

Written by: [Kelly Wold](#)

With Marc Caballero & Chris Finnegan

I recently had the privilege to travel to Los Angeles and visit with the guys from [Screen Novelties Studios](#)

. This article is the source of many firsts for me...

This is the first interview I am conducting for AnimateClay.com

This is the first time I have met anyone in person associated with Stop Motion

This is my first time in an actual studio

So when you hear that I drove six and a half hours from Monterey to Los Angeles just for this meeting, you may understand why I couldn't pass up this exciting opportunity.

Like many of you out there, I am a lone animator who works in the dark of night from a corner of my home once everyone else has gone to bed. For me, Screen Novelties is the embodiment of what I aspire to be a part of. The studio is a friendly, creative, productive workplace that encourages experimentation while still adhering to a high standard of design quality.

So for all of you stop-mo newbies and old pros alike, here is what I found out while touring this eclectic studio brimming with character...



AC: How did you get started in Stop Motion?

Marc: *Seamus Walsh and I met at school (UCLA extension). We were student filmmakers, and took some classes' together .While working on a project; we discovered our shared interest in stop motion. We both liked the same "goofball" styled pieces. We met Chris Finnegan while working on Celebrity Death Match. Then we settled down here in Los Angeles and started Screen Novelties.*

AC: Were you self taught, or did anyone "give you your start"?

Marc: *We were familiar with the stop motion process, but at that time – that type of information was really privileged. You had to read about it in articles or learn from someone who had done it. We started by building puppets and doing test animations. When Seamus got an internship at the Chiodo Brothers, things got easier as he was figuring things out (they were a big help). It was a lot of trial and error.*

We also watched everything we could get our hands on. There is a great movie store in the valley called "Eddie Brandt's Saturday Matinee" that had a ton of obscure videos, and we would watch anything that was animated.

AC: Did you take acting classes to help develop your animation style?

Marc: *Yes, they help you to become self aware (body movements) and to project to the audience. For example, if you move one side of your body, the other side moves as well. Your puppets need to move in the same way. Even though they are in a cartoon world, they have to move somewhat realistically.*

AC: What do you like best about your company?

Marc: *It is good to have partners to rely on and bounce ideas off of. It's not always peaches and cream mind you, but it is fun. We are all friends and it is nice to share ideas. The good thing about Stop motion is it is a small community, and you know that the cool people you are working with now are most likely going to be the same people you'll be working with in 50 years. It is encouraging to see all the new talents coming out of schools and garages.*

AC: What do you like best about your work?

Marc: *The charm of the style. Filmmaking is really opening itself up to so many visual styles.*

AC: Can you describe a typical day - and when your day is through, do you ever stop thinking about your projects?

Marc: *Typically we mosey in around 9:30-10:00. You go through your daily routine of checking email and tending to daily tasks (you work on any puppets that need attention) Often during lunch we will step away for creative meetings, go over scheduling, develop drawings for treatments and set up for shots. The day never ends. I am always thinking about animating. When I go home, I think about projects or watch movies for inspiration or imagery.*



AC: Do you have separate people to build and animate?

Marc: *Yes, we do have artists that come in and help us. But everyone does a bit of everything -*

whatever needs to be done. We have a core group...

Max Winston: Puppet fabricator, filmmaker

Kelly Mazurowski: Director and Supervisor for Flapjack & Chowder

Brian Capati: Artist extraordinaire, painter

Robin Walsh: Puppet Maker, armatures, technical advisor

AC: Do you have a particular material that you prefer to work with (clay, latex, aluminum wire or ball and socket)?

Marc: *No, not really. We tend to go through phases. Like many stop motion companies we like to experiment with different textures (like feathers and furry things I guess). We also like to re-appropriate found objects for building props. For armatures, I like to use aluminum wire build up b/c it is quick and easy.*

AC: What projects have you been most proud of?

Marc: *That's a really hard question because we're proud of them all, but I would have to say our own projects and ideas. It is satisfying to see your own creation materialize in front of the camera.*

Chris: *I'd have to say Monster Safari. We are building off the short and transitioning it into a feature film.*

AC: What challenges have you experienced?

***Marc:** When using multiple animators for one character, it is challenging to shoot with continuity. We try to cast one animator for one character.*

AC: What types of projects are you currently working on?

***Marc:** We are developing *Monster Safari* into a feature film with the Henson's. We are also developing another short called *The Witch Doctor*, an additional *SpongeBob* project, and currently stuff for *Mad Magazine*.*

AC: What advice do you have for people just entering the industry, what skills are important?

***Marc:** Learn as much as you can in every department, and find an appreciation for good design.*

***Chris:** Versatility! Being able to build puppets, sets, and animate are all great qualities.*

AC: Where do you see your work in five years?

***Marc:** I hope by then we will be completing *Monster Safari*. And I hope to see myself on the beach in Hawaii (laughing).*

AC: How do you find steady work as a studio?

***Marc:** When we first started, about 90 percent of the work that came in here was just*

word-of-mouth. Now we have a commercial rep. TV pieces and commercials provide steady work which pays the bills. Often times we are the directors, but sometimes we work with directors. We are hoping to transition into feature films and establish ourselves there.

AC: What is the most important piece of technology today?

Marc: *I would have to say two things. Digital cameras and digital reference software (Dragon software). They make a big difference.*

AC: Any final words?

Marc: *It's really encouraging to see all the stop motion that is being done right now. It is always going to be seen as this quirky way of film making and that's what makes it charming. For me is a privilege to be a part of.*

*A big thank you to the guys at Screen Novelties for allowing me to visit their studio!

*Kelly Wold is a freelance Stop Motion character designer and animator. She is currently pursuing her BFA in Stop Motion at the Academy of Art University. [You can visit her web site here.](#)