

ANIMATION SEMINAR STORYBOARDING & EDITING

Nederlands Film Festival 26 September 2016 by Mette Peters

Speakers: Michael Dudok de Wit, Sim Evan-Jones & Ashley Boddy

Moderator: Job ter Burg

Location: Blauwe Zaal, Stadsschouwburg Utrecht

Organised by: Vereniging Nederlandse Animatie Producenten, in collaboration with Nederlandse Vereniging van Cinema Editors, Nederlands Filmfonds and Nederlands Film Festival.

Summary

It was a full house during the animation seminar on Storyboard & Editing at the Netherlands Film Festival in Utrecht. The audience consisted of a mixture of people from both animation and editing backgrounds. After a word of welcome by Ton Crone, director of the VNAP, experienced editor Job ter Burg acted as moderator during the day. The three invited artists Ashley Boddy, Sim Evan Jones and Michael Dudok de Wit focussed in their individual presentations on their own working practice and showed lots of visual examples. Ter Burg made all lively panel discussion and audiences questions run smoothly.

Both Ashley Boddy and Sim Evan Jones work at Aardman studio, which Evan Jones called the 'industrial end'. Currently they both work on Nick Park's new feature animation *Early Man* (expected release in 2018). Boddy's presentation focussed on the role of the storyboard and the story department, especially within feature film production at Aardman Animations. When making feature animation films the story artists spent four years doing the storyboard. They are on the film to the end of production. Boddy calls the storyboard the blueprint of a film, because it goes to different departments on a film and it helps making sure that everyone is on the same page. But every single department sees it differently. For example: the director and edit department will look at it from a structure and storytelling point of view, model making will look at the number of puppets, animation at the amount of character on screen, lay-out and camera look at camera moves and lenses, VFX uses it to set out rigging, art looks at it for set building and production uses it as a schedule or organizational to know what animators to put on what scene, at what time during production. Boddy provided a live sound-track, as a kind of pitch session, of a sequence that was cut from the *Shaun the Sheep* series.

In his presentation Sim Evan Jones referenced his experiences as editor of both live-action and 2D and 3D animation features and focused on the work with storyboards in the editorial department. Animation differs from live-action because you don't have dailies, you don't work with a load of performance shots which you have to cut. The feature storyboard editorial process is very iterative. In the process when the script is storyboarded and send to editorial everything is versioned. Nothing is seen without getting notes and everything is constantly revised. The story really does evolves in editorial. Editorial, in many ways, is the place where everything comes together and where it can be seen as a movie for the first time. You create a story reel which is basically sketches cut together with temporary sound. The story reel is a planning tool to work on structure, rhythm and tone of the movie, before you actually start shooting. Classically in feature animation, you use a lot of temporary sound: effects, music and scratch dialogue. It shows how you can create drama and emotion using temporary sound and music elements. That's something that is a huge part of what this job is all about: creating the idea of the finished movie before you finished it. It is quite common in animation that the writing is a continuous process. It doesn't just end once you start to storyboard things or shoot things. Sim illustrated his talk by showing clips from two film he worked on: the animated

feature *Shaun the Sheep the Movie* and the live action film *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Michael Dudok de Wit is an independent animation director who worked on shorts and commercials. Recently he made his first feature animation film *The Red Turtle* with the acclaimed Japanese Ghibli studio. In his presentation Dudok de Wit started by making the point that we all edit continuously, every day, all the time. He focused on two ways of being creative, intuition and the rational mind. These two communicate with each other non-stop and are important on an individual level, but also in a collaborative process of making a feature film. In his previous work editing was never a very conscious process: in his commercials the dialogue was the guide for the editing, and his short films were often inspired by music. Dudok de Wit only truly became to realize the possibilities of editing when he worked on the feature *The Red Turtle*. For this feature he collaborated with co-writer Pascal Ferran and experienced editor Céline Kélépikis. He considers the editing of a feature a different discipline. Furthermore Dudok de Wit talked about how he conceived the idea for the film, how he used a simple curve as a visual theme and the approach of Ghibli Studio, which he calls a director's animation studio. Dudok de Wit larded his presentation with still images and discussed a few outtakes.

Biographical notes on the speakers

Ashley Boddy is senior story artist at Aardman Animations (UK). He graduated from the Arts Institute at Bournemouth in 2007 and worked as story artist at Passion Pictures and Rovio Entertainment. At Aardman he worked on the feature *The Pirates!*, the *Shaun the Sheep* series and *Shaun the Sheep Movie*. Currently he works on *Early Man*, the new feature film by director Nick Park.

Sim Evan Jones is editor also works on *Early Man* at Aardman Animation. He has worked on a wide variety of both 2D and 3D animation and live-action features. He worked on editorial departments of features films in Europe and USA, for companies such as Stephen Spielberg's Amblimation, Dreamworks Animation, Disney and Working Title. A selection of the films he worked on: *American Tail* (1991), *We're back!* (1993), *Balto* (1995), *Prince of Egypt* (1998), *Shrek I* (2000), *Shrek II* (2004), *Madagascar* (2005), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005), *Nanny McPhee and the Big Bang* (2010), *Cirque du Soleil's Worlds Away 3D* (2012), *Mr. Pip* (2012), *Pompei* (2014), *Free Birds* (2013), *The Book of Life* (2014), *Shaun the Sheep Movie* (2015).

This year Michael Dudok de Wit finished his first feature animation film *The Red Turtle*, produced by the acclaimed Japanese Ghibli Studio. The film was very well received, won the Prix Spécial du Certain Regard at the Cannes film festival and is one of the most successful films in Dutch cinemas this year. Dudok the Wit studied animation at the West Surrey College of Art in Farnham. He worked as freelancer on commercials, and is book illustrator and lecturer at art colleges. He was very successful with his animated shorts *Tom Sweep* (1992), *The Monk and the Fish* (1994), the Oscar winning film *Father and Daughter* (2000) and *Aroma of Tea* (2006).

Presentation Ashley Boddy

Ashley talked about his own experiences as story artist. The purpose of the story department, which you don't have in live-action film so much, is to realize the story. If a script gets through from the scriptwriter (and sometimes if they are in-house, they will be part of the story-department as well) it's your job to take that script and turn it into a visual script, a blueprint of the film. The story department is getting rid of the blank page, or in our case the blank screen. There is a lot of back and forth with other departments, for example with edit. You sit with them and watch as they cut everything you put hours into. We tend to just throw things away, we are not careful or precious with any of our work. Advice to students out there: if you love your own drawings, get over it, they are going to get cut!

The story department starts very early on in the pipe-line of feature film production. Way before the green light, usually in the development phase. We hash out the beats of the film, so that we know what we are doing as a film and have a story in place that's going to work. Because if you start production and you have a story that doesn't work, you end up building sets you don't need, designing characters that aren't relevant. There are also story beats that are taken out to film festivals and other places to get financing for the film. They are shown to financing companies, such as Amazon, they have quite a big say in things now. During pre-production we will start putting together [10...] of sequences that we know are going to be in the film. Usually it's the end of act 1 and the end of act 2. When a project moves into production the story department is crewed up properly. At the moment we work in quite small teams of eight or ten people. For example during the production of *The Pirates!* the core crew of the story department was five or six people, but at some point it was expanded to fourteen. It was really nice working in a big vibrant department, but at the same time when there are so many voices it can get a bit confused in there.

The story artist is a jack of all trades, with a basic knowledge about animating, editing, writing, design, lay-out, cinema and lighting. When you are making a storyboard, you work with the director a lot of the time. Sometimes it means making things that you don't necessarily agree with or isn't your personal style of filmmaking. But in a feature film that's the job. You are not directing the film. If you are making a short film, quite often you'll be in charge and draw the entire storyboard yourself. But in a feature film there is team of four of us. We need to be on the same wave-length, and that is our director. The directors I've worked for are all completely different. It takes a while to get to know them, their various sensibilities and joke-telling. Your job is to get to know them well enough so that they can brief any of us in the story team and we would all produce a storyboard for them that is pretty much what they themselves would produce. You have to try to think like the director. Most directors are very open to ideas, and your job is to provide options and opinions.

At the story department storyboards are drawn. These storyboards go to different departments and everybody sees it differently. On a feature production you try to control 200 people, sometimes 300. The storyboards job is to make sure that everyone is on the same page. The director and edit department will look at it for structure and storytelling point of view. Storyboards help the model making department with the number of puppets. There is not just one Shaun, there is probably about forty Shauns. There are lots of different units of sometimes thirty different sets and if Shaun is required on every different set, they have to make forty versions of him. But of a lesser character they don't make as many puppets. The animation department will look at the storyboard for the characters on the screens. But also on dialogue that they are going to be using, because they've got to make mouth shapes. They'll press mould them. And if we are using rapid prototyping with printing machines, like we were on *Pirates!*, they know which mouth shapes to print. The visual effects department will use boards to set out rigging. VFX costs a fortune, and if a character is rigged correctly it's easier for the VFX to be done. Production uses storyboards as a schedule, an

organizational tool. They know what animators to put on what scene, at what time during production. Camera and lay-out use it to judge what lenses to use on the camera. We do think about that when we are storyboarding. Are we shooting telephoto or wide, which can make a huge difference on the feel of a sequence. The sound department (the dialogue) comes under editorial, usually. The actors and composers don't come in at the story stage and don't watch story pitches, they don't work directly from the storyboard. They'll reference the animatics.

In the broad scheme of things, a storyboard is a blueprint for every single department on the film. Students take two or three weeks to do a storyboard for their film. And then they spend seven months making their film. That baffles me. When we at Aardman are making feature film animation we spent four years doing the storyboard and we are still on it during production. We don't really end till the end of production. Advice to students: take care of your board and really use it as a tool to set out or make it work. So you can organize what you're going to be doing and when you are going to be doing it. And it helps you troubleshoot any problems beforehand, you get ahead of it and figure out economically the best way to make your film. Ashley gave lively commentary while showing a sequences that was cut from the *Shaun the Sheep* series, as an example of how boards are pitched at Aardman.

Presentation Sim Evan Jones

Sim came to Aardman a couple of years ago for *Shaun the Sheep Movie*.

Basically what they had done is that they, as a feature studio, almost gone into hibernation. They had done *Chicken Run*, *Flushed Away* (done in USA), *The Pirates!*, *Arthur Christmas* (done in USA). In terms of editorial department, they hadn't done any feature work there for about four years. What they did have was a very talented sort of tv-editorial crew. They had been scaling up to do features and were editing the sequences of *Shaun the Movie*. But it was felt that they needed someone to come in and look at the long form, to see how it worked as a feature. So that's when I walked in with my feature experience. It was a brilliant opportunity. The films was brilliant and from my point of view, it was just a very straightforward job of going in, as any editor would, working on the structure, pacing and how the whole movie tracked and worked as a feature film. There was lack of cohesion to it, and I was able to bring quite straight forward stuff to it, that kind of plussed up.

Sim talked about the animation editorial process.

Editorial gets sent storyboards. It's not quite the same as live-action, because you don't have dailies. You don't have a load of performance stuff shot which you have to cut. You have to kind of create the dailies. That's what the first pass of the storyboard is. Classically in feature animation, you use a lot of temporary sound, effects and score, and you record scratch dialogue. If it is a scripted dialogue film, everyone will do a voice. It's like amateur dramatics in the cutting room. Very often what we're dealing with is story artists who are writing dialogues to go with their gags. But *Shaun the Sheep Movie* had no dialogues, the gags all come visually. Apparently on *Shaun* there were 80.000 storyboard sketches, so there is a lot of material generated and a lot of stuff to go through. The feature storyboard editorial process is very iterative. You have a script (If you are lucky, *Shrek* never had a script). If the script arrives it is boarded and sent to editorial and everything is versioned. Nothing is seen without getting notes, and everything is constantly revised. The story really does evolve in editorial. Editorial in many way is the place where everything comes together and can be seen as a movie for the first time. You create a story reel, which is sketches cut together with temporary sound. It is a planning tool to work on the structure, rhythm and tone of your movie, before you actually start shooting. With animation you can't just shoot stuff and stuck it away. It is quite common in animation that the writing is a continuous process. It doesn't just end once you

start to storyboard things or shoot things . You have these iterations and constantly inventing dialogue and shots.

Sim showed clips from two films he worked on to illustrate the editorial process. First he showed – before and after - of the opening sequence of *Shaun the Sheep Movie*. First a scene in its raw form and then the recut. You can see the transition from the storyboards, with their simple clear graphic storytelling, and how they get plussed up when they go into animation. The second clip was the opening sequence of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* in which Sim worked with director Andrew Adamson. Adamson had a visual effects and live-action background. But after he had done *Shrek* and learned a lot about storyboarding he was determined to storyboard his live-action films too. Because it allowed him to, as he said, to ‘turn over the dominos of the story. You can see what happens when you do this in act 1 and what it means for act 2 and 3. We had read and loved the books [C.S. Lewis *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* was published in 1950 in UK]. Andrew felt that they lacked a set-up. In the opening chapter, there was a war and children went away to their uncle in the country to get away from it. What he felt we needed was a sort of dramatic set-up for a movie, just to explain to modern audiences what a war is and why kids need to escape. We did a quite detailed animatic of that opening sequence. It kind of plots the process that we would use on those live-action films, and also on the CG films. We go from storyboard to previsualization or lay-out to the final thing. It shows how you can create drama and emotion using temporary sound and music elements. That’s something that is a huge part of what this job is all about: creating the idea of the finished movie before you finished it.

Panel discussion with Ashley Boddy and Sim Evan Jones

The following issues were discussed.

Relationship between the director and the story artist

Ashley: The style and the design of the storyboard comes from the director. The relationship between the director and the story artist varies. Sometimes there is an open brief, sometimes it’s more closed. But generally it is important for a story artists to get information from a director. How does he want a sequence to feel. Nick will thumbnail and Pete Lord too, but other directors are not so visual and you have to work hard to get it across to them.

Use of texts in boards

Ashley: we don’t use text directly on the story-panel itself. Because your eye are naturally drawn to words, you read that word and the attention goes in the wrong direction. For the same reason we don’t use arrows as well. When we send the boards to edit we have a little bar on the bottom, where we can write dialogue or sound effects instructions or general camera pans.

Previsualisation

Sim: previsualisation is usually required in films with complex production value, visual effects or set builds. Previsualisation is not a good script development tool, it doesn’t get you to emotional storytelling on any level. It’s a great kind of a logistic thing.

Recording of the actual voice of the actors

Sim: Ideally I would do a table read before we start boarding or shooting. But my pragmatic experience is that if you have a big cast it’s hard to get that together. And very soon it will start to be useless because the script and the dialogue for all the scenes change a lot. What you end up doing, which is not ideal, is you record the actors as needed. You test everything with scratch actors, before you get your final actors in, and before animation starts.

Planning and the interaction between the different departments

Sim: It is hard to explain the process. You have long production schedules. They are really well plotted in terms of screenings and completion dates. So you are always working towards deadlines.

Still images and timing in an animatic

Sim: it evolved. It used to be a board with images as long as you thought it realistically takes for the action to happen. Now there is an expectation. What we used to call a Leica reel is now called an animatic. It animates and we are constantly under pressure to cut it quickly, to make a reel that is practically animated. Ashley: we deliver a kind of animated boards now. That came in when we went digital and we switched from paper to digital.

Storyboard pitch

Sim: On *Shrek* I would go to every pitch, because I would then have the timing of the guy pitching it. But you don't formally pitch on a board anymore, do you? Ashley: No, we pitch on a screen now.

Storyboard sketches

Ashley: we start on paper, because it's much easier to see the story on paper. You use pen and paper and then lay it out, so you can plan it quicker. Even if you use an A3 file in Photoshop and draw really tiny boards. You're never really able to zoom out and see the whole board. On a Cintiq you can zoom in and become too picky.

Size of the editing teams

Sim: It depends. We are at the 'industrial end', with a certain level of budget where dates have to be met and complexities have to be addressed. It's intense. For *Shaun the Sheep Movie* we had two sequence editors, three assistants, a storyboard coordinator and me.

Limitations and requirement of different animation techniques

Ashley: with CG you really have to bring down the camera work. They don't realize it's a physical object now, not a virtual camera. Sim: what is great about Aardman is that you actually do go to the set and check it out. In CG they just draw anything and don't worry about scale and characters. They focus on story. Ashley: I like to work with that limitation in stop-motion. Especially if the set is being built, I look at it and see how I can play around with it.

Picture lock and when to stop the story and editing process

Sim: it's an iterative process. You aim to screen the whole movie, or what you got of it, every 12 to 14 weeks. You gradually see which bits are starting to come together and really tell your tale. Those things get locked first. Sometimes it's determined by what works and what's funny, or what's moving it forward. But you will very often pick off the action scenes, the set pieces. Because they are going to take a lot of sets built and using up a lot of animators. You lock individual scenes, not particular in order and build it up from there. Ashley: the last boards tend to get drawn a week before the last shot. You are there all the way to the end. Apart from edit, story is on it the longest. Because we start before green light. As soon as green light is given all the other departments are ready to go, based on a storyboard.

Presentation Michael Dudok de Wit

Michael Dudok de Wit started his presentation by making the point that we all are editors. We edit continuously, every day, all the time. When tell an anecdote, story or joke, we are professional editors, consciously and unconsciously. Michael used as example what you reply when you are asked about your past. The other example was from his own experience as a little boy, when a farmer told the local Dutch ghost-story, about 'Witte Wieven', to three little boys. Michael talked about how he only became to realize the full possibilities of editing when he worked on *The Red Turtle*. With hindsight, he said that his editing had been very basic. In his previous work, he did the storyboard, the animatic and the animation himself. In his commercials the dialogue was the guide for the editing, and his short films were often inspired by the music. 'The music was not just guide, it was a muse basically'.

He considers editing in feature animation a different discipline. For *The Red Turtle* Michael worked with editor Céline Kélépikis who had a lot of experience with animation, documentary and live-action films. 'She knew the language, was very intuitive and sharp. And most importantly, there was a good chemistry between us. An editor really has to listen to a director, but in turn the director has to listen to the editor. They have to create an understanding, which you sometimes can't explain in words. Edit is often guided by the conversation, dialogue or music, or both. In the case of *The Red Turtle* she wasn't guided by dialogue, and enjoyed the big freedom of imposing new ideas on the film. In a simple scene like when someone is crossing the landscape from right to left, we had to imagine how long it would take for the character to cross the screen. We don't get it right because it depends on the animation and there is much variation possible. We make an animatic, knowing that when we start animating lots of scenes will be shortened or lengthened. The animatic has to feel good, because the producer has to look at it and say: we really see it coming now. But in the real timing when you start animating, some things can be told much much quicker or vice versa. That's one of the big differences.' Michael drew most of storyboard for *The Red Turtle* himself, thousands of drawings. 'But you can double or triple it, easily, considering all the scenes that have been taken out or redrawn, just to improve them a little bit.' His co-writer Pascal Ferran, who made live action films and never worked on animated films before, helped with the storyboarding and saw it as a process in which you look at both edit and storytelling.

While collaborating with Céline Kélépikis Michael came to realize the importance of working with two ways of being creative, the intuition and the rational mind. These two communicate with each other non-stop and are important on an individual level, but also in a collaborative process of making a feature film. One of the golden rules is: 'it just feels right'. Michael's process comes from a very intuitive point where he can't always explain why he made a certain choice, but at the same time he needs the reasoning, technical side. During the production of this feature he embraced the feedback process of checking ideas with direct collaborators, the producers and others. 'The film started in an explosive way for me, because I simply got an email out of the blue from a studio I admire a lot in Tokyo, studio Ghibli. They said: we really like your short film *Father and Daughter*, we like it so much we even think it's like a Japanese film. We wonder, have you thought of making a feature film with the same kind of sensitivity? If you are, we would be very interested in producing or co-producing this feature. I already knew the answer, before arriving at the end of the email. I wasn't ready for a feature film, but thought if I want to make a feature film, this is my change. They are a studio that make directors films. They are a studio were they make directors films. Once a director starts making a film, he is in charge, even if the others don't agree. There may be discussions, but it's his responsibility. If he can't explain certain things, that's okay, because he is in charge.'

'I knew within a couple of days which main theme I wanted to use: a castaway on a desert island. It's an obvious idea. I think it's an archetypal idea. Not only because it's very familiar, it symbolizes life in

general from my point of view. I asked myself: what is the emotion, the feeling behind it, the power behind the film? In my case it was obvious too: just a very profound and deep admiration for nature. Not the animals, lovely forests and sunsets. That too. But what do we feel when we are in nature, even in a park, it doesn't have to be wild nature. What do we feel when we touch a tree, or when we are with a particular animal. When we are in a conflicting relationship with nature. What are the ambiances we feel? When you walk outside on a grey day. The very fine ambiances that are never the same. What do you feel about death, growth, the way the light falls, just the intensity of a shadow. Not in filmmaking, but more in general. What do you feel when feeling the temperature on your face or just the texture of your clothes on your skin. That's what I mean with 'nature'. I wanted to express that in the film. It's not as a message but more a celebration, or just a joy to say wouldn't it be great to translate that feeling, that sensitivity in a film?'

'So I started writing a short text, an outline of the story. Then I wrote a script. When the script was finished, I went with that to Tokyo and told them the story by heart and left the documents with them. As I was talking to them I quickly did one simple drawing, a curved line. I said: this simple curve is the film. It's just that there is a visual theme that comes back in the film. It comes back in many ways. Just like in music you have certain themes in song or piece of music. It comes back in a film in a subtle way from time to time, not as a message, but just because you enjoy it. On a subtle level it creates coherence in the film. Traditionally, with all films, you can create coherence with contrast, choice of color, textures, other visual elements.' Michael discussed this curve theme while showing still images from the film: the top of a mountain, the profile of the beach, a shape in the clouds, the edge of a lagoon, the rocks, the profile of the tree tops of the forest or branches in the foreground. He furthermore talked about certain cultural parameters, which are hardwired in our brains and we play with when we are visual creative or conceiving a visual story, for example if you think of the choreographical side of storyboarding and editing. Such as the North-South- East- West orientation in the West of Europe or the tendency amongst animators to create movements in profile. This has a practical reason: animation is very complex and with visual profile acting you simplify and stylise character movements. In reality our movements are very complicated, so we imitate mime artists. When they want to do a simple movement, like drinking some water, a mime artist would show the same gesture in profile and exaggerate the profile. And you can read it graphically really strongly. In live-action you know immediately what you're seeing, but in animation it can become messy, with all the lines. At the end of his talk Michael showed some outtakes and explains why they were not used in the final film.

Panel discussion with Ashley Boddy, Sim Evan Jones and Michael Dudok de Wit

The following issues were discussed:

Intuition

Michael: In filmmaking you have to make it more conscious for yourself, but also often you have to try and find a way of communicating it to others. I think intuition is timeless, unchanging. But your awareness of it is evolving, you become more conscious. Maybe intuition is not a good word, but there is no perfect word for it. It is impersonal. It's not mine or yours. You have access to it. A space..

The Red Turtle script

Michael: I wrote the script alone first. But I made a beginners mistake. I wrote too much, far too many things happened in the story. The script is just a strong starting point and you start working from there. When I started storyboarding I eliminating lots of details and purifying. The script was

well written, it was fine, but it was almost like ‘quickly forgotten’. At some point I had difficulty with the storyboarding, it took too much time. I got help from Pascale Ferran, my co-writer. She said: in order to please the producers, and ourselves, we should rewrite the script, polish the script. She rewrote the script in her language, which was much more professional, and more immediately visual appealing and interesting and emotional. Then the producer looked at it and said ‘that’s great’. I hardly read it, because we had already moved forwards, into the storyboard phase.

Selection process of collaborators for *The Red Turtle*

Michael: The selection process was slow, over a long period. The animation community is small, so people heard there was a feature coming up. They contacted either the production company I was associated with, Prima Linea Productions, or myself. We looked at portfolios and each animator did a test, where they literally had to animate a scene over a two day period.

Working with an editor for *The Red Turtle*

Michael: Editor Céline Kélépikis arrived during the storyboard phase and gave me feedback for months and months. Once we were in full production she was not in-house anymore. We had an in-house editor who just assembled everything. Céline would come regularly, every 2 -3 months, to do a lot of work.

Animatic for *The Red Turtle*

Michael: I imagined I would do a storyboard first, and then do an animatic. But I missed the feeling of timing, so I very quickly went from storyboard to a very low-tech animatic. I just scanned the storyboard and didn’t bother about camera movements and cross dissolves. I just put them in a very basic software programme on my Mac. Quickly after that we made a proper animatic using Final Cut Pro.

Sound in *The Red Turtle*

Michael: In the beginning we had temporary sounds, also on the animatic. My brief to the sound people of Piste Rouge in Paris, was: no cartoon sounds, think of it as live-action. And I realized we had to be very sensitive to the irritation factor, sounds coming back over and over again in the film. The composer came quite late in the process when the animation was nearly finished. Which was an advantage for him, he saw a film in color and lots of animation. He thus had a lot to draw from.

Sound in *Shrek*

Sim: normally me and the director take a lot of effort forming the temporary sound. We use existing music, pop songs, those were a big part of the *Shrek* thing. We would get into crazy things with amazing composers. Music is the intuitive thing and you have to try and get it verbalized. It’s a tough thing.

Collaboration and creative responsibility

Michael: On *The Red Turtle* more than 150 creative people worked on sound and visuals of the film. It was my responsibility to create a unity with all these creative energies, including mine. It feels a bit like the position of being the boss. All the questions come to me, and I have the final say in decisions. But there was clearly one boss above me: the film. The film dictated my decisions. Not in the beginning, but as soon as it was coming together, feeling good, having an identity. Sim: That’s absolutely what happens. Your movie starts to tell you what it needs. It can take a while to get there, and it can be painful.

Different storyboard approaches

Ashley: I tend to work quite quick. My fast drawings that are a bit rougher tend to communicate an idea much better than my tidied up drawings. If I spend too long thinking about it, I’ll convince myself its wrong and won’t draw it. Sometimes it simply comes down to a deadline. Michael: some of my

images, 10 to 20% of my storyboard, is drawn very loosely and very quickly. It's my personality to draw quite carefully. But *The Red Turtle* is a vulnerable film, not supported by a lot of humour, dialogue or incredible suspense. It's very much about a kind of visual poetry. Just the elegance of a cloud or the beauty of a strong shadow which draws more attention than the character casting a shadow. I had to show to myself that that would be enough to keep the attention of the spectator. In that sense I needed to draw more carefully. I was also aware that I was not going to animate and do backgrounds. So any well finished drawing would already be a nice lay-out and guide for the team when they arrive.

Characters in *The Red Turtle*

Michael: the design of the male character came very quickly. It happened in my drawings. Quite a straightforward design, but with hindsight, I was damned ambitious, because he was hard to animate. If you don't have good animators, you get a weak film, even with a strong character and story. It's very easy to see clumsiness in animation when you have realistic designs and movements. The design of the woman was another story. A woman is more subtle, especially at that young adult age, my god it's so difficult. I asked five different people of the team to work on her. They struggled too. Very slowly over the weeks her shape appeared. The personality of the man was quite easy, I had some models in mind. The man is not literally like them, but he resembles them. He doesn't resemble me. Luckily, because the film would have been really boring. I was thinking of captain Haddock in the Tintin books and Toshiro Mifune in the film *The Seven Samurai*. It shows in the acting, he acts really in a big way. The woman was contained, mysterious. That's tricky, because you want a mysterious woman, but not too mysterious because you want to identify with her as a spectator. There I had long conversations with my editor and co-writer. My co-writer said: you have to make her stronger and at the same time respect her mystery. She has to be strong in her relationship to the man. She is not subdued to the man. She has to show her strength, her strength is nature, she understands nature. And she is not a turtle anymore, she is human. Make that clear. Not in lots of scenes were it shows, but just in the right little scenes, actions, expressions or gestures. It's about fine-tuning.