100 Animated Feature Films

Revised Edition

Andrew OSMOND

100 Animated Feature Films: Revised Edition

BFI Screen Guides

Andrew Osmond

THE BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

BLOOMSBURY is a trademark of Bloomsbury Publishing plc

First published in 2010 by Palgrave Macmillan.
This edition first published in Great Britain 2022 by Bloomsbury
on behalf of the
British Film Institute
21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN
www.bfi.org.uk

The BFI is the lead organisation for film in the UK and the distributor of Lottery funds for film. Our mission is to ensure that film is central to our cultural life, in particular by supporting and nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences. We serve a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK.

Cover image: *La tortue rouge* (2016), directed by Michael Dudok de Wit,
Prima Linea Productions/Why not productions/Studio Ghibli/Collection Christophel/
ArenaPAL www.arenapal.com

Cover design: Louise Dugdale

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: HB: 978-1-8390-2441-2
PB: 978-1-8390-2442-9
ePDF: 978-1-8390-2444-3
eBook: 978-1-8390-2443-6
Series: BFI Screen Guides

Project management, typesetting and layout by ketchup/Tom Cabot

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters

Contents

Acknowledgements

My thanks go to Rebecca Barden and Sophia Contento for commissioning and supporting this book, and to the wonderful staff at the BFI Reuben Library where much of the research was done. Other thanks go to Michael Barrier, Crystal Bogle, Jonathan Clements, Benjamin Ettinger, Helen McCarthy, Justin Johnson, Bill Plympton (for kindly answering my questions about *Idiots and Angels*, 2008, during a flying visit to the Animated Exeter festival in 2010), and Blue Neon and Niffiwan for help on East European animation.

Introduction

There have always been more animated feature films than most people think. Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) is often called the first, but there were several precedents in cut-out and stop-motion animation. The earliest known surviving animated feature is Germany's cut-out *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* in 1926. By a happy alphabetical accident, it is the first entry in this book. There were also several lost films from Argentina which were *probably* feature length, starting with *El Apostol* (1917) by Quirino Cristiani.

From 1937 until the 1990s, animated features around the world were dominated by Disney. Of course, other films and other *kinds* of film were made in this time. Some were critically acclaimed, or were local hits, or gained loyal fan followings. Some were truly alternative visions, such as Jirí Trnka's balletic stop-motion *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1959); Ralph Bakshi's coarsely drawn *Fritz the Cat* (1972); and Katsuhiro Otomo's future epic *Akira* (1988). But these landmarks were separated by language, generations and cultural expectations. When it came to feature animation, Disney was the world's denominator.

The Mouse

Between 1937 and 1942, Disney released five enduring classics of feature animation: *Snow White* (1937), *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia* (both 1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942). Yes, these films can be cute and mawkish, most notoriously in the characters' cartoon-saucer eyes. At their best, though, they use their cuteness as a starting point in works of cinema bravado, thematic power and spiritual depth.

Following *Bambi*, Disney had several years of commercial decline, caused by the war and Walt's over-ambition. The studio returned to prominence with 1950's *Cinderella*, but Walt himself was less involved as he moved into live-action films, TV, theme parks and even town planning. He died in 1966, while his studio was in production of what would be one of its most enduringly popular animated films, *The Jungle Book*.

The Disney animated films over the next twenty years are often only mentioned in bad-old-days contexts. Many young animators were hired by the studio in this time; many bailed or were dismissed. The drop-outs included some of the biggest future names in animation: John Lasseter, Brad Bird, Henry Selick, Tim Burton and Don Bluth. Contrary to some accounts, though, these films were still enjoyed by children. The first Disney I saw myself, aged five, was 1977's *The Rescuers*.

In 1982, Disney was subject to a boardroom coup, leading to a new Disney regime led by Paramount's Michael Eisner. He tasked Jeffrey Katzenberg, also from Paramount, with overseeing the animation department. At first indifferent to the medium, Katzenberg became fascinated by it and began exerting a creative influence of his own. The story of this time is well told in the 2009 documentary feature, *Waking Sleeping Beauty*.

The Eisner regime saw an upswing in Disney's prestige through the successes of *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992) and *The Lion King* (1994). Was this 'gold standard' on

a level with *Snow White* or *Bambi*? Not to an adult sensibility, but then Disney also released *The Nightmare before Christmas* (1993), a Gothic stop-motion film different enough to appeal to people who disliked the new Disney style. Two years later, the studio released another 'unDisney' film by an outside party. It was *Toy Story*, the first computer-animated feature.

Rises and Falls

Made by the young Pixar studio, *Toy Story* was visually kinetic, with a buddy-film dynamic, and very funny. It was also a better Disney heir than *The Prince of Egypt* (1998), a Bible epic from the rival DreamWorks studio. DreamWorks was co-founded by Katzenberg, whose Disney career had ended acrimoniously. The establishment of DreamWorks confirmed there were now several animated games in town. Feature animation was no longer just a fight for Walt's legacy.

In fact, it was as much a fight for the legacy of *The Simpsons*. The animated TV sitcom débuted in 1989, and quickly changed expectations of what animation could offer in terms of jokes for adults. Coincidentally or not, *The Simpsons'* knowing, audience-flattering tone was mirrored in features as early as Disney's *Aladdin*, then fed into the first batch of computer-animated films: *Toy Story*, DreamWorks' *Antz* (1998) and, most successfully, *Shrek* (2001).

By the 2000s, Disney's animation was declining, unable to compete with Pixar, DreamWorks and other computer-animated studios. From 2002, Michael Eisner began shutting down Disney's traditional animation units, even before the costly flop of *Treasure Planet* (2002). But as traditionally animated features faded at Hollywood, they were imported from overseas. France's very unDisney *Belleville Rendez-Vous* (2003, aka *The Triplets of Belleville*) won critical attention; so did the Disney-distributed *Spirited Away* (2001), by Japan's Hayao Miyazaki. Both were marginal at the Western box office, but they had cultural cachet in an increasingly glutted market.

Eisner left Disney in 2005, having mothballed hand-drawn features and alienated the Pixar studio. However, his replacement Robert Iger secured a *rapprochement*, then bought Pixar out in a $7.4-billion deal. John Lasseter, the director of *Toy Story*, became Chief Creative Officer of both studios. One of his first moves was to revive Disney's traditional animation, greenlighting *The Princess and the Frog* (2009). Yet Disney Animation still looked like a fading force.

In 2010, I wrote an article in *Sight & Sound* in which I claimed, 'perhaps the next few years will see the final, quiet death of Disney animation.' I predicted the studio's new CGI film, *Tangled* would be eclipsed by Pixar, as *The Princess and the Frog* had been in 2009. I also cited what Don Hahn, who'd produced Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*, had told me in the early 2000s: that if Disney stuck to fairy tales, 'the animated form will wither and die'.

'For all (*Tangled*'s) pleasures', I wrote in *Sight & Sound*, 'I think many of the young adult demographic who cheered (Pixar's) *Toy Story 3* wouldn't be caught dead going to this pretty princess Disney; any more than Spielberg fans in the 1980s would have gone to *The Fox and the Hound* (1981).'

Instead, *Tangled* – which was Disney's first 'princess' musical in CGI – was a global hit, surpassing the box-office of any of the studio's cartoons since *Lion King*. Three years later, *Lion King*'s record was toppled by Disney's phenomonally popular *Frozen*. Perhaps more importantly, *Frozen* also outgrossed Pixar's *Toy Story 3*.

Disney Animation had survived another downturn, and some of its 2010s films would outperform Pixar's critically and commercially.

Today, Pixar is still identified as the CG pioneer, while Disney highlights its far older heritage in drawn animation. From 2007, Disney Animation's production logo incorporated a whistling Mickey Mouse, taken from the studio's 1928 landmark, *Steamboat Willie*. But by then, most Disney Animation features were in CGI, and in the 2010s, 'most' became 'all'.

As of writing, it's been a decade since Disney's last 'traditional' cartoon feature, a 2011 revival of *Winnie the Pooh*. The unit which had made it and *Princess and the Frog* shut in 2013. Some traditional animation was used in 2018's *Mary Poppins Returns*, but its animators were obliged to use the Pasadena studio of Ken Duncan, a former Disney artist. Drawn animation was once Disney's whole identity. Now it wasn't even a part of the studio.

Inevitably, Pixar and Disney Animation felt less different; after all, their CG films *looked* similar. Even their stories started to cross, as discussed in the entry on Pixar's *Coco*. The same entry also references the fall of John Lasseter, following reports of his personal conduct. From 2018, his former role was split between Pete Docter, director of Pixar hits including *Inside Out* (2015), and Jennifer Lee, one of the directors of *Frozen*.

There were rises and falls elsewhere. In 2009, DreamWorks confidently announced it was planning to release five animated features ever two years. By January 2015, it was shutting one of its two main bases (PDI/DreamWorks near San Francisco) and laying off 500 people. As of writing, the studio's recent box-office has been far from the highs of the *Shrek* franchise. Jeffrey Katzenberg left DreamWorks Animation in 2016, when the company was acquired by NBCUniversal.

At first, it was announced he would be replaced by Chris Meledandri, the CEO of *another* of Hollywood's main CG animation studios, Illumination. Originally Illumination Entertainment, it debuted with the hit *Despicable Me* in 2010, followed by films that often outperformed their rivals. In 2017, *Despicable Me 3* beat Pixar's *Coco* and *Cars 3*, to say nothing of Warners' *The Lego Batman Movie*, Blue Sky's *Ferdinand* and DreamWorks' *Captain Underpants*.

In fact, Meledandri declined to helm DreamWorks as well as Illumination, which would have given him power comparable to Lasseter. As of writing, the President of DreamWorks Animation is Bonnie Arnold, who'd been a producer on Pixar's first *Toy Story*; she also oversaw DreamWorks' *How To Train Your Dragon* trilogy.

Disney, Pixar, DreamWorks and Illumination account for the bulk of the most lucrative animated films this century. The other big CG player, Blue Sky, burst on the scene in 2002 with its prehistoric adventure *Ice Age*. It would release a dozen more features; its biggest box-office hit was the third *Ice Age* in 2009. It was closed in 2021 by Disney, which had acquired it two years earlier.

Other CG companies kept afloat with less stellar box-office (mostly under $500 million worldwide), but with generally lower budgets. Sony Pictures Imageworks animated such CGI films as *Arthur Christmas* (2011, co-produced with Aardman); *Hotel Transylvania* (2012) and its sequels; and the acclaimed *Spider-Man: Into the Spider Verse* (2018), which won the Best Animated Feature Oscar. (The same unit had provided effects for live-action Spider-Man films, going back to Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* in 2002.) *Spider Verse* used playful 'cartoony' effects as emotional punctuation; they were just as evident in the studio's 2021 animated comedy, *The Mitchells vs. the Machines*.

Both *Spider Verse* and *Mitchells* were produced by Phil Lord and Chris Miller (Lord also co-wrote *Spider Verse*). They had previously been the writer-directors of 2014's well-received *The Lego Movie*. That film and its sequels were animated by Australia's Animal Logic studio for Warner Brothers.

Other formats, other countries

In 1977, Bruno Edera's book *Full-Length Animated Feature Films* surveyed the field as it seemed then. In Edera's view, the stop-motion puppet film, exemplified by France's *Le Roman de Reynard* (1937) and the Czech *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1959), had probably had its day. 'None of the new (animated) film-makers will make much use of puppets', Edera wrote, 'and it remains to be seen what will happen to this particular branch of the medium.' But stop-motion lasted.

In 2005, Britain's *Wallace & Gromit in The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* won the Best Animated Feature Oscar, beating another British-animated stop-motion film, *The Corpse Bride*. The latter was co-directed by Tim Burton, whose Disney film *Frankenweenie* (2012) was also made in Britain. Both Burtons were animated at London's 3 Mills Studios, which later hosted Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) and *Isle of Dogs* (2018). The latter came out the same year as Aardman's plasticine *Early Man*, animated in Bristol.

By then, stop-motion had also returned to America. The Laika studio in Portland, Oregon, launched a series of critically favoured films with the scary *Coraline* (2009). Meanwhile, the live-action writer and director Charlie Kaufman had his voice-play *Anomalisa* turned into stop-motion at Burbank. Released in 2015, Kaufman's film wasn't for kids; it dealt with middle-aged angst and had a (moderately) explicit sex scene.

Anomalisa was low-budget (reportedly $8 million) but it flopped in cinemas, earning just $5.7 million. It highlighted the vast contrasts in 21st-century animation, between the Hollywood franchises and the experimenters trying to open up the medium. Other stop-motion features cost and earned more, but rarely broke $100 million at the box-office. Laika was hit by variable returns; its 2019 comedy *Missing Link* was a dangerously costly flop. In March 2021, the studio announced it was expanding into live-action.

Many animated films from outside America were in a comparably precarious position in the world market. At least they were easier for Anglophone viewers to *access* than they had been in past decades. For example, in 2021 a British viewer could watch any of India's *Bombay Rose* (2019), Hungary's *Ruben Brandt, Collector* (2018) and Saudi Arabia's *Masameer: The Movie* (2020) on Netflix.

In America the distributor GKIDS was founded in 2008 and built its name promoting international films. These included Brazil's *Boy and the World* (2013), the Swiss/French stop-motion *My Life as a Courgette* (2016), and the work of Ireland's Cartoon Saloon, starting with 2009's *The Secret of Kells*. These were all nominated for the Best Animated Oscar, though none of them won. Some earned almost nothing in cinemas – the superb *Boy and the World* reportedly earned under $300,000 worldwide – but they may have paid off on other platforms.

The nominations did give these films a few moments of global presence, beside the Hollywood CG blockbusters. An Oscar voting rule change in 2017, meaning that nominees could be voted on by all Academy members, not just by a specialist few, caused animation fans to worry that non-Hollywood cartoons would be excluded. Two years earlier, the *Cartoon Brew* website had quoted an anonymous member of the Academy. He expressed outrage that *The Lego Movie* wasn't nominated for the Best Animated Feature, while two 'smaller' films were.

'Those two freakin' Chinese f--- things that nobody ever saw… Most people didn't even know what they were!' the Academy member declared. He was referring to Japan's *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya* (2013) and Ireland's *Song of the Sea* (2014). Nonetheless, international films have continued to be nominated by Academy voters since the rule change.

As of writing, the highest-grossing non-American animated feature is China's *Ne Zha* (2019). This CG action-fantasy made over $700 million in 2019, mostly in China alone. (This book has an entry on *Ne Zha*'s hand-drawn predecessor, *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King*, 1979.) Time will tell if this more than a fluke. As of writing, the only country producing a *volume* of animated features to rival America is Japan.

While the future of Studio Ghibli, which had made *Spirited Away*, looks uncertain as of writing, other Japanese creators were stepping up. In 2016, Makoto Shinkai's bodyswap fantasy *Your Name* threatened the record of *Spirited Away*, which was then Japan's most successful film. The record was finally broken in 2020 by *Demon Slayer: Infinity Train*, a TV cartoon spinoff.

These commercial triumphs were set against depressingly unchanging stories of abysmal pay for many Japanese animators. A *New York Times* headline in February 2021 was typical: 'Anime is booming. So why are animators living in poverty?' The studio Kyoto Animation, whose work included the feature *A Silent Voice* (2016), was a shining exception. Its employment ethos was much-praised; for instance, its artists were salaried rather than being paid by the drawing, as was the norm in anime.

In April 2019, Kyoto Animation was attacked by a lone arsonist. Thirty-six people died in the fire. Yet since then, the studio has rallied and is making animation again.

Defining issues and *Avatar*'s children

As of writing, the top-grossing animated film worldwide is Disney's 2019 remake of *The Lion King*. It was made in 'photo-real' CG animation, if talking and singing animals can be photo-real. The lead animation/VFX house was the British-headquartered Motion Picture Company (MPC). However, the remake was officially assigned to Disney's 'live-action' division, and it wasn't entered for the Best Animated Feature Oscar. This was part of a bid by Disney to redefine animation.

Sean Bailey, president of Disney's Motion Picture Production, claimed the new *Lion King* was 'a new form of film-making. Historical definitions don't work.' The remake's director Jon Favreau told the *Slashfilm* website that it was misleading to call the film animated, 'as far as what the expectations might be'.

For Favreau, these expectations were the key. He suggested that if *Lion King wasn't* classed as animation, it would cause audiences 'to be present and mindful and pay attention because you're trying to figure out what you're looking at.' Favreau seemed to want to cast his audience back to the innocence of the generation who saw the first *Jurassic Park* (1993), which replaced stop-motion monsters with CGI ones. Or perhaps Favreau was thinking of the viewers who saw the early stop-motion creatures in *The Lost World* (1925) and *King Kong* (1933).

But those films are now accepted as part of animation history; and unlike them, the *Lion King* remake has only *one* live-action shot in its entire running time. (It's the first shot, of a sunrise in Africa.) At *Cartoon Brew*, editor Amid Amidi pointed out that Disney had recently remade several of its cartoons in live-action (for

example, 2017's *Beauty and Beast*), and presumably didn't want to complicate its marketing categories. As such, Disney's sophistry may be confined to *Lion King* and its sequels, unless the studio tries for a photo-real *Bambi* or *Zootropolis*.

Back in 2009, James Cameron had released *Avatar*. Like Favreau, he refused to class it as animation. As of writing, there have been many heavily virtual blockbusters since then, but few *as* virtual as *Avatar*. Aside from the new *Lion King*, the main two were *Gravity* (2013) and Disney's 2016 remake of *The Jungle Book*, the latter by Favreau. Like *Avatar*, both films put real actors into virtual spaces. You can see them as digital descendants of Walt Disney's 1923 short *Alice's Wonderland*, which placed a girl in a drawn landscape.

Other films used *Avatar*'s second big trick, transforming actors through CG animation techniques. (Of course, *Avatar* wasn't the first to do it; a major precedent was set by *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* in 2002, which foregrounded the slithering character of Gollum, played by Andy Serkis.) By 2019, *Alita: Battle Angel* was turning Rosa Salazar into a huge-eyed android, while *Captain Marvel* de-aged Samuel L. Jackson by 25 years.

Many viewers were less convinced by the rejuvenated stars in another 2019 film, Martin Scorsese's *The Irishman*, who had to sustain far more screen time. Uncanny Valley problems still endure – one of *Alita*'s fascinations is how it *embraces* that uncanny, with a naïve, huge-eyed, mannequin-gaited heroine, who may be based on a manga character but recalls nothing so much as Disney's *Pinocchio*.

The Future

In the 2010 edition of this book, I wrote optimistically, 'The animated feature has rarely been as celebrated, or enjoyed such a high profile, as it does today. There's a high awareness among cinemagoers that it's not a genre but a diverse medium; that it doesn't always come from Disney, Pixar or America; and that it's not necessarily aimed at children or family audiences.'

However, I also acknowledged that animation may have been stunted by the world's most powerful studios, whether Disney or Ghibli. The animated feature has had a long succession of counterculture icons. *Yellow Submarine*, Richard Williams, Ralph Bakshi, Jan Svankmajer, Ghibli, Cartoon Saloon and even *The Lego Movie* have all been framed as alternatives to the stultifying cartoon establishment of the day. In 2020, for example, the *New Yorker* ran a long article, 'Cartoon Saloon and the New Golden Age of Animation'. But what keeps the field alive is a continuing series of alternatives, not a lone vision.

In the first edition, I cited the 'new pluralism' of such 2000s films as the British/French *The Illusionist*, France's *Persepolis*, Japan's *Spirited Away*, Israel's *Waltz with Bashir* and Ireland's *The Secret of Kells*. Eleven years on, the situation seems unchanged, neither better nor worse. A few studios still dominate the field commercially, yet the variety remains. For the list above, one could substitute France's *The Red Turtle*, Japan's *Your Name*, Brazil's *Boy and the World*, Poland's *Loving Vincent* and Ireland's *Wolfwalkers*. All were made in the 2010s.

As of writing, there's a surge of international animated films depicting real wars and oppressive regimes, following *Persepolis* (2007) and *Waltz With Bashir* (2008). There are more details in the entry on Cartoon Saloon's *The Breadwinner* (2017). A drama set in Afghanistan, this film was aimed at a wide audience, though it earned very little in cinemas. The chances of a Hollywood CG animation tackling a similar subject seems slim.

Another development does not relate to cartoon features directly, but rather to series for television and streaming. Since *The Simpsons*, there's been a steady evolution in Anglophone 'adult' animation series. *The Simpsons*' descendants are still comedies, but now they can be tragicomedies or comedy-dramas, sometimes with longform storylines. *BoJack Horseman* (2014-20) felt closer to Charlie Kaufman's *Anomalisa* than to Springfield. Perhaps this TV adult animation boom can never be replicated in cinemas, but it's a mirror to an alternate world.

Animation fans have asked for decades if an 'adult' animated feature could be commercially mainstream – a film not just enjoyed by adults, but *aimed* primarily at them, perhaps excluding children altogether. Such films have always been made, from *Fritz the Cat* to *Anomalisa,* but nearly always on the margins. Today, of course, there's a bigger concern: the marginalising of adult *live-action* films in a cinema of fantasy blockbusters, using techniques that originated in animation.

Japanese animation is often cited as containing adult themes. However, most anime films are commercially marginal even in Japan. True, there are domestic 'blockbusters', such as *Princess Mononoke* (1997) and *Your Name*, and they do play differently from Hollywood's CG mainstream. They're less reliant on jokes, and have fewer moral binaries. Hollywood animation seems to be learning from them – see the entry on *Moana*.

However, even *Princess Mononoke* and *Your Name* use young protagonists and fledgling romances, as do most anime. It's rare to find an anime protagonist over twenty, let alone twenty-five. *Your Name* had wistful interludes, and a story that resonated with Japanese trauma, but it's still an anime equivalent of *Back to the Future* (1985). It's far from the middle-aged concerns of *Anomalisa*, *The Illusionist* (2010), *The Congress* (2013) or *Rocks in My Pockets* (2014). The chances of *that* kind of animation reaching the mainstream seem remote; but it's likely such films will continue to be made, and still find followings.

In this new edition of *100 Animated Feature Films*, there are slightly fewer American titles and more international films. Many of the latter are from Japan, but there are entries from China, Hong Kong, Czechoslovakia, Brazil, Britain, Ireland, France, Latvia, Russia, Italy, Israel, Hungary and Germany.

Thirty-five entries are new, while several of the others have been updated or amended. Thirty-five entries from the first edition had to be retired. The 2010 book included entries on *Avatar* and 1933's *King Kong* to make a point about how the definitions of 'animated' film could be extended. (*King Kong* may seldom be called an animated feature, but it was the first feature with an animated *star*.) This point felt like an indulgent stretch this time around, though I was tempted to include Scorsese's *The Irishman*.

Other creators and studios have matured. The 2010 edition included *The Secret of Kells*, Cartoon Saloon's debut feature. This new book has entries on the burgeoning studio's three later films to date. In 2010, I included *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (2004), which I felt was much underrated, rather than the first film. However, the original's cultural presence has grown in the interim, as witnessed by the controversial Hollywood remake in 2017. For that reason, a switch felt mandatory this time.

I've added in some other older films that I reluctantly omitted from the first edition but still seemed to deserve a place in 2021. These include Satoshi Kon's *Perfect Blue* (1997), Disney's *The Little Mermaid* (1988), Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaa* (1984) and Lev Atamanov's *The Snow Queen* (1957).

In the first edition, I wrote: 'The selection is shaped by my own tastes, as the entries make clear, but I hope it is not wholly capricious.' That still holds true now.

The Adventures of Prince Achmed

Germany, 1926 – 66 minutes
Lotte Reiniger
[Cut-out silhouettes]

DIRECTOR/ANIMATION
Lotte Reiniger
SCORE Wolfgang Zeller

The making of the world's oldest surviving animated feature was seen at first hand by a boy called Louis Hagen. (As an adult, he would flee to England as a Jewish refugee, become a decorated glider pilot and write a bestselling war memoir, *Arnhem Lift*). Hagen could hardly *not* have seen the production of *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*. It was made at his German family villa, by his beautiful art teacher, Lotte Reiniger. Hagen's father, who shared his name, was a bohemian banker who chose to support Reiniger, an artist trained in theatre and film. Reiniger had studied under Max Reinhardt and Paul Wegener, but found herself drawn to silhouettes, shadow plays and animation.

The senior Hagen proposed that Reiniger should animate a feature, financed by himself (money had little worth during German hyperinflation) and made in an attic studio over the garage of his Potsdam villa. Here Reiniger animated her characters, which appear on screen as black cut-out silhouettes, while her husband Carl Koch operated the camera. (Koch later worked with Renoir on *La Grande Illusion*, 1937, and *La Règle du jeu*, 1939.) Different layers of animation were shot on vertically stacked glass sheets, an ancestor of the multiplane camera.

Berthold Bartosch, who would later make a celebrated French political animation, *L'Idée* (*The Idea*, 1932), handled the special effects involving wax, sand and soap. His partner on *Achmed* was Walter Ruttmann, the future director of *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927). Walter Turck arranged the brightly tinted, print-like backgrounds, in a film taking its hero from Arabian minarets to Chinese mountains.

The junior Hagen remembered that when his villa's lunch-bell rang,

> We heard all kinds of moans and groans, as if they had been in a torture chamber … . The studio wasn't very high and all the animation work had to be done at floor level, so they worked on their knees. You can imagine, if you spend hours crawling, it's bound to be painful when you get up.

In *Achmed*'s story, a composite of Arabian Nights tales, the Prince contends with sorcerers, spirits and monsters, and eventually teams up with Aladdin (who in this version loves Achmed's sister). Ruttmann complained about the fantastical material – 'What has this got to do with 1923?' he asked – but the film was timely. *Achmed*'s production overlapped with Hollywood's *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), starring Douglas Fairbanks, and anticipated such cartoon-feature landmarks as *The Thief and the Cobbler** and Disney's *Aladdin**.

Achmed, like all Reiniger's silhouette animation, is tactile *à la* stop-motion. There's a physicality to the opaque figures' filigreed outlines, their frilly dresses, unkempt beards and jointed limbs, which the viewer can *imagine* manipulating. There's also a palpable electricity between the characters. An evil wizard grasps the hand of a princess; the taboo in this touching feels greater played out by silhouettes. Later the heroic Achmed woos a

cowering girl, their motions of longing and repulsion framed in a grove with seashell curves.

The eroticism is plain, as it is when Achmed finds a bawdy bevy of man-hunting maidens (snaffling a last kiss from them as he flees) or steals the wings from a faunlike fairy bathing nude (the same girl he woos later). *Achmed* never subverts the fairytale convention of princesses as prizes for heroes, but nor does the film hide its sexual tensions. The BFI DVD of *Achmed* also includes a striking extract from Reiniger's 1935 short, *Galathea*, in which a woman statue ferociously rejects her Pygmalion.

Within Reiniger's innately magical animation, a capering simian sorceress commands the elements like Mickey Mouse in *Fantasia**. The rival wizard creates a flying horse from primal liquid shapes. The horse bears Achmed helpless into the starry heavens in a thrilling but scary scene, while the heroine's bird nature foreshadows the oeuvre of Hayao Miyazaki. The villain folds origami-style into a bat; a tree unfolds into a man-eating monster; and a mountain vomits up enough creepy crawlies to populate Skull Island.

Another BFI DVD, *Lotte Reiniger – The Fairy Tale Films*, focuses on the children's shorts which Reiniger made in England. Two of them, *Aladdin and the Magic Lamp* and *The Magic Horse* (both 1954), combine *Achmed* footage with new animation. Far stranger is Reiniger's 1928 *The Death Feigning Chinaman*, which is also included on the fairytale DVD. Originally planned as an episode of *Achmed* itself, the short features a comedy corpse, gallows humour and a gay theme. Reiniger explained that she wanted two men to kiss, 'so children – some of whom would be homosexual and some who would not – could see it as a natural occurrence and not be ashamed'.

Akira

Japan, 1988 – 124 minutes
Katsuhiro Otomo
[Drawings (with brief CGI)]

DIRECTOR Katsuhiro Otomo
PRODUCER Ryohei Suzuki, Shunzo Kato
STORY Katsuhiro Otomo, Izo Hashimoto
SCORE Shoji Yamashiro
DESIGN Kazuo Ebisawa, Yuji Ikehata, Koji Ohno
ANIMATION Takashi Nakamura, Yoshio Takeuchi, Hiroaki Sato

In July 1988 – both the real date when *Akira* opened in Japan and the fictional dateline at the start of the film – Tokyo was burned away by a great sphere of light. But in Katsuhiro Otomo's epic animation, creation and destruction are part of one organic process. Our first sight of *Akira*'s city, Neo-Tokyo, is of a bleeding red shape, suggesting a heart, lungs or guts. Teen gangs, the city's *true* life-blood, rule the streets on huge phallic motorbikes, blurring into neon speedlines down tarmac veins between skyscrapers. Armed police battle rioters, terrorist gangs adding to the mayhem. And in a giant-sized nursery, housing a top-secret state project, three withered children await the return of their divine brother, Akira … .

Otomo's film was a cult hit in the West because of its stunning spectacle and shocking images. For all its political subtexts, *Akira* is a visceral trip which became a punkish piece of British pop culture and a midnight movie in America. Harry Knowles, the founder of the *Ain't It Cool News* website, remembered, 'College theatres got hold of that film and just played it over and over and over.' Its cartoon violence looked transgressive to everyone who hadn't seen Ralph Bakshi's early films (see p. 54) or the more recent *Heavy Metal* (1981). *Akira*'s

most nakedly exploitative moment, reminiscent of *Robocop* the previous year, comes during the manic opening scenes where an already horribly maimed man is shredded by bullets. From there on, though, bloodletting is secondary to Otomo's grander vistas of destruction.

Considered as a Japanese animation, *Akira* is a fluke. Director Otomo was primarily a creator of comic strips (his *Akira* manga, unfinished when he made the film, would run to 2,000 pages). When *Akira* entered production, Japan was in its booming bubble years. The film had an unprecedented budget of around $10 million (huge for anime), a seventy-strong staff, technology allowing for character lip-synch, and the resources to make 'full' animation on twelve or twenty-four frames a second. Even Studio Ghibli films use semi-limited character animation, which is why they're less smooth than their Hollywood counterparts. *Akira*'s characters also move far more individually than Ghibli's, though their explosive fury rarely modulates into anything like pathos.

Otomo's vision was inspired by 1970s Tokyo. 'There were so many interesting people … . Student demonstrations, bikers, political movements, gangsters, homeless youth … . In *Akira*, I projected these elements into the future, as science-fiction.' Halfway through the action, a colonel character brings about a military *coup*, echoing an actual (failed) insurrection in 1936. A universe is born in an Olympic stadium, as the 1964 Olympics had heralded the rise of post-war Japan. The images of tanks on 'Tokyo's' streets – as in films such as *The Flying Ghost Ship* (1969) and the later *Patlabor 2* (1993) – reflect the fears of another militarisation in the 'pacifist' country. 'We're in East Ginza', a soldier reports, placing the action in Tokyo's best-known shopping district.

The film compresses Otomo's manga into two dazzling but confused hours. Subplots and support characters are truncated or forgotten: plot points are vague or contradictory. The abridged story is in line with earlier SF anime films, such as *Space Battleship Yamato* (1977) or the *Mobile Suit Gundam* trilogy (1981–2), though these were edited down from TV cartoon serials rather than comic strips. And yet *Akira*'s messy plot and information overload are its fascination. More than any SF film since *Blade Runner* (1982), Otomo's film hurls viewers into a world bleeding from the screen in multiple hinted backstories.

The round-faced boy leads, the cocksure Kaneda and the monster-victim Tetsuo, are believable teenagers, oscillating between sentimental comradeship and murderous hate. The other characters are under-explained and under-developed, but they're solid on-screen presences, especially the commanding, bull-like colonel who knows Akira's secret. The spectacle is driven by the explosive breathing and clacking percussion of the musicians Geinoh Yamashirogumi, as Tetsuo mutates into a killer teen demi-god, fighting through tanks and helicopters, then battling a supergirl on a huge metal globe while giant pipes and energy beams take out the infrastructure. 'It would be great if a film were just one big scene, with no divisions', Otomo said.

But Otomo also stresses Tetsuo's enraged vulnerability. We're shown the boy's nightmare, a ghastly, beautiful scene where he crumbles into rubble in a playground while Kaneda smiles obliviously. Even when Tetsuo wakes, he's attacked by the psychic kids disguised as childish toys. In another scene, he can't save his girlfriend from a sexual assault, which is brutal and believable without a trace of exploitation. Afterwards, the boy is shown flailing and staggering screaming on the street, clutching his head, a terrible portrait of teen impotence. The blipvert images that punctuate his fit – flashforwards to the end of the film – include a subliminal glimpse of the girl's death, which he's doomed to cause.

Finally, Tetsuo's puberty sends him back to babyhood as he swells into a liquefying giant, mewling, puking and excreting its way into oblivion. The coda is a New Age trip through a vortex of smashed skyscrapers, book-ending the film with twin Armageddons. Even the destruction is beautiful: the buildings buffeted by roiling winds, the sea pouring through concrete wreckage, the sky reflected in a thousand dead-eyed windows.

Akira takes place in the run-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. In 2013, the film's fans were impressed when Tokyo was indeed chosen to host the 2020 Olympic Games. But in *Akira*, the games are derailed by catastrophic events, something else that Otomo got unnervingly right.

Aladdin

US, 1992 – 87 minutes
John Musker, Ron Clements
[Drawings with CGI]

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER John Musker, Ron Clements
STORY John Musker, Ron Clements, Ted Elliott, Terry Rossio
SCORE Alan Menken
DESIGN R. S. Vander Wende
ANIMATION Glen Keane, Eric Goldberg, Mark Henn, Andreas Deja

Disney's hit *Aladdin*, made on the upswing of the studio's fortunes in the 1990s, skewed Hollywood cartoon features in new if not necessarily artistic directions. Its star turn, though, was a one-off. *Aladdin*'s Genie, an S-curved blue stream of cacophonous consciousness, was realised by animator Eric Goldberg and perpetually psyched comedian Robin Williams. 'The frame speed of animation guarantees that where Williams goes, an instantly compatible image follows', wrote *Sight and Sound*'s Farrah Anwar. 'If he chooses to shoot from a glitzy chat-show host to a heavyweight political figure via a mischievously shaded Jack Nicholson, the film stays with him and has the temerity to ask for more.'

The character's introduction would have made Walt proud. 'The ever-impressive …' (Genie is Schwarzenegger from *Pumping Iron*, 1977) '… the long-contained …' (Genie strains against the cube that's trapped him) … 'often imitated …' (Genie ventriloquises a dummy) '… but never duplicated-duplicated-duplicated' (Genie throws up a swirl of doubles) … 'Genie of the LA-AMP!' (The duplicate Genies applaud, while the original turns into TV host Ed Sullivan.) It might not have moved fans of the wildest Hollywood animators – Tex Avery, for example, or Bob Clampett – but its self-promotion was flawless. In a flash, Disney cartoons had gone from fairytale to Friday night, swimming in a soup of catchphrases and celebrity lookalikes.

As with *Shrek**, one of *Aladdin*'s progeny, the film was only doing what cartoons had done decades before. Bugs Bunny, for example, had faced off a caricatured Edward G. Robinson and Peter Lorre back in 1946 (a Friz Freleng short called *Racketeer Rabbit*). Classic Disney features had one-liners for grown-ups; in *Pinocchio**, Jiminy Cricket demands, 'What does an actor want with a conscience anyway?' *Aladdin*, though, made these gags a talking and selling point of a family blockbuster, much as *The Simpsons* (1989–) had done for a family sitcom.

The directors claim the humour was guileless, without commercial agendas. However, it's hard to believe Jeffery Katzenberg, Disney's Chairman, didn't know what he was doing when he aggressively overhauled *Aladdin* in development. Originally, Aladdin would have been young, not much older than *The Jungle Book**'s Mowgli, and his main concern would have been to please his mother, with a tent-pole song called 'Proud of Your Boy'. This young Aladdin is visible in the film; freeze the moment in the 'Friend Like Me' song when the hero is pressed down by Genie's finger.

Legend has it that Katzenberg's reaction to the young Aladdin was a curt, 'Eighty-six the mother. Mom's a zero.' The mother was utterly erased from the film. From then on *Aladdin*'s themes shifted from parent–child to buddy-bonding, even keeping in a homoerotic Williams quip: 'Oh Al, I'm getting kind of fond of you, kid; not that I want to pick out curtains or anything.' We're told that Aladdin has layers and esteem issues, which is something that cartoons convey best when the characters are middle-aged and ugly (the Beast, Buzz Lightyear, Mr Incredible, Homer Simpson), though not always even then (Shrek). But Peter Schneider, Disney's

head of feature animation, conceded that *Aladdin* was courting teens, with a buffed-up hero they might want to sleep with. Note the way that Aladdin suddenly gains a mature cheekbone when he first kisses his love interest, the voluptuous Princess Jasmine.

Many reviewers thought Aladdin and Jasmine fared about as well against the Genie as Snow White did against the dwarfs. In some scenes, the pair seems almost drawn for mockery – look at their shiny-sappy expressions in the 'Whole New World' song, though in fairness that's followed by some of their *best* animation, when Jasmine challenges Aladdin while they rest on China's Forbidden City. Sensibly, their romance is told as a story of escape, discovery and adventure, the film pitching between exuberant and crass. There are theme park rides (a zooming magic-carpet dash was inspired by Disneyland's 'Star Tours' flight simulator), shouty scenes (a parrot sidekick is deafeningly voiced by comedian Gilbert Gottfried), and TV toon pacing (the frantically busy last act).

When I saw *Aladdin* at a London retrospective screening in 2010, the print had the controversial version of the opening song, 'Arabian Nights', including the notorious lyric, 'They cut off your ear if they don't like your face.' (The first draft had been, 'They'll hack off your lips if they don't like your smile.') In 1992, *Aladdin*'s panto-burlesque Arabia, chock-full of harem dancers, pointy Viziers and ape-like palace guards, was denounced by Arab groups, and the 'ear' line removed from British prints. Given the stink, it's poignant to watch Genie animator Eric Goldberg on the *Aladdin* DVD. He explains that he took Williams's Yiddish exclamations (the Genie's first word is 'Oy!') to mean that what the film is *really* all about is the friendship between an Arab and a Jew.

Alice

Czechoslovakia/UK/Switzerland/West Germany, 1988 – 84 minutes*

Jan Svankmajer

[Live-action and stop-motion]

DIRECTOR/STORY/DESIGN
Jan Svankmajer
PRODUCER Peter Christian-Fueter
ANIMATION Bedrich Glaser

The avant-garde Czech artist Jan Svankmajer has been in many animation books before this one, a fact he may view with annoyance or amusement. For Svankmajer insists he's not an animator at all. 'Animators tend to construct a closed world for themselves', he says, 'like pigeon fanciers or rabbit breeders. I'm not interested in animation techniques or in creating a complete illusion, but in bringing life to everyday objects. Surrealism exists in reality, not beside it.'

Svankmajer was influenced by Georges Méliès, and like Méliès he spent decades channelling his ideas through short films, dating back to 1964. In Svankmajer's usually stop-motion masterpieces, clay heads eat each other; shoes and socks gain eyes and teeth; and stones and dolls perform intricate ritual dances.

* Shown on British television in six segments.

Released under the suspicious gaze of the Communist authorities (which penalised Svankmajer more than once for his works' suspect content), his films do less to bring the inanimate alive than to breach the barriers between living and unliving. Svankmajer respects dreams, pre-rational childhood and the magical properties of objects and structures, down to the living textures of raw stone, which people imbue with consciousness over years and centuries.

By the 1980s, Svankmajer had a world festival following, and *Alice*, his first feature, found backers outside the Iron Curtain. Britain's Channel 4 contributed nearly half the budget. As Clare Kitson recounts in her book, *British Animation: The Channel 4 Factor*, *Alice* was an underhand production, passed off not as a film but as an 'audiovisual display'. At the first full screening, the foreign backers were met by angry Czech officials insisting, too late, that a feature film was *forbidden*.

Alice (called *Something of Alice* in Czech) interprets *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a violent, solipsistic nursery game. Much of its action takes place in stone passages (it was shot at a former Prague bakery) or in doll's houses that shrink outside and in. Apart from a glimpse of Alice's sister, her face unseen, the sole human is Alice herself, played by a blond, blank-faced little girl. Even she becomes a stop-motion doll for long sequences, while her Wonderland adventures continue without a break. (Svankmajer directed them first, while he was looking for his human actress.) The doll's face is immobile, yet seems more expressive than the real girl's. Mercifully it's the doll-Alice, not the real one, who's attacked by skull-headed chimeras in a stomach-churning scene whose imagery recalls Starewitch's *The Mascot* (see p. 148).

Svankmajer's creations (designed by him and animated by Bedrich Glaser) blur the line between affectless characters and uncanny effects. You may feel more fleeting empathy with a bit of ambulatory meat (a Svankmajer motif) or with a heap of leaves rushing into a desk drawer, than you do with the madly chittering White Rabbit, puckish and malign. (Alice chases him into the story after he escapes a taxidermist's vitrine.) Carroll's Caterpillar becomes a sock-puppet, building itself with dentures and eyeballs. The Mad Hatter is a Czech marionette, tea dribbling from its wooden torso, as sawdust does from the White Rabbit's stitching. (Tragically, Svankmajer doesn't do the Cheshire Cat.) All these creatures are Alice herself – she says their lines, the camera focusing on her lips, or rather another girl's lips, as 'Alice' herself lost a tooth during the shoot. But the child's transformations mean she herself is another bit of Wonderland, just one more figment of dream.

The *New Yorker*'s Terrence Rafferty deemed *Alice*

> a film for children of a certain kind, for the quiet solitary ones who spend hours in conversation with their dolls … whose play will, over the years, perhaps turn into a lonely, obsessive craftsmanship, of the sort animators have.

Amusingly, Svankmajer claimed that Swiss parents dragged their children out of the cinemas, threatening to sue the distributors for such a disturbed and disturbing film. In Britain, Channel 4 serialised *Alice* at lunchtimes over a holiday week. As Kitson says, it was arguably a better way to see *Alice* than watching its one-note strangeness straight through.

Svankmajer replaces the charm of Carroll's prose with savage Punch and Judy violence (a slapstick siege of a doll's house goes on forever). The music-free soundtrack consists of harsh creaks and bumps, while dialogue is atomised into Alice's flat, piecemeal line-readings ("Your hair needs cutting', said the Mad Hatter'), around compulsively repetitive action. At times, it's reminiscent of early computer text adventures, with their atonal pseudo-narratives. The end departs from Carroll, with a mischievously political moment where Alice won't read a scripted confession, but she's last seen becoming a tyrannical Queen of Hearts. Svankmajer firmly believes that kids are cruel. In one of his later features, *Little Otik* (2000), a carved tree-trunk comes to life and devours a hapless social worker, the monster's baby coos and chuckles punctuated by the splat of human organs against a door.

Allegro non troppo

Italy, 1977 – 85 minutes
Bruno Bozzetto
[Live-action and drawings (with brief stop-motion)]

DIRECTOR Bruno Bozzetto
STORY Bruno Bozzetto, Guido Manuli, Maurizio Nichetti
ANIMATION Bruno Bozzetto, Giuseppe Lagana, Giancarlo Cereda, Guido Manuli, Paolo Albicocco

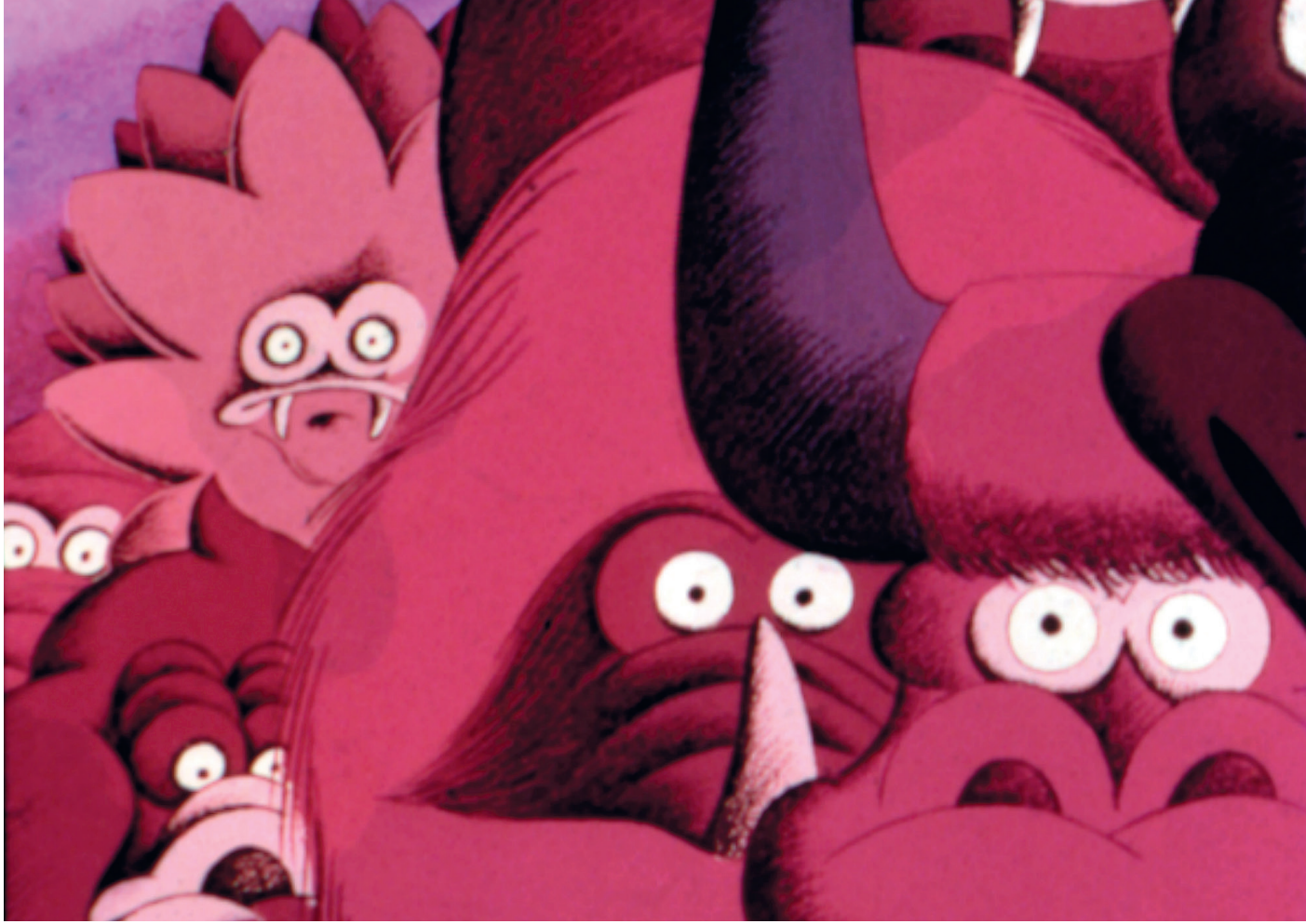
In music, 'allegro non troppo' means 'fast, but not too much'. It's a modest title for a reckless-seeming homage, a response to the most hubristic cartoon ever made. Like Disney's *Fantasia**, this Italian film sets classical music to animation, so why not call it *Fortissimo*, or *Vivacissimo*? Perhaps director Bruno Bozzetto was banking on the audience's love of underdogs. *Fantasia* began with the black-jacketed Philadelphia Orchestra sitting down to play, so *Allegro non troppo* starts with a cleaning lady wiping down the stage. Such is the place of the non-Disney animator; but it also reminds us of Disney's Snow White and Cinderella, before their fairytale rags became riches.

Bozzetto's film is less a spoof than a humorous commentary, extending the adult content in *Fantasia* that Disney cloaked in fantasy, and injecting a European pessimism which Walt wouldn't have tolerated. What *Allegro non troppo* is *not* is anti-Disney, in the manner of Tex Avery or *Shrek**. Bozzetto saw *Fantasia* eleven times: 'Walt Disney left an indelible mark on my childhood.' Before *Allegro*, Bozzetto had made a slew of cartoons and features, many starring the hapless Mr Rossi, who was created as a cipher for the Italian Everyman. Rossi cameos in *Allegro*, where he's drawn as a doodle on paper, then blithely burned to a crisp.

Much of *Allegro* is live-action (the animation lasts about fifty minutes). The live-action framework is a slapstick, occasionally Pythonesque farce as the film-makers struggle to make their picture with a geriatric woman orchestra and an enslaved animator. (The latter is played by Bozzetto's collaborator Maurizio Nichetti, who would later direct *The Icicle Thief*, 1989, and co-direct the part-animated *Volere Volare*, 1991.) Many reviewers found the live-action obnoxious, and it was reportedly trimmed on some prints. The purpose of these 'shabby and wacky' scenes, Bozzetto said, was to counterpoint *Fantasia*'s over-dignified interludes with Leopold Stokowski and Deems Taylor. *Allegro*'s live-action is in black and white, so that the colour animation stands in the same relation to it as Oz does to Kansas in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939).

There are seven cartoon segments in the film, three of them outstanding. The first uses Debussy's 'Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune', a languorous stroking of lust in an unserious Arcadian mythoscape that inevitably recalls the coyly sexualised world in *Fantasia*'s 'Pastoral Symphony'. Bozzetto's twist is to make the faun an ageing roué whose spirit can't lift his flesh. When he sees a nude nymph, he's so excited that he stands upside-down, and his tummy puddles round his head. In a landscape flowering with *double entendres*, there's no smutty happy ending; the faun shrivels into his dotage. There's more lust in a lesser segment which uses Stravinsky's 'The Firebird' (later animated in Disney's *Fantasia 2000*). Here, hell is endless pink-hued pornography, as giant breasts pour from TV screens.

The remarkable 'Bolero' sequence took a year to create. Astronauts discard a Coke bottle on a barren planet and life evolves, at first undulating over the landscape as bubbles with eyeballs before chimeric creatures emerge, flowers billowing into dinosaurs. Gradually a villain is glimpsed in the fauna, a sneaky serial-killer ape. It's a misanthropic joke, more savage than any of Hayao Miyazaki's eco-fables, though perhaps



to balance it, we see an angelically innocent Adam and Eve in the 'The Firebird' episode. The sequence parodies Fantasia's 'The Rite of Spring' and the start of *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), but the beautiful morphing images, intelligently built through Ravel's repeated theme, are a paradigm of animation as a rhythmically sustained, narratively muscular conceit.

The film's most iconic piece, though, is set to Sibelius's 'Valse Triste'. A mangy, saucer-eyed cat, its stripes straining against its haunches, skulks around the remnants of its home. Despite, and partly because of, its Margaret Keane-esque eyes, the cat's face and body are enormously expressive, while the timeshifting scenario anticipates the operatic 'Magnetic Rose' in the Japanese *Memories*. As with the best Disneys, the art is good enough that the manipulation (lazily equated with kitsch) feels like a by-product – surely Bozzetto's tribute to the Disney of his youth. At the segment's end, we cut to the live-action orchestra of hag ladies dabbing their eyes and wailing 'Bravo!' It feels less like smugness than the self-conscious harrumph of a director shyly trying on Walt's mantle.

Animal Farm

UK/US, 1954 – 72 minutes
John Halas, Joy Batchelor
[Drawings]

DIRECTOR John Halas, Joy Batchelor
PRODUCER Louis de Rochemont, John Halas, Joy Batchelor
STORY Lothar Wolff, Borden Mace, Philip Stapp, John Halas, Joy Batchelor
SCORE Matyas Seiber
ANIMATION John F. Reed, E. Radage, A. Humberstone, R. Ayres, H. Whittaker, F. Moysey

In the British cartoon of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the word of Communist revolution is spread by a jowly Old Major pig, who looks and sounds like Winston Churchill. Orwell might have liked that irony, if not necessarily the cartoon (he died before its release). The actor Maurice Denham, who provided the film's barnyard vocals, claimed the voice fitted the 'lovely old pig'. But it seems to reflect how even a cartoon that was funded by the CIA wouldn't conform to straightforward rhetorical agendas. After the Churchillian Major is killed by his own oratory, and collapses and dies on screen, the film's sparse dialogue is dwarfed by a cacophony of brays, squawks and squeals, a mass of individuals who'll never surrender.