

flash animation

What It Is, How to Find It,
and How to Make It.

By Marcus Nordvik and Doug Desmond

Independent animation has traditionally been relegated either to film festivals or direct-to-video. These days, you can find a range of animation artists on the Net, from "Ren & Stimpy" creator John Kricfalusi to Oscar-winning shorts to up-and-coming stars.

Animation consumes a lot of bandwidth, so it'll be pretty slow unless you are

You can find a range of animation artists on the Net, from "Ren & Stimpy" creator John Kricfalusi to tomorrow's up-and-coming stars. And you can watch their work any time, for free.



on your college's network, or at least a DSL line. You'll need enough RAM—64MB minimum. Also, some sites will require extra plug-ins. If you don't already have the plug-in installed (many come pre-installed on recent versions of Netscape and Explorer), the site will usually point you to a link where you can download it.

Some films are short, less than a minute long, and are more like visual one-liners.

Another common format is the series, with an ongoing plot and character development. A good starting point for narratives is HotWired's animation showcase (hotwired.lycos.com/animation), which features several Oscar-winning shorts and an extensive collection of amateur—but excellent—3D films.

Icebox (icebox.com) sets a different tone, going for more cartoon-type serials

that add a new episode every week or so. Kricfalusi has work here, although the site is not all big names. Wildbrain (wildbrain.com) also has a couple of animated series, based more around suspense than humor. Fans of MTV's "Aeon Flux" will feel at home here. Camp Chaos (campchaos.com) is the original home of the infamous Metallica/Napster parody, which everyone should check out.

Online animation doesn't have to be as passive as watching "The Simpsons." Interactive cartoons are growing in popularity—some of Icebox's series feature interactive elements, as do sites like Joecartoon (joecartoon.com) and Bunny Grenade (bunnygrenade.com).

If you're really intrigued, try making your own. Macromedia Flash is used by many web developers, and a free 30-day demo can be downloaded from flash.com. Macromedia keeps an archive (flashzone.com/flash/index.html) of tutorials, games, tips, animated buttons, demos and more on their site. And if you want to

explore other animation formats, WebMonkey (webmonkey.com) has a great tutorial for beginners. •

For the full guide to hilarious animation around the Net, and where to find Flash tutorials, go to
www.steamtunnels.net
and search under keyword "Flash."

Coming Soon to a Theatre Near You

Steamtunnels' Guide To Holiday Releases

FAMILY MAN

Release Date: 12/15

Nicolas Cage, Tea Leoni

Cage is a capitalist king with a Ferrari, a model girlfriend and lots of money. Then he wakes up one morning in bed with his old girlfriend ("the one who got

away," who is now his wife and the mother of his 2 children). He also finds himself making a living as the best tire salesman in New Jersey. *Family Man* explores the possibilities of "what if" life occurrences in a way that recalls Gwyneth Paltrow's hit *Sliding Doors*.



© Universal Studios

EMPEROR'S NEW GROOVE

Release Date: 12/15

David Spade,
John Goodman

In a faraway land an emperor is stripped



© Disney Enterprises Inc.

of his power and kingdom. David Spade—the emperor of course—is a ruler with attitude and the constant need to get his groove on. This tenacious compulsion to keep his flow gets the emperor into trouble, and he's turned into a llama by an evil sorceress. Llama man now has no friends, no groove, no clue. John Goodman keeps saving the day as the good-natured peasant with a heart as big as his stomach. The movie zeroes in on their friendship, bringing to light the bond that can occur between classes. Class conflict, be gone!

WHAT WOMEN WANT

Release Date: 12/15

Mel Gibson, Helen Hunt,
Bette Midler

Ladies, we're all looking for a man who can read our minds, do what we want and not ask too many questions. That man may be Mel Gibson. In this film, Mel gets hit in the head and is suddenly blessed with the ability to read minds—female minds. Since he's Mel, the mind-reading thing is used not just to score chicks, but as a route to life as a new man—sensitive, caring and brimming over with empathy. Luckily for moviegoers, Mel's road to sensitive guy-dom has plenty of pit stops.



© Paramount Pictures

13 DAYS

Release Date:
12/20

Kevin Costner

Yes, it's another Costner epic.

It's 1962 and the U.S. is facing the possibility of nuclear war. Costner works under J.F.K. as an aide during the Cuban Missile Crisis, during which the U.S. will have just five minutes to save 80 million people from dying. Unlike previous Costner blowouts like *The Postman* and *Waterworld*, *13 Days* is full of compelling action.



© New Line Cinema

VERTICAL LIMIT

Release Date: 12/08

Chris O'Donnell,

Meg Tunney, Bill Paxton

Chris O'Donnell plays a retired mountain climber on a rescue mission to save his sister and the rest of her summit team, stuck on K2, the second highest peak in the world. Think *Cliffhanger* scenery with good acting and a much better plot. • -YTabi

Go to your local site at steamtunnels.net for theatre listings and times.