

What's in a name

By Rick Lasse

Does anyone think that it's the name that keeps the jobs away?

I often wonder..okay, maybe not that often...if stop-motion animation would be better served if we adopted a new name for our style of animation. After all, it is the new century and we should move up to, at least, the 1990's....right?

Why are we called stop-motion animators....we're not stopping any kind of motion? We're doing everything to create motion.

Sometimes, it seems as though it's about the perception in that name, too. If you tell someone that you just spent 18 months on a stop-motion project, immediately they will think of how tedious the whole process was and that you were lucky enough to finish a walk cycle but if you tell them that you spent 18 months on a computer animation or traditional project, they wouldn't even bat an eye and have that "WOW" look on their faces.

I think stop-motion animators of the world should proclaim 3D animation as our style, since we're the only animators who actually physically animate 3D objects. You can't touch an object built inside a computer, unless, of course, you spend countless hours on a stupid eyeball movement and the thing just won't rotate and you really, really want to reach inside that darned monitor and move it yourself. But, WE can actually animate a computer, frame by frame, if we wanted.

You can't touch a character that was drawn on a piece of animation paper. You can touch the paper but be careful...because those 2D animators get a little touchy if they think you might smudge their work or put their numbered pages in the wrong order. They get that Barney Fife anxious look if you get too close.

Computer animators are a bit more smug. They sit at their station, tapping a key here and there, explaining what they're doing with a slight smirk because they know you may not know half of what they're talking about....polygons...nurbs...huh? They think they're so cool.

So, what about us?

Even though we've been around as long as 2D artists and longer than "those other" 3D guys, we're treated like the little brother. You can almost feel the pat on the head like we're not big enough to join the big boys.

Even in some colleges, they've discontinued any stop-motion related classes in favor of the computer ones.

Some call it "stop-motion" or "stop-frame" and even others try to create a more artistic spin on it a bit by calling it "puppet animation"...really, puppet animation??? It, kind of, sounds like we've been outside with our action figures too long. Then there's "clay animation" or "claymation" but none of them sounds awe-inspiring.

We need to modernize the name of our style—hey, what about 3D-motion animation? Hmmm, I like the sound of that. Because that's exactly what we do—we put real three-dimensional characters in motion.

I mean, the other guys have the cool names like CGI or even plainly—computer animators. The 2D guys have "traditional". Ooooooh, "traditional". Like, they're the only "old school" animation in town. The whole "traditional" name sounds as though they're the original, the very first—connected to the very essence of the origins of animation. But, we were there too with our Ladislav Starewicz and Lotte Reiniger. Are we any less traditional than the guys who can draw

## Rick's Blog

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Tuesday, 24 August 2010 19:26 - Last Updated Wednesday, 25 August 2010 22:14

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on paper really well?

So we need a cool name too that will ease the minds of prospective producers when you tell them that the project is a stop-motion animation film and they have that “ohmygoshhowlongwillitake?” look in their eyes.

So, I think I'll start referring to my work as 3D-motion animation. Will it create more jobs for me—I have no idea...but at least it will sound cool, eh?

[blockquote>About Rick Lasse[/blockquote]