk of change. And you and I will be paying for it the next thirty years.

Remarkably enough, after the article appeared, the Directors of the M.T.A. suddenly became all concerned about the big cost overruns and wild spending. That big fancy office building the M.T.A. erected for close to \$500 million? The directors now concede that maybe it was a mistake, and Mayor Riordan confesses that perhaps building subways under the urban sprawl of Los Angeles is not the most cost-effective way to go. Meanwhile, the city bus system deteriorates and the hard-working men and women jack-

hammering down in the dark tunnels will get laid off in the frantic rush to save money.

Of course, this is the government, right? We kind of EXPECT them to louse things up. But what's interesting is, as I sat reading the TIMES long expose on M.T.A. mismanagement, I kept saying to myself: "Wow. Just like two or three different cartoon studios I visit all the time."

Hard as it is to believe, in the years I've been doing this job I've seen a few animation facilities that could give the M.T.A. a run for its money. I've seen animators sitting around depressed, wondering when a picture or storyline is going to be okayed so that they can do something besides "practice work." I've seen crews lounging in their cubicles, reading newspapers and doing crossword puzzles because work has not come through... or hasn't even started. I've watched management push animation staffs to the breaking point to get a picture out on time, only to lay them off after the deadline had been met because there was no production ready to follow it.

The above examples, like the M.T.A.'s long pointless tunnel, are wonderful examples of mismanagement. Nobody in the front office wants to put that second feature into production before they see how the first one performs in theaters, therefore the second one will cost lots more money because they will charge the idle crew's salaries to a film not yet in production.

And like the tunnel workers and crane operators laboring for the M.T.A., the people who will ultimately take it in the shorts will be the artists and technicians working at various studios. By and large, the managers who merrily foul things up will go right on, because when excrement rolls, it rolls downhill, smothering the unfortunates at the bottom.

This is the tragedy of mismanagement. When the M.T.A. does it, people in hard hats suffer. When cartoon studios do it, artists and technicians stress out from overwork, then stand on unemployment lines.

—Steve Hulett

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Morale

I've noticed something strange lately about our current crop of overlords, i.e. our producers and production managers. I say current because as anybody who's been around awhile knows, ten years ago most of these folks weren't anywhere near an animation studio. Frank Thomas says it takes at least five years to make a good animator. Nowadays one production makes a grizzled old vet out of a doe-eyed novice and as a consequence a threat to the newer suits who grab the reigns of power immediately above them.

Anyway, stop them in the hall and ask them if they ever think about the morale of their crews. Morale? At best they may stare at you dumbly, at worst they will immediately peg you as a troublemaker. Morale is just some b-plot in war movies.

Now I'm not faulting them for being new- Leon Schlesinger, Amadee Van Beuren, Edie Selzer, Fred Quimby and the rest of the 1930's class of producer knew as much about this business as the 1990's models do. They did all right.

I just think the current business schools don't bother to teach managers to consider the morale of their employees anymore. I guess they figure today's hot-shot exec spends more time regulating work flow to child labor in Suriname or Honduras than concern if they're happy or not. Or maybe it's a 90's thing to treat everyone like a floppy disc. And handling dozens of artists? Sheesh! There's probably never been a training course about that.

So, as a public service to the production types I know read this column I offer **MPTVCBusEd#104C: Employee Relations** (2 credits)

First: What is **Morale**? Morale is defined in Websters as : a. *A Sense of Common Purpose or a degree of*

dedication to a common task. Esprit Des Corps. b: A state of individual psychological well being and buoyancy based upon a sense of usefulness, and confidence in the future.

Morale is not just a free lunch or an indoor basketball court.

A crew that is motivated and involved in what they do can create quality much better and cost effectively than an unmotivated, sulky group. Yet I hear stories from a number of top studios of anger, frustration and politics frustrating the making of films.

The current wisdom among us thralls is that the person who calls management's attention to a problem is seen as the problem himself. I experienced this once when I voiced the frustrations of my fellow artists around me on Friday and the only result was I was almost fired by Monday. So I shut up, as did everyone around me and no amount of employee forums could do any good.

I knew of one studio who chastised it's production people for fraternizing too closely with the artists. Their management philosophy dictated a distance must be maintained betwixt the governors and the governed. Another production would roll a head then buy everyone an ice cream bar. What? Are we children that that makes everything better?

Some artists want 839 to help them get rid of their



Dave Lowery

(See FROM THE PRESIDENT page 5)

SO... WHO REALLY OWNS STOCKS?

(OR... THE RICH GET RICHER)



According to the Federal Reserve's Survey of Consumer Finances, one of the most accurate sources on America's family finances:

- * In 1995 (the most recent survey) the richest 1% of the population owned 42.2% of all individually held stocks (up from 38.5% in 1992.)
- * The richest 10% owned 84% of individually held stocks, leaving the bottom 90% of the population to divide up the remaining 15%.
- * Much of that 15% is in retirement savings plans, such as 401(k) accounts, that have replaced traditional pension plans.

While Professor Gingrich pushes for a further reduction in Capital Gains rates — down to 15% — those of us with lots of stock in our pension savings plans should remember that OUR stock holdings will be taxed as INCOME when we hang it up, not as capital gains.

401(k) TOTALS \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

The Screen Cartoonists 401(K) Pension Savings Plan is now available at seven Employer locations:

- Disney -Los Angeles
- Disney -Florida
- DreamWorks SKG
- Rich Animation
- Warner Bros. (& Hanna-Barbera)
- Adelaide Prod. (Sony - new as of April)
- MGM (new this quarter).

Plan assets as of June: \$18,045,378
 Plan participants as of June: 1,467
 New participants as of July: 115

ARE YOU NOW OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN...?

Author Karl Cohen, who's book "Forbidden Animation" details Toontown's naughty secrets has agreed to do a one night talk and book signing for us union types on Hollywood Blacklisting and censorship. It will be held on Monday night August 10th at 7:00 p.m. at the union office's upstairs meeting room. We ask this be ADULTS ONLY because we want to run the notorious 1930's silent stag film "Buried Treasure". Don't take the Fifth, come and enjoy!

FUNCASTS



FROM THE PRESIDENT

(continued from page 3)

production manager or producer. The union can protest violations of the contract like the producer who makes his cocker-spaniel a p.a. then let's it do script rewrites, but we can't mandate a producer or production manager not be an a-hole to his people.

People who worked at studios that were run by charismatic leaders like Dick Williams or Don Bluth would say the secret of their charisma was their ability to make you feel important and involved in the project. When a Dick or John K would take the time out of their complicated schedules to compliment your work it really meant something. You'd gladly drink the cyanide Kool Aid for them.

I'm amazed at execs who comment about sports events: "The Bulls won because they were hungry for it!" then go to their studio and not give a second thought to what their own team was feeling.

One director snarled at me: "I've learned that if it comes between a good film and a happy crew I'll take the good film!"

But the record shows films done by a happy and motivated crews do stick out: "Snow White, Dumbo, Rooty-Toot-Toot, Who Framed Roger Rabbitt?"

The folks who did 'Quest for Camelot' lived with turmoil and politics and their anxiety can be seen on the screen. While the Iron Giant or Florida Mulan crews were motivated and the joy they have at doing their work is also evident on the screen. Years later we remember fondly the units who provided a good working atmosphere- Florida's Fleischer studio, early UPA, Kroyer's Ferngully crew, etc.

And in all the cases I've named the motivated or 'hungry' crew did their film for a more cost-effective budget than the problem piece.

So morale building is not just an occasional grand gesture like a picnic or screening-employees only no spouses. Morale is opening your locked doors and involving your people. Of dishing out praise as much as money. Of rolling your sleeves up and getting dirty with us.

We're not here to fight you or sabotage your career, we just want to make successful films just like you. C'mon', let your guard down and trust us. You might like the results.

t.s.

CHOOSING MUTUAL FUNDS

There are now over 5100 Mutual Funds into which you can throw your after-tax dollars (and Stephan-Steven recommend that you put some of your after-tax dollars into SOMETHING). The question is, what exactly?

Below we lightly review a couple of your options (and remember we are NOT financial advisors.)

Index funds — (Whole Market, S & P 500, etc.) are good places to put some of your after-tax loot, but there are other funds types you should consider, among them:

Focused Funds — relatively new type of fund that holds only about 20 different stocks. The good part: a small portfolio run by a shrewd manager can produce returns above the market average. The bad part: Fund managers are human; sometimes they choose wrong. A focused fund will usually be more volatile than a broadly diversified index fund.

An example of a focused fund: The Oakmark Select Fund (Minimum investment, \$1000 — tel. # 800-625-6275)

Tax-efficient funds — These are funds designed to minimize the capital gains tax on stock. In tax-efficient funds, managers work to hold down stock turnover — the old "buy and hold" strategy. A second way is to track losers and gainers inside a portfolio. And when the fund sells off some stock that have gone up, it sells off some that have gone down as well, so that gains and losses cancel each other out, and no tax is due.

An example of a tax-managed fund: Vanguard Tax-Managed Fund -Growth and Income Portfolio. (Minimum investment, \$10,000 -tel. # 800-523-7731).

NEW QUARTERS

DreamWorks Feature and T.V. Animation have completed their move to the Flower Street Campus. DreamWorkers bid a fond farewell to the Lakeside building with it's golf carting around the Universal lot, smokey barbeque and Stoli-martinis at the Smokehouse. Disney feature Northside and Southside are watching new buildings rise on their doorsteps.

MOUSE GROWS NICER IN CANADA??

While Disney T.V. cuts back on personnel, the new Mouse-Houses in Vancouver and Toronto are busier and bigger than ever. Yet the pay rates in the Great White North are paltry compared to their equals in L.A. or Orlando. While scale for an Angeleno animator is \$1174.14, his Canadian counterpart makes \$900.CN (\$480 U.S.) and 50-60 hours without overtime is the norm.

Canadian artists are grumbling to their friends down here about the conditions. Word was that the studio warned it's staff not to even talk to a union rep. Someone must have pointed out to them that this is a violation of Canadian law because the latest we've heard was that they now say Canadian animators do have every right to form a union.(Animators are already in a union in Calgary- Local 212.) But the studio adds that such an act will spoil the beautiful family atmosphere they have now. So just watch it, eh ?

"LION KING" (THE STAGE VERSION) SNAGS TONYS

Disney's stage version of "The Lion King" won Tony Awards for Best Musical, Director, Scenic Design, Costume Design, Lighting and Choreography. Congratulations to Peter Schneider and Tom Schumacher for an amazing success. Someday maybe the animated films on which such stage productions are based may receive equal recognition from The Motion Picture Academy.

AROUND TOWN

Last month's Sara Petty Benefit was a great success. Over \$15,000 dollars was raised and more importantly an artist who had sunk into a demoralised funk regained the will to create again. Thank you for all your help, especially Scott Johnston ,Charles Solomon, Max Howard, Warner Bros., Amanda Seward ,Howard Lowery and Frederick Back.

IN MEMORIAM

Sherman G. Labby, longtime storyboard and layout artists on the east and west coasts, died June 1, 1998. Sherman began his career in Local 841, moving west in 1966. Through the '60s, '70s and '80s, Sherman worked at Fimation, Hanna-Barbera, and Ralph Bakshi, among others. Mr. Labby also had an extensive career storyboarding in live action.

Retta Davidson, longtime Disney animation artist, died June 12, 1998. Starting at Disney in 1939 as an inker and painter, Retta became an inbetweenner during the Second World War, becoming one of the few females in a (then) all-male workplace. Late in the war she joined the Navy and worked in a Washington D.C. film unit. She retired from the animation business in 1985.

Duane Crowther, born in Los Angeles in 1928, entered the animation business in the late forties. His career started in animated commercials in New York, but he soon moved to Los Angeles and worked on dozens of films for Quartet, Filmfair, Pantomime Pictures, and Jay Ward Productions among others. In the late sixties he journeyed to England to animate on "The Yellow Submarine." In the seventies, he co-founded Duck Soup Productions where he worked as an animation director for many years. He died June 6.

Animation veteran **Richard Thompson** suffered a fatal heart attack June 12, 1998 at the Motion Picture Home. He was 83. Dick began his career as an apprentice animator in 1938 in the Chuck Jones unit at Schlessinger studio. Serving in the Army Air Corps First Motion Picture Unit under Major Rudy Ising during World War II, Dick returned to Warners and the Jones unit, where he worked until his retirement. Among a large and loving family he leaves daughter Nancy Katona, a son Scott Thompson, and granddaughters Ashley Rose and Dakota Roxann.

Jack Huber, longtime layout artist at Hanna-Barbera, died May 12, 1998, six days after his 84th birthday. Jack became a member of Local 839 at the time it was chartered in 1952. Then an assistant animator at Disney, he moved into Disney's layout department in 1955. Jack remained a layout artist for the balance of his lengthy career. He retired from the industry in 1981.

BEWARE OF STRETCHED-OUT "TESTS"

Many studios now ask job applicants to not only submit portfolios, but take work tests (clean-up test, background test, animation test, etc.) From time to time we get complaints about these tests, but studios have a right to see what a job applicant's quality of work is.

What they don't have the right to do is require multiple character designs or backgrounds that will then be used in a tv show or movie. We've heard of a few job applicants who have been asked to design and/or paint several layouts. If this happens to you, please report it to the union office. No studio, union or non-union, has the right to pull free work out of you that they then use on production. When it happens, let us know.

AND INVOICE THEM.

INFORMATION NEEDED...

John Canemaker is currently writing "WALT DISNEY'S NINE OLD MEN AND THE ART OF ANIMATION," to be published by Hyperion in 2001. The book will contain detailed biographical portraits of Disney's early team: Les Clark, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Marc Davis, Ward Kimball, Milt Kahl, John Lounsberry, Eric Larson, and Wolfgang Reitherman.

John would like to hear from anyone who knew or worked with these animators — especially family members, animation assistants and/or proteges — who can provide stories anecdotes, tributes, or biographical information about the Nine Old Men.

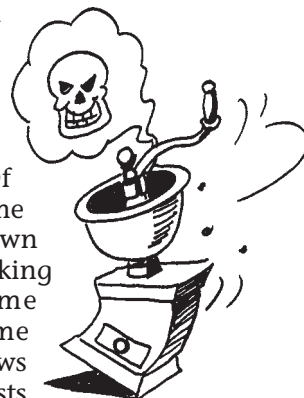
Please contact John Canemaker at: John Canemaker, 120 W. 70th St., New York, Y.Y. 10023. Phone/fax: 212-874-7462. e-mail john.canemaker@nyu.edu

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THE RUMOR MILL

Buzz around Disney Features is that layoffs will occur after Tarzan wraps. The studio feels it needs to do the next film with a "leaner-meaner" staff. Of course they said the same thing after Rescuers Down Under but wound up making Aladdin with the same number as always. Some artists reps regard the news as an HR ploy to scare artists currently in contract negotiations to settle for less.



More jostling for good release windows between upcoming animated features: "Prince Of Egypt" now set for end of December, and the Big Mouse will be counter-programming with "Mighty Joe Young." Meanwhile, "A Bug's Life" (originally scheduled for November to stomp on "Prince of Egypt") will now face competition from DreamWorks' "Antz," set to launch in October, a month ahead of "Bug." And the high-stakes battles continue.

MAX & TOM MOVE ON

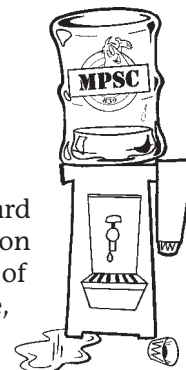
Warner Feature Animation honcho Max Howard, head of Warner Feature Animation for the past three years, resigned from the company on June 5 to take a producer position with DreamWorks SKG. We're informed that the motion picture that Howard will be producing at DW will be the animated feature "Spirit."

While at Warners, Howard oversaw the production of "Space Jam" and "Quest for Camelot." Prior to Warners, he was a Vice President at Disney Feature Animation.

Over at the mouse house, long time Animation exec Tom Ruzicka resigned from Disney Television Animation after a twelve year run. T.R. started at Disney TV in 1985, at the time the television division was created.

AT THE WATER-COOLER

Congratulations to Ryan Woodward of Warner Bros. Feature Animation and his wife Tiffany, on the birth of their new baby daughter, Camille, born on June 13th.



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