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Th-th-that's all folks!



VANIMATE ME: Name 50 of the people waiting for Bugs Bunny and win super big prizes!!

By JASNA STEFANOVIC

If you expected recent films at Vanier College's 10th Animation Festival, Vanimation '87, you may have been disappointed. The three-day festival, last Wednesday to Friday, was in fact a historical retrospective of the development of American and Canadian animation. If only all history lessons were this animated and lively...

The festival opened on a high note with American classics. An impressive line-up of guests were brought in from as far away as California. Among them was Shamus Culhane, who worked with the legendary animation studios of Walt Disney, Max Fleischer, and Warners Brothers. There were also Sody Clampett, the widow of Bob Clampett, who created some of the finest Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies, and Zack Schwartz, who worked as an art director for the Walt Disney studio.

With all these guests, it was our local animation expert and fan, Reg Hartt, that dominated both the talks and our interest with stories of the 'good old animation days.'

One of these stories was of Walt Disney's first talking cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, which introduced Mickey Mouse. At New York's 5,000 seat Roxy Theatre, *Steamboat Willie* was shown before the main feature, a few times a day, for a couple of weeks. The theatre was packed for every show, not for the main feature, but for the world to see this talking mouse.

This film still managed to amuse its audience last week, even after almost 60 years following its premiere. Its timeless appeal set the standard for American animation.

Other cartoon classics shown the first night included the most violent Popeye cartoon ever made, the uncensored version of Betty Boop, and that cool American hero, Bugs Bunny, who garnered the loudest applause. My favourite film that night was a lesser-known *Coal Black and the Sebben Dwarfs*, a black version of *Snow White* set to incredible jazz music.

During the next night of the festival, which focused on Canadian films, it was surprising that no cartoon heroes were included. Instead, the program consisted of predomi-

nantly serious art animation.

Guests for this night included Ellen Besen, Jaan Pill, and Kaj Pindal, whose animated films were featured.

The Canadian retrospective did, however, illustrate the many different possibilities that animation has.

The Street was made of soft washes of watercolor, which beautifully captured melancholy memories. Then there was Norman McLaren's Oscar-winning *Neighbours*, which applied the principles normally used to put drawings into motion, to animate live actors.

The audience saw lines dancing, puppet and sand animation, and other experiments with the medium. But it wasn't all serious art films that night either. Films like *The Big Snit* and *Why Me?* provided much needed humour to the program.



Deviating from the American/Canadian focus of the festival, Friday night afforded us a chance to see some rare British animation, as well as segments from the *Yellow Submarine*. Tom Halley, who animated the "Meanies" from that film, was a guest that night.

The rest of the evening consisted of more American animation and a move to the Open End Pub, for an informal chance to talk with the festival's distinguished guests.

As I was leaving the pub, an excited student walked up to Shamus Culhane and said, "I always wanted to meet you," and they proceeded into a conversation about animation, pausing only for the occasional autograph. Perhaps this was one of the strengths of this year's festival.

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Because the action takes place over 20 scenes in almost as many locations, the set required either a billion dollar budget or abstraction. After creating elegant neo-period costumes, designer Astrid Janson and director Martha Henry opted for the latter with a set of precarious high level ramps, an ingenious multi-purpose trap door and a clever washing line arrangement for an elegant ruffled curtain. All this was in keeping with Aristotle's rule that Theatre must have spectacle.

W.C. Fields advised that one should never perform on stage with dogs or children. This rule the play breaks. The blonde-tressed child playing Mary Junior only appears at the very end but the dog appears at the beginning of the second act. While the kid is cute and the dog is amazing, some of the focus of the play is unfortunately lost as the

audience keeps track of how the dog does his choreography between bits of food. But credit is due for the choice: it is daring to use an animal which might possibly perform an action on stage that could be construed as a criticism of the play.

The end of the play arrives with no such accident but a slightly troubled ending. Mary, unscathed, retires after her life of destruction with little gained other than the respect of her father and the contentment that having opened and explored Pandora's Box, she is the better for it. Perhaps the hidden message is that such evil is produced by keeping children from the world, but, if we identify with Mary, the theme is either make sure you're rich so you can do as you please at the expense of those you employ, or that daughters should be locked up, as they are likely to cause untold troubles. Go see *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and decide for yourself.