



Animation Insights & Perspectives

Stop motion animation case study

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What is stop motion?

Stop motion or stop frame animation is the act of taking many pictures of your object or person while moving it slightly in between each shot. Creating the illusion of movement where your brain can fill in the gaps between its very similar to other forms of animation such as traditionally drawn animation however stop motion is unique due to the fact all characters and objects need to be on a physical set which could end up being way bigger almost comparable to what live action movies had but the models had to be either screwed down or held with supports that are later removed in post to make sure they could hold their position for long periods of time without moving. They were able to achieve this with metal skeletons inside the models that let them keep the pose they were in as well as giving the model the support it needs to stay in place.

however an issue of early stop motion was the film they used. since it wasn't designed for this type of animation animators had to be extra careful with their sets as they weren't able to look back at the last frame to make sure everything was in the same place. for most studios at the time they were able to get past this limitation of technology by just marking down where the model was with a little line



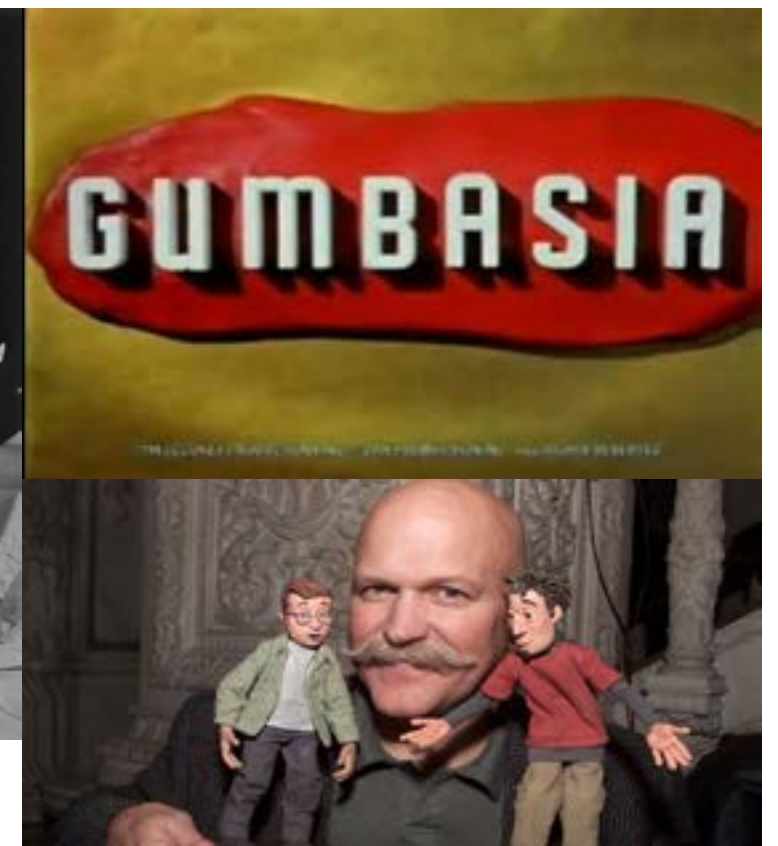
Claymation animation

A pretty big part of stop motion now is Claymation which is just a version of stop motion animation that uses clay as the material usually some form of plasticine clay for the characters and some backdrop features. which is due to it being a malleable but rigid material that with the help of an armature (the metal skeleton I talked about before) it can be used to create humanoid creatures even animals if the rig is created for them.

the person to start to make Claymation as popular as it is today for stop motion movies and shows is Will Vinton who made a short film with the title of Claymation: Three Dimensional Clay Animation in 1978 which later he trademarked Claymation as it slowly became the name for the style of animation. However the first person to use clay in stop motion was in 1955 by Art Clokey in his short prototype film Gumbasia which used clay as the main actor in the entire short film he also then went on to make Gumby a popular children's show



Art Clokey



Will Vinton

A few key figures in stop motion

in the 1920s an animator by the name of Willis O'Brien started to use stop motion heavily in a movie call The Lost World which would make it one the first full length movies to use this animation style. He was able to do this thanks to his incredible skill to make stop motion creatures come to life and with his work on The Lost World he created his own techniques for this type of animation. with this skill he was able to create his most famous piece King Kong which went on to star in many other films comics and tv shows but also he was of-fered an Oscar for his work on King Kong. However he declined it with the reason being that the entire crew who worked on the film should get one not just him. A few years later he did accept another one for his work on Mighty Joe Young



Another animator that made waves in the stop motion industry and was also a protégé of Willis was Ray Harryhausen who's work was so well made that it could easily be added into any live action movie at the time which eventually got the name Dynamation which eventually became a software to help combine stop motion and live action. one of his first solo features using this new technique was The beast from 20000 fathoms in 1953 where a prehistoric creature runs rampant within new York. He continued to make black and white movies using this for another few years till in 1958 he created his first colour picture The 8th Voyage of Sinbad which allowed him to perfectly put himself into the special effect industry forever. for this movie he had to animate many different types of creatures showing his skill within stop motion some of these creatures are skeletons cyclops massive birds and a half human half snake who would all battle in a massive world he created which he had hoped would inspire the next generation of stop motion animators to join in.



A massive part of stop motion animation today is aardman animations who have been making stop motion animation since 1977 with their first release morph which was a children's tv show about a clay figure doing going on random adventures getting himself into trouble. morph has recently made a resurgence where he gains a partner called Chas in the new show The Epic Adventures of morph which is a longer format series with a focus more on YouTube now instead of airing it as often on tv. another massive part of aardman animation is Wallace and Gromit who has earned them 13 awards with one for the best animated short film. Wallace and Gromit became such a large part of the culture it was based in it became a national treasure and despite the region specific jokes and characters people from around the world have tuned in to see them return in 2024 after a 13 year gap between movies. However one of the most important movies they made was a full length feature film called Chicken run which was produced with DreamWorks and Pathe this movie is still one one the highest grossing stop motion animation film of all time after 25 years. Chicken run had a massively popular sequel released in 2023 which due to it being released on streaming sites we don't have accurate numbers for how much it made but the anticipation between the trailer and its release was massive with people eagerly rewatching the original to make sure they remembered everything before it released



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