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Mind Your Business: What Kind of Animation Do You Like?

In this month's "Mind Your Business," Mark Simon reveals the surprising results of his animation survey (hint: the big winner isn't mocap).

I love cartoons. I produce cartoons. I wear cartoon clothes. My office is filled with cartoons. I got to thinking about how other artists think about animation.

Over 300 of you filled out my Animation Survey (Thank you!). As always the results were fascinating, as many of the results do not follow popular opinion.

So let's take a walk through the minds of you crazy animators and see what makes you tick.

First of all, over three quarters of the survey-takers were men. That either means that more men watch cartoons, more men work in the animation industry, or men watch too many cartoons, never get laid, and have enough time on their hands to fill out online surveys.

For a long time I have proclaimed that I prefer classic hand-drawn animation. It felt like I was alone when reading the trades, where every article covered mostly CG animation and more recently Flash animation. I refused to believe that I was alone in wanting to see great hand-drawn animation. That was the reason behind the survey question, "What is your favorite type of animation to watch?"

The styles of animation available to choose from were 2D classic, 2D Flash, CG cartoony, CG realistic, motion capture and stop motion.

The results were dramatic. More than half of the survey-takers preferred 2D classic animation. More than all the other styles of animation combined, you the viewers still prefer hand-drawn animation. *Do you hear this, studios and networks? Hand-drawn animation is not dead!*

Sony Imageworks and [Beowulf](#) director Robert Zemeckis spent over \$150 million producing a motion-capture CG animation movie. Want to know what scored the lowest in the survey of favorite animation styles? Motion-capture CG animation. Barely 2% of the survey-takers prefer this style of animation. It would seem that this is not a good investment.

All the networks are investing heavily in Flash animation because of the lower cost, and the look of Flash is constantly improving. Curious how it rated? Terribly. Fewer than 3% of the respondents prefer watching Flash animation.

OK. Maybe motion capture (mocap) and Flash animation are not popular to watch. But maybe artists and animators like working on them? Maybe that's why there are so many mocap and Flash productions. Right?

Wrong. Mocap and Flash are also the least favorite styles to work on. Fewer than 2% of you prefer working on mocap productions and fewer than 8% prefer working in Flash.

Your favorite style of animation to work in? Classic hand-drawn 2D animation. Again, more than half of you prefer working with a pencil (or at least a digital pencil). Everyone seems to love cartoons. The second most-popular style to work in is CG cartoony.

LAIKA/House, Chiodo Bros. and other stop-motion studios should be happy to see that people prefer to watch and work on stop-motion animation more than mocap and Flash productions combined.

So why don't we see more of the types of animation we actually want to see? Because studios make decisions based on faulty information. When a few 2D animations lost money at the box office, the style was blamed instead of the story. It would make more sense to pay more attention to the story and then produce projects in the styles of animation that people prefer to watch.

But then again, that would make too much sense.

When questioned about animation software, the clear winner was Adobe Photoshop. The most popular CG software is Maya and the most popular 2D animation is Toonboom.

The most popular write-in software was TV Paint Animation, as it's now known. This software is not widely used in the United States. TV Paint Animation used to be called Mirage. I couldn't find any U.S. distributors on their website.

Not surprisingly, the most popular editing software is Adobe Premiere, followed by Final Cut.

I had a personal stake in the question on storyboarding, since that's my favorite part of production. Most board artists still work on paper and those who work on the computer mostly scan in their boards to Photoshop.

The most popular storyboarding software is Photoshop (70%), Flash (26%), Painter (11.5%) and Toonboom Storyboard Pro (10.6%).

With newer and cheaper versions of the [Wacom Cintiq](#) tablets now available, I expect to see more artists boarding digitally. I predict this will lead to a great gain in popularity for Toonboom's Storyboard Pro.

Of course with all this animation being produced, I wanted to find out where all of you prefer to find and watch animation shorts. Most of you watch animation on YouTube, followed by DVDs and television. Festivals, AWW and Atom Films are also popular. Your write-in ideas taught me about a lot of other sources of animation shorts of which I was not aware, such as the very creative Flash animation site, New Grounds.

Cartoons make the world a better place. We can all do our part by animating and by vegging out in front of our TV.

There are a lot of ways to animate. Different software, different pencils and different means of viewing cartoons. The one thing all animations have in common is an artist who wants to share his or her story with the world in a creative way.

View the entire summary of the [animation survey](#).

Mark Simon is an award-winning animation producer/director and speaker. He also helps people to sell their shows with consultations, samples and training. His latest product to help creatives is the [TV Pitch School Home Study Course](#). He may be reached at marksimonbooks@yahoo.com.