

Monkey Business

June 2009

Animated musings from
Emmy-winning screenwriter...

...Jeffrey Scott



Lessons From the Trenches of HOLLYWOOD THE PIXAR STORY, PART 10

In my last newsletter I marveled over the amazing fact that Pixar had released nine blockbusters in a row. Just a few short months later and I already have to update myself.

Pixar's latest feature, *UP*, is blockbuster number ten!

It was even more obvious with *UP* that Pixar's secret to success is in the story. Why? Because *UP* was Pixar's most down to earth story. No talking toys, no superhero antics, no monsters in the closet, just a cantankerous old man and an annoying kid. What was it that kept the audiences enraptured? The story. It pulled the audience in and held their attention with characters that they cared about, and an airtight story structure that beautifully wove together the character arcs and plot.

When I left the theater I realized that Pixar had elevated the art of animated features to a new level. They are no longer cartoons. And certainly not just kidstuff.

They are simply movies.

Animation is now just another medium by which filmmakers can tell their stories. And that's what made *UP* so good—it's just a beautifully told story. A story that actually speaks more to adults than kids, but with enough magic and fun to entertain the youngest of viewers.

I predict that in the near future we will begin to see animated features expand beyond cutesy animals and talking toys, that could just as easily be shot in live action, but will be done in CG simply because it's a beautiful artform.

But what will never change is the need for great story.

Jeffrey's Latest Monkey Business

Monkeys are beloved throughout India, but nowhere near as much as their darling little Krishna. So despite his best efforts, my ghostwriter, Hunter N. Pecker (pictured above), was unable to sell his series idea about a midget monkey superhero named *Little Pecker*. Fortunately, I was able to secure him the job of writing BIG Animation's new CG series, *Little Krishna*, 13 half-hours of warm-hearted action that follow the adventures of young Krishna, from his humorous antics to his courageous warrior prowess.

The series debuted last month on *Nick*, India's leading kid's entertainment channel, and is already a big hit with viewers. The stories were intentionally written with universal appeal, and plans are to distribute the series globally.

As always, Hunter was P.O.ed that I took the writing credit, but a bunch of "monkey points" and an Associate Producer credit quieted him down. *Ook! Ook!*

This month's excerpt from Jeffrey's highly acclaimed book

HOW TO WRITE FOR ANIMATION

If you're jammed and feel overwhelmed while writing, you probably just need to get what you're creating out of your head and into the real world. Take paper and pencil and start drawing out your ideas, or diagram them. If I'm trying to figure out a complicated scene, like how to get a hero out of a difficult trap, I usually just draw a picture of it first. Then it flows much faster when I write it.

By the way, if you've ever had writer's block or blank page syndrome, don't bother going to a psychiatrist (even though they've probably already classified them as mental disorders and are prescribing Prozac). You can get the flow going again by simply starting to write anything. Good, bad, indifferent. It doesn't matter. Just get the flow going. Then go back and improve it as necessary. What you must avoid at all costs are those sneaky little self-invalidating-bio-software ideas like, *God, am I ever going to be able to write again?* Just write! Trust me, it will come, but you've got to start. Otherwise you'll just sit there in wait mode. That's when those devilish, self-invalidating voices will creep in. Once you start validating yourself and your creative ability, you'll turn that trickle of ideas into a raging river. Believe that you are the master of your thoughts and you will soon begin to control them better. Eventually, your ideas will jump through hoops for you like a well trained dog.

You'll find the rest of this article in Chapter 17 of
How to Write Animation

