



Milking The Pro's - Part 3

A series of interviews by Jake Friedman

If you're reading this newsletter, you love toons as much as I do. We made it our interests, our hobbies and/or our professions. But what exactly is out there for people who love toons? I had the opportunity to ask nearly a dozen people all over the animation spectrum the four main questions that are the crux of any good brain-tapping. In this, the third section of a multi-part article, talented people in the fields of writing and music share their words of wisdom.

John Culhane is an acclaimed animation historian and author of books on Disney's Fantasia, Aladdin, and others. His latest contributions can be seen on the new special edition DVD of **Disney's Bambi**



JF: What's the hardest part about being a writer and historian on the subject of animation? What's the biggest perk?

JC: The hardest part of being a writer on the subject of animation is the same difficulty that Hemingway found trying to be a writer period: "The greatest difficulty, aside from knowing what you were supposed to feel -- had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always." The best animators, from Shamus Culhane and Fred Moore to Milt Kahl and Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston to Glen Keane and Eric Goldberg and Andreas Deja, know the sequence of motion and fact which makes the emotion -- and the emotion is more often Joy than Sorrow. As I say on the DVD of Bambi: "Bambi says clearly that life is wondrous, and it's beautiful, and it's dangerous - and, in it, love is a song that never ends." This is the biggest perk to being a writer on animation: spending so much of your life contemplating such joy.

JF: Why did you choose this as your field?

JC: When I was seventeen, I told Walt Disney's daughter, Diane, that I considered her father what the great caricaturist David Low called "Leonardo da Disney," and told her I had to meet him to discover the secret of life. So she brought us together. I told Walt -- as he insisted I call him -- that I thought I could be happy with a career writing for and about the art of animation." Walt told me that "animation is a moving caricature of life," and "caricature is an exaggeration of the essence of something. To make any good caricature," Walt said, "you have to understand your subject. But life is a pretty tall order." What can I do about it? I asked. Walt said that I probably understood my home town, Rockford, Illinois, as well as I understood anything: he knew that he understood Arceline, Missouri, as well as he understood anything. So he advised: "Get a job on your hometown newspaper, write for your neighbors, and just keep widening the circle." I did what Walt advised, and that has made me a journalist for over 50 years now:

JF: How do I get to be where you are now?

JC: By celebrating the things worth celebrating. The Incredibles, with their heroic struggle against mediocrity, should win the Oscar for best original screenplay this year so that the importance of the film's ideals is validated before a billion people. On my birthday this year, I went with my family to see "The Incredibles" -- that's where I am now, enjoying joy!

Jared Faber scored 3 seasons of Nickelodeon's **AS TOLD BY GINGER** and composed its theme song, sung by Macy Gray. Visit him at blindlemonmusic.com



JF: What's the hardest thing about being a TV animation composer?

Faber: Deadlines. I am expected to score an episode a week when in production on a series. There's really no margin for error. Most animated shows are very music intensive. It's a lot of music to come up with in a week and then do it again the following week.

JF: What's the biggest perk?

Faber: I find it really fun when I meet someone who actually knows one of the shows. When I'm working, it always just seems like some little project that only me and the other people working on it know about. In fact these shows are on TV around the world and are seen by millions of people. I really get a kick out of meeting someone who is a complete stranger and knows one of my shows.

JF: Why did you choose to do what you're doing?

Just trying to make a living making music. It wasn't that deliberate; just got lucky and found an outlet that works for me.

How do I get to be where you are now?

Faber: I've been lucky, I've met some good people along the way. I've tried to stay in contact with people. I'm not a real hustler by any means but also I've not been afraid to ask people for what I want. I always try to come through with quality work. I think my real answer is to be looking for and always available to opportunities. Do the best work you can do with any opportunity that comes your way so that you are a valued asset to the process. To me all of those things are obvious though. There's no place to send your résumé to become a composer for film/TV as far as I know. Be creative not only with your art but with your approach to working. Be flexible and understand that your role is to serve the overall project and not your ego. At the same time be strong in your creative convictions. Try to bring a point of view, an aesthetic.

Next issue: Our one and only Dave Levy spills the beans.

Jake Friedman is a New York based animator. To contact him or send him free stuff to review, email Bugabu613@aol.com.