



ANIMATION WORLD NETWORK

Mind Your Business: Partnering on *Princess and the Frog*

by msimon



Premise helped make *The Princess and the Frog* pop. Images courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures.



**Dominic Carola, owner of
Premise.**

<http://www.awn.com/print/articles/mind-your-business-partnering-princess-and-frog?page=0%2C1>

2D animated features are back and in a big way. Disney explodes back into the marketplace with a beautiful and funny feature, *The Princess and the Frog* [2]. At the screening I was in, the audience applauded at the end. That's a sure fire sign of a movie that will have legs.

A few years ago, Disney consolidated all their traditional animation production back to Burbank. So, how did they ramp back up for this feature? They partnered with a few independent studios.

In a non-descript Orlando office complex in the shadow of their former employer, Disney Feature Animation, the artists at Premise Ent. (www.PremiseEntertainment.com [3]) partnered with Disney to provide a significant contribution to *The Princess and the Frog*. I contacted the crew in Orlando and asked them about their work on this project.

Dominic Carola is the owner of Premise Entertainment and the head of production for the work they did with Disney. He spent more than a decade at Disney Feature Animation in Orlando as an animator working on such films as *Mulan* [4], *Lilo & Stitch* [5], *Brother Bear* [6] and others.

"We were very fortunate to work with our colleagues again," said Carola. "We received sections of the film that really turned out to be great sequences which are featured throughout the movie. We had an incredible clean up team on this picture, and top-rated teams in effects, backgrounds, and ink and paint artists. It was truly a pleasure to contribute to this beautiful film and work with so many talented artists.



Pam Darley, artistic coordinator at Premise.

Premise spent about one year working on Princess. The scope of what they first produced was from clean-up. The California production offices sent scenes which had been mostly keyed. The Premise artists did many from clean-up to FX follow-up to complete backgrounds and ink and paint and compositing.

Pam Darley, artistic coordinator at Premise, described the process, "They prepped the data. They sent us a shot, we cleaned it up, we did the scanning for it, we prepped it, we comped it, we sent it back, they did some work on it and then we got it back for effects. There's a lot of back and forth with the data."

Darley said Premise used more than a dozen seats of Toon Boom's Harmony animation software, having moved away from their proprietary CAPS system a few years ago. As artistic coordinator, Darley answered the crew's process questions for clean-up and effects, Harmony questions and set-ups the artists may not have been familiar with in the system. Plus, she served as department head for ink and paint and scanning so that means prepping all the shots for them and pitching in wherever she was needed.

"The thing that's really great about Harmony," Darley continued, "is that it has indexed color, so that you can modify the palettes post ink and paint. Colors across an entire scene can be changed even after it is completed. The thing that's great about working in a smaller studio is that the people tend to be multi-talented. You have to be able to jump in and help out where you can because it is a much smaller crew."



David Wang, department head of backgrounds at Premise.

Part of that crew included Premise's head of backgrounds, David Wang. Wang is another Disney Feature alumnus with credits that include Pocahontas, Mulan, Lilo & Stitch and Brother Bear.

When painting the backgrounds, Wang said, "I am using Photoshop with an Intuos tablet, not a Cintiq. The Cintiq is too close to me as I paint. I can have more space from the monitor using the tablet."

Even standing there, watching Wang paint, I couldn't believe how incredible the art was using a standard tablet. Wang's small crew of background painters worked on many sequences throughout the film.

Premise provided a lot of visual effects follow-up on the production, headed by their effects department head, Tony West, another long-time Disney Feature Animation vet. "We did maybe around 200 effects shots," West said. "We've been doing a lot of tones and shadows. We've also had a chance to do some pretty cool organic effects like a giant wave and bubbles and splashes and ripples and highlights. I actually had an opportunity to do something I've never done before after 20 years in the business and that was animate snot. We did two shots of snot."

To produce the effects, Tony's crew worked digitally on Cintiqs in Toon Boom's Harmony. Added West, "It's nearly perfect for effects in my opinion. I love it. Even on my first digital scene, I was able to draw effects about 1/3 faster than on paper."



Tony West, department Head of effects at Premise. Effects animator Enoc Castaneda is in the background.

Carola concluded: "I think it's fantastic that there is such terrific talent still here in Orlando that we can continue to work here and by utilizing today's technology, you don't have to be in the same city where the production is headquartered. That's one of the best things that has happened in the last eight years. People can now live where they want to live but still have opportunities to work on a great production and maintain relationships with good people they work with long distance. It is a wonderful feeling to be associated with a project of this quality."

To hear more of my interviews with the artists at Premise Ent., you may listen to the 20 minute interview podcast at <http://www.SellYourTvConceptNow.com/frog.html> [7].

Mark Simon is an award-winning animation director. He is co-founder of www.SellYourTvConceptNow.com [8], the ultimate resource for TV show creators. His animations may be seen at www.FunnyToons.tv [9].

Links:

[1] <http://www.awntv.com/playlist/the-princess-and-the-frog-playlist>

[2] <http://www.awn.com/articles/2d/goldberg-deja-and-smith-talk-princess-and-frog>

[3] <http://www.premiseentertainment.com/>

[4] <http://www.awn.com/mag/issue3.4/3.4pages/3.4kleinmulannotmp.html>

[5] <http://www.awn.com/articles/review/disneys-magic-returns-lilo-stitch>

[6] <http://www.awn.com/articles/review/fraternal-obligation-disney-revisits-animal-picture-ibrother-beari>

[7] <http://www.sellyourtvconceptnow.com/frog.html>

[8] <http://www.sellyourtvconceptnow.com/>

[9] <http://www.funnytoons.tv/>