



ANIMATION MEETS LIVE ACTION IN THIS RALPH BAKSHI FANTASY

It began back in the early 1970s with the outrageous birth of the films *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*, both of which have since been acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

By the late '80s, it was rock videos like the Rolling Stones' *Harlem Shuffle* and the surreal remake of *Mighty Mouse* that had many members of the original video generation once again tuning into Saturday morning cartoons, this time with their kids.

For those 20 years, Ralph Bakshi has always been in the avant-garde of animation. While the huge studio empires adopted a more mainstream approach, Bakshi was content to be a maverick, maintaining his own unique and independent vision. Now, with his direction of the upcoming release, *Cool World*, he'll likely find a warm reception from both old and new fans alike.

Cool World stars Kim Basinger, Gabriel Byrne and Brad Pitt in what is billed as an "exotic adventure" combining live action and animation.

Byrne, late of *Miller's Crossing*, plays cartoonist Jack Deeks whose

COOL WORLD

When a cartoonist finds himself trapped in the two-dimensional "Cool World" he created, he runs up against the local police detective (Brad Pitt, top) and Nails, one of the 2-D "doodles."

daydreams and late-night fantasies become realities as he drops out of Las Vegas and into the two-dimensional world he's created. No, Toto, this isn't Kansas anymore — and it isn't Toon Town either. It's "Cool World," a city that's a living, breathing character of its own "where buildings move and shake and talk and smoke and cough," says producer Frank Mancuso Jr.

It was Mancuso (*Internal Affairs*,

He Said, She Said) who conceived the project nearly two years prior to its beginning principal photography in Las Vegas in 1991. He teamed up with Bakshi and, together with production designer Michael Corenblith and artist Barry Jackson, they created an odd otherworld that Deeks soon discovers he didn't invent but has only tapped into subconsciously.

In fact, just beyond the border

of *Cool World* lies another dimension entirely — "Sweet Town," possessing the style and look of the '50s. Patrolling both neighborhoods is Harris, a hard-bitten police detective fresh from the battlefields of the Second World War who prefers *Cool World* to his previous existence.

Besides Deeks, Harris is the only other character to have passed through the barrier between the humans and the "doodles," the 2-D entities that populate the fantastic realm of *Cool World*. Harris is played by Brad Pitt, who drew good notices for his work as the young cowboy/con man who hitches a ride with Geena Davis in *Thelma & Louise*.

Kim Basinger, who vamped as Vicki Vale in *Batman* and sent temperatures soaring opposite Mickey Rourke in *9 1/2 Weeks*, plays Holli Would, the seductress who lures Jack into his wildest dreams come true.

For Bakshi fans who can't get enough of this director's slightly skewed and decidedly more adult view of the world, a trip to *Cool World* will no doubt be a very cool trip indeed.

Cool World opens in theatres across Canada this summer.

— Richard Judge

