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Breaking the Mold

A: Most 3D CGI productions focus on what can be done quickly and without crashing the renderfarm. This means a propensity for clearly defined edges and simplifications that result in the look we've come to expect.

Q: What makes *Kaze*, *Ghost Warrior* look different?

A: It's more painterly. Soft edges and reduced contrast outside the centers of focus guide the audience's eyes to where you want them to be looking, just as artists are taught to do in painting composition classes.

Q: How does the film's animation style differ?

A: The animation is limited; I tried to spend my animation budget wisely, and keyframes are costly in terms of time. I used lots of moving holds, dramatic close-ups, and angles to tell the story, all of which allowed me to average only four hours of working time per scene.



Digital artist and CG filmmaker **Timothy Albee** is the creator of *Kaze*, *Ghost Warrior*, a 3D animated drama that he wrote and produced by himself for \$5000 while living in a remote area of Alaska. For more information

A: *Kaze* is a powerful drama. While American animation is recovering from the 'Saturday morning cartoon' perception of the '70s and '80s, it is still thought of mostly as a medium for comedy or children's programming.

A: By breaking the perception that homogeneity equals quality, every successful new style that the public embraces will whet their appetite for more.

A: The truly successful ones are made by visionary filmmakers, particularly those who have always wanted to see a particular film, and, as in the case of Peter Jackson, director of *The Lord of the Rings*, grew tired of waiting for someone else to make it. The best stories are not meant to be liked, nor understood, by everyone.

A: Absolutely. My experience with *Kaze* has shown me that the public is craving animated films and characters that respect their intelligence by delivering deep, powerful story lines. This is especially true as their 'real world' grows more challenging with each passing year.

A: Proof. Filmmaking is a business, and those guarding all the doors usually don't know what constitutes a good story and good storytelling. So they go with what has been successful in the past. We need a quiet revolution in which artists and storytellers are the ones shaping the visions that reach audiences.

A: The astronomical budgets of current filmmaking have made it so that most major film releases have to be liked by a huge number of people, otherwise they lose incredible amounts of money. Reducing the workforce per film, thereby increasing the number of films per artist, will show business-minded individuals that this kind of production environment is a better business model.

A: The full budget for the upcoming *Kaze* feature is well under \$10 million, and that's for a project that doubles or triples the production value of every aspect of the *Kaze* short film: animation, characters, environments, music. That price is a coffee break for most big-budget features, and could repay investors in the first weekend at the box office, even with a limited theatrical screening.

A: I am, along with others, at Timothy Albee Animation, a studio I just opened in Poland. I find myself drawn to the European cultures, and am fascinated by artists who have spent their entire lives surrounded by art history.



By revamping filmmaking's business model to give artists and storytellers more control, other revolutionary CGI projects like *Kaze* will emerge.

A: Nothing. In fact, I know several people who have already committed to taking that risk, and many others who are planning to do so. I believe there are 100 Walt Disneys out there who just need the right property or project to ignite their passion and allow them to believe in themselves.

A: I see the development of tools and techniques that will let smaller teams of artists produce greater visual quality. When we link smaller teams with funding and distribution, we'll get more unique stories. And artists will be able to choose projects based on things they enjoy most, as opposed to today's MO whereby animators have become the new migrant workers, choosing 'the best of the worst' jobs.

A: I hope to someday soon watch hundreds of animated films, spanning all the ranges of dreams and desires, made because they were the films their creators had wished to see. Eventually I will segue out of physically doing animation myself because the people who I will train will be able to do it much better, more quickly, and more effortlessly because they will not have experienced the struggles and frustrations that I have experienced in my career.

A: The first step is to successfully complete the *Kaze* feature, furthering the techniques used in the *Kaze* short. Then, we will open our doors to apprentices who have the passion for animation but not the resources to pay for school, and develop stories in-house that support mainstream and art-house productions.

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