

# ANIMATION TODAY

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*Witches, Wizards & Ogres!* **THE SHREK THIRD**

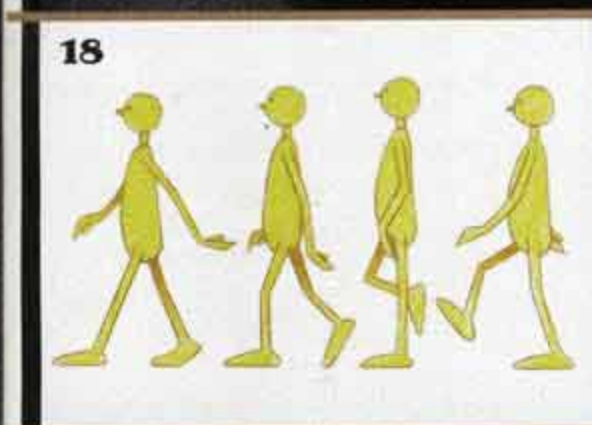
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## ANIMATION TODAY

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**KING OF THE HILL**  
IT ISN'T BETTER THAN BEER, BUT IT'S CLOSE

Shrek. Over the past decade, the grumpy, green ogre from Dreamworks has gone on to become one of the most beloved animated characters of audiences around the world. And this month, he returns to theaters in his third film, Shrek the Third. Animation Today gets the lowdown on the making of the blockbuster-to-be. Also in the issue, we take a look at South Africa's Blackheart Gang, the basics of hand-drawn animation and Dhimant Vyas' stop-motion animation. Also, one of the most popular game franchises ever, Final Fantasy turns 20 this month, while King of the Hill comes back from near-death, say exec producers John Altschuler and Dave Krinsky...

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# Walking through the road not taken

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference”

**T**hese lines by Robert Frost, from his poem “The Road not taken” were in my mind while talking to this wonderful person, Mr. Dhimant Vyas. Dhimant Vyas is the animation director from India who has successfully made his presence in the global stop motion animation arena by working in the prestigious Aardman Studios based in UK. A man who loves to explore and experiment with different styles and materials, he admires Norman McLaren, Ishu Patel and Caroline Leaf. He is also a good photographer and also loves to collect miniature toys.

As a boy, he remembers himself being so much passionate about the art subjects. He said he knew one day he would do something related to art (but never knew he would MOVE puppets...!!!). Dhimant joined NID for an Advanced Diploma in Communication Design with specialization in Animation film Design after completing his five years Diploma in applied arts from Kala Kendra College of Fine Arts. At NID, under the guidance of senior faculty like Nina Binita, R L Mistry, Barry Parker, etc he learned and experimented a lot with the medium. He learned all the basic traditional skills and worked hard, mainly with pencil and paper, forgetting that “hard” part seeing his drawings coming to life. It was really amazing says the man with a smile.

Stop motion is a type of animation technique where the animator moves the model frame by frame in tiny increments which is captured by a camera. Animation by stopping motion...!!! Well that is a way to define stop motion, since the camera must be stopped intermittently during the filming process. Remember, no in-between-ing folks :-)

But, his real entry to stop motion started with a workshop in 1988 under Prof. Joan Ashworth (Head of The Animation Department, Royal college of Arts UK) and Catherine Greenhalgh at NID in 1988. That was something he was looking for.

Some of the early stop motion film makers include Wladyslaw Starewicz, Emilie Cohl etc followed by Willis O'Brien (who animated dinosaurs in “The Lost World” in 1925 and “King Kong” in 1933) and Ray Harryhausen (made films like “The Beast from 20,000 fathoms “ in 1953 and “Jason and Argonauts” in 1963. Later came people like Tim Burton (The Nightmare before Christmas, Corpse Bride ...), Nick Park, Peter Lord (Wallace and Gromit , Chicken Run... ) etc who helped to popularize the medium widely.

When asked on his love for claymation and when I raised a question “Why Claymation..??” Dhimant pointed to the unique feeling of the hand made textured surface, and the moving thumb mark on the character which is hard to create using computers. “It marks a human touch and feel and that is why we like claymation more” says Dhimant proudly. He says that being into claymation and experimental animation makes him versatile to any medium of animation, adapt himself to anywhere in the industry and gives him a lot of satisfaction in doing a variety of work.



Yes, this man has indeed done a variety of work. Apart from various commercials and promos, he has worked for the 3 minute short film “Cute Bunny” (Toonz Animation) and a 5 minute short film “Water Pump Project” for UNICEF. He also worked for the Telugu feature film “Anji” produced by Shyam Prasad Reddy for the concept art. Subsequently this film won the 52nd Indian National Film Award for Best Visual Effects. He also worked for the Malayalam film “Arimpara” directed by Murali Nair, which was selected to Cannes film festival. He worked as an animator for Flickerpix Animation Ltd. UK for a TV series for BBC titled “On the Air”. In 2006 he started his work in Aardman studios for the Creature Comfort series. He is also working for the feature film “Cat Burglar” directed by Steve Box, where his activity involves concept art and storyboards for the film.

Asking on his another major interest photography he said it helps him a lot while planning for camera angle, lighting etc and to know the technical side related to it like shutter speed, lens types etc. He also mentioned his habit to look for miniature toys, props, tools or materials when he goes for a normal shopping. “I have lot of collection of all so while making character or set I find most of the thing from it.” Says Dhimant with a smile.

Finally, when asked on the future of stop motion Dhimant says “Very Optimistic”. He said that today things have changed and many are aware of what stop motion is. He remembered those initial days of his career when he had to educate the client “what claymation is” and showed them the samples. And he added that there will be an Indian clay animation film for International market. Wow...!!! That sounds really good...!!! And we all know that you’ll be there at the helm...!!!



## AWARDS & OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- Special Jury award for Children short film “Cute Bunny” ,Vatavaran Environment & Wildlife Film Festival (KAFTI), 2005.
- Award for best Animated film for children to “Cute Bunny” at Zevs Animation Film Festival-Bimini, Latvia 2003.
- Gold Award for Children short film “Cute Bunny” ,Kalamazoo Animation Film Festival (KAFTI), 2003.
- Pro-Max Award for MTV Spot “HORROR” Singapore, 2000.
- Gold Award for BIONA-Y-SNORE, (TV commercial), Regional Advertising Award, Bangalore, India. for Storyline and Technical excellence.
- Prize in ‘The Hindustan Times’ Caricature and Cartoon competition 1997, Delhi, India.
- Gold medal in the 55th International Photographic Salon of Japan 1995-96.

Contributed by Ranjith P.M.