

What's Up Doc?

A Fond Remembrance of Chuck Jones

Cartoons turned a corner when Chuck Jones came to town. He transformed Walt Disney's vision to one of wit, humor and mischief. We watched as Wile E. Coyote repeatedly attempted to trap the Roadrunner, only to fall victim to his own falling anvils; Pepe Le Pew's aromatic expressions taught us everything we need to know about unsuccessful romance; Marvin Martian's Gladiator skirt, tennis shoes and romanescque helmet gave us an alternate view of aliens out to destroy the earth. And of course, Bugs Bunny's gregarious self-confidence enabled him to outwit, outsmart, and outsing any adversary. For most of the 20th Century, Chuck Jones has shaped the way we see a particular side of the world, and our art and our souls are all the better for it.

This very special Special Session unites animators from all over our industry, each of whom had a particular relationship with this fabulous man and his work. Please join us for what is sure to be an inspiring, animated session about an inspiring, animated artist.

Organizer:
Jill Smolin
Independent

Panelists:
Scott Clark
Directing Animator
Pixar

"If it can be read equally with pleasure by children and adults, it will be a successful story." In 1995 I was lucky enough to have Chuck Jones relay this bit of wisdom to me personally. As a young animator-in-training my internship at his studio helped me get to Pixar a year later. It's this advice that I've tried to remember in doing my own work. His influence on my animation is, and always will be, guiding, constant, and inspiring.

Jennifer Emberly
Animation Supervisor
Industrial Light & Magic

The inspiration of Chuck Jones goes beyond any words. As a kid I found my dreams in a world of Rikki Tikki Tavi's, Bugs, Grinches, Daffy Duck's and Marvin the Martians. I grew up a bit but not enough to give up my Saturday ritual of Chuck Jones Cartoons. Many times I tested the theories of his Wile E. Coyote physics on my siblings. Searching for years to find the perfect place in an adult world to combine my imagination, passion for drawing and the desire to push the limits like Chuck always had, I went into animation. I finally got to see him at a presentation and he was every bit as animated as his Bugs Bunny....it was a thrill and an inspiration. Thanks Chuck!!

Stephen A. Fossati
PDI/DreamWorks

...It is impossible for me to adequately relate in a few paragraphs nearly ten years of seemingly disparate lessons, ranging from the physiology of a frog ("a frog is like a quail plucked clean and slathered in grease"), to the psychology of a coward ("he thinks big and acts small"). But pressed (as editorial limitations are want to do), to boil everything down to its very

essence or even to a single word, Chuck's philosophy of and his goal in directing was *believability*.

In a very practical sense, believability to Chuck meant that since frogs blink with their lower eyelids, then so too must his frog. Little touches like this, which helped to make his characters more real were important to Chuck, but the true meaning of believability was deeper and more personal than logic or factual accuracy.

Believability was knowing that the characters you were directing were real. That somewhere Bugs Bunny, Wile Coyote and Pepe Le Pew all actually lived and breathed, triumphed and failed and then woke up the next morning to try and do it all again. Believability was knowing that that "somewhere" was inside of himself and inside everybody else who might ever watch his films.

Chuck Jones was an extraordinary director; not because he knew exactly how many frames it took for a coyote falling from a cliff to strike the canyon floor below; not because he could capture the precise attitude or expression in a drawing with a single self-confident stroke of his pencil. He was a great director because he was Chuck Jones and because Chuck Jones found humor all around him, because Chuck Jones found joy and inspiration in literature, in music, in art, in life and in himself. Because Chuck Jones truly believed that the characters he was directing were real and because Chuck Jones knew that they, like he or we, were not infallible and that they, like he or we, were simply human.

Doug Sweetland
Animator/Story Artist
Pixar

"Miles Davis said the story of jazz could be told in four words: "Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker". In my estimation, the story of animation goes: "Walt Disney, Chuck Jones". And the four names are analogous. The first names birthed the form and the second ones stripped it down to a highly efficient, highly evolved, modern language. Miles didn't think there was a third name for jazz, and I don't think there's a third name for animation."

Barry Weiss
Senior VP of Animation Production
Sony Pictures Imageworks

I grew up on Chuck's work. Not because I had dreams of being an animator, but because I liked being a kid. And I liked being mischievous and funny, just like Bugs.

When I finally discovered animation and had the privilege of meeting Chuck, I realized why I loved this business and worshipped the man. Here he was, 80+ years old and he was still a mischievous kid. And I realized that's where great characters and animation come from, mischievous kids.

I'm still one and hope to stay that way.