

HOPELESSLY DEVOTED TO 80'S MOVIES

# GIRLS, ON FILM

The Animation Issue

An American Tale

The Snowman

The Adventures of Mark Twain

Twice Upon a Time

American Pop

Rock & Rule

Rainbow Brite

Cat City

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# MOVIES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE...

AMERICAN POP (1981)

THE SNOWMAN (1982)

ROCK & RULE (1983)

TWICE UPON A TIME (1985)

RAINBOW BRITE & THE STAR STEALER (1985)

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## SKETCHING THE SCENE...

# GIRLS, ON FILM

Issue # 8  
April 2020

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Welcome to the 8th issue of *Girls, on Film*, the fanzine that is hopelessly devoted to 80s movies. For each issue, we select a theme and discuss eight 80s movies related to that theme. We cover all kinds of movies and themes. All issues are available to read, for free, on our website at [girlsonfilmzine.com](http://girlsonfilmzine.com).

In this issue, we draw from animated films from the 1980s, particularly the strange and rare titles of the decade. We are joined by guest writer Rhonda Baughman!

**AMERICAN POP (1981)** This beautifully animated historical/musical follows the doomed lineage of father and son musicians from the early 1900s to the late 1970s.

**THE SNOWMAN (1982)** A Christmas hater inadvertently becomes part of UK Christmas tradition when his snowman tale gets injected with a little holiday spirit.

**ROCK & RULE (1983)** A rock n' roll mad man hatches a crazy ass scheme to get back on top.

**TWICE UPON A TIME (1985)** An all-purpose animal and a mime save the world from endless nightmares.

**RAINBOW BRITE & THE STAR STEALER (1985)** Rainbow Brite has to save the world from the Evil Princess who is trying to steal all the world's light.

**THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN (1985)** Mark Twain sets off on a mission to find Hailey's Comet with three of his well-known characters.

**CAT CITY (1986)** The Hungarians crank up the classic cat-and-mouse chase with a Bond parody about a secret agent mouse on a mission to solve a kitty crisis.

**AN AMERICAN TALE (1986)** A family of mice immigrates to the US to try to escape evil cats.



## BEHIND THE ZINES

### STEPHANIE McDEVITT

Stephanie's one big disappointment in life is that she wasn't old enough to fully appreciate popular clothing styles in the 80s, as she was mostly attired in paisley sweatsuits. A full-time editor and occasional freelancer, Stephanie looks nostalgically back on 80s films such as *Ernest Goes to Camp*, *Adventures in Babysitting*, and *Can't Buy Me Love* and wishes she could pull off the hairdos of Cindy Mancini and her friends.

### JANENE SCENZA

Janene has written a buttload of zines over the years. She spent her teen years combing musty video stores for all the 80s movies her hometown had to offer. There were lists! She's got plenty of favorites from the decade, but it's stylish indie films like *Desperately Seeking Susan*, *Repo Man*, and *Terminator* that she loves best.

### RHONDA BAUGHMAN (GUEST)

Dr. Rhonda Baughman, teacher and freelance writer, raised adolescent hell in the 80s and the horror films of that era were her BFFs! She loves all of 80s pop culture, but nothing spoke to her quite like *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama*, *Nightmare Sisters*, and *Reform School Girls*. She had her own pink laminated Video Time Video rental card at 9 years old and she never looked back. Or forward, really... she still loves her VHS and sweet, sweet VCR. And let it be known, the scrunchie never died for Rhonda: she STILL wears one proudly!

## CALLING ALL 80S FANS!

We welcome girls and honorary girls who are hopelessly devoted to 80s movies to guest write for the zine. Contact Steph and Janene at [info@girlsonfilmzine.com](mailto:info@girlsonfilmzine.com).





# DAMN THE MAN! AMERICAN POP

BY JANENE SCELZA

Before I get into *American Pop*, let's talk about American New Wave. Not the music genre. I'm talking about auteur filmmaking in the United States back in the late 60s and into the 1970s. Film studios no longer ruled with an iron fist. The ridiculous Hayes Code was abolished. And, television offered some real competition. A steady stream of epics and campy musicals were failing to get asses, particularly young asses, in seats.

A new generation of filmmakers who came of age in the 60s and were heavily influenced by the experimentation of their European and Japanese counterparts were granted un-

precedented independence. And with it, they made films that spoke to a country mired in war and revolutions and other crazy shit. [1] (It's a history worth repeating, frankly).

Coppola, Cassavetes, Bogdanovich, DePalma, Spielberg, Lucas, and Woody Allen are just a few of the filmmakers who came out of that period. So did Ralph Bakshi, except his medium was cartoons.

Before Bakshi, cartoons were primarily considered kid's stuff. At a Comic Con panel a few years ago, someone asked Ralph Bakshi about the great studio panic of the 1960s.

RELEASED FEB 13, 1981 / WRITTEN BY RONNI KERN / DIRECTED BY RALPH BAKSHI

## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE



LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

By then, he said, animation had become so redundant, the industry wasn't worth saving anyways. [2] Unfortunately, he added, Disney had paralyzed the industry, convincing the new guys that animated films had to be big polished productions to succeed.

Armed with Ashcan aesthetics [3], Ralph Bakshi gave the finger to all of that and started making low budget animated films for adults. [4] As Marc Spitz wrote: "If you grew up in the '70s or 80s, the name Ralph Bakshi got your blood pumping. His films were bold and profane, hysterical, politically incorrect, gothic and gorgeous to look at. They were shot through with a real sense of rock and roll and street smarts. [5] His first, an adaptation of Robert Crumb's *Fritz the Cat* comics, had so much tail that the MPAA gave it an X rating. (It also made a hell of a lot of money and really pissed off folks at Disney who feared cartoons would trend towards pure vulgarity [6]).

Starting with that bit of trivia probably makes Ralph Bakshi sound like a guy who hated Disney and, in the opposite extreme, made a bunch of lewd cartoons. Nope. His filmography includes badass fantasy films like *Wizards* (1977), the Brad Pitt bomb, *Cool World* (1992), and semi-autobiographical tales like *American Pop* (1981). (See, I finally got around to it!)



AS TIME GOES BY.

Told in a series of vignettes, *American Pop* traces the doomed lineage of a family of fathers and sons. Zalmie, Benny, Tony, and Pete, all musicians, struggle with paternal destinies and personal legacies.

Bakshi mixes gorgeous animation (he regularly used rotoscoping, painting over live action stills to produce realistic character movements [7]), archival footage, and old photographs. There are also more subtle touches to immerse us in the timeline. For example, Zalmie's childhood coincides with the silent film era, so initial exposition is delivered by title cards. A steady rotation of evolving American pop music provides the soundtrack. (In fact, music licensing delayed it's release to home video).

The movie opens with Zalmie and his mother fleeing the Cossacks in Russia. His rabbi father remains, insisting that someone finish the prayer. The survivors emigrate to the states and settle in NYC's tenements.

Zalmie is recruited by a man named Louie to work in the burlesque houses. It becomes a lively second home, and Louie becomes like a father to the boy when his mother dies in the Triangle Shirtwaiste Factory fire (the women in this story don't really have it any easier).

As a young man, Zalmie performs in Vaudeville shows. He wants to be a singer, but





BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY.

Injuries sustained during an air raid while performing for the troops permanently damage his voice. He becomes smitten with a singer named Bella. She gets pregnant. The mob lends him money to marry her and support her career.

It's the Big Band era. Bella is the victim of a mob ambush. Zalmie spends time in prison. Their son, Benny, makes a living playing piano in jazz clubs. His wife is pregnant, but he enlists in WWII. A happy couple jitters alongside real war footage. We see a moment of real humanity that takes us miles away from the conceptualization of cartoons as mere kiddie fare when a Nazi soldier tearfully listens to the Benny play on an abandoned piano before killing him.

Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" marks the transition to Post-War America. Benny's son, Tony, listens to the disaffected Beat poets proselytize. He wanders West to California where he pens hit songs for a successful folk band.

Rock goes psychedelic. Tony becomes a junkie. His son, Pete, stays by his side, surviving as a dealer. He navigates a maze of nodding junkies. We hear the Velvet Underground and see pogo-dancing punks. Pete negotiates with a band to record one of his songs. Cue ... Bob Segar's "Night Moves" and the gentle reflections of teenage love?!



PETE'S DRAGON.

(Bakshi originally wanted "Freebird"). Nonetheless, it's stardom at last. Will it last?

*American Pop* came out of Bakshi's desire for a more personal project after working on the fantasy films *Wizards* and *The Lord of the Rings*. By then, he had his own animation studio. Columbia Pictures took an interest.

Delegating scriptwriting to Ronni Kern was a good move - *American Pop* is a much tighter story compared to Bakshi's previous, semi-autobiographical reflections on urban life like *Heavy Traffic* and *Hey Good Lookin'*. The film is a tremendous undertaking for an hour-and-a-half movie, and there is so much going on, both in the visuals and the narrative. Consequently, large chunks of critical American history -- especially in Post-War America -- are missing from the timeline that no doubt would have had some kind of impact on these guys.

Critics then and now generally applaud *American Pop* as something so damn different and interesting. It did well enough financially, but it was never a box office smash. That probably didn't bother Ralph Bakshi, who always said that he was never interested in making movies for everyone. [8] Like most of the films we wrote about in this issue, *American Pop* became a cult hit. I can't recommend it enough.





# MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. BRIGGS! THE SNOWMAN

BY JANENE SCELZA

Like a lot of kids who grew up in the 80s with a VCR in the home, my folks recorded plenty of kid-friendly content that my brother and I watched *ad nauseam*. There were lots of Christmas specials, including the classics like *Rudolph* and *Frosty*, and the more modern properties like *The Smurfs* and *He-Man* (turns out Eternia celebrated, too). One that became part of our holiday tradition well into adulthood was *The Snowman*, a 1982 animated British short film about a boy and his magical snowman.

Americans have their own familiar children's

tale of snowmen coming to life: *Frosty the Snowman*, which airs here every year. It's definitely a product of its time (the late 1960s) with its hokey songs and the jolly snowman reassuring sad kids that he'll "be back again someday" (he was). That's not to criticize *Frosty* -- I loved that cartoon growing up. But, *The Snowman*, which also broadcasts every year, usually on Christmas Eve in the UK, is quite different.

It's based on Raymond Briggs's children's book of the same name. The book was told in a series of wordless panels that Briggs

RELEASED DEC 24, 1982 / WRITTEN BY RAYMOND BRIGGS / DIRECTED BY DIANNE JACKSON + JIMMY T. MURAKAMI





IT'S SNOW TIME!

illustrated with pastels and colored pencils. The movie remains fairly faithful both in visuals and narrative, with the exception of scenes added to fill the 26-minute runtime (more on this later). The only spoken words are from choirboy Pete Auty performing Howard Blake's wonderful "Walking in the Air." Raymond Briggs provided the animation in what *Telegraph* columnist Dominic Cavendish referred to as a "shimmering, sketch-pad style." [1] (Executive producer Iain Harvey wrote an article describing the production process). [2]

One morning, a rosy-cheeked boy named James wakes to discover the English countryside blanketed in fresh snow. Words are unnecessary to convey his utter delight. The day is planned. He rushes downstairs past his mother and father, skips breakfast, and heads outside to investigate. The camera pans out to reveal a vast landscape he has to himself. The possibilities are endless.

By lunchtime, James begins to build his snowman. It's an ambitious project, too. He has to stand on a stool to add the head and the final touches: a tweed hat, green scarf, coal buttons, and tangerine nose.

The boy admires his handiwork until his mother calls him in for the evening. He has trouble sleeping. Something compels him to check outside. The snowman turns and



GETTING THE PERSONAL TOUR.

waves. James can't believe his eyes.

When the snowman comes to life in *Frosty*, he is already fairly aware of his surroundings. In Briggs's story, everything is new. James introduces him to the mundane features of everyday life. The snowman is intrigued by the magic of light switches, television, balloons, and perfume, among other things. He doesn't already know not to sit too close to the fireplace.

The snowman has his own magic to show James: he can fly. He takes the boy's hand and they soar over the countryside. Some of the bystanders can't believe their eyes, either. Other snowmen (and snowwomen) join them. They land in the North Pole and partake in a glorious party. (I absolutely love Howard Blake's soundtrack here). James meets Father Christmas who gives him a scarf. With daylight approaching, the boy and his snowman return home. By morning, the snowman has melted. James is devastated. The film ends.

There were different introductions to the film, all running less than a minute. In one, Father Christmas (voiced by Mel Smith) settles into a comfy chair after a busy day. In another, David Bowie wanders around the attic of an old house, where he finds the blue scarf given to James. He says it's his scarf and talks about building a snowman,





JAMES AND SNOWMAN TAKE FLIGHT.

suggesting that the rosy-cheeked red-headed boy grew up to become a fashionable blonde man with anisocoria. (Bowie was a fan of Briggs's work and would also provide the title track for the film version of his book *When the Wind Blows*).

*The Snowman* had humble beginnings. The short was initially pitched for the UK's Channel 4 when the public television station began broadcasting in 1982. It was later nominated for an Oscar for Best Animated Short and won a BAFTA TV award. Even with that notoriety and Bowie's name attached to the project, the producers had trouble introducing the film to US markets. The Japanese, on the other hand, were fans. "[They] recognized the simplicity and purity of the film as being very close to their culture," wrote Iain Harvey. [3]

But guess who hates this movie? Raymond Briggs! "Famously, Raymond Briggs hates Christmas; it's one of the ironies of modern publishing that this self-described 'grumpy old man' has become inextricably linked with the juggernaut of the festive season," wrote Justine Jordan. [4]

He isn't being totally unreasonable. Briggs has often complained about the pointless agonizing we do to prepare for the holiday. "Although I support the principle of a day of feasting and presents, but the anxiety



SNOWMAN PARTIES ARE AWESOME.

starts in October: how many are coming? Are they bringing grandchildren? How long will they stay?" [5] His best-selling 1973 story, *Father Christmas*, even "presented Santa as an irritable old man, grumbling about delivering presents in the cold, remains indifferent to the festive spirit." [6]

Strange for a guy who wrote a children's Christmas story. Actually, the original story had no connection to Christmas. Scenes were added to fill the runtime, including some of the flying sequences, the entirety of the Snowman Party, and meeting Father Christmas. Briggs's original focus was on mortality. A child builds snowman. It comes to life. He loves his new friend. But in the end, the snowman melts. And, unlike Frosty, he doesn't return.

Except when he did. *The Snowman and The Snowdog*, released in 2012 to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original film, sort of rehashes the story (so much for mortality). It supposedly had Briggs's blessing, presumably because they didn't ham it up, and it maintains the original animation style, though a bit cleaner and brighter.

*The Snowman* is a wonderful film. The lack of dialogue, the old animation style, and the music all give it a sort of endearing solitude that I have always loved. Look for it and the sequel on YouTube.





# COME TOGETHER: ROCK & RULE

BY RHONDA BAUGHMAN

*One voice. One heart. One song.*

*Rock & Rule* is the first English language release from Canadian animated-film company Nelvana Enterprises, Inc. and a spin off from their *The Devil and Daniel Mouse* (1978) TV special. Initially unsuccessful in theaters, *Rock & Rule* would see hundreds of animators, multiple writers, several distributor changeovers, a brief run in Boston, one German film festival, and finally find real buff during airings on late night cable access channels. Relentless bootlegging across the convention circuit also found devotees.

During this time, no one (makers, critics, and fans) could come to a consensus on whether *Rock & Rule*'s audience should be kids or adults. The verdict is STILL out, actually -- which could be a reason it initially failed to find major markets, home or abroad -- and why it's now a cult classic: that fantastic blurry, wiggly line between kiddie stuff and the adult universe.

The film has gorgeous poster art that boasts mega musical talent (Debbie Harry, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, and Earth, Wind, and Fire) and double taglines: A. *The Beauty. The Beast. The Beat* and B.

RELEASED APRIL 15, 1983 / WRITTEN BY PATRICK LOUBERT, PETER SAUDER, + JOHN HALFPENNY / DIRECTED BY CLIVE SMITH



## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE



HE'S GOT THE BEAT

*Sounds You Can See in the Movie You Can Feel.* These twin animation battle cries immediately spoke to my love of sound repetition (consonance, in this case) and my understanding of synesthesia. Neither line is used in the film and its real moral, thematic catchphrase is *One voice. One heart. One song.* But the biggest compliment I can give *Rock & Rule*? I'd buy this film's soundtrack ... on vinyl! Overall, the film is about summoning demonic forces at an epic rock concert! Of course, I need this soundtrack on vinyl. [1]

The fictional Ohmtown heroes and villains of *Rock & Rule* exist in a post-WWIII era. The human race has been annihilated and adorable animal/human hybrid mutants roam the streets - and still, they want to be rock and roll stars.

We arrive on the dirty club scene. Band mates Angel, Omar, Dizzy, and Stretch are performing at Talent Night, giving their all to the crowd in the mostly empty venue because that's rock and roll, baby! As with any band, there's strife, tension, and turmoil. I wondered if this film was the animated tale of the legendary band, Blondie. I just finished Debbie Harry's autobiography *Face It* prior to watching *Rock & Rule* and noted many synchronicities. For example, both Harry and former partner/band comrade Chris Stein are on the soundtrack and the lead mutants resemble them physically, but this could all be coincidence.



VILLAIN SO NOT CHILLIN'

Talent Night in Ohmtown is a bust, but Mok (voiced by Don Francks), an aging, partially insane, evil rock star, is in da club, and he is looking for the voice! The One Voice! According to his talking computer, there is one voice Mok will need to sing. This voice will open a portal and unleash hell on earth, apparently, and some rock and roll demons will help restore Mok to his former chart-topping glory. [2]

Mok's magic ring glows when Angel sings her ballad, so the band is invited to Mok's mansion presumably just to hang, meet their idol, whatever aspiring rock bands did in the 80s - but really, devious Mok has other plans! His roller-skating henchmen triplets, the Schlepper Brothers -- Toad, Sleazy, and Zip -- help Mok to lure the lovely Angel to his garden where she's kidnapped after rebuffing his advances... and a poky blimp getaway ensues. Over the course of the evening, Angel's bandmates are also hypnotized by Mok and Co. with "Edison balls" - I don't know what these are either but they sure are mesmerizing. It's very sparkly.

Once in Nuke City, Mok has to prepare for his concert/summoning shindig. Angel teams up with Schlepper sis Cindy and overhears Mok's wicked scheme, including a way to stop the summoning. When Mok asks the computer who can stop him, it cleverly responds: "no one." Meanwhile, Angel's bandmates realize they've been drugged, so they steal a cop car. Shenanigans





FRIENDS 'TIL THE END

abound, as do multiple captures, diversions, escapes, and close calls.

Everything converges at Club 666. (Honestly, IF dance clubs were this cool, I'd still be hitting them up on the weekends.) Omar runs into Mok, who uses one of his gloriously apocalyptic sycophants to don an Angel mask and fool Omar. Being mildly daft even before the sparkle ball-drugging, Omar believes Angel is deeply in love with Mok.

A power failure in the Nuke York venue interrupts the summoning. Mok heads for home - "Ohm sweet Ohm," he cleverly says, since within Ohmtown lies a power plant big enough to actually hold his concert and invoke his demon. While the Schlepper brothers contemplate good and evil, a power surge overloads the city and the shock brings Angel's bandmates out of their second sparkle-ball drug state.

*Deus ex machina* arrives: Stretch and Dizzy stumble on a poster advertising Mok's new concert with Angel. After Omar ditches them both to lick his wounds, (unable to fathom trickery despite the best attempt at explanation from his comrades), Stretch and Dizzy crash their stolen cop car, arriving at the concert too late. Angel is lustily bound to the stage, Mok forcing her to sing. I won't spoil the ending, but the appearance of the big bad demon is a sight to behold.

It's hard to believe this entire film was



TECHNOLOGY FINDS A WAY

initially envisioned for children. I'm not a Disney gal. I loved the magical aspects of the film, and the darker animation and grimy imagery of the era -- the mid-to-late '70s and early 80s NYC music scene.

Quality bootlegs can be found on YouTube. The movie also had a Marvel comic tie-in (Super Special #25). Aside from a little online NightFlight action, Youtube also houses most of this film's history. The user, CinemaCase, compares three different endings for the film, and user Patbacknitro reviews the origins of *Rock & Rule*, including its source material from the 1978 *The Devil and Daniel Mouse*. Musta Costa Fortune posted an entire making of documentary that looks suspiciously like it might come from a DVD/Blu-ray release. However, the real award goes to user Johnny Ceed [3] for how enthusiastically he revels in *Rock & Rule*.

I'm considering purchasing this movie for one reason alone: there's the ultra-trippy, hypnotic animation at the 25-26 minutes mark that had me smiling and noting multiple personal synchronicities ... and the film overall deals with multiple conflicts (man vs man, man vs self, man vs demon), as well as gender fluidity (Cindy), exploitation and greed (Mok), blindly following monstrous leadership (Schlepper bros), and one major theme: the flickering embers of the dying American Dream -- some artists who want nothing more than to achieve their notions of success within a highly competitive and creative field. I can definitely relate to that!





## PROFANITY INCLUDED: TWICE UPON A TIME

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

*Twice upon a Time* is a weird, little-known film produced by George Lucas. It was his first feature-length animated movie, but, unfortunately, the movie wasn't released nationwide. In fact, *Twice Upon a Time* was unintentionally sabotaged by its own production company. I'm going to tell you about that, but first, let me try to explain the plot.

*Twice Upon a Time* takes place in three different worlds. First, we have the city of Din, which is occupied by the Rushers (humans). They are a tightly wound race controlled by their Cosmic Clock, which only allows them to stop moving when they sleep. The depic-

tions of Din are all black and white images and videos of humans who all seem to be in a great hurry (hence: Rushers).

Then we have the land of Frivoli, where Greensleeves (Hamilton Camp) and the Figmen of Imagination come from to deliver sweet dreams to the Rushers. On the opposing side of that is Murkworks where the evil Synonameess Botch (Marshall Efron) wants to foil Greensleeves' sweet dreams by using his fleet of vultures to drop nightmare bombs. Botch commands his vultures to capture Greensleeves and thus sets up the main conflict of the movie. Are you with

RELEASED AUGUST 5, 1983 / WRITTEN BY JOHN KORTY, BILL COUTURIE, SVELLA KENNEDY, + CHARLES SWENSON / DIRECTED BY JOHN KORTY + CHARLES SWENSON





A TYPE OF NIGHTMARE

me so far?

Enter our bumbling heroes, Ralph, the shapeshifting all-purpose animal (Lorenzo Music, known best as the original voice of Garfield), and his mime human friend Mumford. Ralph and Mum are out to prove themselves after being demoted at work. They run into Flora Fauna (Julie Payne), Greensleeves' niece, who is worried about her uncle. They decide to rescue him and prove their competence, when Botch swoops in and convinces them they can rescue Greensleeves if they go to Din and steal the main spring out of the Cosmic Clock. With that spring, Botch can stop time, plant all the nightmare bombs he wants, restart time, and curse the Rushers with nightmares forever.

Well, Mumford and Ralph set off to release the spring, which stops time. However, the spring, well, springs away from them and the evil vultures pick it up and bring it back to Botch. Mum and Ralph get a visit from the Fairy Godmother (Judith Kahan), who informs them that Botch tricked them. She gives them three magic dimes to call her when they need help, and then she recruits the muscle-bound Rod Rescuer (James Cranna) to help them find Greensleeves. Rod decides he's way more interested in pursuing Flora, so he ditches Mum and Ralph almost immediately.

Mumford and Ralph wander into an office where they find nightmare bombs scattered everywhere. Mum accidentally sets one off,



FAIRY GODMOTHER AT WORK

but since the Rushers are frozen in time, they are unaffected, and Ralph and Mum experience a nightmare in which they are attacked by office supplies. Once it's over, they're forced to use one of their magic dimes to call the Fairy Godmother and have her transport them back to Frivoli. She fires them and tells them they should give up on this hero business.

Meanwhile, Rod Rescuer has been trying to "rescue" Flora in an attempt to win her heart. Flora, who doesn't need rescuing, rebuffs his advances, and they eventually join back up with Mum and Ralph and decide to storm Botch's castle to foil his plans and save Greensleeves. Can our clumsy protagonists save the day? I'm not going to tell you here, you'll have to watch the movie.

Writer and director John Korty and his animation team made *Twice Upon a Time* using a method Korty invented called Lumage (short for Luminous Image). In this technique, the characters are sketched out, then cut out from a translucent piece of plastic, the pieces are moved by hand on a light table, and then filmed in stop motion. It's a very time-consuming practice since you have to create the characters twice - first as a sketch and then again in plastic. It took three years to make this movie. [1]

Prior to making *Twice Upon a Time*, Korty had worked with Lumage on such children's shows as *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*. Despite his previous work





SWEET TATTOO!

with kid-friendly material, *Twice Upon a Time* is pretty dark. In my favorite scene from the movie, Botch's chief nightmare writer, Scuzzbopper (James Cranna), has just completed his great novel, and Botch throws the book out the window. Flora and company later come upon Scuzzbopper hanging from a noose. She screams, thinking he's dead, but Scuzzbopper just looks up and dryly tells her, "It's been a long day." It was a very funny scene, but maybe not child appropriate.

The attempt to sell *Twice Upon a Time* as a kid-friendly movie might have been its undoing. Kory took a sample of the movie to George Lucas who set him up with the Ladd Company, the company that eventually released the movie. After three years of working it, Ladd held a few sneak previews and they were disastrous. People went in looking for a light and sweet movie and were met with something much darker. Kory's business VP, Bill Couturie (who also has a writing credit on this movie), decided to bring the actors back in and re-record their dialogue to include profanity in an attempt to avoid a PG rating and to perhaps sell this as something other than a children's' movie [2].

This new cut of the movie was sent to theaters in Portland and Seattle where they showed it in a double-feature with *The Secret of NIMH*, a children's movie. However, no one watched the new cut before sending it out. Movie-goers, so upset that the kids



OUR BUMBLING HEROES

heard the curses, demanded their money back, and when word got back to the Ladd company, they pulled the movie from distribution. Kory said, "Its entire nationwide release was killed by fifteen words [of profanity]. There was nothing I could do...Five years of hard work and good ideas went down the drain in a matter of days." [3]

A few years after the disaster viewing, there was a deal with HBO, but they also got the version with the profanity and aired it on cable. Kory said, "Families turned it off, but a small (very small by TV standards) audience of young people caught it and decided it was great." There is an Internet rumor that Kory threatened HBO over showing the version with the profanity, but he says that's not true. He also said, "If you really want a copy of the 'adult' version, I suggest you pressure WB [Warner Brothers] to release a DVD with both versions on it." [4]

Well, it seems that that is exactly what happened. I couldn't find this movie on any streaming services, so I bought the DVD (which was released in 2015), and it has both versions on it. Knowing nothing about this movie before I saw it, I watched the "adult" version, but I only noticed a few instances of cursing. It's a funny, weird movie and if you can find a copy, I definitely recommend checking it out.





## MARKETING SUCCESS: RAINBOW BRITE AND THE STAR STEALER

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

Rainbow Brite was one of my favorite characters growing up. I don't remember much about her TV specials, but I'm sure I watched them at some point. I don't think I saw *Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer* when it was originally released, and I kind of wish I hadn't watched it as an adult. It wasn't good, and I like to keep my 80s childhood nostalgia in a happy place away from the reality of how terrible most cherished childhood things tend to be.

*Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer* begins with Rainbow Brite (Bettina Bush) attempt-

ing to ring in spring on Earth. Rainbow is the keeper of all the world's colors, and it is her job to end winter and bring color back to Earth. This seems like a great deal of responsibility for a child. Anyway, when she tries to change the seasons she realizes her powers are weak, and winter continues despite her best efforts.

Back in Rainbowland, a robotic horse named On-X (Pat Fraley) comes with a message for Rainbow Brite. He tells her to follow him to Spectra, the diamond planet that provides all the world's light (inter-

RELEASED NOVEMBER 15, 1985 / WRITTEN BY JEAN CHALOPIN + HOWARD R. COHEN  
DIRECTED BY BERNARD DEYRIES + KIMIO YABUKI





RAINBOW AND FRIENDS

estingly, in this universe, the sun does not exist). Something is wrong on Spectra, and if the light coming from Spectra is dimmed, the entire universe will die off. Rainbow Brite and her talking horse, Starlite, take off on a magical rainbow path (that originates from Rainbow Brite's belt) to try to save the world.

Once on Spectra, Rainbow Brite realizes that the Dark Princess (Rhonda Aldrich) is trying to cover Spectra with a net to drag it back to her planet so she can own the biggest diamond in all the world. Rainbow Brite and Starlite make an attempt to destroy the net, but they are chased by glitterbots (giant robots) and they need to escape. Eventually, they run into Krys (David Mendenhall), who is also a small child trying to save Spectra. Krys doesn't want to work with a girl because, as he says, there is no girl who is braver than he is. Rainbow Brite tells him to shove it and they venture off to talk to the Dark Princess.

Their plan is to simply tell the Dark Princess that stealing Spectra is wrong because they're like eight years old and that's the best way they know how to deal with problems. Obviously, the Dark Princess doesn't give a shit what they think. She throws them in a dungeon and steals Rainbow Brite's magical belt, rendering Rainbow Brite completely useless. In the dungeon, Krys and Rainbow Brite argue about who's braver and whose horse is better, and really, all their arguing is annoying.



THE EVIL PRINCESS HAS 80S HAIR

Eventually, Starlite and On-X get Rainbow Brite's belt back and save the kids from the dungeon. What follows from this point is a series of misadventures in which Kris and Rainbow Brite get caught and escape over and over again. Finally, Rainbow Brite and Krys get into the princess's lair, and manage to destroy the crystal that gives the princess all her power. The princess's powerful crystal was a confusing plot point, and I didn't really follow how it gave her power, but it didn't matter once Rainbow Brite and Krys destroyed it.

With the crystal destroyed, you would think that Rainbow Brite and Krys have won but not before one last attempt by the princess to destroy Spectra. Rainbow Brite uses her magic rainbows to repulse the princess's spaceship, and she blows it up. Brutal. Anyway, now Rainbow Brite and Krys can return to Rainbow Land as heroes, and spring on Earth can officially begin.

Originally, Hallmark Cards created Rainbow Brite because they were looking to break into licensing a children's character. Hallmark's Vice President of Creative/Licensing, Garry Glissmeyer, and a team of artists headed by Cheryl Cozad created this group of small girls who have power over nature and are responsible for bringing color and beauty to the world. Hallmark artist G.G. Santiago developed the final look of Rainbow Brite, Mattel made the line of Rainbow Brite dolls and toys, and DIC Entertainment produced three TV specials





KRYS SUCKS

prior to making this movie (they also made *Inspector Gadget*). [1]

*Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer* is, uh, not good. I found it to be rather boring and way too long. Critics did not screen the movie prior to its release, and most reviews I saw were not positive. Robert Blau at the *Chicago Tribune* said, “*Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer* is not an especially imaginative tale, and the animation is at times lifeless.” [2] Renee Schonfeld at *Common Sense Media* said, “This cartoon adventure... is a disaster. Other than a perky, brave heroine and some appealing sidekick characters, this is an overlong (even at 85 minutes), super-loud barrage of action sequences that place the heroes in constant danger.” [3]

This movie has a rare 0% fresh critics’ rating on *Rotten Tomatoes* (although the audience rating is at 79% fresh). [4] It opened the box office with \$1.8 million and ran for just five weeks, grossing just under \$5 million in North America. It was first released on VHS home video in the United States and Canada in 1986. In November 2004, Warner Home Video reissued the VHS cassette and also released the movie on DVD with bonus features that included a sing-along and a “Find the Missing Color Belt” game. [5]

Apparently, Rainbow Brite was supposed to be part of an all-female team. Hallmark



THE RAINBOW TEAM

added boy characters to diversify (because there were zero kids shows featuring boys in the 80s), and in this movie, they added Krys. However, Krys was one of the worst parts of *Star Stealer*. He had no superpowers, his horse was a simple robot, and all he did was complain about Rainbow Brite’s efforts to help him.

Even if Rainbow Brite couldn’t exist in an all-female universe, I like that the writers make it impossible for Krys to save Spectra without her help. Late in the movie, Krys comes into possession of a prism that only works in concert with Rainbow Brite’s rainbow powers. I found this to be a very satisfying conclusion to their relationship. Rainbow Brite invites him to live in Rainbow Land with all the other kids (even after all of his bitching and whining), but in order to use his prism, he has to work with her. At least there is a nice message in the end.

Rainbow Brite lives on today and even got 3 new TV episodes in 2014 (with Molly Ringwald voicing the Dark Princess). You can still find all sorts of Rainbow Brite toys and dolls--both vintage and the new, updated versions--online. As far as watching this movie, I had a hard time finding it on most streaming services. I was able to rent it through Vudu, which is Wal-Mart’s streaming service, which seems appropriate for a character who was created by an advertising agency trying to get into the licensing business.





# CLAYMATION STATION: THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

*The Adventures of Mark Twain* is based on a 1909 Twain quote. He said, "I came in with Halley's Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year, and I expect to go out with it." [1] Twain was born within two weeks of Halley's Comet's closest approach to earth in 1835. In this quote, he accurately predicts the year of his death to coincide with the return of Halley's Comet in 1910. [2]

In the movie, Twain boards a steampunk ship (a cross between a riverboat and a hot air balloon) and takes off to meet Halley's Comet. Before he leaves, his own

characters, Becky Thatcher, Tom Sawyer, and Huck Finn, all sneak on board to try to become famous aeronauts. However, once they realize Twain's planning a suicide mission, they try to find ways to sabotage the journey and return to earth.

Twain takes on a kind of Willy Wonka personality. He's a mad genius who built an incredible ship that includes a portal that takes the children into several of Twain's literary works. The movie is peppered with scenes from Twain's novels *The Diary Of Adam and Eve* and *The Adventures of Tom*

RELEASED MARCH 1, 1985 / WRITTEN BY SUSAN SHADBURNE AND MARK TWAIN /  
DIRECTED BY WILL VINTON





CAPTURING THEIR CREATOR

Sawyer and short stories “Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven” and “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” There are also scenes from *The Mysterious Stranger*, which is probably the best-known part of this movie (more on this later).

In addition to the perils of traveling with an apparent mad man, Huck, Tom, and Becky face stormy weather, deal with demonic creatures who come to life through Twain’s works, and are forced to ponder the human condition. Heavy stuff for a bunch of fictional children. Towards the end, Twain sits with the children and finishes telling them his Adam and Eve story, which is a story of great love. When the movie cuts back to Twain, he looks at a picture of his wife and simply says that he misses her. It seems his trip to meet with Halley’s Comet is a journey to be reunited with his wife in death.

There is a lot going on in this movie. If you’re a fan of Mark Twain and his writing, this is a must-see. I think having a background on Twain would be helpful, but it is definitely not necessary for you to enjoy the film. Mark Twain’s writings aside, I would definitely recommend this movie to those of you who are fans of animation and different animation techniques. *The Adventures of Mark Twain* was shot entirely in claymation. Will Vinton, considered to be the father of claymation, directed this movie. Vinton, who died in 2018, also animated *The California Raisins*, the Red and Yellow M&M characters, and *The PJs*. He coined



STEAMPUNK SPACESHIP

the term “claymation” and trademarked it in 1978. [3]

Prior to directing Twain, Vinton and Bob Gardiner, made an eight-minute, stop-motion, claymation movie called *Closed Mondays*. Though it was originally rejected at a local film festival in Portland, OR, Vinton showed it to a friend who owned a movie theater. *Closed Mondays* played before the feature film at that theater and the reception was very positive. Vinton then kept submitting it to film festivals, and eventually, it went on to win the Oscar for best animated short in 1975 [4] [5].

Building on the success of *Closed Mondays*, Vinton was able to expand his animation team and, by the time he was working on *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, he had about 17 full-time staff plus freelance artists. In a 2013 interview with Animation World Network, Vinton said Hugh Kennedy Tirrell (the executive producer), who was a huge Twain fan, had sent him Twain’s complete works. Vinton said, “So, we did start on *The Diary of Adam and Eve* while I was still reading Twain, and by the time we had that together, I started to feel like there was a very cool, very unusual movie that could be made.” [6]

Vinton’s team spent four years working on this movie. He said, “We shot the film in a converted house that had a barbershop in front of it, so we called it the Barbershop Studio. The bedrooms and things were editing rooms and offices. The high-ceiling



## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE



THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

basement was conveniently connected to a four thousand square foot studio that we built in the back, and that basement was where the animators and sculptors worked on the characters.” [7]

It is important to note that this entire movie is made of clay. Vinton said he wanted to avoid using other materials that might look cheap and distract the viewers. The characters in this movie are so expressive, it’s amazing to think that their heads and faces are all made of clay. Furthermore, there are a number of sequences in the clouds and sky that are really beautiful and I was astounded to learn they were also all done in clay. Vinton said, “That’s all clay painting done in multiple passes and layers to create depth and transparencies. It was pretty complex but it works and I think it gave a kind of artistic feel.” [8]

This brings me back to the scene with the mysterious stranger, which is a pretty messed up scene. *The Mysterious Stranger* is a Twain novel that he worked on between 1897-1908. It was first published posthumously in 1916. The gist of the story is that Satan appears to a group of young boys, performs magical feats, predicts a series of terrible events, takes the boys around the world to witness horrible events like witch trials, hangings, mass hysteria, and religious fanaticism, and then he vanishes without explanation. [9]

In the movie, Vinton and his team animated Satan as an androgynous jester holding his



ADAM AND EVE: A LOVE STORY

face on a stick. Vinton said the character was so unique and interesting: “someone who has this power but no feeling one way or another and just sort-of tells it like it is regarding the future of humanity. We wanted it to be about metamorphosis, visually, and make that a big part of the sequence. He transforms and grows up and down from the earth and appears out of nothingness.” [10] The sequence is scary, especially if you watch it out of context (which you can do on YouTube). The Internet started a rumor that these scenes were banned from TV runs of the movie, but, alas, it’s not true.

Despite the terrifying look at the horrors of humanity, this movie had a G rating. Vinton really wanted a PG rating because he didn’t want it to be thought of as a kids’ movie. He also believed that the rating hurt the movie, which never really found an audience. [11] Mainstream critics didn’t love it, and it bombed at the box office. The movie was released on a collector’s edition Blu-Ray in 2012, so hopefully it has gained more of a following since then.

Vinton’s story is interesting and kind of sad. He spent 30 years in the animation business building his studio. In the end, he had to hand over his company and all of his trademarks to Nike co-founder, Philip Knight, (his biggest investor) when the studio fell on hard times. There’s a great article in *Priceonomics* about his professional journey [12]. I suggest you read it and then watch *The Adventures of Mark Twain*.





# HELL COMES TO MOUSETOWN

## MACSKAFOGO (CAT CITY)

BY JANENE SCELZA

Cats and mice as instinctual adversaries is a cartoon tale as old as time. Who knows how it began? What is known is that the conflict between the common house pet (cat) and the otherwise peaceful, but freeloading pest (mouse) has always been fairly simple. It usually ends with the mouse outsmarting the cat, and savoring a personal victory until the next episode.

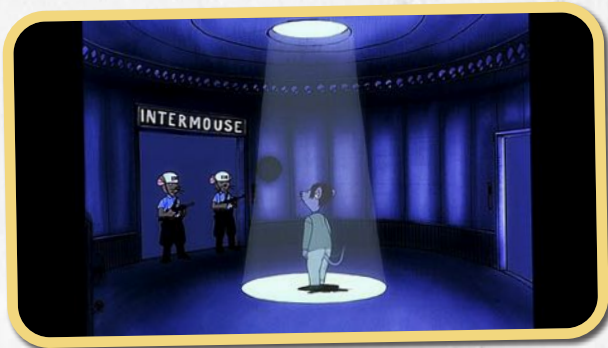
The animated Hungarian film, *Macskafogó* (released in the US as *Cat City*), raises

the stakes on this classic cat-and-mouse chase. Set in the year 80 AMM (After Mickey Mouse), mouse society on the fictional Planet X is on edge. Cats, ignoring a years-long truce between the species, have organized into multinational gangs who seek to completely eradicate the mice. Much of the action takes place in Mousetropolis, the nerve center of the mouse community, which the cats want to transform into Cat City! *Dun. Dun. Dunnnn!!!*

RELEASED OCTOBER 2, 1986 / WRITTEN BY JÓZSEF NEPP / DIRECTED BY BÉLA TERNOVSZKY



## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE



DUTY CALLS

See, the cats aren't so easily outsmarted anymore. And their feline fury knows no bounds. When the movie opens, the manager of the largest mouse bank is assuring his customer that her money is safe, just as some cats blast through the door to siphon money from the vault. It nearly bankrupts the city. In other scenes, they casually rob and assault the mice, even stealing a TV from an elderly mouse couple while they're watching it. They also plant surveillance devices in the homes and offices of government agent mice to intercept any sophisticated attempts by the mice to defend themselves.

The syndicate is led by a fat Persian cat named Gatto, the Italian word for cat. It's a nice touch to use the cutest of the cat breeds to represent the dastardliest of the villains. However, we don't see much of Gatto. In typical head-gangster style (and typical pampered cat fashion), he spends his days lounging in luxury while scantily clad female cats silently give him massages and manicures. Periodically, he checks in with his right-hand cat, Mr. D. (originally, Tuefel, but many of the names in the U.S. version were changed to avoid associations with countries of the Soviet bloc[1]).

The syndicate is formal: Mr. D has an office and an assistant. He presides over the many operations intended to weak-



THE 4 GANGSTERS™

en and humiliate the mice. Subject to the wrath of Gatto, who has no problem eliminating subordinates, Mr. D often defers to his bumbling assistant, Tweed (originally Safranek), and attacks him when plans fail. The mice have a little luck on their side: the syndicate's ambition to rid the world of their species has superseded their ability to do so in the quickest way possible.

The InterMouse intelligence agency has turned to their last best hope: a fearless secret agent mouse named Gary Gumshoe (Grabowski, in some versions). The head of the agency visits Gumshoe to persuade him to come out of retirement (where he goes after every assignment) to meet the elderly Professor Fushimisi in Pokyo and get the top-secret blueprint for a machine that could finally end the kitty crisis once and for all (and with a nod to the classic cat-and-mouse cartoon chase finales).

Mr. D's henchmen intercept the conversations between the agents. But, Gumshoe and his team are careful not to divulge too many details. Mr. D employs a quartet of entertaining gangster rats (who advertise their services with a musical number) to track down Gumshoe. Meanwhile, a hapless bugle-playing police mouse named Billy serves as a decoy. Will Gumshoe succeed in getting the plans and saving mouse society?! Tune in to find out!





MR. D GETS A PROMOTION



BILLY SERENADES THE BATS

Without the accompanying pictures, the plot of *Cat City* sounds like a grim dystopian tale. We're talking about mouse genocide, after all. But it is comedy that parodies ultra-masculine classic spy fare. In addition to obvious visual inspiration for its villains, it also means: "explosions, car chases, glamorous locations, lavish musical interludes, and titillation in the form of plenty of tail." [2] There is even a musical number called "Pussy Talk." I suppose it would've been considered a kid's cartoon by 80's standards, even with the sexual content.

*Cat City* also dishes up political satire, which I was completely unaware of before researching the film for this essay. In the 1980s, the Soviet Bloc was crumbling. Hungary, like most of the countries associated with it, was undergoing substantial political and economic change, moving away from communist rule to multi-party democracy and capitalism by the end of the decade. Lincoln University (UK) professor, Dr. Gábor Gergely, argues in a chapter he wrote for the Oxford University Handbook of Children's Film that *Cat City* and its sequel, released 20 years later, were anti-Semitic and racist. The Hungarian mice supposedly represent Hungarian nationalism, for which they are celebrated, while the cats are lawless outsiders (Jews, blacks, etc.) [3]

*Cat City* was a huge hit in its home country.

It was selected for the Hungarian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 59th Academy Awards but was not accepted as a nominee. [4] A spin-off series was planned for TV in the early 2000s, but fell through for lack of funding. And, of course, there was a sequel: *Cat City 2: The Cat of Satan*, in which an isolated tribe of cats learn of their feline brethren's defeat and summon the devil to avenge them.

Pannonia Film Studio, the only animation studio in Hungary up until the 1990s did the animation for *Cat City*. It was probably nothing special at the time. *Cat City* looks something like the old *G.I. Joe* and *He-Man* cartoons, with roughly sketched foregrounds over rich watercolor backgrounds. Still, it's refreshing to go back and watch these movies. The status quo of slick computer animation makes everything feel sterile after a while. The pacing, too, is reminiscent of early anime, with its brief pauses and hasty cuts to new scenes. Though, I'm not sure if that's a consequence of dubbing from a complex foreign language (Hungarian) to English.

I recommend watching *Cat City*, particularly if you love the old 80's action cartoons. Tracking it down, however, might be difficult. A number of Polish and Russian streaming sites have English dubbed bootlegs available.





# NEVER SAY NEVER: AN AMERICAN TALE

BY STEPHANIE MCDEVITT

*An American Tail* is about a family of mice immigrating to the United States in search of a life free from cats. Along the way, Fievel, the middle child, gets separated from his family and the movie follows his quest to find them upon arriving in America. While this movie isn't a dive deep into the circumstances surrounding most immigrant groups who arrived in America in the late 1800s, it does its best to teach kids about immigration, assimilation, and the realities of trying to live out the American Dream.

*An American Tail* begins in Shostka, Ukraine in 1885 as the Mousekewitz family

celebrates Hanukkah. Papa Mousekewitz (Nehemia Persoff) regales his children, Fievel (Phillip Glasser) and Tanya (Amy Green), with stories of America. Most importantly, he tells them that there are no cats in America, which is a dream to this family of mice who live in fear of a cat attack. Well, almost as if he summoned them, a group of cats come through the town and attack the mice, setting the Mousekewitz's house on fire.

In the next scene, the Mousekewitz family is seen boarding a boat to America. On a stormy night, Fievel gets separated from

**RELEASED NOVEMBER 21, 1986 / WRITTEN JUDY FREUDBERG, TONY GEISS, + DAVID KIRSCHNER / DIRECTED BY DON BLUTH**





OLD WORLD STORIES

his family. His parents assume he died in the storm; however, Fievel miraculously survives and ends up roaming New York all alone. He sets out on an adventure to find his family that leads him to be captured by conman Warren T. Rat (John Finnegan) and sold to a sweatshop, escape from the sweatshop, and almost get stomped by a horse. Finally, Fievel meets Tony (Pat Musick) and Bridget (Cathianne Blore), two mice who want to help him find his family.

All the while Fievel is looking for his parents, the mice in the city are trying to do something about the cat problem because, as it turns out, there are cats in America. The Mott Street Maulers, as the cats are called, are terrorizing the mice, and Bridget and Tony are part of the movement trying to find a solution. Working with a rich, uptown mouse named Gussie (Madeline Kahn), they all attend a rally in which Fievel presents the idea that will help get rid of the cats.

The plan is to lure the cats to the pier, and then use a secret weapon to drive them onto a boat to China. All the mice in the city turn out to help, including Fievel's family. On the big day, Fievel and Tony are running late to the pier, and as they try to get there, Fievel hears violin music and thinks it's his father playing the violin. He follows it into the sewer and ends up right in the lair of the Mott Street Maulers.

While stuck in the sewer, Fievel realizes that Warren T. Rat is actually a cat in dis-



WARREN T. CAT!

guise and the leader of the Maulers. They catch him snooping around, lock Fievel in a cage, and assign vegetarian cat Tiger (Dom DeLuise) to guard him. Tiger and Fievel quickly become friends, and Tiger lets Fievel go. As he scrambles to get to the pier, Fievel leads the cats right into the mouse's trap. The mice release the secret weapon, the cats end up on the boat to China, and the mice celebrate their victory.

Once the cats are taken care of, Papa Mousekewitz argues with Tanya about Fievel because Tanya firmly believes he is still alive. Papa insists he isn't, but then they find Fievel's hat and launch an all-out search party looking for him. I won't completely spoil the ending, but it is a kid's movie, so I'm sure you can guess how this one goes.

Prior to directing *An American Tail*, Don Bluth worked as a Disney animator on other kids movies such as *Pete's Dragon*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Robin Hood*. In 1979, Bluth and fellow animator Gary Goldman left Disney and took 16 other animators with them. Their first release outside of Disney was *The Secret of NIHM*, which was a critical success and caught Steven Spielberg's attention. [1] When Spielberg was gearing up to start production on *An American Tail*, he reached out to Bluth to direct it.

According to Wikipedia, the original concept of the film came from David Kirshner, but Bluth and Spielberg brought in writers Judy Freudberg and Tony Geiss, who worked



## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE



THE MAULERS

together for many years writing for *Sesame Street*. [2] I think this is a big reason why *An American Tail* was so popular. In addition to the beautiful animation, it was written specifically for kids by people who knew how to communicate with kids.

Bluth worked with Amblin entertainment and the marketing team at Sears (the department store) on the animation for the movie (Sears marketed *Fievel*). They wanted to avoid modern, sleek animation and make it look more like an animated movie from the 40s. [3] Production had a good number of delays, which resulted in significant scene cuts, including the Mousekewitz's trek across Europe to get on the boat and the elimination of the Mousekewitz's baby character after the boat trip. [4]

Originally, Spielberg wanted *An American Tail* to be a musical (he wanted a "High-Ho" of his own). James Horner composed the score and worked with Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann on the songwriting. Eventually, they decided to write a special song for Linda Ronstadt (who was dating George Lucas at the time). She recorded "Somewhere Out There" with James Ingram, and it won the Grammy for Best Song Written for a Movie and Song of the Year. It was also nominated for a Golden Globe and an Oscar but lost both to Berlin's "Take my Breath Away" from *Top Gun*. [5]

While most critics agreed that it was a beautifully animated movie, they didn't like



A HAPPY REUNION

the character development or storytelling. Roger Ebert said few children are "likely to be entertained by such a tragic, gloomy story." [6] However, *An American Tail* grossed \$47 million in the US and \$84 million worldwide. It was also one of the first non-Disney animated films to beat another Disney movie at the box office when it out-grossed *The Great Mouse Detective*. At the time of its release, it was the highest-grossing non-Disney produced animated movie, but those box office records were quickly surpassed. *The Land Before Time* and *Oliver and Company*, and eventually *The Little Mermaid* blew all of those box office numbers away. [7]

While I would agree with some of the criticism about the plot holes, I think this movie holds up. The writers attempted to show how all the different immigrant groups came to the city with their own customs, including having an Irish wake with the dead mouse laid out on the table with flowers. Furthermore, it touches on the rough conditions immigrants faced with the sweatshop scene and when immigration workers change Tanya's name at Ellis Island. I imagine if the movie hadn't fallen victim to production issues and scene cuts, it would have been a clearer picture of the immigrant experience. Either way, I still think it's worth watching, and the animation is lovely.



## ENDNOTES

### DAMN THE MAN: AMERICAN POP

- [1] See A Decade Under the Influence (documentary), 2003 <https://tinyurl.com/wnbgm6g>
- [2] "Ralph Bakshi: Surviving In Tough Times" (San Francisco Comic Con, 2008), <https://tinyurl.com/oqzootl>
- [3] "Ashcan Movement Overview" (The Art Story), <https://tinyurl.com/yx6v8z5p>
- [4] "Ralph Bakshi | Animation's New Wave" (Any-Mation, 2019) <https://tinyurl.com/y3f-h34p2>
- [5] "They don't make them like Ralph Bakshi anymore" (Salon, 2015), <https://tinyurl.com/weaw75q>
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] "How Rotoscoping Works" (How Stuff Works), <https://tinyurl.com/rwuns99>
- [8] "Ralph Bakshi: Surviving In Tough Times" (San Francisco Comic Con, 2008), <https://tinyurl.com/oqzootl>

### MERRY CHRISTMAS, MR. BRIGGS: THE SNOWMAN

- [1] The Snowman and the Snow Dog, Channel 4 Review (Telegraph, 2013) <https://tinyurl.com/u97oecu>
- [2] How The Snowman was built (BFI, 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/rfc4tat>
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Raymond Briggs: 'Everything takes so bloody long when you're old' (The Guardian, 2019), <https://tinyurl.com/wf6mx9a>
- [5] "Raymond Briggs: The Snowman is not

really about Christmas, it's about death" (The Independent, 2012), <https://tinyurl.com/vgqd68q>

[6] Ibid.

### THE RHYTHM IS GONNA GET YOU: ROCK N' RULE

- [1] As of this date, an official soundtrack doesn't exist. The Internet offers varying reasons for this (greed, money, lack of interest, the film itself changing hands several times, et al) and in 2015, digital downloads, rips of various songs appeared on a thread at [OrangeCow.org](https://www.OrangeCow.org). Many critics now call the music dated. I think they're wrong, of course.
- [2] "Revenue from US vinyl sales climbs to 30 year high" (The Vinyl Factory, 2019) <https://tinyurl.com/ugtsysq>
- [3] "Rock & Rule: The 80's Classic On VHS, DVD, LaserDisc and More..." (Johnny Creed, 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/sbhcd2>

### PROFANITY INCLUDED: TWICE UPON A TIME

- [1] "Short Order - John Korty's Lumage." View From the Paperhouse, 2016) <https://tinyurl.com/w8cvvo4>
- [2] "The Controversy About Twice Upon a Time" <http://www.johnkorty.com/press.html>
- [3] Ibid.
- [4] Ibid.

### MARKETING SUCCESS: RAINBOW BRITE AND THE STAR STEALER

- [1] "Rainbow Brite" (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/uymdlvo>
- [2] "Rainbow is Strictly Child's Play" (The



## GIRLS, ON FILM: THE ANIMATION ISSUE

Chicago Tribune, 1985) <https://tinyurl.com/tmj32dm>

[3] "Rainbow Bright and the Star Stealer (Common Sense Media) <https://tinyurl.com/w35484m>

[4] "Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer." (Rotten Tomatoes) <https://tinyurl.com/saqk-bey>

[5] "Rainbow Brite and the Star Stealer." (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/tfl2uzr>

### CLAYMATION STATION: THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN

[1] "Mark Dawidziak Celebrates Will Vinton, Oscar-winning Director, Producer, and Revolutionary Animator." (Center for Mark Twain Studies, 2018) <https://tinyurl.com/uknu77p>

[2] Mark Twain's Wikipedia page, <https://tinyurl.com/n4gz25s>

[3] "How the Father of Claymation Lost His Company" (Priceonomics, 2014) <https://tinyurl.com/yzehd2pk>

[4] Ibid.

[5] Closed Mondays (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/skcx5uf>

[6] "Feat of Clay: The Forgotten 'Adventures of Mark Twain.'" (Animation World Network, 2013) <https://tinyurl.com/smkb2u>

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] The Mysterious Stranger (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/ramj2r3>

[10] "Feat of Clay: The Forgotten 'Adventures of Mark Twain.'" (Animation World Network, 2013) <https://tinyurl.com/smkb2u>

[11] Ibid.

[12] "How the Father of Claymation Lost

His Company" (Priceonomics, 2014) <https://tinyurl.com/yzehd2pk>

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[1] Cat City (Wikipedia) <https://tinyurl.com/vbmh58x>

[2] "Only Drawn That Way: Ethnic And Racial Difference In Macskafogó/Cat City (1986) and Macskafogó 2/Cat City 2" (2007)" (Gábor Gergely), <https://tinyurl.com/rgdkrl2>

[3] Ibid.

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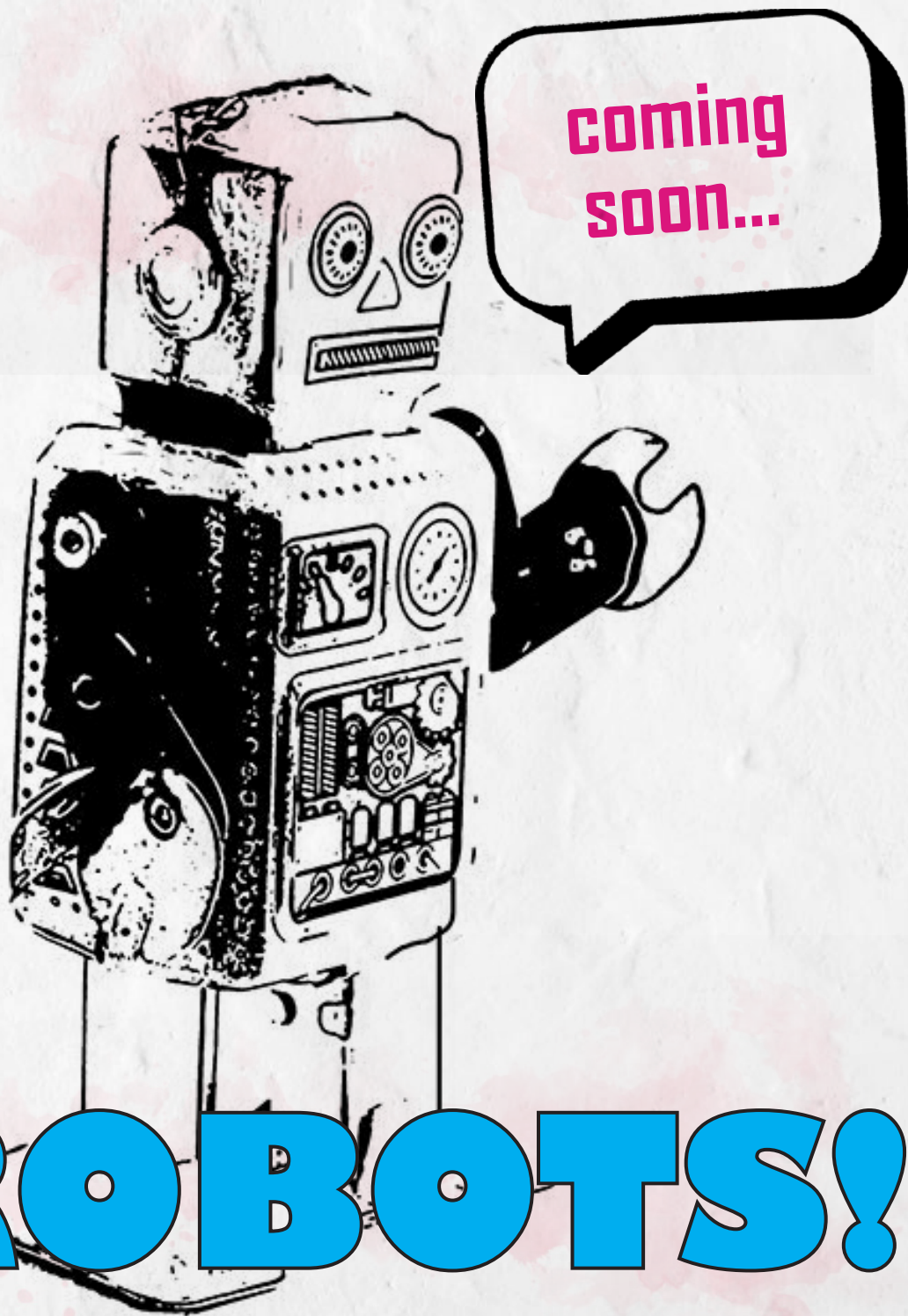
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# ROBOTS!

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