

Don Bluth creates animated art

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were later abandoned by Disney and animators in general. These same methods of animating are now at the core of all Bluth's work. And to get back to classical animation bases was the reason Bluth and company left Disney in 1979.

"FULL MOVEMENT animation is very different from the limited animation of Saturday morning cartoons, but the two are often confused by the public. Bluth is quick to point out the differences, both technically and, more importantly to the seasoned animator, morally.

"Limited animation is just that—limited. Characters don't move even half as much and visually. They're one-dimensional," he said. "At one point, there was a sincere attempt to develop limited animation as an art

—Bullwinkle, Mr. Magoo, for example. But now, limited animation on the whole, is a marketing tool.

"But let's get to the soul of it. The real difference between what I and other feature animators do and Saturday morning cartoons is this. We try to tell a story that will affect our audience, children and adults, both emotionally and intellectually. That you'll somehow be better for the experience, having seen our film."

In Bluth's opinion, Saturday morning cartoons are created solely as a billboard to sell toys and cereal.

"They have nothing to offer the young mind. They're not created to entertain or teach or impart any kind of lesson. They're there just to sell, and children are the victims," he said.

"The only reason these cartoons exist is to get the kids' attention so that the networks can break every

three to four minutes and advertise a toy. It's really a form of brainwashing. The kids are very attentive, watching every Saturday, and they're being programmed."

HE DECLARED. "The cartoons don't even make sense. They're not sequels. They have to be turned out so fast, on a weekly basis, that content-wise, they don't say anything. And kids watch them for hours on end and get very worked up. Saturday morning cartoons are, in a sense, extremely pornographic. I'm very much against them."

"All Dogs Go to Heaven" will be the third hit in a row for Bluth. Two of his previous animated films, the Steven Spielberg presentation of "An American Tail" and the George Lucas/Spielberg presentation for Universal Pictures, "The Land Before Time," were both critical and box

office smashes.

"All Dogs Go to Heaven" features the voices of Burt Reynolds as Charlie B. Barkin, a roguish German shepherd; Dom DeLuise as Ichy, the nervous dachshund; Vic Tayback as Carface, the villainous pit bull; Charles Nelson Reilly as Killer, the misnamed, nearsighted mongrel; Leon Anderson as Flo, the beautiful collie, and Melba Moore as the angel-voiced Heavenly Whippet. Music is scored by Academy-Award-winning composer Ralph Burns ("Cabrera," "All That Jazz," "Annie," "Lenny," "A Chorus Line").

Production of "All Dogs Go to Heaven" took 19 months to complete. More than 1.5 million individual drawings were used in the film. Artists drew from a collection of 1,100 different shades of paint to color each character and background.

Nolte's 'Christmas Carol' filled with spirit

Performances of the Meadow Brook Theatre production of "A Christmas Carol" continue through Sunday, Dec. 31, on the Oakland University campus in Rochester Hills. For ticket information, call the box office at 377-3300.

Back for its eighth crowd-pleasing season, "A Christmas Carol" at Meadow Brook Theatre reminds grousers and modern-day Scrooges to mend their skintight ways.

Meadow Brook's version of Dickens' classic story is a warm-hearted, entertaining production that knows how to please a crowd and send folks home aglow with Christmas spirit.

Director Charles Nolte's "Christmas Carol" may be less psychological and thoughtful than other retellings of the tale, such as the made-for-television version a few years back starring George C. Scott, but Nolte, who wrote this dramatic stage adaptation, wrings every bit of humor and theatrical razzle dazzle out of Ebenezer Scrooge's midnight rendezvous with ghosts and spirits. Nolte delivers a feast of sights and sounds with the showmanship to please a generation attuned to Lucas-style special effects.

Before the show even begins, carolers dressed in 1830s styles set



the mood in the lobby, with songs about going wassailing and God resting merry gentlemen. On stage, weather takes over. Blustery winds whine around the street corners in Dickens London, fog rolls ominously about Ebenezer's tombstone, and snow falls on stage in the finale when the curtain rises on a two-story Christmas tree that magically appears in seconds.

PETER HICKS' flexible, revolving set and the natural way crowd scenes camouflage set changes add to the sleight-of-hand magic of the entire production.

The masterful effects that set the dramatic mood are just the beginning. The real audience-gasps arrive when the ghosts come and go. For starters, Jacob Marley's ghost (Olin Allen Pruett) emerges in a hellfire glow and billowing smoke from a trap door in the stage. History has it Will Shakespeare's Globe Theatre had such a trap door, but in his day words alone had to create the hellfire and brimstone. Not anymore. Meadow Brook's production weds the old Dickens' tale to modern, flamboyant effects.

Booth Colman returns for his eighth season to play the cantankerous Ebenezer as a man who quickly sees the error of his ways and becomes a cute convert to the joy of Christmas. Paul Hopper also returns to head the Cratchit household, a family whose touching goodness stays just this side of cloying sentiment. Kathryn Nash plays a fine Mrs. Cratchit and Tiny Tim (Bryan Holmes) happily has a voice like a regular kid's rather than the piping soprano of a too, too angelic choir boy.

Most cast members play double and sometimes triple supporting roles. It adds to the magic of the play to see the same players show their acting versatility in multiple roles.

Joseph Reed as the Spirit of Christmas Present opens the second act, laughing with such extroverted delight that his jolly good humor infects the whole audience. Geoffrey Beauchamp brings a good-hearted kindness to the role of Scrooge's nephew Fred. As Fred's wife, Anita Barone projects a coy charm quite different from the raucous earliness she brings to the role of the Landress, but as the Spirit of Christmas Past her stilled ballet gestures and affected speech seem woodenly stylized.

IN FACT, the characters Dickens created often bordered on caricatures. His inclination toward caricature paired with Meadow Brook's fondness for the melodramatic lead to more than a few one-dimensional characters. But what memorable caricatures they are.

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