

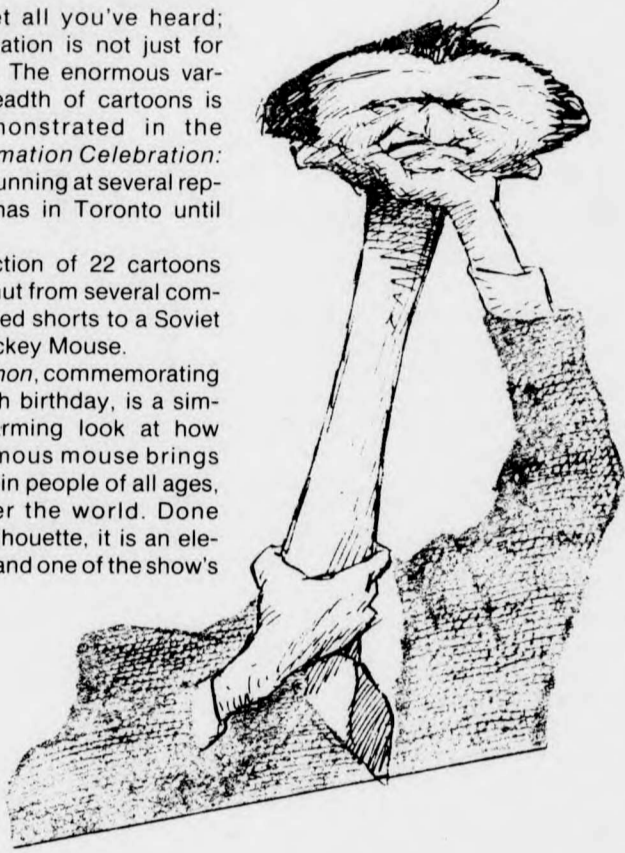
A r t s toronto tastes toon town

by Howard Kaman

Forget all you've heard; animation is not just for kids. The enormous variety and breadth of cartoons is amply demonstrated in the *Second Animation Celebration: The Movie*, running at several repertory cinemas in Toronto until January 21.

The collection of 22 cartoons runs the gamut from several computer animated shorts to a Soviet tribute to Mickey Mouse.

The Marathon, commemorating Mickey's 60th birthday, is a simple, heartwarming look at how Disney's famous mouse brings out the child in people of all ages, from all over the world. Done entirely in silhouette, it is an elegant tribute, and one of the show's



highlights.

While *The Marathon* pays tribute to Mickey's broad appeal, Tom Sito's *Propagandance* pays tribute to music. The film is a light-hearted attempt to show the unifying effect of song through a competition between a Cossack and a breakdancer. Like many of the best animated films, *Propagandance* is short, clocking in at just four minutes and 26 seconds.

Even briefer are the various clips that comprise *A Salute to the Olive Jar Animation Studio*, a company which has produced several well known commercials, most notably some clever ads for MTV. Those commercials (mostly computer animated) are included in the salute which also features a hilarious "intermission" piece advertising the various refreshments available in the lobby such as olive corn, olive dogs and olive shakes.

Computer animation is also the hallmark of Pixar, the California-based company that produced the 1987 Academy Award winner *Tin Toy*. Both that film and Pixar's newest work, *Knick Knack*, are shown. While many believe com-

puters are destroying the craft of animation, this company has pressed ahead and broke new grounds in computer graphics and sound. *Tin Toy* features a baby that seems realistic, cute and menacing all at the same time, while *Knick Knack* has a state of the art soundtrack by Bobby McFerrin.

Even funnier than Pixar's creations are Matt Groening's animated shorts, *The Simpsons*. Originally shown on The Tracey Ullman show, these clips, with names like "Burp Contest," and "Family Portrait," portray the dry sense of humour that has made Groening's *Life in Hell* comic strip such a roaring success. The antics of Homer and Marge Simpson and their three children, Bart, Lisa and Maggie, are familiar but leave you in stitches at the same time.

On a serious note, Gavriilo Gnativich's *Lazar* tells the story of an outcast who believes the wall surrounding his city is far too limiting. His attempts to escape are thwarted by the authorities until they see no reason not to throw him out. Although *Lazar* was produced in 1987, the recent events in

Germany make it a timely piece of film-making.

Given the recent trendiness of world music, *Umbabarauma* is also timely. The film is a music video commissioned by Talking Head David Byrne to accompany *Brazil Classics #1: Beleza Tropical*, a compilation of traditional Brazilian music which he produced. Using a wide variety of media, directors Susan Young and Mike Smith have fashioned a film with as many textures as the music that inspired it.

Not all of the films are inspirational or funny. Yet the contrast and variety in the show make it work. The only piece I disliked was *Rarg*, a 21-minute fantasy about a society that realizes it is a dream. Although the idea was interesting, the animation was nothing special, failing to hold my attention for more than 10 minutes. Still, being an "epic" fantasy, it was unlike anything else included — and so it seemed to fit.

With such an eyeopening array of styles and techniques, there is something for every taste in the *Animation Celebration*. After all, everybody loves a good cartoon.

video boom lives on in the '90s

by Tania Hewett

"VCRs have penetrated 30 to 40 per cent of Canadian homes," says Norman Wilner, freelance journalist for the *Toronto Star's* monthly magazine *Video and Home Entertainment*. The '80s saw an incredible boom for the video business, a boom that shows no signs of slowing down in the '90s. At least 600 to 700 videos were released in 1989 alone, that is twice the number of theatrical releases.

Wilner, an ex-York film student and a former writer for *Excalibur*, has observed some important trends in this lucrative business. One notable trend is the faster release of a movie to video. Initially it took six months for a video to be released once a movie

had its run in the cinema. But in the 1990s the time will fall to four months.

Wilner believes that the reason for this more rapid turnover is "the disposable quality of films. People forget very quickly so studios want to cash in on the excitement created when the film was in the cinema. Most movies these days are designed for short release and not to run a long time in the theatre." The video business is such a money making industry that many movies get sent straight to video. But there is no set pattern or criteria for deciding when and what will be released.

"Money is a factor and how much money can be made. But the studios have no idea what they are doing. They just spit out movies like an assembly line

throwing out the next thing on their list," says Wilner. The marketing of videos is also done very badly. Argues Wilner, "Unless you have a Warner Brothers or a Paramount making commercial tie-ins like the Batman-diet coke commercial, you just see a couple of posters in the store and then they are spat out." Considering the kind of money that can be made, studios don't spend the same kind of money on promoting videos as they do for theatrical releases.

Wilner believes that "the studios don't realize they need to. Studios still see videos as the enemy." They fear that videos will cut into their theatrical release receipts. However, this is not the case considering the high grosses at the box office this year.

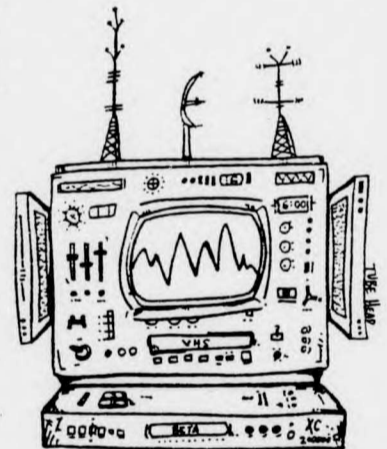
There are some people who are

turning away from the cinema because many are unwilling to spend \$7 on a movie they are unsure about. They prefer to wait and pay \$2.50. Cheaper prices and the fact that movies can be seen again and again are key reasons for the success of movies on video. Wilner believes that "movies with car crashes, bare breasts and mindless violence also do well at the video store."

Unfortunately, Wilner doesn't see the kinds of movies on video cassette getting any better in the '90s. He sees them getting "more violent, more brutal, more explicit because TV is getting steamier and the videos will reflect that." More unrated, uncut movies are also being released to entice the public. But video stores will not have to work too hard to get people to come in with

climbing movie prices.

In the next decade more people are going to be turning to their VCRs for entertainment. Therefore it is safe to say that videos are definitely here to stay.



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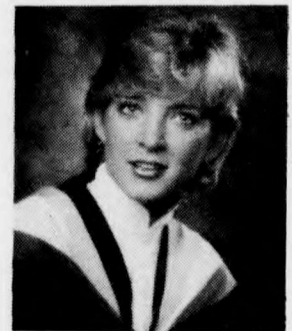
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