

"Power Cat" from well known "Gold" series produced by Nancy St. John at Robert Abel & Associates. "Power Cat" won 1986 Clio award.

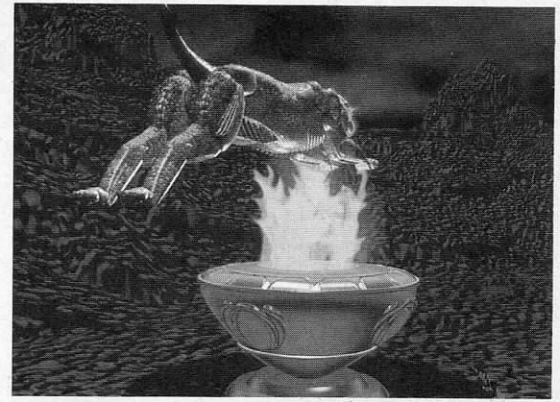
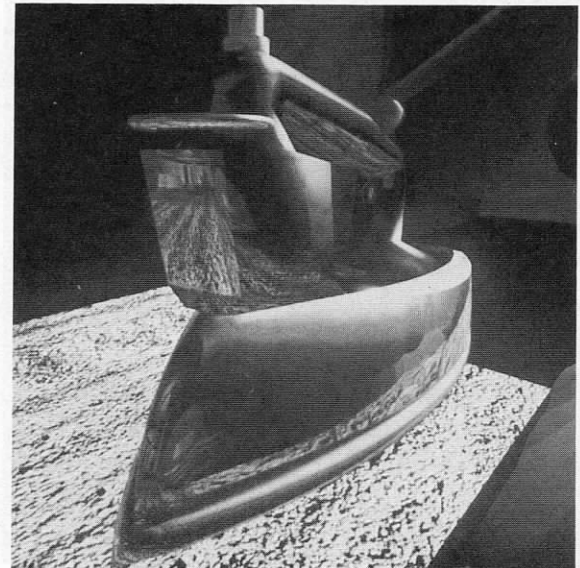


Image Research sold, and wrote a compositing program that was first used on the famous Sexy Robot commercial. Slean worked on the Robot animation in the "Hawaiian Punch" commercial. She is currently doing code for a full-color paint system called Artisan, developed at Media Logic in Santa Monica that runs on Sun and Iris workstations. When Cheryl is not writing code, she mixes her brains and beauty with her acting career.

The producer of the movie "War Games" called upon Judith Herman to program the display screens in the war room set. She was required to join the local Set Decorators Union to work on the project.

There is also another level of computer expertise needed in the production environment: The technical experts who operate the computers and understand all of the graphics software capabilities and limits. Called technical directors, they have been known to write extra code for unprecedented special effects on a deadline. Kathy White of *Reflection-mapped iron from Shelly Lake's "Polly Gone."*



WOMEN IN COMPUTER ANIMATION

By JOAN COLLINS

Not too long ago, the computer animation industry was perceived as a male-dominated field. But, since the introduction of computer graphics to the animation industry, some of the most outstanding computer graphics used in television commercials and special effects for movies have been produced by women. In fact, if you go back to the beginning, computer graphics got its start in the design divisions of the military. A lady named Raye Montague helped the US Navy pioneer CAD/CAM through the use of punch cards 23 years ago.

E. Jan Hurst, a freelance editor, recently had a proposal approved to document the "History of Computer Graphics." The project is funded by ACM/Siggraph (the Special Interest Group on computer Graphics) in cooperation with the Computer Museum of Boston. Her research is creating a compiled list of pioneers in computer graphics. "So far," Hurst says, "the list still represents a small fragment of everyone involved in the development of computer graphics. God knows how many there were. There are a few women on that list. One of the outstanding pioneers was Grace Marray Hopper, who was instrumental in developing COBOL, a programming language still used by the government. It is true that there are more women in computer graphics now than ever before."

Sherry McKenna was Executive Producer on Mick Jagger's "Hard Women" rock video which was animated at Digital Productions in 1986. Computer effects for the movie "The Last Starfighter" were also produced by McKenna. Sherry defined what it means to be an executive producer in computer graphics. She was the first and most influential. She also produced a stable of producers. Ellen Somers worked for

McKenna and now produces at Boss Films.

Nancy St. John came from Vertigo in Canada to work with Sherry on the "Hard Women" project, and is now a producer at Pacific Data-Images. The television commercial that is currently airing on Los-Angeles TV with a gold flute player advertising "94.7 the Wave", was one

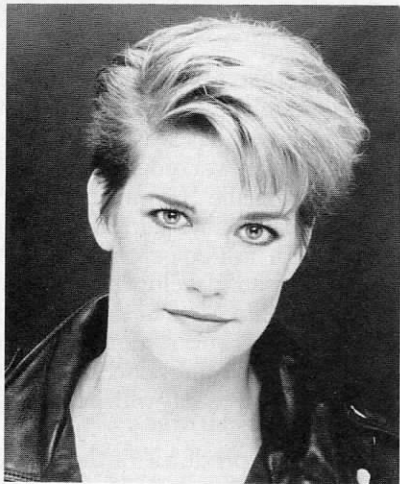


Nancy St. John, Marketing Director/Producer at Pacific Data Images of a series of "Gold" spots produced by St. John at Abel Image Research. She also produced a commercial for Hawaiian Punch that was broadcast just once in order to qualify for - and win - a Clio award. Nancy is currently producing a computer graphic character for Jim Henson's new Muppet show. This character is generated in realtime and actually interacts with the other Muppets. (See Hot Pixels on pg.6)

The community of computer hackers will argue that in a production environment it is not the producer who makes it all work, it's the programmers who code all of the graphics software. Cheryl Slean worked at Robert Abel's as a programmer developing code for the production software systems. This involved special purpose code for each job that came along. She also implemented software that Abel

Rhythm & Hues, and Christina Hills of NBC Magic Department, are two such technical directors who have seen their share of some pretty tough storyboards.

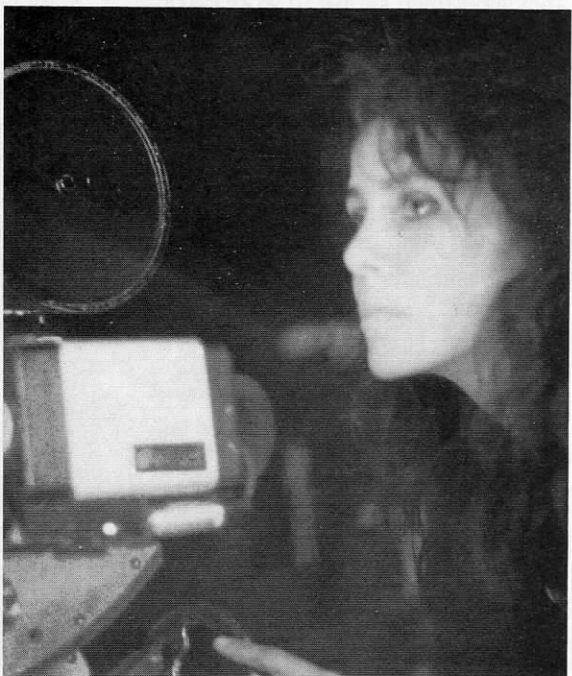
Some other great art directors/designers have been: Rebecca Allen, who directed "Musique Non-Stop"



Cheryl Sleam, graphics programmer.

for Kraftwerk out of New York-Institute of Technology, and Elyse Vaintrub, who created and produced "Deja Vu", an art animation which injected a new sensibility where mood and texture took precedence over technology.

Maura Dutra is a designer/director who most recently did two jobs at Rick Zettner & As-



sociates, one for AT&T and the other a surrealistic corporate identification spot for BASF. The spot features a live actor in a CGI environment with water and a flying bird with dozens of parts hierarchically animated on Zettner's Abel Image Research Iris. Dutra says, "It's been a struggle [being a women in the field]. It's a new concept. I don't think they think a women will be around for long." Dutra's been in the field now for eleven years. She intends to continue working on more CGI combo jobs with live action. The paint system operators are often involved with the overall look of the project. Joni Carter is well known for her series of art stills done for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Having worked with digital paint for years, she is currently working with Eastman Kodak's electronic photography division designing tapes for trade shows. Her Super Bowl image was published on the cover of USA Today Sports.

Shelley Lake received her Master of Science degree from M.I.T. in Visual Studies. From 1982 through 1986 she worked at Digital Productions where she was an animator on the "Last Starfighter." She has been a Fine Artist ever since. Lake has won three Clio awards. She built the elements and choreographed the scenes for her film "Polly Gone" shown at Siggraph and 10 other locations internationally. She took 2nd place in the recent New York International Film and TV Festival, and Grand Prize at Nicograph for her still art. Lake says "You see more women at the front end of computer graphics today. The medium was born of the military. People associate hi-tech with warfare. That attitude is still pervasive. As the role of the computer moves away from the hostile applications, you see more women coming to the forefront of technology." ■

Maura Dutra, Designer/Director, winner of many Clio awards for work on Levis and TRW commercials at Robert Abel & Associates, recently finished work on two spots for BASF at Rick Zettner & Associates.

WANDA WATKINS, COSTUME MAKER.

Interview with Wanda Watkins, costume maker, miniature costume maker, clothing designer and maker of some of the largest front projection screens in the effects industry.

Wanda is typical of the multi-talented women who have helped make the special effects industry run smoothly since its beginnings. She has a special talent with cloth, and has made miniature space suits that hold up well on camera. She has a real sense of pride and professionalism in her work and is not afraid to tackle a big job like making giant studio curtains where the yards of duvetene cloth she has to run through the industrial sewing machine weighs more than she does.

WANDA WATKINS

Q: Are you a wardrobe designer?

WW: I call myself a costume maker, actually. The designs of the costumes are usually dictated by various mechanicals, devices and puppets as well as the need to conceal other special effects apparatus that go on people.

I have done miniatures as well as people. The most recent was in *Bat 21* with Gene Hackman. I did miniature dolls in simulation of him jumping out of a plane.

Q: How did you get into working with costumes for special effects?

WW: I had a 20 year singing career and during that time I made a lot of costumes. I played Las Vegas and began making costumes for other performers as well. Then I got an opportunity to work on a special effects film. I enjoyed it and my avocation was sewing as opposed to my vocation which was singing. I am not actively performing at the moment so I am enjoying doing the costuming work, which I find very interesting. It is a challenge. The difficulty is making something that works when you are performing, that is compatible to your acrobatics and performing requirements and is comfortable and attractive. The challenge in special effects work is

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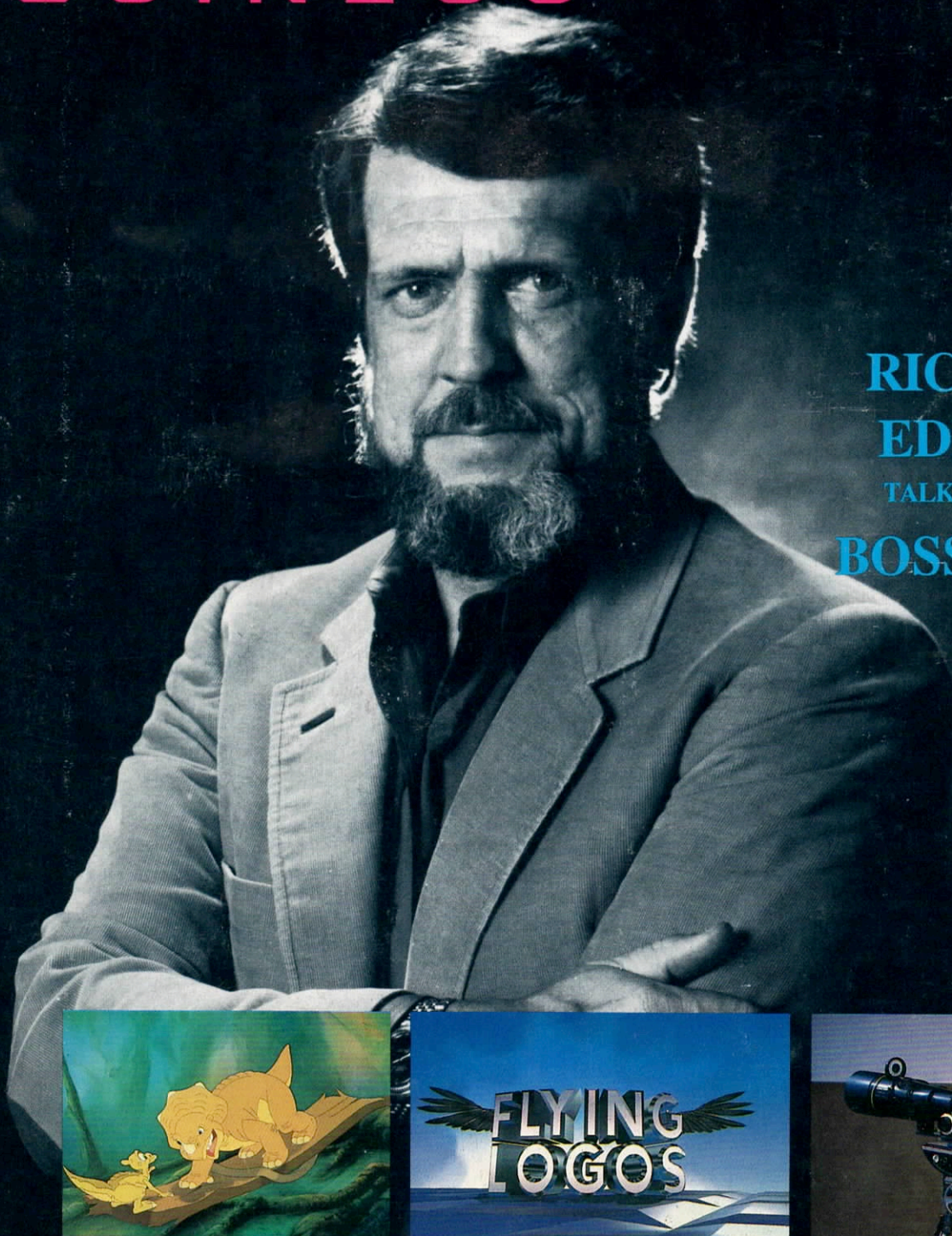
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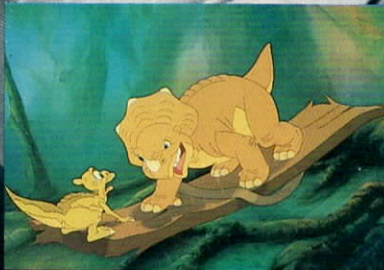
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