

You work with a fairly small team. If, for instance, we were to compare the animation studio you're presently working in with The Disney Studio where they are working in much larger teams...

The reason they would be working with such large numbers is that they have deadlines. At the NFB it's not necessarily like that. I can make my film entirely by myself, or I can work with a large crew. But the type of films I make don't require large crews. **The Sand Castle** was made entirely from start to end, except for the music and editing, by myself. There are two people working with me on **Le grotocéen**. But the fact is I've learned to master a number of things. I can do the camera work and lighting so it's not always necessary to have a lot of help.

Did you come to Canada expecting to find work at the Film Board, and hoping to work there in a personal way, and have the opportunity to develop.

No. There were a number of different reasons I came to Canada. For one, the adventure. I was still young enough to want to find out what the other side of the world was all about. Another reason was that living conditions in Holland were rather difficult. When you're young and want to start a family, living accommodation there is difficult to come by. So we just decided to try another country.

The Sand Castle

d: Co Hoedeman, ph: Co Hoedeman, ed: Jacques Drouin, sd: Co Hoedeman, re-rec: Jean-Pierre Joutel, m: Norman Roger, Administration: Jacqueline Marquis, p: Gaston Sarault, p.c. National Film Board (1977) col: 16mm blown up to 35 mm, running time: 13 minutes, 12 seconds.

Sandcastle is a delightful animated children's film. The central character in the story is the Sandman, who is revealed by the wind and the drifting sand. He comes to life and molds himself a mate and a whole menagerie of funny and sometimes erotic creatures. They romp around the sand-dunes and together build a sandcastle which is to be their home. Inevitably the wind returns and threatens; their time has come. Soon they are covered by drifting sand and the cycle is complete.

A simple story, but then the best ones are.

The film uses standard puppet animation techniques of molding the form of the character over a wire frame. This allows for the puppet to be rigid while filming one frame at a time but pliable enough for the animator to make the desired movements.

However, this film did not break away from the limitations that seem to be imminent in puppet-animated films. The timing and 'pacing' (acting) tends to be too mechanical. Some of the creatures could have moved a lot faster to contrast with the heavier, slower ones. In a film without dialogue it is only movement which gives us



Hoedeman arranging a love dance.

an insight into personality. Puppet animators shy away from "extreme actions" (Distortions of the character for one or two frames of the film to add punch to a movement.) I wonder why? Because this is common practice with 'all animators'. Unfortunately the music did nothing to alleviate this situation and tended to plod along and serve as nothing more than background filler.

However, these observations should not detract from the tremendous creative and technical effort that Co Hoedeman has put together to produce this film. It truly earns its success.

This year the voting precedents for the Academy Awards were changed for the animated and live short subjects. Only peer groups were allowed to cast votes for the winners this year. A great improvement over previous years, where, although peer groups would nominate nominees the final voting was thrown open to the entire Academy, many of whom had not even seen the short subjects.

So we can look forward to the NFB being a regular winner of Oscars from now on.

Michael Mills

Michael Mills is a Montreal-based animator who has made, among other films, "The Happy Prince".

You and your wife?

Yes. And it happened to be Canada because I felt most sympathetic towards Canada. In addition, of course, I knew the National Film Board was here, but I didn't set my hopes on working here. In the back of my mind though, I wanted to continue filmmaking. As it happened, within the first two weeks of our arrival it was settled, and I began working here.

Would you be able to work the way you do if you were not at the NFB.

I don't think I can answer that because I never really tried to work outside the Film Board. But I have seen how other people do it. We are in an incredibly favorable situation; I don't have to hunt for money in order to express my free ideas. I don't have to sacrifice my ideas to please a producer, or an investor for that matter.

In your lifetime, are you going to have time, artistically speaking, to make something other than animation films?

I think I'll probably always do animation films. But life has much more to offer than just filmmaking. Being on the farm with our animals — my wife is a farmer — is one step in that direction. I love photography and darkroom work, things like that. Whatever I do, I'm a professional filmmaker, and I love making films. But not 24 hours a day. □