

Stop Motion

Magazine™

November 2012 / Issue #18

In This Issue:

A Forest Story





Congratulations to Aardman Animations on their stunning feature film, "The Pirates! Band of Misfits", shot with **Stop Motion Pro.**

Visit our website to find out how you can benefit from our expertise in animation production.

www.stopmotionpro.com



Image courtesy of Aardman Animations © 2012

Letter From The Editor

I first found out about the work of John Dods in an old issue of Cinemagic where John had actually seen quite a bit of press for his productions. John Dohler who created Cinemagic had worked with John Dods on Dohlers film “Night Beast”. Dohler had not only employed one of the best character designers in the business of independent films but was also lucky to have witnessed Dods creative genius in the world of stop motion.

I can tell you I was personally excited to hear that Dods has ventured back into creating his film “A Forest Story”. With his cute characters and beautiful matte paintings, it’s obvious that John Dods has captured the essence of what classic stop motion films hold at their core. Not only is the character design brilliant, but the story is equally fun and captivating. John Dods should be done with his film soon. So this issue is really a little peak into what Dods has been up to. We can’t wait to see the final film and hope you find inspiration in what he has done.

We also have a great interview of Neville Buchanan whom is one of the mysterious dark horse animators in our industry. Neville’s talent is exceptional and the amount of work he has self produced is jaw dropping. You should definitely give some attention to this amazing artists work.

One last thing I would like to mention. I recently had the luxury of testing out the Dito Gear Omni Slider motion camera controller. Oh My!!! This thing is amazing!!! We have a review in this issue, but definitely stay tuned for some video demonstrations where we show how amazing this thing is. Put it on your Christmas list... Amazing!!!

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Keep Animating.

John Ikuma
Executive Editor
Stop Motion Magazine

Stop Motion Magazine™

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
JOHN IKUMA

EDITOR
MELISSA PIEKAAR

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
AI IKUMA

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
JOHN IKUMA
LANGLEY WEST

LAYOUT DESIGNER
JOHN IKUMA

CONTENTS:

pg. 6 Book Review

pg. 7 OmniSlider Review

pg. 10 A Forest Story

pg. 18 Neville Buchanan

Stop Motion Magazine is published bi-monthly by StopMotionMagazine.com, 4113 Irving Place, Culver City, CA. 90232. Content is Copyright 2009-2012 by Stop Motion Magazine. All Rights Reserved. Reprint in part or in whole without written permission from the publisher is strictly forbidden. Stop Motion Magazine is trademarked by John Ikuma.

DITOGEAR 



Motion Control Goodness **for Animators**

CHECK DETAILS: [OmniSlider Animators Edition](#)

Book Review: Frame-by-Frame Stop Motion: The Guide to Non-Traditional Animation Techniques

Author: Tom Gasek

Review by: John Ikuma



Frame-by-Frame Stop Motion:

The Guide to Non-Traditional Animation Techniques

PIXILATION - TIME-LAPSE - DOWNSHOOTING

TOM GASEK



For many years, there was a gap in the available knowledge of Stop Motion Animation. I'm not sure why; maybe it's due to fear of sharing industry secrets, or maybe there just wasn't enough interest. Whatever the reason, Tom Gasek has set out to fill that gap, and help us all smash through our creative roadblocks. His new book "Frame-by-Frame Stop Motion: The Guide to Non-Traditional Animation Techniques" isn't your normal stop motion how-to book. This book covers all the stop motion animation techniques that have been left out of the other books. What got me excited was that there was a whole section on downshooting animation. It also covers different methods of lighting, something I haven't seen a lot of in other books. I was also surprised to see an expanded, professional treatise on Pixilation!

This book released by Focal Press is on my top 10 list of must-have animation books. It's loaded with references from professional productions, and has inspirational knowledge soaked into every page. You need this book if you plan on doing any kind of proper downshooting or want to enhance your production techniques. Go out and get a copy today.

ISBN 978-0-240-81728-6

Review First Look: DitoGear OmniSlider Animation Edition



Out of the box this motion control camera slider package is amazing. I first heard about the DitoGear Omni Slider from a friend who said “This thing looks amazing”. So when I had the opportunity to test out the Omni Slider I was curious if it would hold up to expectations. I can tell you that it met and surpassed all expectations.

First thing I noticed is the quality of the construction. The Omni Slider is a very sturdy, well thought out, beautiful piece of art. The design is fluid and simple with a beautiful black paint job and well defined connection ports that take the guess work out of assembling the device. Our test model came with the Dragon Bridge, which holds eight auxiliary ports for connecting eight different devices, or for controlling different axes (as in the use of DitoGear’s Omni Head) and allows the different devices to be controlled by DragonFrame software.

I didn’t need the manual to assemble it. Connecting the cables to the Dragon Bridge and the slider was simple and extremely straightforward. It was quick to set up the device. I did however choose to use C-stands with camera plate adapters instead of two camera tripods. This was purely a personal choice since I felt my tripods were not sturdy enough to hold the sliders weight. The C-stands provided a more stable platform base for the camera and slider to be mounted to, and reduced the risk of bumping the camera. Once the slider and camera were hooked up to the computer, I installed the Arduino software mentioned in the installation manual. This was simple and fast, with no errors or complaints from the MAC OSX 10.6 operating system. Once installed, I was able to open Dragon Frame and make the necessary settings to allow for the software to talk to the Omni Slider. It was a breeze.



DITOGEAR™
OMNISLIDER
SERVO

If you haven't had a chance to use the Dragon Frame motion control settings you are missing out on some fun times. I was able to set one key frame at frame 1, and my last key frame at frame 48. I could hear the Omni Slider make a little tune as it progressed the camera from end to end. This little function built into the device makes the whole experience even more enjoyable.

After my test run, I set the Dragon Frame software to its task and crunched through some frames. The Omni Slider performed flawlessly. It was magic in every way. My only regret is not having the DitoGear Lens Drive, since the focus changes as the camera moves along its axis. This however can be adjusted in Dragon Frame using non-manual lenses. Otherwise I can personally tell you that this device is exceptional and beyond what I expected. Its ease of use and simple design allows for a fast, fun, and rewarding experience. It performed without any flaws and this is vital when it's necessary to get a shot set up and completed in a short period of time.

There are two options available for purchase of the OmniSlider. The first is the Basic Animators kit which (\$1335.00 U.S Dollars), or you can go for the



Pro Animators Kit (\$2245.00 U.S. Dollars). The difference in the two kits is that the pro version comes with a case, special stand, and the Omni Controller. If you are expecting to only use this device in your studio, I would suggest going for the Basic Kit since it most likely will be living on Tripods or C-Stands.

We plan on performing more tests with the Omni Slider, along with testing out some of DitoGear's other devices like the Omni Head. So look for more reviews in our upcoming issues.

If you'd like to find out more about DitoGear you can go to their website at www.ditogear.com.

THE ENGINEER GUY



WWW.THEENGINEERGUY.COM 404-685-8804 1000 TRADEPORT BLVD, SUITE 1003, ATLANTA, GA 30354

WE SHIP
ANYWHERE!

HIGH QUALITY PUPPET BUILDING & ARMATURES



Pedri Animation BV

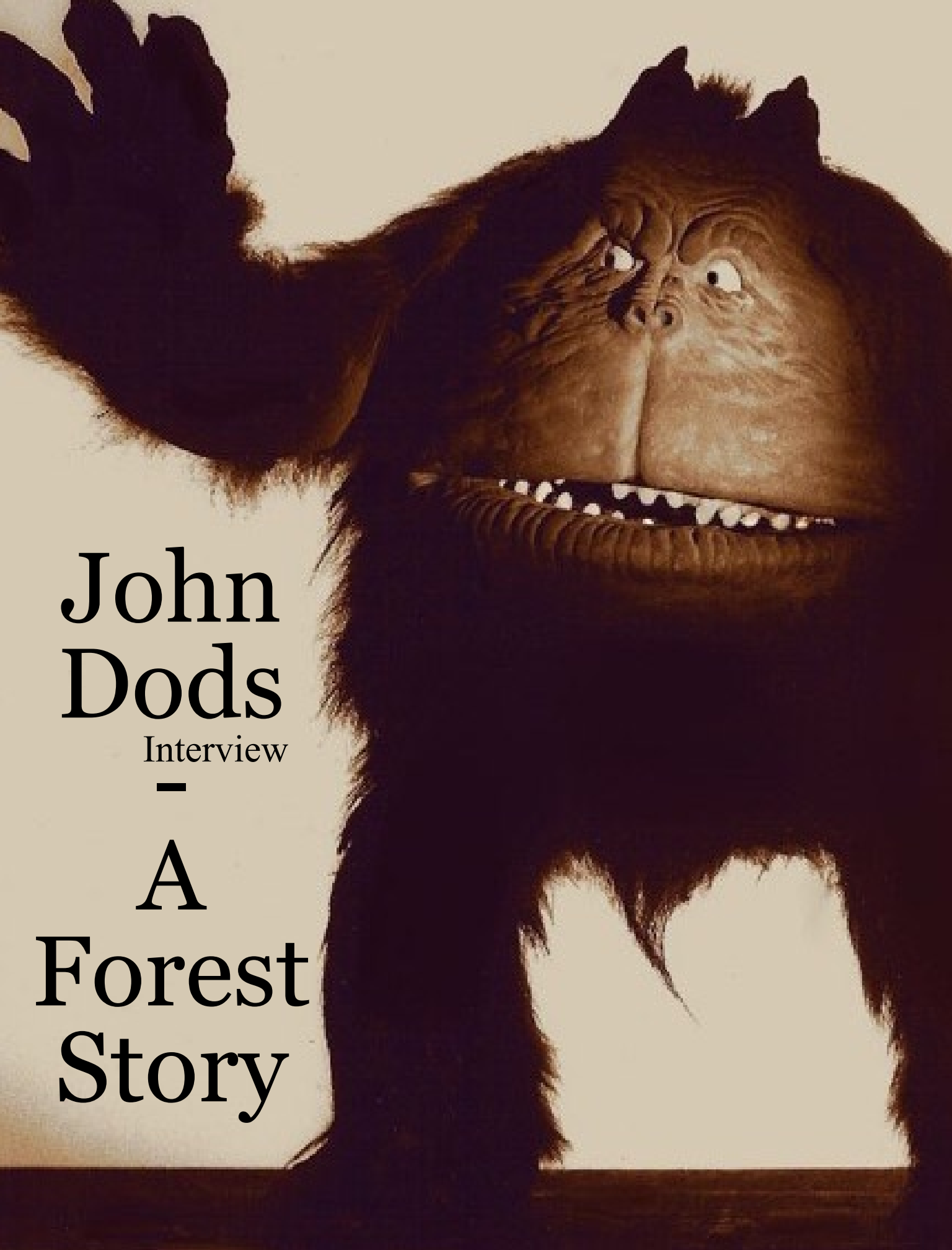
*"Possibilities are only limited by technique,
unlimited by good ideas."*

Successful stop-motion starts with good preparation. At Pedri Animation we have been producing professional stop-motion puppets and animated film for over a decade. Every member of our team has a deep understanding of stop motion animation and puppets. They are able to anticipate specific demands made on the puppets for every project. That way, we can deliver high quality puppets or armatures, guaranteed to fit your project.



Contact:

PEDRI Animation BV
pedri-animation.com
Tel+31(0)35 656 1945
thomas@pedri-animation.com



John
Dods

Interview

—

A
Forest
Story



SMM: When was Forest Story first started?

John Dods: I was making the first models in 1973, but I wasn't happy with them so I spent a year rebuilding the three characters. I tend to re-do things until I'm satisfied. The models in FS are actually the third set that I built. I didn't go to film school - Forest Story was my education in filmmaking - so every rebuilt set or model and every retake was a valuable learning experience.

SMM: Is the film close to how you originally envisioned it?

John Dods: It's better than I hoped. Modern software has enabled me to sync the music to the image very precisely by adjusting the timing of both the shots and the music, so that it now has a 1940's Disney-style precision. I've also been able to add birds, set elements, details, lighting effects, and transitions with Premiere Pro that give the film a lot of polish. The story changed very little over the years.

SMM: Can you tell us a little about Forest Story?

John Dods: It's a ten minute long musical fairy tale told without dialog. It's really a silent movie. I rely on visual storytelling to convey the plot. None of the characters speak. I love music to tightly sync with the action, so there is a lot of that. It was shot on 16mm film with a Bolex Rex 5 movie camera. There was so much dust on the negative that I had to spend months retouching hundreds of frames to make it watchable. In today's digital world you don't see dust or scratches in movies because of the shift to digital recording. The new technology is a blessing.

SMM: Why did you choose to revisit Forest Story?

John Dods: When I turned 64, I knew that if I was ever going to complete my animation projects I would have to do it soon. Ever since I was 18 I had wanted to make Forest Story. I shot it, but then it sat unfinished on a shelf for over 30 years while I had several careers as a practical effects designer. In 2011, I was so happy to discover that much of the camera negative was still in useable condition.

SMM: What are the puppets made out of and what kind of armatures did you use?



John Dods: The Forest Story armatures are made out of steel ball bearings and flat steel “mending plates” from the hardware store. I must have broken 100 drill bits making the holes in the balls. Then I “friction fitted” the balls onto one-inch lengths of nail by pounding them on with a hammer. The armatures came together but they’re not great, and the animation was very difficult. Today, I can usually afford to have professional machinists make my armatures. Jeff Taylor is a real artist at this and I’ve been fortunate to have Jeff build most of my newer armatures. Tom Brierton does an excellent job too for a very reasonable cost. Aluminum wire armatures can be very good - although they will break in time - and I always make those myself. The wire armatures will often have arms and legs that can pop off when they break so they can be replaced with new pieces. Square telescoping brass tubing is used to connect the part to the model’s body.

SMM: How many people were involved in the making of this film?

John Dods: Forest Story is a solo project. I made everything that you see on screen. In my new production, Grog Returns, many artists are contributing to the visuals - although I still end up doing most of the

crafts work and filming it personally.

SMM: What kind of release do you plan once the film is finished?

John Dods: Forest Story will go on the festival circuit. Later, it may be available on video - although short film distribution isn’t usually lucrative. There are currently long excerpts from FS to view on both YouTube and Vimeo.

SMM: What is Grog Returns and where is the original Grog film?

John Dods: My first film, Grog, is badly scratched because the original 16mm Kodachrome was projected over 100 times. There was never a work print or copy made, but it will show up on YouTube eventually, flaws mostly intact. Grog Returns is my new wide-screen HD digital short subject, a fast paced, visually intense musical-fantasy, with a linear narrative. I wanted to do a project that would use everything I’ve learned to do over 30 years working in film and theatre - and as a writer. It’s a labor of love that’s well into production. It could lead to other projects.



SMM: Is there a big leap in how you used to make stop motion in the 80's compared to making stop motion films now?

John Dods: Everything is better now. It's like having the resources of a major studio in your home office. Many of the economic barriers to high end filmmaking have disappeared. You can now make films on your home computer that look better than major studio productions once did. However, the bar for visuals has now been raised sky high so today if an animation film is not visually astounding it may go unnoticed.

SMM: What kind of equipment are you using now to make your films?

John Dods: I'm shooting with Nikon digital still cameras -- the D70 and D300 - and lenses. The switch from 16mm film to HD digital is mind blowing. There is so much information on a still digital frame, that it's now possible to do camera moves and zooms without

a perceptible loss of sharpness. I have Mac computers and my software is Premiere Pro, Adobe After Effects, Photoshop, and Dragon.

SMM: Why do you like stop motion?

John Dods: Using stop motion, I can create a colorful world and populate it with fantastic characters who have amazing adventures. I love to make things. My entire background is in practical effects, real things that exist in front of the camera. Nothing gives me more satisfaction than pulling a dinosaur out of a mold.

SMM: What kind of materials are you using to make your current sets?

John Dods: I like Styrofoam that is dense enough to be carved and dremeled. Taxidermy supply houses - like Van Dyke's, sell this material. You can make nearly any natural setting out of chicken wire and plaster



over a wooden substructure. However, in *Grog Returns*, many of the settings are entirely painted. Using Photoshop, I break down the paintings into as many as ten separate layers, so that each layer can be animated independently of the others inside the computer to simulate camera tracking movement. It's the modern equivalent of Disney's famous multi-plane camera. In those painted shots, the models are composited into the artwork. Some of the forest shots are being created as practical shots - with the layers of artwork on plexiglass in front of the camera.

SMM: The matte paintings are amazing. Who was the artist that made them?

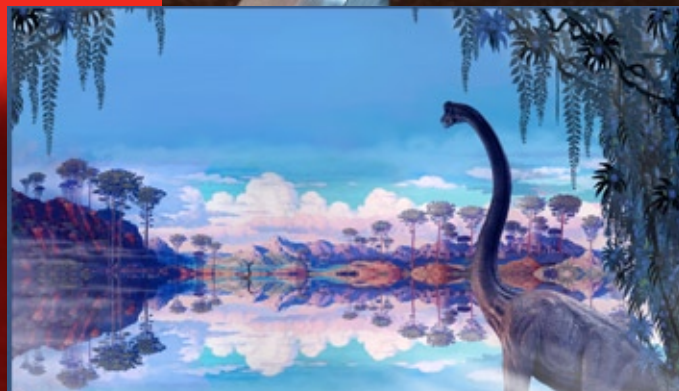
John Dods: Tim Hildebrandt is the production designer of *Grog Returns*. He is a very famous name in illustration. He keyed the entire look of the film. When Tim passed away 6 years ago he had created a lot of art for the project. Tim had been a good friend since 1980 when we worked together on *The Deadly Spawn* feature film - which he executive produced. We

had been planning stop motion film projects together for years but we both had busy careers which made that process slow going. *Grog Returns* will be the first film to reveal the results of our collaborations. I'm now creating some new sets and visual elements that closely follow the style that Tim set for this project.

SMM: Did you use any traditional camera techniques during the making of *Return of Grog*?

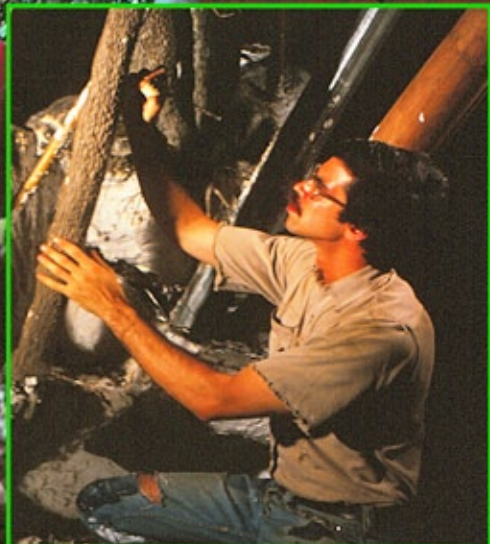
John Dods: Some, yes. Brian Berkey built a very elaborate camera moving system for *Return of Grog* - it's all gears, thread drives, and tracks. This is used to move the camera in the sets that are physical. Part of this system is a geared pan head for the camera, made by Manfrotto, which has controls for panning and tilting in very small increments. It's perfect for stop-motion animators who need to make a camera move. Brian also put together several small scale linear thread drives, which are useful for controlling model movement when very small slow controlled moves are needed.





SMM: When will Grog Returns be finished?

John Dods: Well I can't take 30 years, as with Forest Story - due to my age. I'm working on it every day, but I have many other projects. I don't expect to be showing any footage sooner than 12 months. As with Forest Story, I will release long excerpts from Grog Returns while the film is still in production. The positive feedback sustains me and gives me the sense of an audience. As I often say about stop-motion filmmaking, I know of no better way for time to be spent. I didn't realize that I'd be returning to filmmaking just as stop-motion was entering a spectacular golden age. I'm glad that I haven't missed it!



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU LEAVE YOUR TOYS IN THE ATTIC??

“An Animation Masterpiece”

– Screen International

“Four parts ‘Toy Story’ and one part Tim Burton”

– New York International Children’s Film Festival

“By far, one of the most unique films ever made”

– USA Today

FEATURING THE VOICE TALENT OF

FOREST WHITAKER JOAN CUSACK
VIVIAN SCHILLING AND CARY ELWES

In an Animated Masterpiece
by Acclaimed Director Jiří Barta



www.ToysFilm.com

www.FaceBook.com/toysintheatticfilm

NEVILLE BUCHANAN

Stop Motion Dramatics



INTRODUCTION

In early 2012, I was skimming the internet for stop motion clips, as I often do, when this description caught my eye: [WILLIS O'BRIEN STYLE FRANKENSTEIN STOP MOTION](#). I clicked on the link and for the next 4 minutes and 40 seconds, I was treated to a stop motion menagerie of creatures that seemed to crawl out of the combined imaginations of H.P. Lovecraft and Ray Harryhausen. And, sure enough, there was the giant Frankenstein monster that Willis O'Brien had designed for a project that never saw the light of day, alive and fighting a giant rhinoceros creature.

Combining computer generated effects, practical miniatures and stop motion characters, the clip was gorgeous and seemed to be a promo for a series featuring an elite team called Ultra Guardians. I did some internet investigation and eventually found the man responsible for this treat: Neville Buchanan of Parkville Productions in England.



So that was the very beginning of my Kong fantasy. I trawled the toy shops looking for Kong stuff and Dinosaur stuff and slowly got one or two AURORA kits, but that wasn't good enough. I remember going into the toy shops at perhaps the age of 12, asking for movable dinosaur models like what I saw in KING KONG.....they just looked at me, puzzled. I was frustrated with the situation and would vent this frustration with filling book upon book of drawings of giant apes fighting prehistoric creatures.

Then a friend up the road brought around some magazines he had got called MONSTER MANIA or MONSTER MADNESS (can't remember anymore) to my home....Inside this particular issue was a feature on King Kong, a feature on JACK THE GIANT KILLER and a feature on WAR EAGLES. At last I had in my clutches a magazine that I could read and see what this STOP-MOTION was all about. Also in

LJW: I've got to say, I was very excited when I saw Willis O'Brien's Frankenstein monster in your clip. I think it is a great tribute to O'Brien. One of the tragedies of film history is the sheer number of unrealized O'Brien projects. It's so nice to see life brought to one of them. What can you tell me about the design and the project that he had originally intended it for?

NB: I was exposed to the wonders of Willis H. O'Brien before experiencing the marvels of Ray Harryhausen. At the age of ten I saw the original KING KONG on TV in black and white....I can remember being traumatized by these strangely moving prehistoric creatures and this incredible giant quasi gorilla. Then to see the giant gorilla engaging in several battles with these formidable dinosaurs sent me over the edge. Then, to see this primordial ape climb the Empire State Building and battle the biplanes...well, what can one say... especially at the tender age of 10?





this issue was an article called The 13 Faces of Frankenstein. It was about the KING KONG vs FRANKENSTEIN project that Obie wanted to do. It showed 13 faces of different designs for the FRANKENSTEIN monster that would have fought my giant ape hero.

All this now started to form my quest to be an animation filmmaker. I knew that this was what I had to do and nobody was able to talk me down from it.

Going back to the FRANKENSTEIN stop motion version that Obie designed, he had the great idea of the two mighty creatures being held in the Shea Stadium, I believe. They both break loose and start brawling and fighting all the way into the heart of SAN FRANCISCO. Obie was going to have Kong riding on top of a cable car but he never got that illustration finished. I do believe Obie has Kong as the victor over the man made beast. One of the illustrations he did shows Kong choking out Frankenstein on a street, with a half destroyed banner in background that reads "KONG." The show-down might have been something similar

to the HULK VS THE ABOMINATION scenes, but on a grander and bigger scale. With the advancement of smoother animation that Harryhausen showed with MIGHTY JOE YOUNG, this film would have been FANTASTIC. It would be my dream to have the honor to make this film...and yes it would be in STOP and GO MOTION for the title characters. Some great drawings have been generated showing the two compared to each other..... it would be wild as a project.

Obie was trying to get the flick produced and he got this chap interested who then went of to Japan with the idea...The chap a few years later had sold the general concept of King Kong fighting another formidable creature foe but instead of it being FRANKENSTEIN, it turned out to be GODZILLA. Yes, this chap went to TOHO Studios and crushed Obie's dreams, and all stop motion lovers' dreams with that very sad film KING KONG v GODZILLA. Before it got to that stage the Obie idea went through a name change...it got called FRANKENSTEIN VS PROMETHEUS.



LJW: What can you tell me about the Ultra Guardians and Omni Force?

NB: The OMNI FORCE idea goes back as far as 1988. I had a concept for a feature film that would be a Dynamation extravaganza.....it was about a group of Super Heroes that come up against a very powerful trio of monsters. I was so enthused about the idea I got a professional writer to do the script for me...well, I sent copies to lots of people but got nowhere with it. But that wasn't going to stop me! I eventually showed it to a wealthy businessman along with some of the props and models I had made for the idea and he liked what he saw and invested in me on that day. That is how the company PARKVILLE started. It ran under that name for about 7 years.

In the 8th year the company went on then to become ULTRA GUARDIANS ENTERPRISES LTD. I produced a demo of a slightly less ambitious version of OMNI FORCE when I was in Parkville, to try and attract companies to my product so that I could now go and produce a series around the concept. The

concept gathered interest and more money came into the company. As I started to refine the idea I changed the title...the project then became much more sophisticated and I was able to hire more staff. The peak of the staff I had working with me was 26 individuals. I was given the go ahead amidst great wrangling and dissension within the company (NEW ASSOCIATES) to make a pilot movie in all STOP-MOTION. I flew out to Los Angeles to record my voices for the characters from the script I had made, and by the way the voice over guys were brilliant. I had Dorian Harewood (TERMINATOR: THE SARAH CONNER CHRONICLES, FULL METAL JACKET, etc.), Jim Cummings (STAR WARS: THE OLD REPUBLIC, SPIDERMAN: EDGE OF TIME, etc.) and Ian Ogilvy (DEATH BECOMES HER, BABYLON 5, etc.)

LJW: I've been marveling at the photos and videos you've been posting on your Facebook page. Are most of them part of the Omni Force project?

NB: Yes, that is the origin of most of them, although some are still being made that have never been seen



and are completely new. The old puppets from the OMNI FORCE time have mostly now gone to the grave. But, a new generation is slowly rising up!

Now the OMNI FORCE and ULTRA GUARDIANS ideas have been shelved and I have moved on from that, the new idea is called “FNS”. It’s a complex story and does a great job of creating its own world.

LJW: It seems to be a complex story and really does a great job of creating its own world. One of the things that makes it stand out is how cinematic it looks...great colors, great lighting. Can you talk a little about the cinematography and artistic look?

NB: Well I just seem to be good at lighting. I started filmmaking when I was 15 and basically taught myself. I picked up different tips and tricks along the way by working on several professional productions and through experimentation. I remember on one occasion the master himself (RAY HARRYHAUSEN) graced me by coming to my house to look at my SUPER 8 efforts and I had created a special effect with a floating skull covered in plasticine. All around the skull was black velvet and it was on a black velvet stand. I had a matte box. This device goes in front of the camera and you can place either glass or cards in the front end of the box to create various effects. Well, I had created this effect with this set up where the skull seemed to

be surrounded by a strange aura of light. It was a thrill for me when Ray asked me how I had achieved that effect.

One of the most important people I think that came along to work for me was Spencer Cook. I learned a lot from the way he lit his blue screen scenes...Spencer could never be rushed and you saw the quality in his work because of it. I remember one day trying to get more minutes of animation out of him and he said to me “You won’t remember the time it took to do it. What you WILL remember is how good it looked.” He was correct. Too many productions are so under the hammer they don’t allow themselves a good amount of time to light the sets and the puppet properly.

I try and think of the puppets as actors. I think about how you would go about lighting an actor to get the best from him/her. Some of my references go back to early horror films and the way that they used to light and photograph the actors. Rim lighting is a fantastic way of only showing a part of the character (puppet) and allowing the audience to fill in the rest. As a rule, I will light with a minimum of three lights. A bounce/fill card is good as well and black cut out shapes in front of the light so only a piece of light hits the character (puppet). Another great tool I like to use is dental mirrors. You bounce in spots of light from the mirror



onto the parts of the set or character (puppet) that you just want to catch...I think Mr. Harryhausen used this technique and he called it “mysterioso lighting.”

When possible I like to have the camera on some kind of moving rig so that it isn't static. That DOES add to the time that you have within a schedule and if you get a problem with the rig you have to start again for everything in the shot...and that HURTS.

One thing that is very noticeable to the current slew of BIG EFFECTS movies is the way the camera never gives you a good look at the usually over complex, over textured, over drooling monsters. If you asked a child to draw an outline of a creature that he/she just saw in a new fantasy film, they probably couldn't do it. The camera is always all over the place and the creature has a thousand blurs added to it. It would be nice if the creature at some point could strike a pose and we see it as if framed and then let it go about its action. Let the audience take in the creature and what it really is. Gone are the days were you had to hide the effect because of lack of technology. There is a saying: LESS IS MORE. When you saw Talos from JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS poised up on his plinth, you were inspired and awed.....I STILL am. His fan-

tastically muscular left leg bent and sinewy, his verdigris covered bronze body all greatly put on display.

The word fantasy seems to be gone. Realism seems to be the order of the day. The “strobing” of stop motion doesn't seem to be an acceptable thing now... everything needs to look ultra real.....but, then nothing stands out, so this creates a bit of a problem! If you notice, in a cinema, there is no sense of awe...children and young adults don't go “WHOA” anymore, unless you see a thousand zillion characters charging at the screen wherein not one of them stands out. It's strange. We need to get back to the handmade and taking time to see stuff.

LJW: I understand that Omni Force's origins date back to 1984. Can you tell us a little about how it got started?

NB: I was inspired by KONG, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS and Super Hero comics. So I just thought to myself, “Hey, wouldn't it be really cool to try and create a Super Hero film or TV series with stop motion? So that's when I had a feature film script professionally commissioned to be written by a great London based writer. He did such a good job. It



would be amazing to see that project completed one of these days.

LJW: Growing up in England, you've had a rich stop motion history to inspire you...but I understand that there was something in your background that might have given you an edge in understanding the stop motion process. Can you share that with us?

NB: Yes my secondary school in the UK was only about 4 miles away from the studio where Ray was doing the Stop Motion effects for SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER. I caught wind that Ray was there working away and I used to visit him on my school lunch breaks. That was the MAJOR BOOST that I got. It was seeing it in front of you laid out with all those wonderful puppets just hanging around waiting to be animated or on repair tables. Ray was such a gentleman and a kind man to allow me to come in and disturb his Dynamation. I can remember him allowing me to gingerly hold the Minataur puppet...it was really heavier than I thought it would be. I marveled at the sculpt on that character. One day, there was still fake

blood on the Trog character, as he had been animated fighting the saber tooth tiger the day before. The Baboon was a large model and he weighed a ton. Ray took me over to his movieola one time and showed me some scenes of the Ghouls causing trouble. I think I may have actually seen scenes with those Ghouls that didn't make it into the actual movie...what a thrill for me. Ray's process work with his screens was so impressive. He was so patient with his animation. The Walrus was fantastic, but I made an amusing visual error that still makes me laugh:

As I entered the studio for the first time, I scanned all the puppets as best as I could. The studio was dark and it wasn't easy to see everything in there. In this one corner was the Walrus puppet...it must have been the darkest corner in the studio...anyway, I tried to make out its shape and I tried to make a mental note. I finished that first tour and went back to school and then went home. That night I decided to make a fantastic poster of all the creatures in that film (EYE OF THE TIGER) and take to give as a present to Ray the next day.



The next day came and I took it to Ray on my lunch break...Ray looked at this poster that I was SO proud of and said to me "Neville, why have you made the walrus a WOOLY Walrus?" In my excitement I had gotten this creature completely wrong and covered him in hair. We laughed at this and Ray showed me the puppet again...I think RAY thought my imagination was well overactive!

LJW: One of your bigger professional jobs was creating some stop motion sequences for Clive Barker's NIGHTBREED. The Nesta creature in particular is beautiful. What was your NIGHTBREED experience like?

NB: Clive Barker I found to be a really nice guy. He seemed to really know what he wanted. My Nesta beast was among three that Clive picked from a lot of other creatures myself and the design team had come up with. I was told I was privileged that my creation was being picked by Clive himself. I came along late to the production and I can't say with my hand on my heart it was the most brilliant time of my life. It WAS a definite milestone in my learning and progression though. I learned a lot from other people around me. In particular, there was a great, great designer and sculptor named Howard Swindell. This chap had some

of the best creature designs that I have ever seen. The great thing about Howard was that he could sculpt what he drew. Some of the designers...their drawings were great but the sculpts didn't quite get up to the pictures' standard. But Howard's did. There was a lot of tension on the production and tempers were flaring a bit, so I felt on edge with a few of the players in the place. Walking around the lot during lunch was great though...watching other productions, like the first BATMAN by Tim Burton being filmed in the access ways with that fab first BATMOBILE crashing through pyro laden shutters and general mayhem... great, great stuff.

LJW: Of course, the great thing about NIGHTBREED is the sheer variety of unusual creature designs. Did you find that this helped inspire you to create the creatures of Omni Force?

NB: That's a very hard question...yes, it did have an effect on me. I think the biggest effect on me was possibly Howard's work.

LJW: The number of creatures in Omni Force is staggering. Was it difficult coming up with so many original designs?



LJW: Your main character, Franklyn, is a black male. I understand that at one time a pitch was made to an American company who liked the series, but said that they didn't want to have a black lead. Can you elaborate on this? Do you think this is indicative of the industry as a whole, or a reflection of the American market?

NB: (Smiles) Now this is where it can get a bit sticky. I think some people can't appreciate seeing the hero as a different color other than their own. So they don't identify with and invest in that character. They may go as far as not wanting to watch the program if the hero or star doesn't reflect their race. So I was warned that the American people would mostly have this problem and would not want to watch a BLACK hero being in charge and saving the heroine. This was told to me by a white American executive. At the time I thought he was wrong and I think I might have even been angry with him. But recently I've come to the conclusion that he may have been correct. Whenever I show clips on

NB: No, it was harder not to do MORE...I have loads of concepts in my head.

LJW: One of the things that I like about your designs is that they have a beautiful, old fashioned "build up" look to them...as if they could have been made by Marcel Delgado himself. Do you use a foam latex casting method? If so, was it your intention to capture that "build up" look? I think it has made for some incredibly detailed puppets.

NB: The team and I would sculpt the creature or character, make a mold and then cast in foam. Time was taken to try and get a good job done and I am proud of what we achieved. I'm hoping that I can leave a mark in stop motion history.

LJW: So, Omni Force itself is no longer. What is the status of FNS? Is it something that American audiences might be able to see?

NB: Omni Force is dead...long live FNS! Yes, FNS is what I'm working on now. It's still being pieced together. I'm pulling out what hair I have left trying to make it happen!





my preview site, I get great response to the ones that the black hero ISN'T in. The clips that he IS in don't ever get any kind of acknowledgement. It really is very noticeable.

If I were to start all over again, I think I would make all the lead puppets white. I think the white audience perhaps has more of a problem with the black lead than a black audience would have with the white male lead. And if the American audience demographic is mostly white young males, I might well be losing them because they perhaps cannot see that the program isn't about racial issues...it just so happens the lead is black. I hope I'm wrong about that.

I think when presented with a black lead, people will quickly want to find out "Is this FILM/TV series about BLACK issues or does this character just so happen to be black?"

If they are in a rush they may just say "Hey, I can't be bothered to take the time to find out, even though I love the movements, the monsters, the set up, the ships, the feel, the music etc...nope, I can't take it if it's going to turn out to be about BLACK Issues...

TURN IT OFF" (laughs).

My project has nothing to do with BLACK issues. It's just a BLACK puppet that has the lead.

LJW: How do you feel about stop motion in the current CGI heavy market?

NB: We are mad....mad, mad, mad. BUT.....CG doesn't stand out to anyone either. What do I mean? Well because it's over used; it's commonplace. It doesn't stand out ...it's the norm. It has gone from being a novelty to "Okay, another CG series / film... yawn." When you produce something it should create a "second look" factor. But it's not all about the technique. It's also about the voices, the camera, the lighting, the story, the hype. The characters in both stop motion and CG are important. That is, if a person gives you a few seconds to impress them, perhaps you will grab them with what you have...a GOOD PERFORMANCE. Perhaps you will even get them to return! It's making an impact with a different approach that perhaps will anchor your production and keep them coming back. Something new and well done.



LJW: What's in the immediate future for Neville Buchanan?

NB: Having a snooze.... (Smiles). I'm really not sure. I have carried this for a long while now and if I don't get a moderate to good response in the marketplace, perhaps I will throw in the towel. I'm not as young as I used to be and I have bills to pay. The industry is impossible and the audience seems a bit lost with the amount of FREE stuff you can download. This has caused many to re-think how to make a business out of this anymore when people don't want to pay. That's a hard one.

Some of Mr. Buchanan's work can be seen on his Stop Motion Dramatics Facebook page:

<http://www.facebook.com/stopmotion.dramatics>

And at the 66ANIMATION Youtube channel:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/66ANIMATION/videos>



Animation Supplies offers a variety of high quality animation materials including armatures, Stop Motion Pro animation software, animation rostrums, cameras, plasticine, acrylic eyes, modelling materials and much more. Our products are used by animators all over the world.

Products new to our range this year include bespoke armatures, built to your exact requirements; Sugru, a fantastic new modelling material which sets to look like plasticine but remains flexible; and two new, improved Aluminium Armatures.

Visit www.animationsupplies.net to see our full range of products.



Armatures

We offer bespoke, tailor made armatures as well as exceptional value kits which can be made to your exact requirements.

We sell armatures to award-winning studios across the globe but also have a range of products suitable for students.



Stop Motion Animation Software

Stop Motion Pro is used worldwide by the very best studios. There are several versions available including a generously discounted educational version.

Stop Motion Pro is the software used to make Wallace & Gromit.



Rostrums

We offer a range of great value animation rostrums. They are exceptional quality and ideal for an under the camera production.

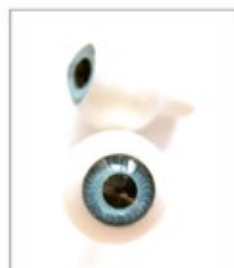
Our large rostrum with lights is a popular choice with animators.



Sugru - Modelling Material

Sugru is an excellent new material which sets to look like plasticine but remains flexible like silicone. It's brilliant for animation and can be used in conjunction with the Newplast Plasticine that we offer.

A range of colours are available on our website:
www.animationsupplies.net



Acrylic Eyes

These eyes are beautifully realistic and will add that finishing touch to a character, taking your animation to the next level. The eyes are exceptional value and come in a range of colours and sizes. Visit www.animationsupplies.net to see our full range.



Newplast Plasticine

Newplast is a high quality Plasticine which is used by award winning animation studios all over the world.

We offer a wide range of colours on our website:
www.animationsupplies.net

web: www.animationsupplies.net

email: info@animationsupplies.net

phone: +44 (0) 1273 359 356



Buy Print Copies Of Your Favorite Issues



Collect Them All...

www.stopmotionmagazine.com

