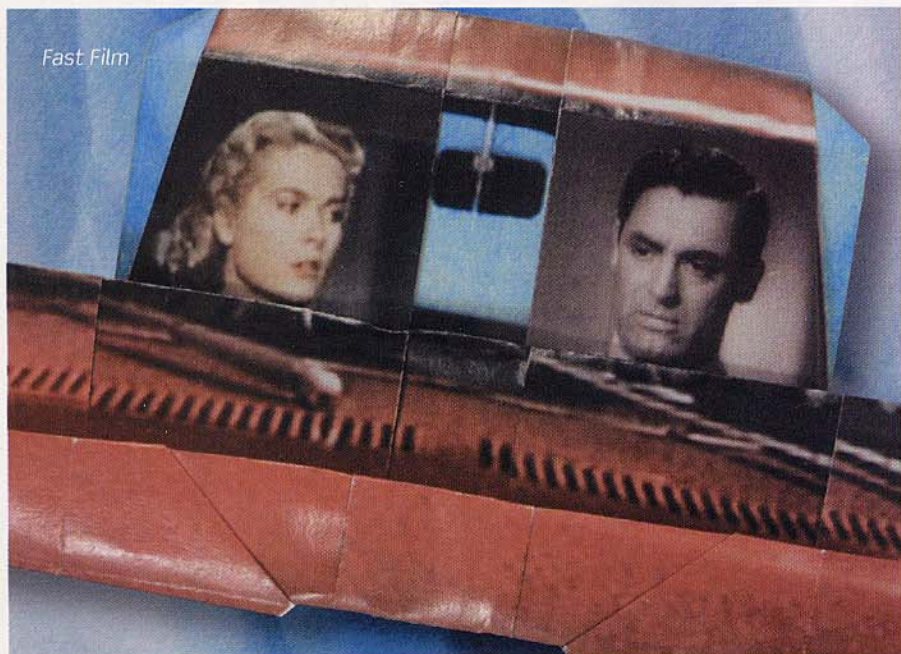


Fast Film



Short & Sweet

Two imaginative recent shorts are standing tall.

BY RAMIN ZAHED

Animators seem to be firm believers of that old Shakespearean quote about brevity being the soul of wit. Why else are we noticing so many amazing animated shorts that are simply bursting with creative energy and endless charm. Here are two instant attention-grabbers that have popped up on our radar.

We're going to go out on a limb and predict that Virgil Widrich's *Fast Film* is going to end up on a lot of Academy voters' short lists next March. The brilliant Austrian animator uses some 65,000 individual images from 300 classic Hollywood films. The short is 14 minutes long, but it uses shots from movies such as *King Kong*, *North by Northwest* and James Bond classics to weave a familiar tale. "The story is a classic three-acter," Widrich explains. "The hero wants the woman, who is kidnapped by the bad guys; the hero has to save the woman, and so he's trapped in the enemy's headquarters. He finally escapes with the woman, and in the big finale, they win

over all the bad guys, and it all ends in a big kiss."

To create the film, Widrich and his team of 12, spent a whole year taking individual images from various film prints and then folding them into figures. The objects were then assembled in various arrangements and a background was added so that four, five and up to 30 different films could be visible within a single shot. Using a printer, toner, Adobe After Effects, folding tools, scissors, a Canon EOS D30 digital still camera and Maxtor hard disks, the team crafted an amazing tour de force, which cost about 180,000 Euros to produce and serves as a highly complicated valentine to old Hollywood. But why does this strange cinematic pastiche move us so effectively? Widrich has the perfect explanation: "The films we love become our friends and are stored in the same place in our brain where we keep the memories of people we once knew!"

Also this summer, at the first Los

Angeles Hypefest, audiences were treated to an eccentric little animated video created by Tandem Films for the band Lemon Jelly's single *Nice Weather for Ducks*. The psychedelic piece uses textural sources such as wallpapers, Art Nouveau illustrations and period designs to get us into the imaginative mind of a tramp. When a magical raindrop falls from the sky, it unleashes a parade of colorful images. Ducks, rabbits and other park critters dance around with the tramp, as Lemon Jelly's infectious lyrics "All the ducks are swimming in the water...Falderaldorald, falderaldorald" bounce along with the images.

Animation director Nigel Pays worked with Airside to create this mini-fantasy. "The best part of the job was doing something that was obviously different right from the off," he says. With a \$70,000 budget and a six-week production timeline, Tandem used 3ds max for the creation of the landscape backgrounds, Flash for the animal animations, and live-action for the tramp character, treated and composited in After Effects.

And the driving inspiration behind the video? "The idea came from Airside," says the director. "They wanted to create a narrative which got its clues from the original inspiration of the song itself. The idea that something can come out of nothing and inspire you to take a spiritual or self-fulfilling journey, and that it can happen to anyone, even you."

The animated ducks nod their heads in unison. ■

