



Thursday, February 13, 2003

Search

ANIMATION WORLD  
MAGAZINE

Page One

SECTIONS

People  
Profiles  
Reviews  
Tutorials

SPECIAL FEATURES

Gaming  
Production  
Technology  
Voice Acting

COLUMNS

Editor's Notebook  
Dr. Toon  
The Animation  
Pimp  
Producing  
Animation  
Career Coach  
Vilppu's How To  
Anime Reviews

ACROBAT VERSION

Current Acrobat  
Issue  
Back Issues

FIND

Articles by Date  
AWN Media Kit  
Contact AWN

ALSO ON AWN.com

AWN Home  
AIDB - Animation  
Industry Database  
Headline News  
Career Connections  
Student Corner  
School Database  
AWN Store  
Animation  
Showcase  
Web Animation  
Guide  
Calendar of Events  
Upcoming  
Theatrical Releases  
Trivia Quiz

## Toon Boom Studio V2: Going with the Flow

Toon Boom Studio V2 is an affordable 2D animation software that takes animators on a smooth ride to create projects for the Web, video, wireless and more.

February 05, 2003

By Darlene Chan

Animation is all about the flow — the fluidity of the image moving through a frame, possessing a kinetic energy all its own. Animators are always on the lookout for software tools that can help them achieve this sense of eternal motion. Toon Boom Studio V2 seems to fit this bill for many animators. Affordable and easy to use, Toon Boom Studio V2 was designed specifically for Web animation and offers an end-to-end production environment that is being used by experienced animators, Web designers and content developers alike. While Flash is the industry standard when it comes to Internet animation, the program wasn't actually built with animators in mind. Toon Boom Studio V2 offers to remedy this; its rich animation feature set and intuitive user interface accelerates workflow and efficiency. Able to import textures and models from other programs and export the finished product in a number of ways, TBS V2 is being used to create animation for not only the Web but everything from the small screen to giant arenas. *Animation World Magazine* recently asked a twice Oscar® nominated animator/director, a digital artist and two production companies about their experience with Toon Boom Studio V2.



Animators agree that Toon Boom Studio V2 gives unparalleled quality animation for a low price. © Toon Boom Technologies Inc.

### Cordell Barker

*Twice Oscar® nominated animator/director Cordell Barker has worked in the commercial field for 27 years. A native of Canada, Cordell made the 7 1/2 minute animated folk song The Cat Came Back for the NFB, which received an Oscar® nomination in 1989 and went on to garner 18 international awards. He was nominated again in 2002 for Strange*

More From Page One

[The Kids Are All Right](#)[The Animation Pimp: Why is it NOT DONE?](#)[Book Review: Animating Real-Time Game Characters](#)[Career Coach: Revolution, Not Resolution](#)

Breaking News

[Jungle Book Take 2](#)[JM Entertainment Toys With Feature](#)[Bibi Is Big In Berlin](#)[Sony Pictures Imageworks Is Using Its Alienbrain](#)[ASU Fest Needs Animation](#)



Cordell Barker (left) and Jesse Giroux work on a project using Toon Boom Studio V2 at Production Pascal Blais' studios in Montreal.

Photo by Denis Roy. Courtesy of Cordell Barker and Production Pascal Blais.

*Invaders. Cordell has created numerous TV ads in Canada, the U.S. and England for clients such as Energy, Mines and Resources Canada; Benylin; Nike; Chili's Restaurant and Bell Canada. He continues to receive awards for his innovative animations.*

The bulk of my commercial opportunity came after I completed my first short film *The Cat Came Back*. Since then, and as a direct result of the success of that film, I have worked on over a hundred commercials. In that span of time, I have shifted from traditional ink and paint on cel over to the computer. The last two or three TV ads

that I did were achieved using the updated version of Toon Boom Studio V2. These spots are an animated Coke campaign made through the production company Productions Pascal Blais in Montreal for the French Canadian market. The concept is a group of five very graphically designed teenagers created in the "Flash" look, who take advantage of life's opportunities. We have approximately a five week production schedule, so we needed a program that would achieve what we needed quickly.

In all, I have directed about seven spots using Toon Boom Studio V2. For the first one we started with USAAnimation, but for the quality that we needed to achieve, we switched over to Toon Boom because of the speed and cost advantage. We also chose to go with Toon Boom because it was so incredibly intuitive to learn and use. The projects have gone quite smoothly, especially as V2 seems to be much more stable than V1. Prior to that, we were using Toon Boom Studio V1 on about five of the Coke projects. The reason we continued with it was the flexibility and speed of use of the program as we only had about a week to a week and a half to put together the elements of each 30 second TV spot. The thing that I really like about TBS V2 is the top and side view windows that allow an animation director, whose formative years were spent creating animation in the traditional cel-paint and camera method, to approach the animation in a very logical and visual way. Much like moving people around on a stage.

1 2 3 4 ►

[Post a Comment](#)

[back to Page One](#)

## 2 Comments Posted

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[Gerard de Souza: Interesting article. It would have been nice to have an online link to examples of the projects listed....](#)



Thursday, February 13, 2003

Search

ANIMATION WORLD  
MAGAZINE  
Page One

## SECTIONS

People  
Profiles  
Reviews  
Tutorials

## SPECIAL FEATURES

Gaming  
Production  
Technology  
Voice Acting

## COLUMNS

Editor's Notebook  
Dr. Toon  
The Animation  
Pimp  
Producing  
Animation  
Career Coach  
Vilppu's How To  
Anime Reviews

## ACROBAT VERSION

Current Acrobat  
Issue  
Back Issues

## FIND

Articles by Date  
AWN Media Kit  
Contact AWN

## ALSO ON AWN.com

AWN Home  
AIDB - Animation  
Industry Database  
Headline News  
Career Connections  
Student Corner  
School Database  
AWN Store  
Animation  
Showcase  
Web Animation  
Guide  
Calendar of Events  
Upcoming  
Theatrical Releases  
Trivia Quiz

## Toon Boom Studio V2: Going with the Flow

(continued from page 1)

One distinct advantage is the way Toon Boom Studio V2 handles the line of any imported line-art. The line is controllable to the degree that we just couldn't get using Flash. There is a particular look to the line that when we first used Toon Boom Studio V2 and the agency creative team saw it, their reaction was, "Yeah, that's what we were after!" You are able to create a thick and thin aspect to the line — the line can go thicker when it joins to another line, and thin out when it runs uninterrupted. This has a very crafted appealing look. I also thought the tutorial was quite good. I'm a big fan of well-made tutorials that jump you straight into a full production situation so that you can be up and running as quickly as possible. An important control element was the ability to nest layers into compositions and then nest those into another separately controlled composition — there are a few much pricier programs out there that weren't able to do this important task.

The thing that surprised me the most about TBS V2 was that the price seemed so very good considering what we were able to achieve — and very quickly at that.

I would absolutely use this software again. In fact, my plan is to do more experimentation and use the program in a way that uses the multi-plane effect to much greater advantage. Its greatest strength is with a graphic style incorporating multi-planing, and as I'm a big fan of the limited animation style, I intend to play around with this quite a bit.

### Jesse Giroux

*Jesse Giroux is a freelance compositor and digital artist who has been associated over the years with Production Pascal Blais in Montreal, Canada. There, he worked closely with director Cordell Barker on the Coke commercial series.*

I started to use Toon Boom Studio V2 about a year ago. I was working in an Ink and Paint studio and we were using USAnimation. Productions Pascal Blais asked us to do the compositing on a Coca-Cola ad campaign directed by Cordell Barker (a campaign that is broadcast on French television in Canada). They wanted a Flash animation look. So I tried as much as I could to achieve that look in USAnimation. But a few months after that, the studio I was working for closed its doors. So I had the idea to use Toon Boom Studio V2 to continue the compositing of the Coca-Cola campaign and it was a success. Not only the price of the software pleased the producer, but the look of the lines and the style of compositing was what the creative team was looking for — the fresh Internet Flash animation look. Since then we've used TBS V2 for a couple of projects here at Productions Pascal Blais for Nestle Nido and Kit Kat commercials.

### More From Page One

[The Kids Are All Right](#)

[The Animation Pimp:  
Why is it NOT DONE?](#)

[Book Review:  
Animating Real-Time  
Game Characters](#)

[Career Coach:  
Revolution, Not  
Resolution](#)

### Breaking News

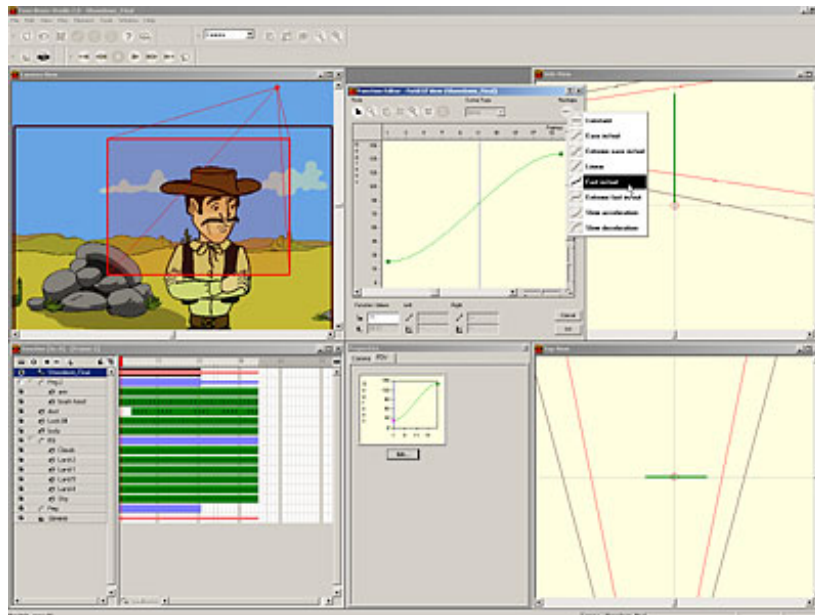
[Jungle Book Take 2](#)

[JM Entertainment  
Toys With Feature](#)

[Bibi Is Big In Berlin](#)

[Sony Pictures  
Imageworks Is Using  
Its Alienbrain](#)

[ASU Fest Needs  
Animation](#)



Animators who try TBS V2 once, want to keep using it for future projects. © Toon Boom Technologies Inc.

The main advantage to using TBS V2 is the 3D sceneplanning. You have the top and the side view. It allows you to manipulate your drawings very easily creating depth effects. The lip-sync feature surprised me. You can compute a sound file and Toon Boom Studio V2 generates a list of drawings that follows the lip-sync. All you have to do is to replace the drawings that the software used by default with your own.

I continue to use TBS V2 here at Productions Pascal Blais, on the same Coca-Cola campaign, plus we have some other projects that we're planning to do in Toon Boom Studio V2. I also use it at home on different projects (Web design and experimental animation).



[Post a Comment](#)

[back to Page One](#)

### 2 Comments Posted

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Thursday, February 13, 2003

Search

ANIMATION WORLD  
MAGAZINE  
Page One

SECTIONS

People  
Profiles  
Reviews  
Tutorials

SPECIAL FEATURES

Gaming  
Production  
Technology  
Voice Acting

COLUMNS

Editor's Notebook  
Dr. Toon  
The Animation  
Pimp  
Producing  
Animation  
Career Coach  
Vilppu's How To  
Anime Reviews

ACROBAT VERSION

Current Acrobat  
Issue  
Back Issues

FIND

Articles by Date  
AWN Media Kit  
Contact AWN

ALSO ON AWN.com

AWN Home  
AIDB - Animation  
Industry Database  
Headline News  
Career Connections  
Student Corner  
School Database  
AWN Store  
Animation  
Showcase  
Web Animation  
Guide  
Calendar of Events  
Upcoming  
Theatrical Releases  
Trivia Quiz

## Toon Boom Studio V2: Going with the Flow

(continued from page 2)

### Larry Feign

Larry Feign is director of STVDIO Media Animation in Hong Kong. STVDIO used Toon Boom Studio V2 in their recent productions for Cartoon Network, Walt Disney Television International and Rugby Sevens, an annual international rugby tournament held in Hong Kong for which they produced a commercial for television and outdoor arenas. The company has also designed a flipbook for print using TBS V2. You can request a free copy by sending an email to [flipbook@stvdio.com](mailto:flipbook@stvdio.com) or by visiting [www.stvdio.com](http://www.stvdio.com)



STVDIO Media Animation created this animation Deedee for Cartoon Network using TBS V2. © Cartoon Network.

I very much like Toon Boom Studio V2. I was a bit unhappy with all the bugs in V1, which made it not very useful. Now most of those are fixed. We have used TBS V2 for a small number, but wide variety, of projects, including video, Web animations and even a print production! Although most reviewers tend to emphasize the multipane camera tools, we tend to use TBS V2 mostly for its excellent drawing tools.

Our primary use of Toon Boom Studio V2 is not for finished work, but for experimentation, particularly for instant line tests and background and layout sketching. Our animators, many of whom never used computers before, all immediately liked TBS V2 as a tool for experimenting and testing.



Presently, we are developing a new series for Disney in Asia, which requires us to come up with a wide variety of art styles and animation techniques. Since we are designing the series from scratch, we use TBS drawing tools to do a lot of freehand full-color sketching, and playing around with different cleanup styles and outline qualities. Plus it has been enormously useful in designing layouts. Of course, we could use Photoshop or other programs for the same purpose, but it's the rotating light table that makes all the difference for ease of drawing. We can sketch rough BGs and characters straight into the computer, and then by using TBS V2 colour pallettes, we can test different color schemes for BGs and characters all at the same time.

We are also working on a very ambitious short animation for Cartoon Network in India, which

More From Page One

[The Kids Are All Right](#)

[The Animation Pimp:  
Why is it NOT DONE?](#)

[Book Review:  
Animating Real-Time  
Game Characters](#)

[Career Coach:  
Revolution, Not  
Resolution](#)

Breaking News

[Jungle Book Take 2](#)

[JM Entertainment  
Toys With Feature](#)

[Bibi Is Big In Berlin](#)

[Sony Pictures  
Imageworks Is Using  
Its Alienbrain](#)

[ASU Fest Needs  
Animation](#)

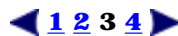


As an experiment, STVDIO created a flipbook with TBS V2. © STVDIO Media Ltd.

involves several Indian dance sequences. We use TBS V2 for instant line tests of the characters doing these very elaborate dance moves. We draw into TBS V2 straight ahead without extremes or sketch planning, making for very loose and organic dance movements, with instant playback. Using Toon Boom Studio V2 allows us to get a much better feeling for the flow and fluidity of the dance than paper-and-pencil line tests. What we end up with are some of the most artful and lovely line tests I've ever seen, done with real spontaneity and inspiration, and in far less time than drawing on paper and line testing with a camera.

We were given a very short time to create some animated sequences for a promotional video for the annual international rugby tournament in Hong Kong called Rugby Sevens. Not only was the deadline short, but the client wanted a heavy and rough line style to match the heavy and rough character, but in full animation. We animated traditionally on paper, then brought scans into TBS V2. We were easily able to achieve the desired line quality by inking fast and loose in TBS V2. We got the look we wanted and met the tight deadline thanks to Toon Boom Studio V2. Incidentally, these may be the largest animations ever made with TBS V2: their primary use is to show on giant outdoor screens at rugby and football stadiums in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe.

We have drawn a flipbook using TBS V2 almost exclusively. Very rough pencil animation was scanned and imported into TBS V2. All the inbetweening, cleanup and inking was done in Toon Boom Studios V2. This was meant as an experiment, but it came out beautifully. The pen tools and rotating drawing area made inking pleasurable, and, of course, the onion-skinning was essential. TBS V2 is not meant for print output though, so we had to export it to Flash, use Flash to export it to EPS, and then lay it out in Corel Draw.



[Post a Comment](#)

[back to Page One](#)

### 2 Comments Posted

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Thursday, February 13, 2003

Search

ANIMATION WORLD  
MAGAZINE  
Page One

SECTIONS

- People
- Profiles
- Reviews
- Tutorials

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Gaming
- Production
- Technology
- Voice Acting

COLUMNS

- Editor's Notebook
- Dr. Toon
- The Animation Pimp
- Producing Animation
- Career Coach
- Vilppu's How To
- Anime Reviews

ACROBAT VERSION

- Current Acrobat
- Issue
- Back Issues

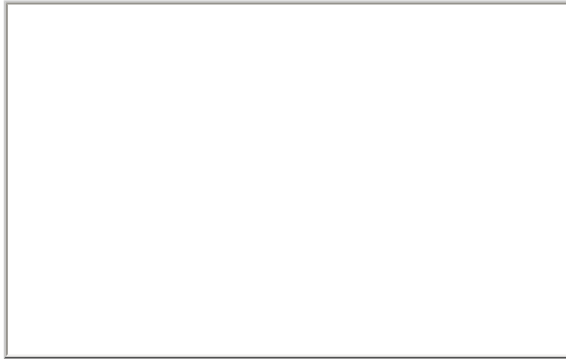
FIND

- Articles by Date
- AWN Media Kit
- Contact AWN

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- AWN Home
- AIDB - Animation Industry Database
- Headline News
- Career Connections
- Student Corner
- School Database
- AWN Store
- Animation Showcase
- Web Animation Guide
- Calendar of Events
- Upcoming Theatrical Releases
- Trivia Quiz

**Toon Boom Studio V2: Going with the Flow**  
(continued from page 3)



*Beetle Bailey* is brought to life on a project STVDIO produced for Mort Walker, creator of the classic comic strip. © King Features.

TBS V2 has several advantages over Illustrator, Freehand or Flash as a vector drawing program for drawing and inking cartoon characters. First, the pen palette is superb, like having a drawer full of different sizes and shapes of real pens, except the TBS V2 ones don't wear out or suddenly leave huge drips of ink on the page. The adjustable smoothing control in the pen settings is the best I've encountered in any program, and extremely

useful for a clean graphic look. And I can't emphasize enough what an advantage it is to be able to turn the artwork on-screen instead of having to contort one's hand on the tablet.

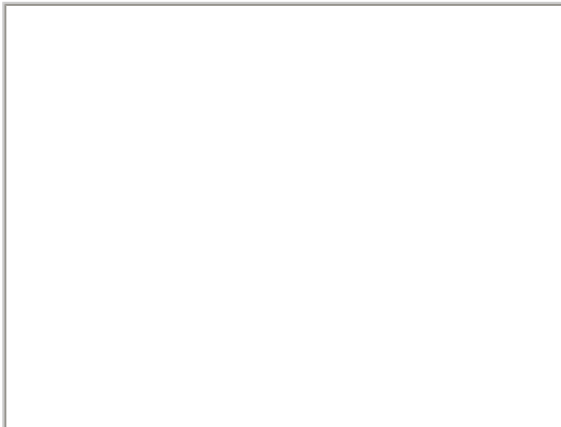
I also find that Toon Boom Studio V2's vectorizing of imported scanned line art is often better than Adobe Streamline, depending on the quality of the original drawings.



STVDIO created this promotion for Rugby Sevens, the annual international rugby tournament in Hong Kong. © Hong Kong Rugby Football Association.

I should point out here that I believe pencils, paper and erasers are still the best drawing tools known to mankind. But I have yet to find a better computer-based drawing or animating tool than TBS V2, even for print-related work.

I was actually surprised at how many features are in the program that were until now only available in the high-end animation programs like USAnimation and Animo. Of course, TBS V2 lacks special effects and is not meant for large-scale team projects. But for smaller productions, an individual has access to an amazing number of professional tools.



More From Page One

- [The Kids Are All Right](#)
- [The Animation Pimp: Why is it NOT DONE?](#)

- [Book Review: Animating Real-Time Game Characters](#)

- [Career Coach: Revolution, Not Resolution](#)

Breaking News

- [Jungle Book Take 2](#)
- [JM Entertainment Toys With Feature](#)
- [Bibi Is Big In Berlin](#)
- [Sony Pictures Imageworks Is Using Its Alienbrain](#)
- [ASU Fest Needs Animation](#)

**Toon Institute**

We'll continue to use TBS V2 for appropriate projects. When some of the remaining few shortcomings are solved, we'll probably end up using it a lot more for general production.

**Nate Pacheco**

*Nate is technical director for Renegade Animation, a leading producer of quality animation for some of the world's leading advertisers, software developers and video game makers, including Nike, McDonald's and Campbell's Soup.*

TBS V2 allows animators to draw with fluidity and spontaneity, as in this Indian dancing sequence that STVDIO Media Animation created for Cartoon Network.  
© Cartoon Network.

We have used Toon Boom on several of our recent projects, specifically a pilot we are doing for Cartoon Network, and a number of commercial projects. We looked at a lot of programs, and our technical director felt that the TBS V2 package had the most features that he liked. Our people especially like the camera package, and feel that it is "animator friendly" in the way the interface works. I think the more we use it the more surprisingly good things we find. We will continue to use it and plan to keep it in our studio's portfolio of software.

*Darlene Chan is managing editor of Animation World Magazine. After receiving a bachelor's degree from UCLA, Darlene happened into the motion picture business and stayed for 14 years. She served as a production executive for Paramount Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, Davis Entertainment and Motown. She produced Grumpy Old Men (1993) for Warner Bros. In 2001, she joined Animation World Magazine.*

Note: Readers may contact any Animation World Magazine contributor by sending an e-mail to [editor@awn.com](mailto:editor@awn.com).

◀ **1 2 3 4**

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**[back to Page One](#)**

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