

Abandon Bob Hope, All Ye Who Enter Here

2000, 7m, prod Quickdraw Animation Society, d Kevin Kurytnik

Merging Dante with Disney, Gustav Doré with Dagwood Bumstead, John Milton with Garfield the Cat, Kevin Kurytnik's divine comedic satire offers both a virtuoso performance of visual pastiche and a penetrating critique of cultural history. As Dante and his guide Virgie (a nearly featureless anthropomorphic squirrel) travel through the detritus of high and low culture, they encounter all manner of bizarre and troubling images from animation history. Their mock heroic pilgrimage also features an "Acolyte of Satan pitching another mediocre Christmas special." While this incredible journey takes place, Kurytnik's film itself appears as if it is about to implode, as its images and sounds are riven with the "rain" and grain of a battered old print. The film's style consists of scratchy storms of visual and aural static worthy of Guy Maddin or, more precisely, Japanese animator Ozamu Tezuka's brilliantly precarious masterpiece, *Broken Down Film*. Witty and withering in its assessment of the commercialization of the imagination, *Abandon Bob Hope* gives postmodernism a good name.

Du Big Bang à mardi matin

2000, 5m, prod National Film Board, d Claude Cloutier

Promising animator Claude Cloutier's kinetic and amusing five-minute version of evolution is a compression of impressions of thousands of years of earthly evolution and human history. From the primordial slime to a man stuck in traffic on a Tuesday morning, *Du Big Bang* is an accelerated animated chronicle of where we've come from and where we are now. Starting out with an abstract rendering of the bang itself, the visual motif of this odyssey is of a series of heads (reptilian, mammalian and human) emerging in slithering succession from the collar of a man's suit. Indeed, the animation style moves from abstraction to representation to abstraction again, as if to mirror the processes by which our world was formed. Sadly, the implications of that particular idea are not explored further in the film's hurtling toward the present. While some of the images are rather clichéd (for example, one "head" that emerges is in the shape of a computer terminal), Cloutier's film contains much humour (including a nod to *Wallace and Gromit* creator Nick Park) and is a thoughtful examination of that complex and vertiginous process called evolution.

Entre temps et lieu

1999, 7m, prod National Film Board, d René Jodoin

Computer-animation pioneer René Jodoin's (producer of *La Faim*, 1973, the first film made with the aid of a computer) latest work is a meditation on perception set to Québécois folk music and modern jazz. Rendered on an AMIGA 3000 computer, *Entre temps et lieu* consists of a series of beige-coloured rectangles, squares and circles that are put into interactive motion. These simple shapes collide, intersect, overlap and reconfigure on a black background while responding to the tonal shifts in the music. In the process, they reshape our perception of the frame itself and confound our attempts to impose an order on what it is we are seeing. As in other Jodoin films, the experiment is somewhat overextended and repetitive. And yet the film's Escher-like perceptual dance is lively and insistent, shattering its visual forms and rebuilding them in an ongoing Möbius strip of sound and vision. At its abstract best, Jodoin's oddly absorbing work enables us to see what we imagine at the very moment when we imagine what we see.

Black Soul

2001, 10m, prod National Film Board, d Martine Chartrand

Gorgeously animated in oil-on-glass and set to the music of Oliver Jones, Martine Chartrand's *Black Soul* is a vivid narrative of black history in Canada and the United States. Loosely structured as a grandmother's gradual revelation of black history to her grandson, the film depicts the horrors of slavery, the vicious exploitation and oppression of black people, the richness of the artistic and musical traditions of black culture and the need to preserve that culture in the midst of the forces of homogenization. From the slave ships to the plantations to the lynchings to the Underground Railroad to the jazz and blues clubs; the voyage is an extraordinary one. While it is occasionally and uncomfortably close to becoming an overly earnest, politically correct civics lesson, particularly when the famous Martin Luther King "I have a dream" speech is woven into the soundtrack, *Black Soul* is nonetheless a valuable animated assessment of the often terrible and often defiantly triumphant journey of black people through the tangled history of North America.



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