

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Bill Plympton's Top 6 Animated Films of All Time

Bill Plympton · Wednesday, May 6th, 2015

Legendary Cartoonist and Indie Filmmaker Picks His Faves



Bill Plympton

I've been on the road hosting screenings of my current feature film, *Cheatin'* – shaking hands, answering questions and always being amazed and honored by the support given by the fans that I meet. At the same time, I've been trying to do as much as possible to get my new project, *Revengeance*, off the ground via a crowdfunding campaign on Kickstarter.

Let's just say that it's been a hectic few weeks, but also a period that has reminded me of how powerful animation can be, and also of my great passion for the medium and its ability to awe and inspire. As such, I couldn't help but take some time to reflect on those films that have done exactly that. Below are my personal top six animated films of all time. I invite you to share yours by leaving a comment on this page.

[divider]No. 6: *Song of the South* (Harve Foster, William Jackson)[/divider]

Song of the South is very hard to see because Disney won't release it in fear of offending African-Americans. It's too bad because the animation (supervised by the great Milt Kahl) is to my estimation the highest point of Disney films. The characters of Brer Rabbit, Brer Fox, and Brer Bear were influenced by the seminal work of A. B. Frost. However, Disney artists really let loose with their character development, and at times it equals Bob Clampett in terms of humor and design.

[embedvideo id="11AVwBBtruM" website="youtube"]

[divider]No. 5: *Yellow Submarine* (George Dunning)[/divider]

Yellow Submarine was the inspiration for my first feature film, *The Tune* (1991). I saw *Yellow Submarine* as a senior in college and it blew my mind! What a marvelous blend of music and imagery! The designs are by Heinz Edelman (who recently passed away). His background was in illustration, but the numerous fantastic characters populating this film are so inventive and beautifully designed, you'd think he grew up in animation. It's the greatest union of music and visuals I've ever seen. And they made it in a year with no story!

[embedvideo id="wRnAcVLBIyY" website="youtube"]

[divider]No. 4: *Dumbo*[/divider]

Dumbo is one of the perfect Disney films – a gem. Great story, terrific character design, wonderful backgrounds, super humor and heart-rending emotions. And all in 62 minutes – it's one of the all-time classic animated features.

[embedvideo id="G8VdQY95Rtc" website="youtube"]

[divider]No. 3: *Porco Rosso* (Hayao Miyazaki)[/divider]

I believe **Porco Rosso** is the best of the Japanese master's films. It has terrific visuals, with lush backgrounds and fabulous action scenes. Also, of all of Miyazaki's stories, this is the most coherent and makes the most sense. (I still don't know what *Howl's Moving Castle* is about.) Also, this film has a wonderful bawdy sense of humor which is lacking in a lot of his more recent films.

[embedvideo id="awEC-aLDzjs" website="youtube"]

[divider]No. 2: *How to Train Your Dragon* (Chris Sanders, Dean DeBlois)[/divider]

When **How to Train Your Dragon** first came out, I refused to watch – I feared it would be a rehash of the Shrek cartoons. But Chris Wedge of BlueSky insisted that I go see it and I'm glad I did! What a marvel of a film. The character design is fantastic, the story is so charming and engaging. But of particular note are the flying sequences in full 3D. I believe they match and perhaps surpass the wonderful flying sequence from *Avatar*. And that's a pretty high bar. This film really puts to use the full powers of animation, this is what animation is for!

[embedvideo id="oKiYuIsPxYk" website="youtube"]

[divider]No. 1: *Mind Game* (Masaaki Yuasa)[/divider]

Mind Game came out about 5 years ago and because of a few lame reviews in Japan, this film flopped and was pulled from circulation. What a tragedy – to my mind, it's the *Citizen Kane* of animation. And because it's from Japan, don't think it's anime – it's not. It's a wonderful blend of East and West styles of animation. But the storytelling technique is what really sets it apart. He uses strange views and exaggerated visions multiple times to convey an action – and sometimes, as in the escape from the whale's mouth, he goes on and on with a piece of action, but it's never boring because he ratchets up the intensity with each subsequent shot. How he does that? I do not know. But then, that's why this film is genius.

[embedvideo id="XU4EfF85u60? website="youtube"]

Bill Plympton's *Cheatin'* will screen in Rochester, NY, on May 7; in Austin, TX, on May 10; and in Pelham, NY, on May 22. [Click here for full schedule.](#)

Please consider making a contribution to the *Revengeance* crowdfunding campaign by [clicking here](#).

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