



## DON BLUTH: BRINGING BACK HAND-DRAWN ANIMATION

In [A&E, Latest News](#) by Victoria Davis September 22, 2016

After a sixteen year hiatus, Don Bluth, the director for animated films like *The Land Before Time*, *All Dogs Go To Heaven*, *Anastasia* and more, is back, hoping to revive the art of hand-drawn animation in a generation of CGI. In the 1980s, Bluth worked on a video game called *Dragon's Lair*, one of only three video games to be archived at the Smithsonian Institute. Now Bluth and fellow animator Gary Goldman are working to bring *Dragon's Lair* to the big screen as a full-length feature film. The 70-year-old artists

are crowd-funding through Indiegogo to create a sizzle reel, or a short movie portion, to present to potential investors. Already having raised \$621,348, it looks like the *Dragon's Lair* revival might be possible, but can the same be said for hand-drawn animation?

Point Loma Nazarene film professor Rick Moncauskas has worked at PLNU for almost 12 years and runs the TV studio and radio station here on campus. "I've always been a fan of animation," said Moncauskas. "If it has a good story, then I think it [*Dragon's Lair*] deserves to be on a big screen." Though 2D animation is still around, it rarely goes beyond television. However, Moncauskas believes that a revival is possible. "Some believe that CGI animation is cold and that hand-drawn animation has a warmth to it that CGI doesn't have," said Moncauskas. "CGI looks like a machine made it, not a human. But maybe CGI animation will get better."

And it is. PLNU Alumni Jason Carter has worked for Dreamworks and Disney, helping to create more advanced and sophisticated 3D animation. Carter's latest project is Microsoft's HoloLens, or holograms. HoloLens will allow movie fans and gamers to be on the set and in the environment of their favorite games and films right in their own rooms. "He told me it was going to change the world," said PLNU film Professor Alan Hueth of Carter's project. "3D animation is highly immersive and holograms will be even more immersive." Hueth believes that our generation is so accustomed to the high quality of CGI, that to go back to hand-drawn animation seems primitive. "Empathy is the most powerful of emotions and the realism of CGI draws audiences into the films, allowing them to experience those emotions," said Hueth. "However, it's the story that makes a film really take off. I emphasize story in every form of television and film."

Although *Dragon's Lair* may have a generic story backbone, meaning a princess is kidnapped by a dragon and a brave knight goes on a quest to rescue her, fans have reason to believe Bluth will bring a new and unique angle to the story that will capture the "empathy" of viewers. Joshua Tonies, a media illustration and digital animation professor at UC San Diego said he is very enthusiastic about the Bluth project. "I always appreciated the way Bluth's films confronted the darker and more complex moments of human experience," said Tonies. "I remember playing *Dragon's Lair* in the arcade as a tween and was completely won over by the memorable design and humor of Bluth's character animation."

Braden Haycock, a senior media communication and film production student at PLNU, said that though amazing things can be done with CGI animation, there's something equally remarkable about hand-drawn animation. "It was the first form of animation we had," said Haycock. "It began a golden age of Disney films that we still love watching today." Haycock said that there are many hand-drawn animators that never made the

transition to CGI and who have been sitting and waiting for an opportunity like Bluth's project to come along. "I think it will start with nostalgia, but if the project succeeds, hopefully there will be a push from within the production community to bring back this whole market that we've lost," said Haycock. "I definitely see a revival in traditional animation."

Haycock and Hueth both hope that the Don Bluth project will inspire a new program to emerge at PLNU that is a joint venture between the media communications department and the art department, eventually teaching students how to be film and television animators. "There's a lot of amazing artists out there that would thrive in the film industry," said Haycock. Hueth added, "I hope Bluth's project succeeds because it will mean more jobs for animators." Courtney Mayer, an art professor at PLNU, agreed that the art of hand-drawn animation is in "high demand" and that, in combination with modern software and animation technology, it makes the process "much more efficient than traditional pencil to paper."

Not only does Don Bluth's project have the opportunity to revive the art of hand-drawn animation in a generation of CGI, but also to show the world that there is room for both. "Every animation concept starts with a drawing," said Tonies, "This project has enabled the resurrection of many beloved intellectual properties."