



## ANIMATION

REEL-EXCHANGE PRESENTS A DIRECTORY  
OF TODAY'S TOP ANIMATORS.



### GETTING TO THE *Heart of Animation*

PIPELINES DON'T CREATE STORIES; PEOPLE DO.

By **Cliff Plumer**, CEO, Digital Domain

**The biggest trends in animation today are both driving and driven by the same thing: an evolution in storytelling.** We see directors now who are just as comfortable behind workstations as they are behind cameras, and they're experimenting with all kinds of techniques to create new experiences for audiences. This blending of techniques—CG, stereo 3D, live action, stop motion, miniatures, machinima, performance capture, and other approaches—requires that we, as creative companies, expand our thinking and capabilities too. The days of “this is our pipeline” are over. There's no formula that works for every challenge.

“Despite a lot of discussion about convergence and the advantages of developing games and movies simultaneously, these processes are still separate.”

*Cliff Plumer*  
CEO, Digital Domain

In the past year alone at Digital Domain, we've created animated characters for *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*—the movie and tie-in commercials—using hand-animation techniques; completed a campaign for the *Gears of War 2* videogame using machinima; combined performance capture, image analysis, and hand animation for *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*; used performance capture and hand animation for *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*; and implemented stereo 3D for a Super Bowl commercial. To aid filmmakers and storytellers in creating the best possible audience experience for that story, animation and visual-effects companies have to be able to work with every possible technique. Below, I've listed some of the trends we see unfolding.

### STEREO 3D

It's fantastic to see stereo moving beyond gags to the way directors are using it now: to enrich the story and the viewer's experience. While we're seeing stereo's impact hitting hard in features today, clearly we're in the early days of something that will grow beyond the theatrical experience to be available to consumers at home. As the demand for stereo content grows, creative companies need to expand their expertise in stereo workflows for movies, TV shows, commercials, special venue productions, and even games, and to mature in the artistry to create story-enhancing images that go beyond gimmicks.


### PERFORMANCE CAPTURE

In the past five years, we've seen incredible advances in performance-capture technology, again driven by the desire to enhance the audience's experience of CG characters and the overall story. Digital Domain's focus on this area for *Benjamin Button* brought us great success, but it also convinced us that animating a human character is still the hardest thing to do. Even with new techniques, it's incredibly difficult for a team of animators to re-create the nuanced performance of a talented professional actor.

Because of the cost and time required, the most impressive performance-capture examples are still in the feature world. While rendering in games has come a long way, animation in videogames is somewhat behind features in the level of sophistication of the performances. Improvements are coming quickly, though.

### PRODUCTION IS LEADING INNOVATION

We have seen a great deal of development from manufacturers in the performance-capture arena, but commercial animation tools have not evolved as quickly in recent years. Production companies with inhouse R&D are delivering the major innovations in this area today. Every studio needs to think about the internal development that will be required to execute a project and what building those tools will add to the cost of production. It's become a necessity to creating the type of work we're all looking to do.



# ANIMATION COMPANIES



### TWO ANIMATORS! Princeton, N.J.

Two Animators! is a full-service multimedia studio specializing in traditional and Flash animation production. Founded in early 2001 by Tom and Joe Costantini, Two Animators! creates content for animated series, shorts, music videos, commercial spots, virtual worlds, websites, games, and more. Studio credits include animation for VH1's *ILL-ustrated* television series, codirection and animation of the 7-minute music video “The Monster Is Loose” for Meat Loaf's “Bat out of Hell III” tour, and animation of 20 episodes of the hit online series *Superficial Friends* for *Heavy.com*.

### BRICKYARD VFX Santa Monica, Calif.; Boston

Located in Boston and Santa Monica, Calif., Brickyard VFX is an independent visual-effects boutique specializing in top-quality animations and visual effects from 3D characters all the way through to compositing. Artist-owned and -operated, the company was founded in 1999 to bring clients a level of customer service, craftsmanship, and focus difficult to find at facilities today. Brickyard's creative expertise on-set and in the studio has been applied to model, animate, light, texture, track, color-correct, and render seamless digital effects for Pontiac, Bud Light, T-Mobile, NBA, Visa, Sprint, and many others.





# ANIMATORS

Search [Reel-Exchange.com](http://Reel-Exchange.com) to find more than 200 animator profiles and demo reels.

## GAMES AND MOVIES: STILL NO CONVERGENCE

Despite a lot of discussion about convergence and the advantages of developing games and movies simultaneously, these processes are still separate. Great movies often still lack a great game. The barriers to convergence are not technical or creative—they're rooted in the way the industry does business. Games are still treated like a license, an afterthought to the creative process rather than an integral part. The creative development of a movie should be driven by a common vision and developed along a parallel process with the game. Both are complex, and both require a lot of time and iteration. We have to overcome the barrier of traditional business practices to reach the creative goal of a movie and game that deliver an equally high-quality experience.

## SHORTS

Shorts are incredibly important to animation production—they're probably the most important tool for grooming talent and trying new techniques. I love seeing them in front of every Pixar film, and I love the shorts that people are doing using videogames and posting on YouTube. The tools are so much more accessible; it's easy to get your ideas and stories out there online. The ease of being able to experiment in a short format is helping to build the industry's animation talent base for the future. ■



## MELANIE BEISSWENGER Singapore

Melanie Beisswenger is a character animator and animation teacher with extensive production experience on feature films and TV commercials. Her credits include the Academy Award-winning feature film *Happy Feet*, the stereoscopic 3D feature *Fly Me to the Moon*, and the TV launch commercial for the blockbuster game *BioShock*. Currently Beisswenger is sharing her knowledge and experience with students at the School of Art, Design & Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Beisswenger is particularly interested in storytelling through character animation and acting. She aims to create a believable and engaging performance that the audience can relate to in her work.



## DIGITAL DOMAIN Venice, Calif.

Digital Domain is an Academy Award-winning digital production studio focused on animation and visual effects for feature films and commercials. The company has built a legacy of achievement, receiving three Academy Awards—listing *Titanic*, *The Day After Tomorrow*, and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* among its more than 75 film credits. A creative giant in advertising, Digital Domain has worked on some of the world's most memorable spots. Recently completed animation work includes *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (movie and tie-in commercials) and *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*. The company is working on animation for the upcoming feature *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*.



## TONY HUDSON Petaluma, Calif.

With more than 20 years of motion-picture experience at well-known institutions such as Industrial Light & Magic and Walt Disney Animation Studios, Tony Hudson now brings that experience to the creation of animation and visual effects for independent film and television producers. Over the past year, Hudson has supervised the creation of more than 500 visual-effects shots for such movies as *The Singularity is Near* and *The Prankster*.



## RENEGADE ANIMATION Glendale, Calif.

Renegade Animation is the industry leader in cross-platform digital animation—producing smart, funny, always original, and occasionally remunerative animated content for film, television, advertising DVD products, and other media. The company's unique process has allowed it to execute top-quality animation entirely in the United States. For clients, that means faster turnaround and a superior product. The studio's strengths lie in personality-based character animation combined with a strong design, achieving a traditional look with nontraditional tools. Its studio is home to some of the world's most talented animators who share an unrivaled commitment and enthusiasm for their art.



## RHINO New York

Since its launch in 2000, Rhino has created award-winning animation, design, and visual effects for commercials, feature films, episodic television, webisodic miniseries, and videogame cinematics. By cultivating extensive relationships with key brands, advertising agencies, and film/TV studios, Rhino uses its creative directors and artists to develop and execute powerful branded entertainment to build both identity and awareness. The company's principals include CD/Director Vico Sharabani, CD/Director Harry Dorrington, CD/Director Natasha Saenko, COO/EP Camille Geier, Managing Director Rick Wagonheim, and CEO North America Zviah Eldar.



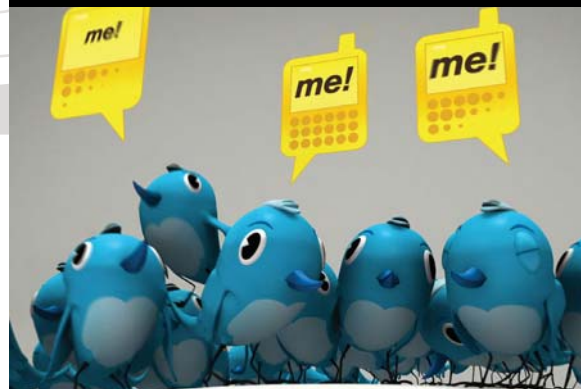
## SHADEDBOX ANIMATIONS South Pasadena, Calif.

ShadedBox is an animation and CGI house based in the Los Angeles area. Since 2001, ShadedBox has directed and produced work for game cinematics, broadcast commercials, and interactive web campaigns.



## VICON HOUSE OF MOVES Los Angeles, Calif.

Vicon House of Moves (HOM)—a division of Vicon, developer of Academy Award-winning motion-capture systems—provides full-service mo cap and end-to-end animation services for film, game, broadcast, and multimedia projects. HOM houses a fully enclosed sound stage featuring a 30'x50' full-body capture volume and a 40'x70'x25' main stage accommodating up to 270 Vicon motion-capture cameras. The HOM animation team delivers animated characters using mo cap or more traditional keyframing approaches, finalized cinematic animations, in-engine looping, and blending.



## SUPERFAD

London, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle

Superfad is home to a diverse group of designers, artists, and directors united to produce compelling motion imagery for entertainment, branding, and that special something in between. With the strategic vantage points of Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, and London, Superfad's creative reach is both vast and personal, combining the spark of advertising experience with artistic approaches.



## REEL FX CREATIVE STUDIOS

Dallas; Santa Monica, Calif.

Reel FX Creative Studios is an integrated group of award-winning design and production studios that produce extraordinary animation, visual effects, entertainment content, commercials, and conceptual designs. With digital studios in Dallas and Santa Monica, Calif., Reel FX's seasoned artists and producers collaborate with clients at every stage of the process, from original concept to visual development through production to final frame. The company's collaborative environment and proprietary technologies are key tenets to its creative and production philosophies.

## DALE MYERS ANIMATION STUDIOS Milford, Mich.

Dale Myers is a four-time Emmy Award-winning freelance 3D animator specializing in character performance with more than 20 years of professional computer animation experience. A creative force in the entertainment industry for more than three decades—producing short films, broadcast commercials, and visual effects for feature films—Myers is best known for his work on the M&M's commercials and his reconstruction of the JFK assassination for Peter Jennings and ABC News. A seasoned writer and public speaker, Myers has served as spokesman on many subjects including video production techniques and computer animation.





### IMED DESIGN Reno, Nev.

Andrew Johnson, principal, has more than 25 years of experience in traditional illustration, cartooning, CGI, 2D/3D, motion graphics, compositing, and production design. IMed has been providing animated content for the medical, entertainment, emergency preparedness, sports, renewable energy, transit, corporate, and broadcast markets for clients such as the American Chemistry Council, Kodak, Procter & Gamble, LAC+USC Medical Center, New York State Fair, Hot August Nights, and US GreenFiber.

### ROYALE Los Angeles

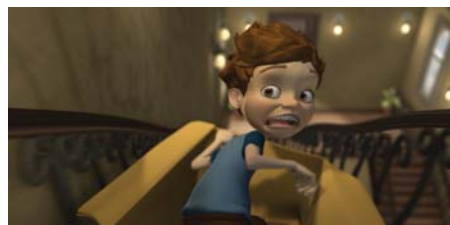
Royale is an award-winning animation, motion design, and production company founded by creative directors Jayson Whitmore and Brien Holman, and executive producer Jennifer Lucero. Royale's greatest love is to help solve its clients' needs through the visceral language of motion design. Tapping innovative creative from a multidimensional team of talent, the Royale treatment is an endless stream of creative solutions, as exhibited in recent collaborations with McDonald's, Discovery Channel, and Comedy Central.



### ELEMENT X CREATIVE Dallas

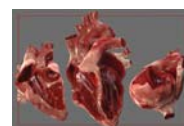
Element X Creative is a full-service animation, visual-effects, and interactive design studio. The company has developed a flexible turnkey infrastructure that allows it to work with clients across the globe on a wide variety of projects, no matter how demanding the scope. Recent animation projects include the animated series *Bowlopolis*, the videogame *Lego Indiana Jones*, and the PC game *Everything Nice*.

## ANIMATORS



### CAROLYN VALE Playa Vista, Calif.

Carolyn Vale recently graduated from Ringling College of Art and Design, May 2008, with a BFA in computer animation, and she started her career with a job at Sony Pictures Imageworks as an associate animator. Recent projects she has completed include digital layout and animation on *G-Force*, and she is currently crewed to work on Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* doing stereo layout, rough layout, and animation.



### DAVE MAURIELLO Philadelphia

Dave Mauriello provides custom 3D modeling and animation services through his company, Magic Animation, and he has been recognized for his work in animation through numerous Telly and Summit awards—most recently for his work on *E-Planet* for Fink Productions. Much sought-after by producers of medical, educational, and entertainment productions, Mauriello will begin sharing his talent and experience this fall with students as assistant professor of digital media at the Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design at Drexel University in Philadelphia.



### FERNANDO CABESTANY Mexico City

Fernando Cabestany is an animator and motion-graphics designer with work experience for advertising and corporate communications clients. Cabestany and his colleagues design, direct, and animate a broad range of projects including television commercials, broadcast design, title sequences, sales presentations, and press releases. He handles 2D and 3D animation and graphics as well as live footage for a wide variety of formats.