

Film Inquiry Submission No. 35

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29 June 2003

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications, Information Technology and the Arts in its inquiry into the future opportunities for Australia's film, animation, special effects and electronic games industries.

Dear Secretary,

We have been associated with, or have knowledge of, two major Australian animation studios funded on a large scale by foreign capital. The feature-length animated films produced by both companies have been remarkable for their daring achievement in large-scale productions. The treatments of their productions have been largely within the established and presumed conventions of animation. In our view, and whilst acknowledging the Australian themes of many Australian productions, to date we have not materially extended the boundaries or the 'language' of animation, nor developed any distinctively Australian style of production.

We would refer by contrast to the American, John Lassiter's, Pixar productions, an initiative by a committed animator which commenced on a small scale with, for example, the four minute 'Knick Knack', displaying a much subtler humour than most animated films, and extending the concepts of the 3D animation programmes comparatively new at that time. Pixar, having proved itself convincingly on a small scale, then worked in association with Disney on feature length productions. Similarly in England, the Ardman studios produced modestly scaled animated short films before venturing into a feature-length production. The Japanese, Studio Ghibli, has taken Japanese feature animated films, originally heavily based on the American prototypes, in a distinctly Japanese direction. The Koreans have recently produced a major feature animation, 'My Beautiful Girl, Mari', likely to become an indicator to the style of future Korean productions.

We would like to confirm to the Standing Committee our support for the general view that certainly the talent exists in Australia to make an original contribution to animation, both artistically, and in developing existing animation concepts and techniques. This talent is apparent in some of the undergraduate students that we are training at the Australian National University. But, having graduated, this talent finds difficulty in gaining opportunities to develop professionally; and particular difficulty in finding opportunity to express its originality in the contemporary commercial field.

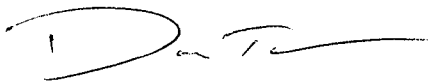
A means of allowing this talent to develop and, if it proves itself, to flourish, might be through the provision of studio facilities and intelligent direction/production advice during the period of the University's summer vacations when students' formal degree training is suspended. The costs of such facilities would be very modest. The studio would:

- aim to achieve a commercial level of professionalism;
- but would be primarily concerned to extend the conceived boundaries of animated films as seen by the general audience, and to work towards standards of artistry lacking in many animated films, but which are taken for granted in other art forms.

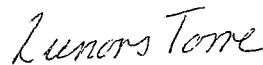
Undergraduate students would expect to be employed on productions conceived by experienced animators. The solid experience of working on real productions intended for public screening at animation festivals and for commercial use, would be of inestimable value to the students, greatly extending, and bringing a professional reality to their formal training. They would greet the following year of their degree courses with an immeasurably greater understanding of their medium, its potential, its artistic and commercial viability, its production discipline, and their own future relationship with the industry generally.

Following their graduation, the experience derived from having spent three months of each undergraduate year working under professional conditions would provide them greater viability in the commercial world of animation and effects - or possibly longer term employment should the studio find a measure of commercial success in its productions. We would see value in a Board of Advisors appointed from the Australian animation industry, to advise on commercial opportunities, economic viability, and other such relevant professional matters.

Yours sincerely,



Dan Torre



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