The Evolution of Animation: Bedrock Revisited

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1. Introduction

Flash is the future of television animation. It cuts costs, saves time, and empowers the artist. There is a gap in the education and understanding of how to effectively utilize this program for broadcast animation purposes. This lecture will serve to educate this gap from both an artistic and production point of view. Creating broadcast animation has long been limited to having lots of money and time. The average half hour cartoon runs between 300,000 to 1.5 million dollars to produce. The traditional animation process takes over twelve weeks to produce one episode with most of the grunt work being done overseas. Flash is an artistically empowering program that will change the face of animation within the next year. Flash is slowly creeping into broadcast. Some traditionalists have hesitated to accept Flash animation as viable method of production is because the taint from the dot com era. The reason Flash has not been accepted as a viable mainstream production method is because for the most part, the animation that has been produced on the web lacked the quality of television and film. Currently, there are very few animators who have walked on both sides of the fence. But any of them will tell you Flash Animation will become a necessity in the television industry.

2. Overview

The presentation will clearly define the benefits using a program such as Flash MX from a production standpoint. Artistic examples such as character design, storyboarding, and animating straight into Flash MX will be covered. The bulk of the presentation will explore the business side of television animation and the archaic system that have been in place for decades. The traditional production system of animation will be starkly contrasted with the time saving efficient workflow digital animation can provide to studios.

3. The Evolution of Scooby Doo

In 1957, the last of the big studios closed the doors of its television animation division. The cost of a six-minute *Tom and Jerry* short was escalating at over $50,000. MGM had no choice but to follow Disney and Warner's lead. By 1960 most animators in Hollywood were out of work. It would be two men named William Hanna and Joseph Barbera that would not only save the genre but also reinvent it. The two men invented the limited animation system. The system was based on reusing animation, strong staging, and simple gags. It would be fifty years later the same principles would become the principles of web animation. By economizing the artwork Hanna Barbera dramatically drove down the cost of production and were able to bring hundreds of artists back to their drawing boards.

It is an amazing story. What was even more amazing was my encounter with Scooby Doo creator, Iwao Takamoto six months ago. The very principles that drive the Flash animation system on the web are the ones that made Fred Flintstone a household name.

When I showed him MX he got it right away, after all it's really a system he helped pioneer.

4. The Future of TV Animation Production

Television animation is at a crossroad once again. Recently, an animation colleague of mine walked out of Comedy Central disappointed. His demo pilot was received well by the brass of the company but the cost to produce his style of animation for full season far exceeded what the studio was willing to pay. The next week we had a conversation. The word "Flash" was mentioned to me followed by a barrage of production and technical questions. There is an undeniable hunger to learn how to produce television animation using this program.

Almost all animated television is now done of overseas much to the dismay of many Hollywood animators. Flash MX could bring production back to the United States because is offers a cheaper and much faster way to create animation. A revolutionized system based on what Hanna Barbera introduced in the 1960s will have to emerge. This presentation would effectively show how such a system could be set up from a production point of view. There are so many animators and producers who have heard of Flash, but do not understand its capabilities both from a technological and artistic standpoint. This lecture will serve as education to creative individuals and studios to effectively drive down the cost of production. In tern, bringing jobs back to the US and saving enormous amounts of time.

5. About the Presenter

Specializing in pure Flash animation, Sandro Corsaro has created projects for clients such as Intel, McDonalds, MCA Records, Nestle, and E Music. Currently based in Los Angeles, he finds time for personal projects between commercial assignments and teaching Flash Animation seminars nationwide. Locally, he has taught seminars for Art Center of Pasadena and for Lynda.com's Ojai Digital Art Center. Among his latest projects is a book for New Riders Publishing entitled, *The Flash Animator*, in which he shares his techniques for applying traditional animation principles in the Flash MX environment.

Prior to his introduction to Flash, Sandro earned degrees in both Fine Arts and Animation from the University of Southern California. There he honed his traditional animation skills under the influences of great animation directors such as Tom Sito and Brad Bird. While still in college, he had the pleasure of working on the production of two animated films for Warner Bros; *The Iron Giant* and *Osmosis Jones*.