

Stop-motion

animation allows maximum control



Theo Pingarelli, SOC's main occupation over the past several years has been as a camera operator. He also has extensive credits as an assistant cameraman, and experience as an animator and lighting cameraman shooting tabletop work for John Gati Film Effects of New York.

Pingarelli appreciates the value of collaboration in filmmaking, but he also pursues a solitary craft, creating and editing his own stop-motion animation films.

Idle Worship and *Doppelganger* are the first in a planned series of short, stop-motion films that are model animated, utilizing armatures for all characters which are skeletons, human and animal, including creatures of various skeletal forms. His current project, *Gotterdammerung*, is being shot in 35mm Cinemascope, utilizing Cinemascope lenses from the 1950s.

In a recent interview, Pingarelli talked about his methods:

Q Compare your stop-motion work to your live-action camera operating.

A My stop-motion animation work is quite the opposite of my work as a camera operator because there is not much camera movement, as it would be distracting and frivolous. I create a painterly kind composition, and have the elements move within it. In camera operating work, the movement is added most often to embellish the production value, irrespective of story points.

Q Why do you choose to shoot on film?

A I use 35mm film because of its worldwide acceptance as a presentation format. I can't see the point of spending days and weeks on an animation shot only to have it recorded onto a tape or a hard drive. In this scenario the camera original is essentially worthless. On film, I can print again as needed. Digitally, there are unknown future limitations to the quality of the format. Also, on film, I can do double exposure work in camera. With digital, this would be delegated to some unknown third party, and I prefer to have control.

Q Which film stocks do you use and why?

A My films are shot on 35mm, which due to extended years in production, have ranged from (Eastman EXR 100T) 5248 Film to (KODAK VISION2 100T Color Negative Film) 5212. I chose film because of its archival properties over the extended shooting period, as well as its aesthetic impact on the big screen. The 100-speed stock was chosen for the best possible image quality in the event of any duplication.

Q Which cameras and lenses do you use?

A I started shooting on an ARRI 2C with CE motor, which gave me a half-second exposure. It was sometimes difficult using this camera, as I had to cap the lens if the interval between frames was more than 15 seconds. Eventually, I secured a Mitchell Standard, which eliminated that tedious task, as the focal plane shutter caps the film. Nikon lenses were used on the Mitchell after being converted by Panavision of Hollywood.

Q What are some of the other technical considerations?

A Most of the film is shot through 1/8 or 1/4 black Pro-Mist filters on camera. A moving sky backdrop was achieved by rear projection. The projector elements were provided by Bill Hansard and David Allen Studios. The projector utilizes a Bell & Howell 2709 camera movement, in place of the original projector unit. The projector has a straw filter overall, as the bulb is slightly blue. Sometimes filters are placed in front of the projector edge acting as a hard edge grad to give color effects. My exposure calculations include the camera exposure of a half second, the line voltage of 120 volts AC, and the film speed which I discount to 80 ASA. This usually comes out to T8 or T11, as the light reading on set is dictated by sky background brightness. These films are intended to be finished photochemically without DI in 1.66 formats.

Q How will these films be seen?

A All the films will eventually be printed and submitted to various film festivals here and abroad.