

The University of Prince Edward Island
Journalistic Society Presents

A Dinner of Turkeys

By Trent Drake

This Week: Cartoons!!!

IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE TO any reader of this column that I am more than a little Looney Tunes. Whenever a cat gets a stripe painted down her back and ends up detonating the libido of a suave French skunk, I heartily long to be there. Whenever the laws of physics bend in order to maim a hapless coyote in his own devices, I insult him by beeping. And when an egotistical green duck gets smashed by an endless stream of heat-seeking anvils, I applaud and call it a work of genius. I long to be a 'toon, one so berserk that even falling boulders pause to laugh before pushing my head through my feet (how's that for an image!).

And on a different level, I also stand in awe of animation, that lengthy and beautiful process of sitting at a desk for hours on end, drawing the same picture and changing small details so that a candelabra can cop a feel off a feather-duster... a pair of mismatched lovers can dance... and a stuttering rabbit can marry a sultry vamp... and the course of true love can eventually run smooth.

And if you recognized any of the situations above, you've obviously been watching lots of recent Disney stuff. But while I hold nothing against Disney, it would be a mistake to assume that they had a corner on the animation market. So, today we are going to go over a few non-Disney, not-generally-watched cartoons. And we'll start with one that really stinks.

Revenge of the Ninja Warrior is possibly the single worst example of Japanese animation I have ever seen (no, I take that back. *Goldwing*, a splendid example of horrid 60's T.V. animation, is the worst.). It's the story of Jo, a young orphan whose mother is killed by a ninja who frames him for the

murder. The ninja's boss then adopts Jo, trains him, sends him on a mission and sends another ninja to kill him. Jo escapes, and, over the long and confusing course of the movie, encounters black slavery, female wave-walking ninjas, and a young American reporter who turns out to be French but was born in Japan. As if that weren't enough, Jo's sword turns out to be the key to Captain Kid's treasure, he kills the evil high priest three times and even meets Mark Twain. Makes a lot of sense, right?

While the plot is confusing, the animation is ridiculously simple. It's about on a par with the old

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Voltron series (which was worse than you remember, but I loved it anyway), but with so many speed lines, gritty close-ups and over-used laser effects that your head will spin. It's not that it's incredibly bad, but the horrific dialogue, poor sound dubbing and unexplainable story render it unwatchable.

Best Line: Jo to two people he's never seen before: "You are the only two that survived. I am grateful." I still don't know why.

Bottom Line: Do you want a headache? Here's one way to get one.

Tiny Toons: How I Spent My Vacation is the funniest travelogue I've ever seen. Based on the frequently hysterical T.V. show (if you haven't watched it, your world is a lot less fun), this flick presents us with a hilarious look at how the students of ACME Looniversity spend their summer. Buster Bunny starts a water war with Babs that

escalates into a double flooding of ACME Acres and leaves the combatants floating downriver. They spend the rest of the summer dodging people who want to eat them, including a family of hillbilly possums and a trio of truly terrifying alligator sisters.

Meanwhile, Plucky Duck cons Hamton Pig into letting him come along on the pig family trip to the happiest amusement park on the planet: Happy World Land. But it's a car trip from hell. Plucky must endure endless miles of desert terrain, sight gags, horrifying family sing-a-longs (including the hit "99 Bottles of Non-Alcoholic Beverage on the Wall"), car games so sickeningly wholesome even Barney would cringe, and a very psychotic, chainsaw-wielding, pig-hating hitchhiker who suddenly decides he hates ducks, too.

All this, plus Elmyra heaping loving torture on an entire safari park and talk-show host cameos and at least a dozen gags in the closing credits. That's a lot of good, clean fun for a ninety minute video.

The animation? Good, clean, funny. But you knew that.

Best Line: "Perhaps I've gone too far..." -Babs Bunny, after opening a dam and flooding ACME Acres in a futile attempt to drench Buster.

Bottom Line: You will laugh. It is very funny. It's the funniest thing the Tiny Toons have ever done. There are so many great gags I can't even begin to name them all... just watch it.

Starchaser: the Legend of Orin: This is a very weird movie. On a world where everyone lives underground and mines crystals in the service of a tyrannical 'god', a young man named Orin finds a mystical sword. The sword instructs him to leave his cavern home and go to the surface, despite the claims of the 'god' Zoron that 'up' is where hell is, and then the blade vanishes. Orin soon discovers that his people are slaves to a galactic economy that

uses the crystals for starship fuel. But everyone knows that the mines are worked by robots... aren't they? As Orin seeks the blade and a means to free his captive people, he meets up with the assorted scum of the galaxy and makes allies of some suspiciously familiar people: a starship captain who acts like Han Solo and looks like Humphrey Bogart; a Princess who looks like Leia but without the hairy earmuffs; a neurotic ship's computer named Arthur who's like C3PO but funnier; and a fembot with the hots for the Captain.

The animation quality is a bit of a mixed bag. The character animation is a little flawed. Orin in particular appears to be somewhat two-dimensional at times. But the film is noteworthy for its early computer animation techniques, which are quite effective in rendering the spaceships even if they don't quite have the detail of some recent stuff like *Aladdin*.

Best Line: "I'm naked! Put my ship back on, you perverted fembot!" - Arthur.

Bottom Line: An original and enjoyable space opera, despite the character similarities. I love the

design of the *Starchaser* (that's Arthur's real name, even though they only use it once) and the ways in which it moves. And the plot and dialogue are above average for a film of this type.

And now, because this is getting too long, some quick shots at other films you animation freaks will enjoy:

We're Back: a Dinosaur's Story: Lousy children's film about a bunch of big, dumb dinosaurs who come to the future in answer to calls on a wish radio; almost totally computer-animated, and beautiful for that, but with corny dialogue that will have you climbing the walls. Turn the sound off if you watch it.

Akira and Lensman: These two animated releases wing your way courtesy of Streamline video, and are not at all alike. *Lensman* is a bizarre adventure across vast reaches of space full of thrilling chases and exciting laser battles. It's a little hard to figure out in spots, but it's great fun to watch. I'll have to read the novel it was based on.

Akira has even better animation, but it has the distinction of being very confusing. The story in a nutshell: The military abducts a young man named Tetsuo after his motorcycle gang has a chance encounter with a small, blue-skinned boy of enormous psychic power. They use a strange process on him and inadvertently turn him into an insane monster of virtually unlimited telekinetic power. Tetsuo nearly destroys Neo-Tokyo, and in the end... Well, I haven't figured it all out. An intricate science fiction puzzle you'll enjoy solving presented in excellent Japanimation, *Akira* is an experience not to be missed.

And finally, at the other end of the spectrum, we have the popular *Ferngully: The Last Rainforest*—kind of a silly movie, actually, and while the animation is good the backgrounds are rather bland in spots; however, the magical beauty of *Ferngully* is well portrayed in glowing special effects. I like the "save the planet" message the movie conveys, there's a horrifyingly well-done computer animated machine called the Leveler (the name does not say it all), and it has three pretty impressive voices going for it. Christian Slater does a swaggering faerie who makes a fool of himself trying to explain what a Walkman is; Robin Williams works his patented hilarity into Batty, a schizophrenic fruitbat who escapes from a brain-studying lab; and the spectre of Ultimate Evil rears its head once again... and once again it turns out to be Tim Curry, this time as a destructive toxic monster named Hexus. If you don't mind a slightly preachy tone in your films, this movie is a lot of fun. And the message is an important one, so make sure you force impressionable children to watch it. The planet you save may be your home.

All of these movies are available anywhere in Charlottetown, with the exception of *Revenge of the Ninja Warrior* (which you don't want to find) and *Starchaser: The Legend of Orin*. Both are found at Plaza Video, erroneously placed in the Children's Section.

Til next year, remember: Stupidity can be a virtue.

TRENT DRAKE

NOTICES

The U.P.E.I. Theatre Society

While you're still recovering from Pickwick's great success, let's talk about next year.

There will be a meeting for both old and new members on March 31, 3:00-4:00, in Main 130. You don't need any experience in the theatre to join us.

We'll do two things. First we'll talk about *Pickwick* and thank our director. Then we'll turn to next term's plans for our evening of one-act plays. If you know about a short play that we should perform or if you want to look for one, drop it off or see me before that meeting. We needn't agree about the directors

now, but I'd like us to decide on the plays.

Shannon Murray
Department of English (Main 133)
566-0428

1994 Spudman Triathlon

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