hey there!

Welcome to the first issue of 'The Making Of,' the magazine that takes you behind the scenes of your favorite animated films and series. In this issue, we dive deep into the creative processes, technical challenges, and artistic triumphs that bring these captivating stories to life on screen.

From exploring the intricate animation techniques used in popular series like Haikyuu to examining the evolution of character design in long-running franchises, our team of writers and industry experts provide an insider's perspective on the world of animation. We also delve into the power of sound and voice acting, showcasing how these elements contribute to the immersive and emotional experiences that define the best animated works.

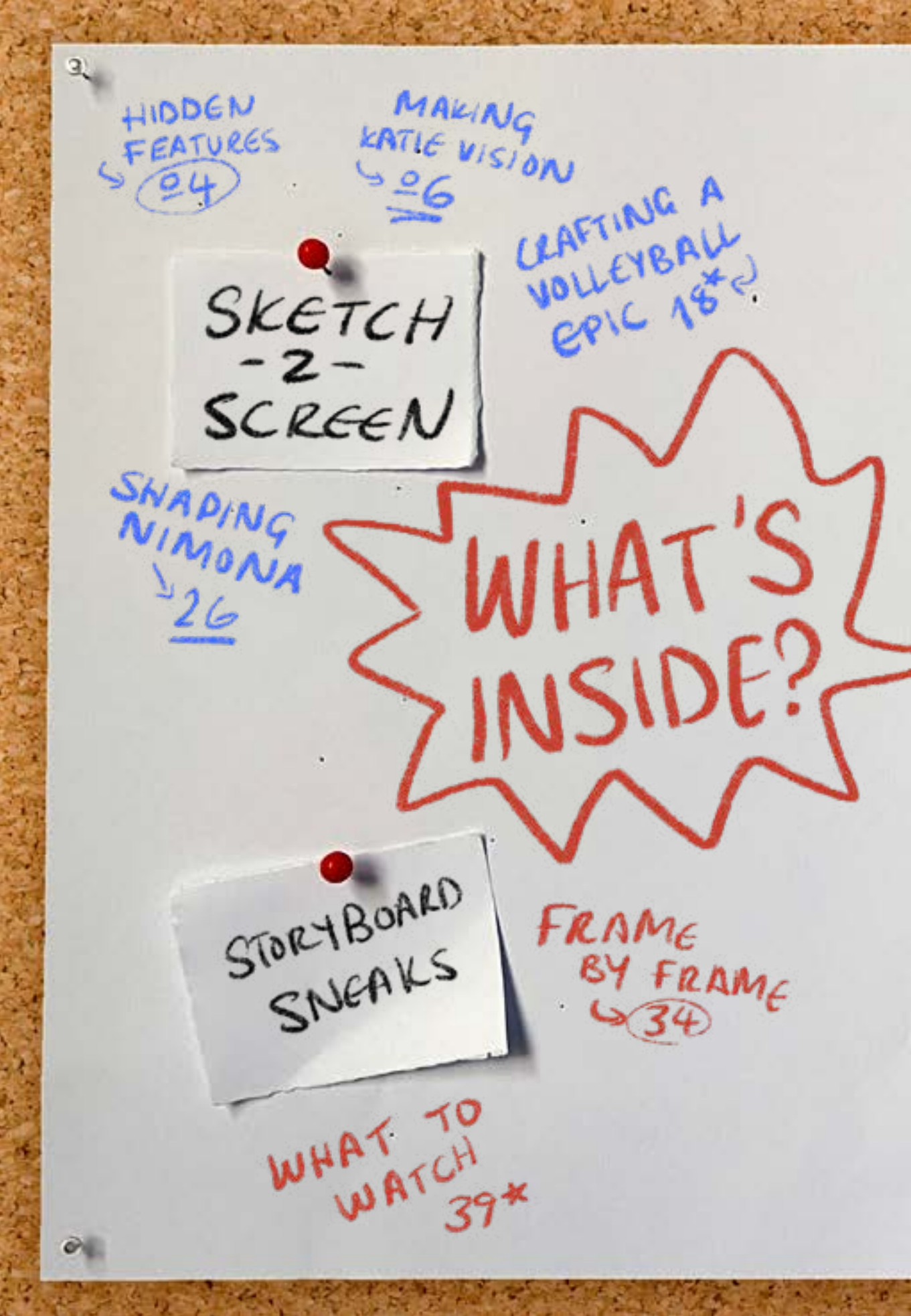
In addition to our in-depth features, we bring you exclusive interviews with the talented artists, animators, and directors who work tirelessly behind the scenes to create the animated worlds we know and love. Their insights and stories offer a unique glimpse into the passion, dedication, and innovation that drive the animation industry forward.

As always, we are grateful for your continued support and engagement. We hope you enjoy this issue of 'The Making Of' and that it inspires you to appreciate the artistry and craftsmanship that goes into every frame of your favorite animated films and series.

Happy Reading!

Ameera Khan

EDITOR


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HIDDEN DETAILS

How a 'mishmash of all animation styles' came together for a quirky opening

By Ian Failes

When director Douglas Mackinnon asked Peter Anderson and his studio to design the opening titles for Good Omens, the Amazon Prime TV series based on the book by Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman, he had only one major stipulation.

"He said," recounts Anderson, "'I want you to promise me that you send us emails that start with, 'This might sound absolutely mad, but our idea is dot dot dot'. That set the tone for the creative process, which was wonderful."

It's fair to say the London-based Peter Anderson Studio came through with flying colors on that brief, Anderson himself describing Good Omens' animated titles as "a totally bonkers mishmash of all animation styles in a way where they feel as if they belong together."

The titles certainly feel like something inspired, at least in part, by Terry Gilliam's famous animated cut-out vignettes in Monty Python's Flying Circus. The twist is that Good Omens' opener employs illustration, physical props, character animation, 3D and even live-action footage to foretell the show's story about the clash of Heaven and Hell and the coming apocalypse.

"Our titles really mimic the drama," says Anderson, "because in the show, for instance, you've got a classic English countryside and then suddenly a spacecraft that's been drawn by a child and re-made in 3D comes flying down and aliens come out that have duck heads. We had to work in that same totally bonkers spirit."

In the opening titles, a myriad characters from Good Omens are in procession — often via escalators up (and down) — to the end of the world. From concepts and storyboards, Peter Anderson Studio launched into a major exploratory process of generating imagery that directly referenced the show's cast of people and creatures. Ultimately, all the

cont.



characters seen in the titles actually began as "real," live-action people.

"It's me as many characters," says Anderson. "And then there are different members of our studio wearing the costumes from the actual show, sometimes filmed on a green screen walking on a travelator. Then what we did is we cut them out and we made real people look like strange animations by tracking two-dimensional heads onto them."

This is where things become even more surreal. Each one of the two-dimensional heads, reveals Anderson, are actually "in-disguise" representations of the show's two lead actors, Michael Sheen and David Tennant, who play the angel Aziraphale and demon Crowley, respectively.

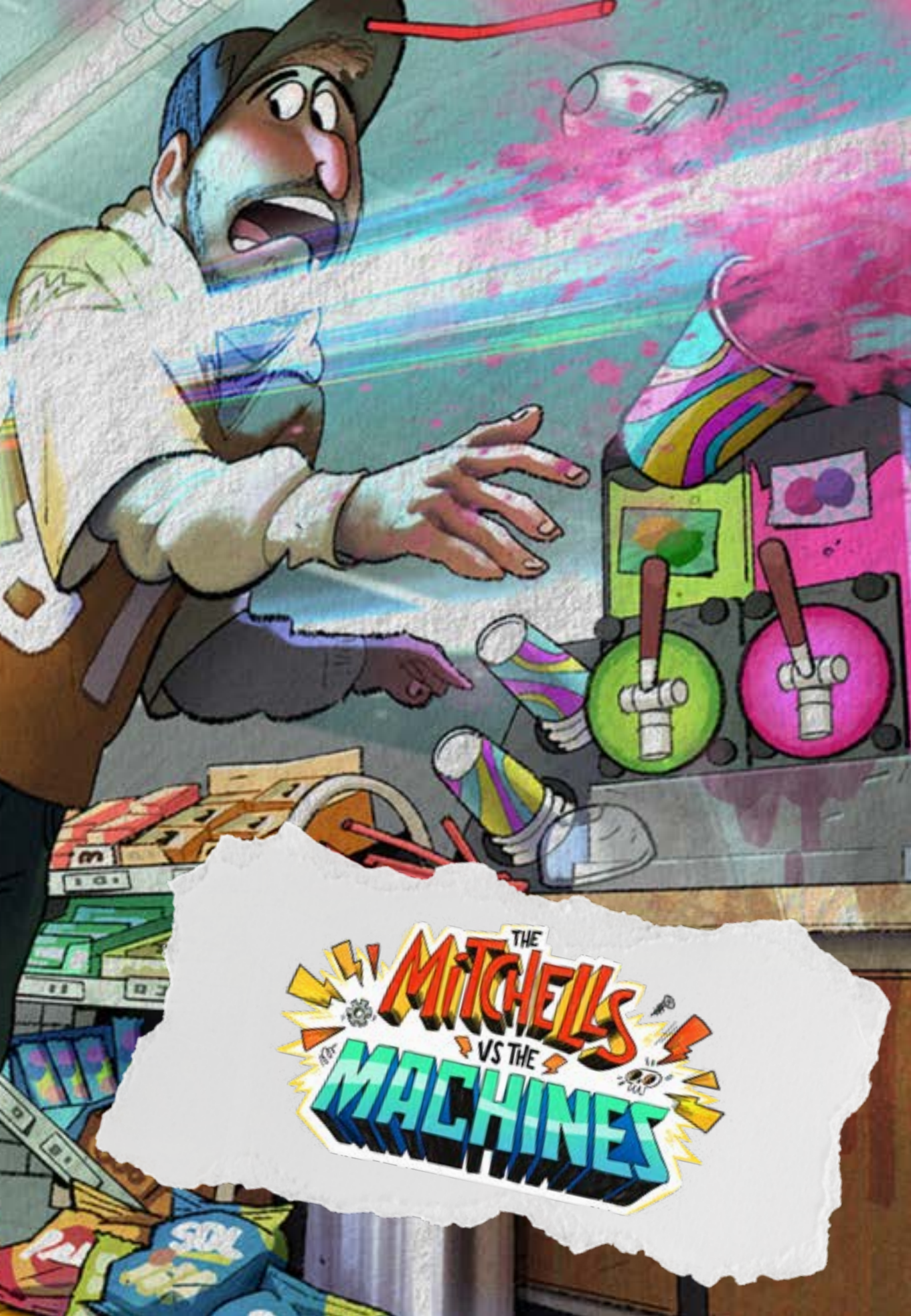
"The reason we did that," states Anderson, "is that Neil said that he felt there was good and bad in everybody, and the angels and the demons represented the good and bad that exists within the world. So we'd take Michael and David's faces and adapt them by, say, adding a mohawk or sunglasses, for example."

That's not the only detail to look out for in Good Omens' opening titles, which warrant multiple viewings to catch several Easter eggs. Anderson says look out for a cactus wilting as a demon walks by, or even one moment where a someone realizes they are on a downward escalator path to Hell, only to start running up the people-mover the wrong way.

"Whether you interpret the titles as the characters choosing their sides to go to war, or as something where we all approach the end of the world and we're going to go one way or the other, it's up to you," concludes Anderson. "I hope there are lots of double meanings in the storytelling."

END.




THE
MITCHELLS
VS THE
MACHINES

Making KATIE VISION

Lindsey Olivares On Her Bold Production Design Debut in 'The Mitchells vs. The Machines'

By Alex Dudok de Wit

The title says it: The Mitchells vs. The Machines tells a tale of two worlds. When a robot uprising interrupts the Mitchell family's road trip, the scene is set for a clash between humans, in all our messiness, and the clinical world of technology. The premise is a designer's dream, and the film's look is indeed one of its most striking aspects: it revels in the contrast between the Mitchells, who are gangling or lumpy in their forms, and the sleek realm of Pal Labs, the Apple-like corporation behind the uprising.

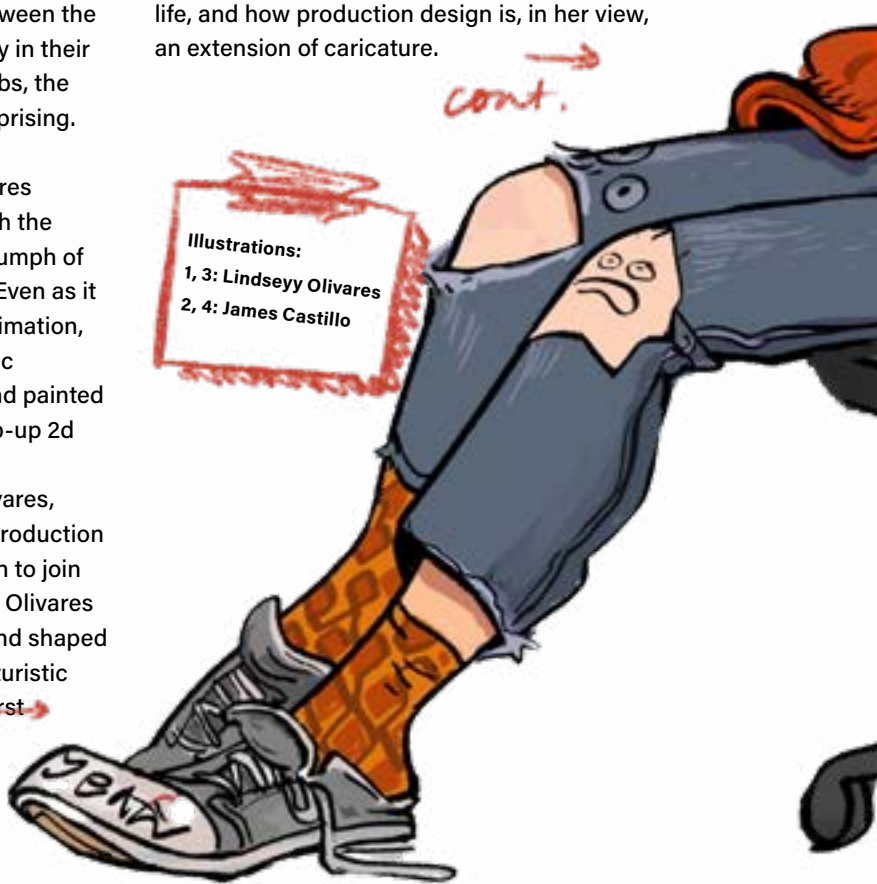
More than that, The Mitchells vs. The Machines continues Sony Pictures Animation's broader experiment with the art of cg animation, following the triumph of Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse. Even as it uses studied, nuanced character animation, the film incorporates non-naturalistic elements like watercolor textures and painted outlines, live-action inserts, and pop-up 2d animation.

Much credit is due to Lindsey Olivares, who served as both character and production designer on the film. The first person to join director Mike Rianda on the project, Olivares assembled much of their art team and shaped the film's style with her bold, caricaturistic sensibility. Remarkably, this is her first production design credit: she previously worked as a visual development artist for a number of studios, including Dreamworks (Trolls, Penguins of Madagascar) and SPA (The Emoji Movie).

Ahead of the film's release on Netflix, we spoke to Olivares about her experience of the production. She tells us how the team came together, how they brought their characters to life, and how production design is, in her view, an extension of caricature.

cont.

Illustrations:
1, 3: Lindseyy Olivares
2, 4: James Castillo




RAA

INTERVIEW START!!!

TMO: You have this dual title on the film. What was the extent of your oversight? Were you focused on characters or any other areas, or were you overseeing the design of the whole film equally?

Lindsey Olivares: Overseeing the entire set of the film equally. But the character design component, I did a lot of that before I was the production designer — before we were greenlit — and then I became the production designer. We had some other artists that supported us in character design. At our vis-dev models stage, before the production models stage, we were a really small team. We weren't greenlit and I had the time to really work with our 3d modeler, very one-on-one.



And so I got backup once I moved into the production design role, but still did a lot of it. By the time we're hiring most people, we're really moving quickly. Each artist has their own hand in the way of doing it, so there were a lot of things that, to keep it in that same style, I was pretty hands on with — which was a lot, you know, to do both [roles]. But it was also, I think, a nice, cohesive thing to do.

The film has a strikingly different look from a lot of a big-studio productions. At Annecy last year, Mike Rianda said that you started out with this manifesto: to do something new with animation. I'm wondering at what point that crystallized into the look of the film.

It's a good question. It felt like it happened gradually. There was a version of that in my early drawings, but they were more kind of line drawings, not so much like a final render. But they had a certain quality to them ... a kind of scribbly, slightly inky, watercolory texture.

After the early design phase] I feel like we really hugged to where we were. You do have to let it be a little bit more, in the way that their eyes are basically black dots, but when you look close up, there's a little bit of iris that doesn't go all the way around — it's just a little hit of it. But it's that level: you have to gain a little bit so that it doesn't feel ... I don't want to say cheap, but so that it just feels more, because you do need to use the tools you have. I don't think I wanted it to look just like a sketch.

But we hugged really closely to the things where it was like, do we have to get rid of linework? Or does the collar have to become real fur? I've always liked [to think]: how do we use the computer as a tool to make it look like anything?

Because you start to get types of 3d looks, so it feels fun to do something different.

Our movie is about humans versus machines. Obviously, humans are always making these [films]. But how can we make it feel more like a human hand made it, and you're seeing strokes of brush texture from the look-dev surfacing team, and you can feel like it's almost more traditionally made, in ways? That felt appropriate for this human-versus-machine story.

Coming after Spider-Verse, it felt like there's a lot that was learned too. Our style is a bit different, but there are some elements of pushing and trying new things that [are similar]. It was, I think, really lucky for us that we were able to come after that production, because there are some things that we learned and some confidence that I think the studio had, too.

While you were developing the look of the film, how conscious were you of what the Spider-Verse team was doing, in terms of experiments with rendering and so on?

Well, it's interesting, because I started the project remotely. I was in Northern California, living with my grandmother, which is how Mike found me: I had these little animated GIFs of me and




RICK
Linda
AARON
MUNCHI

my grandmother hanging out. So I was actually kind of in a vacuum from that. I started down at Sony in 2018, so I wasn't able to see any of [Spider-Verse's production].

Had I been exposed to it when we were in production, it might have been like, you know, being too aware of it. I don't remember if I first saw it from the trailer eventually, when I was down at the studio. It mostly worked in all positive ways, like, "Oh yeah, we can do something new, too." While we were working on it, we had this feeling of big shoes to fill for the project coming after [Spider-Verse]. But earlier on, I was a little bit more in my own freelancer, outside-the-studio space. So I didn't have to compare.

Mike's family served as inspiration for the characters. Did they serve as visual reference for the designs of the characters as well?

I don't know that they look like them in any kind of specific likeness. But I definitely had reference. The closest one is: there's a photo of Mike's dad that … is exactly the costume the dad, Rick, wears. And then the other ones, it was a mix of getting photo reference from them and their energy is really big. Linda, the mom, is a mix of Mike's mom and aunt. And I'd have all these photos of them kind of jumping around and there's this big energy. In a character way, they were very much a part of it.

And then a lot of the detail came from a lot of different places. I really like observation. My character design process is usually me really digging on things like Facebook, or, what's the closest thing I can do to people watching — looking at someone's purse, or details of clothes, or how they fit, or something?

So it's a mix of general observation based on the character clues that I got from his family. Katie's kind of a version of Mike, but also kind of her own thing. And Aaron's a bit of Mike, so there were some childhood pictures of Mike that he'd send. And then on top of that, it's nice because you get that knowledge of who the character is, because it's so clear in [Mike's] mind. So there's a nice kind of foundation to design from.

When you were designing the characters, had the voices been cast?

Mostly I'd say no, but for some of the characters they had been. There was a version where I designed them in the beginning, and some parts of that stayed really the same. But the Katie character took a little bit longer to find. We did tons of versions of her. By the point that we were solidifying her, Abbi [Jacobson] had just been cast.

I actually found a video that was really crucial. There's a point where we started to get a design that we kind of liked, but it wasn't quite enough. She was a little more like mild, or a little bit less like the main character of the movie. But Abbi had just been cast, and she had just done this really awesome voice recording session. She knew the character by that point and it was all very specific, but I think she was just improvising and it was so good. It brought a lot of, "Oh, I really get who the character is."

Abbi did all these great line reads and I did several drawings where I just put her in these poses, because I wanted to use that as inspiration and see how it felt. And my main drawing, where I really found her and pushed her clothing to be a little more iconic, was while working with Abbi's acting. I'm not saying that

cont.

[Katie] looks like her, but her personality really helped in that stage. With Mark Bowman, the tech CEO, we had a design for him and we were changing it. At that point, I had Eric [André, who voiced the character], and I kind of drew him. We weren't trying to be caricatured — I do like caricature, but we weren't trying to do [the actors] literally — but I love to draw to video, so being able to put a video of Eric André up and draw that character definitely help find him and give him some life.

You have an amazingly strong caricaturistic style in your art. Did you have many discussions with Mike and the team about how far to push the caricature in this film? Because there are moments in which they break into the very cartoonish, stylized expressions, and so on.

When I first started with Mike, he asked me to do a range, because I think he was unsure how realistic to go. I think there was a part that he wanted it to feel like this is a real world with real stakes and real people, but [also] wanted a certain type of playfulness of animation. We talked about that and landed in a kind of in-between spot.

I think the movie has a lot of mixed elements, in a way. Some things are really naturalistic: the animation, the acting, the little moments that are very human but, like you said, can be also very broad. [The characters] have a certain cartooniness. I think that tonally, that works for what [Mike] wanted to do.

The animation kind of took it to the next level, too. And they were really good at matching the boards — they've got really incredible rigs at [Sony Pictures] Imageworks.



When you're designing the characters, are you already thinking from the start in terms of how they will adapt to 3d models, the limitations of 3d?

At the beginning, not really. For me, the main thing is trying to find the character, and I usually won't weigh myself down too much [by wondering], "How do we translate it?" I think that might inhibit the process a little bit. But yeah, you do need to translate it ultimately. [At that stage], you make more discoveries, and go to another level of specificity and form in a technical sense.



I wanted to ask about the tech world. It's threatening, but not too much, because this is still a family comedy, and also because the film has positive things to say about tech as well. I found that balance interesting, and I was wondering how difficult it was to strike it.

I don't know if I initially approached it with, like, "How menacing?", but it would come up a lot. But the first thing I got excited about with the tech stuff, or started to understand it, was — I guess I said this before, but I like caricature. But to me, [caricature] is not just a big nose or goofy face or something: you're really distilling the clearest thing to really exaggerate it, so that it's really clear. I feel like production design is an extension of that, because you're caricaturing a world or feeling.

I was like, "I'm going to caricature tech, these companies that we're familiar with." I looked at different apps — I won't single anybody out — and there's lots of simple gradients, bright colors. It's like Apple, it's the apple. Their design is so minimalist and clean — it's kind of the opposite of what we're doing in the human world. So that contrast is appropriate and wmade sense.

My specialty is more the kind of human lived-in stuff. I think I had a point of view with that. But we had a lot of great artists that were also taking us to the next level. Arthur Fong did a lot of cool work like Pal's office; we had Ryan Lang on the robots, and Alex Konstad did a lot of cool robot development. Our art director Toby Wilson did a lot of really cool robot tech effects and stuff. And we had a really cool motion graphics designer.

This was your first leadership role. What were the challenges of working with a large team and maintaining a consistency of style across the project?

It was an interesting position because I'd been onboard in the early days, and by the point when we got a team, we were a little bit later than I was used to in my experience at those studios. I think it's nice when you have artists that get to have some room to explore and try new things. And we kind of had [that] point of view. So it was like, "How do we keep that evolving?" And I think there was a lot of really great stuff people brought to the table that was in line with that. But, you know, there's things too where

you're like, "Oh, this thing is not right," whether it's paintovers, or getting everybody onboard with the brushes or [reference material]. How do you share [the things in your head] with the team so that we all start thinking similarly? That's the challenge of it, because you have all of these people that all have their own unique styles. There's things that kind of come into it.

Part of it's in the hiring: I can see everybody's different, but [with some people] I can see there's this component that's going to really adapt really well, or it's going to bring something really specific. Part of it's in the community culture. I think we had a nice dynamic; it was obviously mostly pre-pandemic, so it was nice to be all together.

All that stuff kind of happens naturally: I mean to trust your team, give feedback, hear feedback. It was interesting doing leadership for the first time. It felt really rewarding.

END.




My FAMILY
FOOD


音駒
3


HAIKYU!!

CRAFTING VOLLEYBA

Discover the creative decisions, production challenges, and artistic triumphs of Haikyuu that have shaped its journey from manga to screen.

By Alex Dudok de Wit

Haikyuu, a sports anime that has captured the hearts of millions worldwide, is a testament to the power of storytelling, character development, and exceptional animation. This article delves into the behind-the-scenes process of creating this beloved series, exploring the creative decisions, production challenges, and artistic triumphs that have shaped Haikyuu's journey from manga to screen.

The Animation Process

Haikyuu's animation process is a testament to the dedication and skill of its production team. The series' animation producer, Keiko Matsushita, works closely with the theatrical branches of the studio, ensuring access to artists capable of bringing the dynamic and intense world of Haikyuu to life.

One of the most challenging aspects of animating Haikyuu is the lifelike character acting. Achieving realistic expressions and movements in animation requires an immense amount of effort, but it's a challenge the Haikyuu team has embraced from the start. This commitment to authenticity has been a key ingredient in the series' success, helping to create a deeply immersive viewing experience.

The animation team also faces the challenge of accurately depicting volleyball matches. The sport's fast-paced nature



A LL EPIC



and complex movements require careful planning and execution in animation. The team often studies real-life volleyball matches and consults with professional players to ensure the accuracy of the game sequences.

Character Design Evolution

Over the course of its four seasons, Haikyuu's character designs have evolved to reflect the characters' growth and the series' stylistic progression. This evolution is particularly evident in the character design of Hinata, the series' protagonist. The design changes between seasons 1-3 and season 4 have sparked discussions among fans, with some appreciating the closer alignment with the manga's look in season 4.

The character design process involves a deep


HAIKYU!!
viz media



understanding of each character's personality and development throughout the series. The designers work closely with the series' creator to ensure that the designs accurately reflect the characters' traits and growth.

The Power of Sound

Music plays a crucial role in Haikyuu, enhancing the emotional impact of the series and contributing to its distinctive atmosphere. The soundtracks for the series were composed by Yuki Hayashi and Asami Tachibana, and each was produced and distributed by Toho Animation Records. Hayashi, a former rhythmic gymnast, was drawn to composing through his experience selecting gymnastics floor music. His work on Haikyuu, among other notable series, showcases his talent for creating music that heightens the drama and excitement of the on-screen action.

Sound effects also play a significant role in the series, adding depth and realism to the volleyball matches and character interactions. The sound team meticulously creates and selects sound effects that enhance the viewing experience, from the sound of a volleyball being spiked to the ambient noise of the gym during a match.

Voice Acting

The voice acting in Haikyuu brings an additional layer of depth to the characters, with a cast that skillfully conveys the characters' personalities and emotional journeys. The voice actors' performances contribute significantly to the series' immersive quality, helping viewers connect with the characters and their experiences.

The voice actors often participate in script readings and rehearsals to fully understand their characters and deliver authentic performances. They also work closely with the series' director to ensure that their performances align with the overall vision for the series.



Fan Engagement

The Haikyuu fandom plays a significant role in supporting the series. Fans engage with the series in various ways, from purchasing official merchandise and streaming episodes from legal sites to following official Haikyuu accounts on social media and participating in virtual events. This active engagement helps sustain the series and contributes to its ongoing success.

Fan feedback also plays a role in shaping the series. The production team often takes into account fan reactions and suggestions when making decisions about the series, ensuring that the series continues to resonate with its audience.

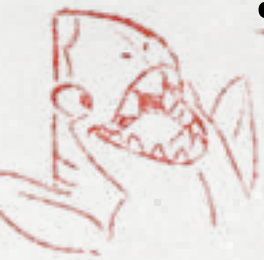
In conclusion, the making of Haikyuu is a complex process that involves a dedicated team of animators, designers, composers, and voice actors, all working together to bring this captivating story to life. The series' behind-the-scenes journey is a testament to the power of creativity, collaboration, and a shared passion for storytelling. The success of Haikyuu is not only a result of the hard work and talent of its production team but also the active engagement and support of its fans.




バケモンたちの宴
開幕!!
ハイキュー!!
TO THE TOP




NIMONA



SHAPING NIMONA

Behind the creation of 'Nimona's unique animation style and compelling story

by Anshita Bhatt

Since its release on Netflix, praise has not stopped for the animated film Nimona. From its unique animation style to its story and lead character, the feature film is refreshing in its storytelling.

Based on the New York Times best-selling graphic novel of the same name by ND Stevenson, and directed by Nick Bruno and Troy Quane, Nimona is a tale about finding friendship and accepting yourself and others for who they are. The feature is brought to life by the DNEG Animation crew.

Here's a synopsis of the film: When Ballister Boldheart (voiced by Riz Ahmed), a knight in a futuristic medieval world, is framed for a crime he didn't commit, the only one who can help him prove his innocence is Nimona (voiced by Chloë Grace Moretz), a mischievous teen with a taste for mayhem — who also happens to be a shapeshifting creature he's been trained to destroy. But with the entire kingdom out to get him, she's the best (or technically the only) sidekick Ballister can hope for. And as the lines between heroes, villains, and monsters start to blur, the two of them set out to wreak serious havoc — for Ballister to clear his name once and for all, and for Nimona to...just wreak serious havoc.

The journey of bringing Nimona to life was marked by perseverance and adaptation, navigating through numerous hurdles from script to screen. Initially, Blue Sky Studios had taken the reins, optioning the rights for the movie and investing significant efforts into look and character development. However, the studio's closure in April 2021 posed a significant setback. Undeterred by the challenges, the filmmaking team exhibited unwavering determination to keep the project alive. Ultimately, the collaboration between the production company Annapurna, Shapeshifter Films, and the resilient spirit of DNEG Animation led to the film's revival and the realisation of its unique vision.

We spoke to Nimona's animation director Ted Ty, VFX supervisor Archie Donato and digital producer Anthony Kemp who shared insights on reconstructing and redeveloping the look of the feature, expanding the environments and bringing to life the personalities and performances of the animated cast.

1 **Anthony, as a DIGITAL PRODUCER, what is your role in an animated film, and what was it in NIMONA?** 1

KEMP

As digital producer, my job is to ensure all digital assets and imagery are successfully completed and delivered to the client. For Nimona, this included all assets, all sequences and shots, as well as the titles and end credits. I oversaw the entire production process, schedule, and budget and partnered with my VFX supes, Yancy and Archie, to guide our creative teams toward hitting the high creative benchmarks across all departments within the time we had to complete the film. Since we had to build a team of over 1,120 unique artists and production leaders in order to complete Nimona, I also partnered with our Recruiting and Resource Management teams to hire and onboard a large portion of the Nimona crew into DNEG.

2 **From the time that DNEG was brought on board, how many days did it take to COMPLETE the project?** 2

KEMP (CONT'D)

Our work at DNEG took roughly 20 months of production from the time we started our initial ingest to final delivery to post.

3 **Which all DNEG branches have worked on Nimona?** 3

KEMP (CONT'D)

We had a globally distributed crew across six DNEG branch hubs. Remote workers spanned 10 countries, 12 time zones and included over 1,120 individual contributors.

4 **Was it a challenge to VISUALLY represent Nimona? Could you elaborate on how you achieved the visuals?** 4

DONTATO

Nimona had a very complex road prior to reaching us at DNEG Animation. There had been development work done at Blue Sky Studios but most of it needed to be redeveloped from scratch because the directors wanted to push the look a lot further towards the graphic novel look. (Also the DNEG and Blue Sky pipelines were dramatically different, which prevented us from inheriting any of the previous look dev).

We were presented with a unique challenge since we needed to move away from the traditional CG approach of shaping the lighting and texture into a more flat, two dimensional look. This meant that we would completely move away from the ambient

occlusion (commonly used on most CG feature films) and find a more selective approach to occluding the light in a painterly fashion.

We also developed several proprietary tools to accomplish the graphic look using in-house filtering and the most important aspect of this was to break out individual elements that make up a character into the stand alone render passes so that we could treat those components individually before reassembling the image back. So that means going way deeper into the use of AOVs, where instead of breaking out traditional specular highlights, difference, bounce etc...we ended up breaking out many more components to have creative control over each individual component.

5 **When DNEG came on board, the Blue Sky team had already developed the look and characters, and your team developed them further. Could you tell us a bit more about this process? Also, what do you think is more challenging – developing something from SCRATCH or REDEVELOPING something?** 5

DONATO (CONT'D)

As I mentioned before, there was some look development done at Blue Sky but we at DNEG could not use any of it because, per our directors, Nick and Troy, the look needed to be pushed a lot further, so the look development was started from scratch at DNEG. Also due to dramatic differences in the pipelines between the two companies it was not possible to reuse their look-dev. To your second question, it is considerably harder to redevelop the look than start from scratch. You have to take into consideration that each company approaches things so differently. But Nick and Troy knew exactly what they were looking for and we knew that we needed to start from scratch to accomplish what they intended the look to be.

6 **The animation style is quite distinct from what people have seen before. Could you tell us more about this 3D-2D mix?** 6

TY

The shape language of the film is tied into all elements of the film and the characters are no exception. The "2D" aspect of the animation felt present because we made use of silhouettes as much as possible for the legibility of the characters, and put them in profile much more than the average animated film. The 2D aspect also ties into older 2D hand drawn techniques of helping characters' directionality, both physically and emotionally be more clear. And it was also to tie our animation a little closer to the feel of ND Stevensons' graphic comic book feel as well.

7 **I had the most laughs on Nimona's EXPRESSION. To me as a viewer, her expressions played a major role in her character. Could you give us an insight on the VARIED expressions of the character?** 7

TY (CONT'D)

It's great that you enjoyed her expressions! They were really exciting to explore, because she is so dynamic and unpredictable. It was a fun challenge for our animation team because Nimona is very emotionally driven, but also has such a wide dynamic emotional range – meaning she could be very explosive one minute and very quiet and inward the next. We focused on making certain that we were sure of her emotional intention before animating in order to make her expressions be as specific to the emotions of that particular scene in the story. That way, her expressions deliver the full performance potential to the audience.

8 **The character of Nimona SHAPESHIFTS to multiple different animals. But each animal she transitions to retains her QUIRK, and one can feel her talking even if it's an animal avatar. How difficult was that to achieve?** 8

TY (CONT'D)

It was indeed a challenge. It's impossible to determine which form was actually Nimona, because she is not defined by any form unless she chooses to transform into it. Basically, we had to think about the shark, whale, gorilla, etc. as Nimona's true form at any given time, and it was more about making her behaviours consistent across all animal and human forms as opposed to taking the gestures and idiosyncrasies of girl Nimona and putting them on the animal forms. We used more obvious things like her eye and eyebrow behavior to link her personalities across all her forms, but also less visible things like the timing of her head for instance. A really fun aspect of animating her different forms was not only keeping her behaviour consistent, but to also imbue each form with movement based on that particular animals' traits – a quick mouse all the way to a powerful gorilla.

9 **Even while Nimona has devil teeth, her character and look manage to exude all things POSITIVE. How was that done?** 9

TY (CONT'D)

The teeth were a very entertaining aspect of Nimona, and essentially, our character rigs had different sets of teeth that we could change and modify, depending on what was necessary in

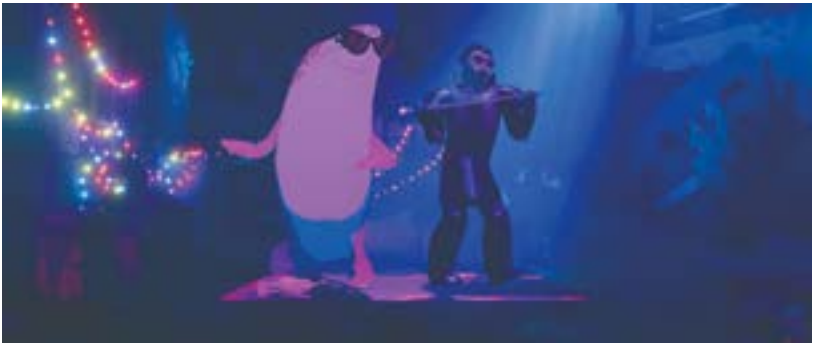
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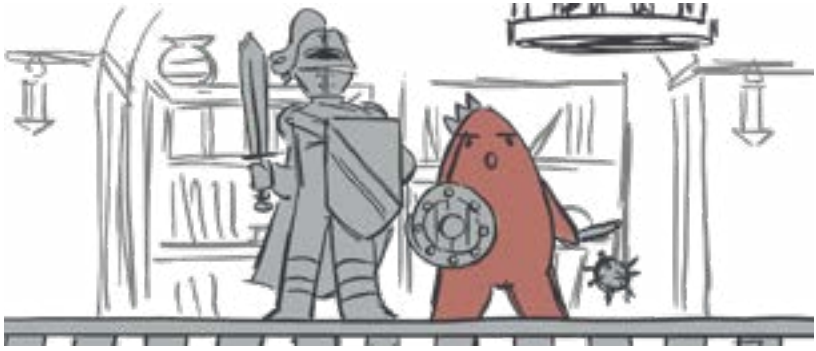














that moment. It could have been as subtle as shaping her canines to be a little more pointy when Nimona is feeling mischievous, like when she's a shark – like at very "metal" moments.

10 **There is a lot of between the lines and SYMBOLISM in this film, in terms of LIGHT and COLOUR. How important is that to the STORYTELLING of any film? Can you share some examples from Nimona?** 10

DONTATO

Here I have to give all credit to our incredible production designer Aidan Sugano. He had a very clear colour script of the film which was designed to assist the storytelling. Aidan was able to guide us through this process and was able to paint us some incredible color keys for us to work from. I would entirely defer to him on this question.

11 **What was the most CHALLENGING to work on, including the most difficult scene in the film?** 11

DONTATO (CONT'D)

Without a doubt it was the Shadow Creature destroying the city – that was by far the most challenging set of the sequences.

12 **Could you each tell us what you ENJOYED working on the most?** 12

DONATO

To me personally, accomplishing the graphic 2D look of the film in 3D was the most difficult and at the same time the most rewarding part of the film.

TY

It was making sure that we managed to extract the full acting potential of the fantastic vocal performances, script and story. It is rare to have such layered and deep characters with profound "souls" and finding the right choices in the performances with the animation team to deliver what the directors were looking for – and more – was really enjoyable.

KEMP

Working with our crew was the biggest joy of this experience for me. We had an incredible (and sometimes "impossible") task of bringing artists and their work together from all across the globe, but every time we managed to create another stunning sequence, it was a reminder of the miracle of what we could accomplish with that level of talent and passion.

cont.

13 **Tell us your PERSONAL EXPERIENCES of working on Nimona.** 13

DONATO

For me this film was by far the most important animated project of my career due to its message of acceptance of everyone regardless of their background. This message drove myself and my team to go above and beyond to make this film look as amazing as possible.

TY

This was a difficult but rewarding film to make because the message, tone and the "life" of the film drove us in animation to always push for more – a higher level of honesty and truthfulness in the performances. It was incredibly inspiring to help contribute to a film with such an incredible message of self-acceptance, and the acceptance of others.

14 **How was the experience working with DIRECTORS Nick Bruno & Troy Quane?** 14

DONATO

For us Nick and Troy were such a wealth of information about every tiny detail of the film that it made my job as a VFX supervisor a lot easier by having constant access to our directors. I used to email or call Nick and Troy and they were fantastic in getting back to us with answers immediately. Their support to us as a team was absolutely phenomenal since we at DNEG had to hit the ground running since we did not have six to seven months of early production to learn all the intricate details.

TY

Nick and Troy are both very accomplished animators in their own right, so working with them to shape the characters' performances was that much more precise and specific. They have really sharp eyes for animation, and know the characters so well and that helped to guide our animation. They were incredibly collaborative and lent a great deal of trust to me and my animation team – allowing us to bring fresh ideas and encouraging us to push for more in the performances all the time throughout the film. The fact that they are really funny guys also made it that much easier to work with them every day.

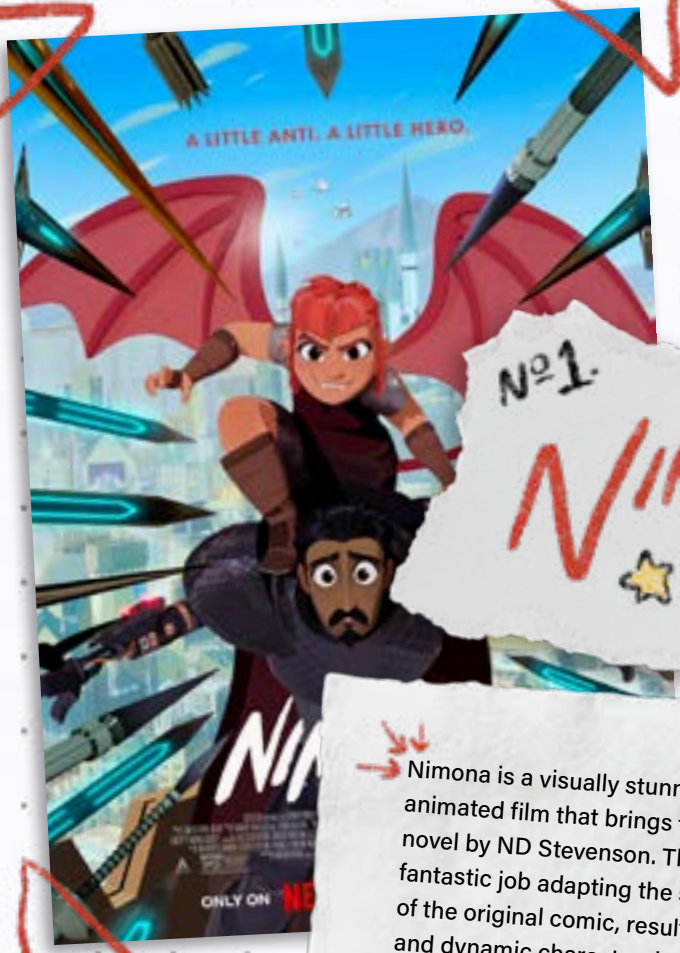
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FRAME BY FRAME!

TMO's Top 10: The crew shares their favourite animated Films and series for this month



TOP 5 FILMS



№1. NIMONA

Nimona is a visually stunning and emotionally compelling animated film that brings to life the beloved graphic novel by ND Stevenson. The creative team has done a fantastic job adapting the simple yet charming art style of the original comic, resulting in breathtaking visuals and dynamic character designs that truly captivate the audience. The animation is especially commendable, with seamless movements and expressive faces that convey a wide range of emotions, adding depth to the storytelling. The movie's themes of tolerance and LGBTQ+ acceptance add a layer of depth and relevance to the story, making it a powerful and engaging fantasy film.

- **Director:** Troy Quane, Nick Bruno
- **Released:** Jun 2023
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Science, Adventure, Comedy



No.2 BELLE

★★★★☆

Belle is a visually stunning and emotionally resonant film that takes the classic "Beauty and the Beast" tale and reimagines it for the digital age. The animation is breathtaking, with each frame a testament to the meticulous craftsmanship of the team behind it. The film's narrative is deeply moving, exploring themes of identity, empathy, and the power of technology. Suzu's journey from a withdrawn teenager to a global singing sensation is a compelling exploration of self-discovery and personal growth. The film's music and songs are also noteworthy, adding another layer of emotional depth to the story. Overall, "Belle" is a must-watch for animation fans and those who appreciate a thoughtful exploration of the human condition through the lens of a digital world.

Director: Mamoru Hosada
Released: Jan 2022
Genre: Fantasy, Anime, Adventure, Romance, Musical

No.3 KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS

★★★★½

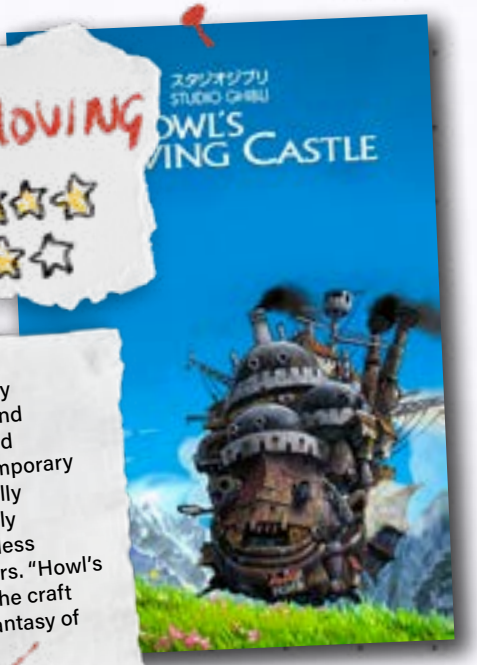


Kubo and the Two Strings is a stop-motion masterpiece that took a decade to craft, and it shows in every frame. The painstaking attention to detail and epic scope of the film are evident, making it a visually dazzling and emotionally resonant experience. The movie's powerful performances, transporting score, and jaw-dropping animation all contribute to its cinematic grace and timeless appeal. The film's narrative, steeped in Japanese folklore and storytelling, is brought to life with a perfect blend of traditional Japanese music and modern instruments, creating a magical and immersive experience. It is a must-see for anyone who appreciates the craft of animation and the power of storytelling.

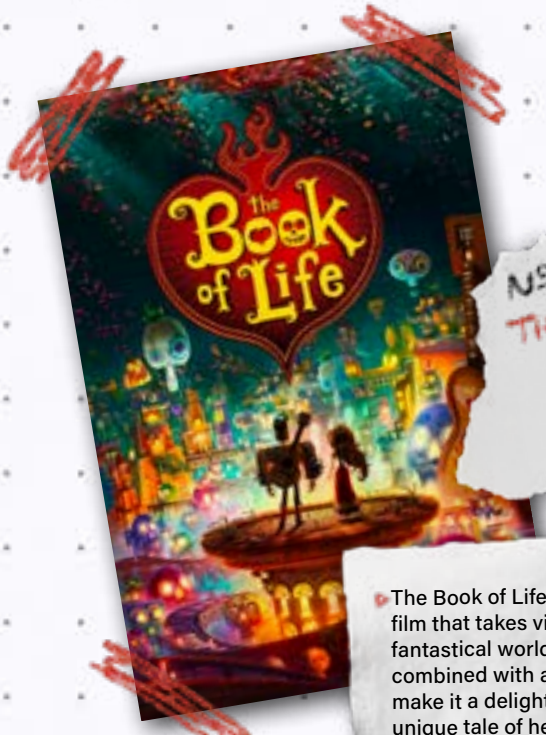
Director: Travis Knight
Released: Sep 2016
Genre: Fantasy, Advent
Action, Family, Drama

- **Director:** Hayao Miyazaki
- **Released:** Sep 2005
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Adventur
  Anime, Romance

№4 HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE ★★★★★



Howl's Moving Castle is a visually enchanting and emotionally captivating animated film that brings to life the imaginative and heartfelt spirit of Studio Ghibli. The movie's dreamy world and captivating characters, particularly the intriguing and contemporary character design of Howl, makes it a stunning and emotionally engaging experience. The film's intricate animation and richly elaborated score contribute to its cinematic grace and timeless appeal, showcasing the dedication and artistry of its creators. "Howl's Moving Castle" is a must-see for anyone who appreciates the craft of animation and the power of storytelling, offering a rich fantasy of adolescent escape and romance in the old and epic sense.



№5 THE BOOK OF LIFE ★★★★★

- **Director:** Jorge R. Gutierrez
- **Released:** Oct 2014
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Adventure, Musical, Comedy

The Book of Life is a heartwarming and visually stunning animated film that takes viewers on an incredible journey through three fantastical worlds. The movie's vibrant visuals and lively storytelling, combined with a mix of age-old myths and contemporary toon tropes, make it a delightful and visually captivating experience. The film's unique tale of heroism, love, and family is brought to life through the dedication and passion of its creators, resulting in a refreshingly original animated film that celebrates Mexican culture and traditions. The film's soundtrack was also incredible. "The Book of Life" is an emotionally resonant adventure that offers a beautiful and meaningful cinematic experience for audiences of all ages.

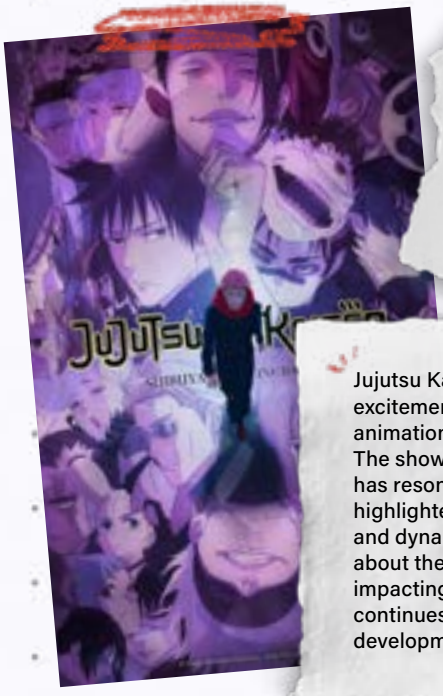
TOP 5 SERIES



№1 TRIGUN STAMPEDE

Trigun Stampede (2023) has garnered a mix of reviews, but it has received praise for its stunning visuals and modern animation techniques. The art style remains faithful to the original while incorporating enhanced CGI, vibrant color palettes, and dynamic action sequences, making it a visual treat for fans of the series. The reboot has been commended for its unique take on the original story, offering a fresh perspective and world-building that captivates both new and old fans. While some viewers have expressed disappointment in the execution of the script, pacing, and character development, others appreciate the emotional depth and unique storytelling approach of the remake. Overall, "Trigun Stampede" presents a visually stunning and unique reinterpretation of the beloved series, offering a fresh experience for fans and newcomers alike.

Director: Kenji Mutō
Released: Jan 2023
Genre: Science fiction, Space Western, Adventure, Action



Nº2 JUJUTSU KAISEN

Jujutsu Kaisen season 2 has been met with anticipation and excitement from fans, with the series receiving praise for its flawless animation, captivating plot, and strong character development. The show's ability to balance suspense, friendship, and humour has resonated with viewers, while the fight sequences have been highlighted as a standout feature, showcasing breathtaking visuals and dynamic action. However, recent reports have raised concerns about the production conditions at Studio MAPPA, potentially impacting the future of the series. Despite these challenges, the series continues to captivate audiences, and fans eagerly await further developments and the potential continuation of the gripping storyline.

- **Director:** Shōta Goshozono
- **Released:** Jul 2023
- **Genre:** Supernatural, Anime, Adventure, Action, Shounen

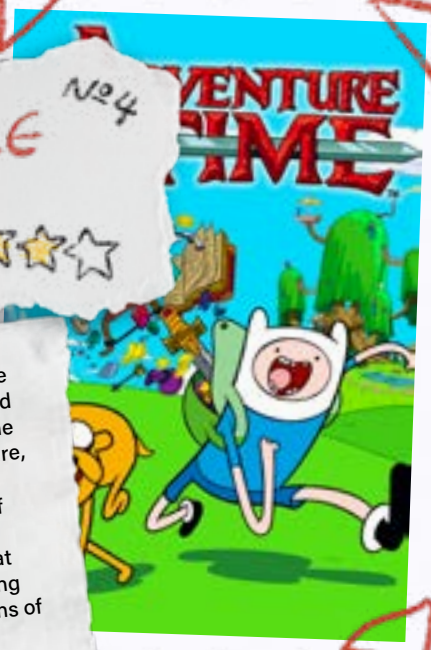
Nº3 OVER THE GARDEN WALL



- **Director:** Patrick McHale
- **Released:** Nov 2014
- **Genre:** Dark fantasy, Comedy, Mystery, Adventure, Horror, Coming-of-age

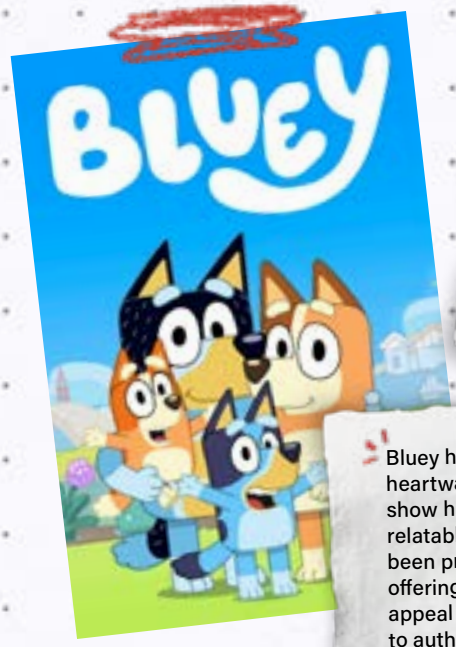
Over the Garden Wall has received widespread acclaim for its unique and enchanting storytelling, captivating visuals, and hauntingly beautiful music. The series takes viewers on a mesmerising journey through a mysterious and whimsical world, reminiscent of classics like "Alice in Wonderland" and "The Wizard of Oz." The animation quality has been likened to "Spirited Away," showcasing lush and varied visuals that contribute to the show's magical allure. The series' originality and creativity have been celebrated, with each episode offering a rich tapestry of artistry and storytelling that continues to surprise and delight audiences. "Over the Garden Wall" stands as a testament to the power of original and imaginative storytelling, making it a must-watch for fans of animation and captivating narratives.

- **Director:** Larry Leichliter
- **Released:** Apr 2010
- **Genre:** Fantasy, Adventure, Romance, Comedy, Family



№4 Adventure Time

Adventure Time has been celebrated for its surreal and imaginative storytelling, captivating characters, and unique blend of humor and depth. The series takes viewers on a whimsical journey through the post-apocalyptic Land of Ooo, offering a delightful mix of adventure, friendship, and creativity. The show's ability to balance complex themes with lighthearted humor has resonated with audiences of all ages, making it a beloved and influential addition to the world of animation and creating a rich and multi-dimensional world that continues to captivate viewers. "Adventure Time" has left a lasting impact on the world of animation, making it a must-watch for fans of imaginative storytelling and vibrant characters.



№5 Bluey

Bluey has become a beloved animated series celebrated for its heartwarming portrayal of family life and imaginative play. The show has captivated audiences with its endearing characters, relatable family dynamics, and charming storytelling. "Bluey" has been praised for its ability to resonate with both children and adults, offering valuable life lessons and heartwarming moments that appeal to viewers of all ages. The series' success lies in its ability to authentically capture the joys and challenges of parenting while celebrating the boundless creativity and energy of childhood. With its delightful characters and meaningful storytelling, "Bluey" has undoubtedly left a lasting impression on audiences, making it a cherished addition to the world of children's animation.

- **Director:** Richard Jeffery
- **Released:** Apr 2021
- **Genre:** Comedy, Family, Children, Slice-of-life

WHAT TO WATCH

Been scrolling endlessly for something to watch? Not to worry, our crew has put together a collection of animated films and series with something for everyone to enjoy.
Have a browse and take your pick!





Arcane

2021–
1 Season | 9 Episodes
(15) 41min/ep
Action, Adventure

Set in Utopian Piltover and the oppressed underground of Zaun, the story follows the origins of two iconic League Of Legends champions and the power that will tear them apart.

Castlevania

2017–2021
4 Seasons | 32 Episodes
(15) 23min/ep
Action, Adventure

The last surviving member of the disgraced Belmont clan, Trevor Belmont, endeavors to save Eastern Europe from extinction at the hands of Vlad Dracula Tepes, who seeks vengeance for the death of his wife Lisa by summoning an army of monsters to destroy all the people of Wallachia

Klaus

2019
(PG) 1hr 36min
Adventure, Comedy

A simple act of kindness always sparks another, even in a frozen, faraway place. When Smeerensburg's new postman, Jesper, befriends toymaker Klaus, their gifts melt an age-old feud and deliver a sleigh full of holiday traditions.

Fruits Basket

2019–2021
3 Seasons | 63 Episodes
(12) 24min/ep
Comedy, Drama

After Tohru is taken in by the Soma family, she learns that twelve family members transform involuntarily into animals of the Chinese zodiac and helps them deal with the emotional pain caused by the transformations.



Kung Fu Panda 2

2011
(PG) 1hr 30min
Action, Adventure

Po and his friends fight to stop a peacock villain from conquering China with a deadly new weapon, but first the Dragon Warrior must come to terms with his past.

ID:Invaded

2020
1 Season | 13 Episodes
(18) 24min/ep
Crime, Drama

A detective is called upon to solve a murder in a virtual reality world. But how can he manage a case when its rules can and are constantly being changed?

Paprika

2006
(15) 1hr 30min
Drama, Fantasy

When a machine that allows therapists to enter their patients' dreams is stolen, all hell breaks loose. Only a young female therapist, Paprika, can stop it.

Helluva Boss

2019–
2 Seasons | 21 Episodes
(15) 24min/ep
Action, Comedy

In Hell, imp Blitzø runs an assassin business targeting the world of the living, using a spell book borrowed from a prince of Hell. With employees Moxxie, Millie, and Loona, they attempt to survive each other while keeping business afloat.



Mulan

1998
(U) 1hr 27min
Adventure, Comedy

A young Chinese maiden who learns that her weakened father is to be called up into the army in order to fight the invading Huns. Knowing that he would never survive the rigours of war in his state, she decides to disguise herself and join in his place; and becomes one of China's greatest heroines in the process.

Coco

2017
(PG) 1hr 45min
Adventure, Drama

Despite his family's baffling generations-old ban on music, Miguel dreams of becoming an accomplished musician like his idol, Ernesto de la Cruz. Desperate to prove his talent, Miguel finds himself in the stunning and colorful Land of the Dead following a mysterious chain of events

Mononoke

2007
1 Season | 12 Episodes
(TV-MA) 25min/ep
Fantasy, Horror

Mononoke follows a wandering, nameless character known only as the "Medicine Seller". The series is composed out of 5 story arcs, each featuring the medicine seller as he tries to solve the mystery behind the existence of various Mononoke, evil spirits that still linger in the human world.

Akira

1988
(12) 2hr 4min
Action, Drama

A secret military project endangers Neo-Tokyo when it turns a biker gang member into a rampaging psychic psychopath who can only be stopped by a teenager, his gang of biker friends and a group of psychics.



The Boy and the Heron

2023
(12A) 2hr 4min
Adventure, Drama

A young boy named Mahito yearning for his mother ventures into a world shared by the living and the dead. There, death comes to an end, and life finds a new beginning. A semi-autobiographical fantasy from the mind of Hayao Miyazaki.

Tangled

2010
(PG) 1hr 40min
Adventure, Comedy

The magically long-haired Rapunzel has spent her entire life in a tower, but now that a runaway thief has stumbled upon her, she is about to discover the world for the first time, and who she really is.

Bleach

2004–2012
16 Seasons | 366 Episodes
(PG) 24min/ep
Adventure, Supernatural

High school student Ichigo Kurosaki, who has the ability to see ghosts, gains soul reaper powers from Rukia Kuchiki and sets out to save the world from "Hollows".

Link Click

2021–2023
2 Seasons | 23 Episodes
(PG-13) 20min/ep
Sci-Fi, Drama, Mystery

Using superpowers to enter their clientele's photos one by one, Cheng Xiaoshi and Lu Guang take their work seriously at "Time Photo Studio," a small photography shop set in the backdrop of a modern metropolis.



