# (RE)DEFINING LOCAL ANIMATION: AN EXPLORATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN ANIMATION IN TERMS OF LOCAL PRODUCTION, LOCAL RELEVANCE AND LOCAL OWNERSHIP

ARABELLA ROGERSON

RGRARA001


SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**MA IN FILM STUDIES**

**SUPERVISOR:** DR IAN-MALCOLM RIJSDIJK

FEBRUARY 2023

## ABSTRACT

There is a pressing need to better understand how we speak about South African animation and what we mean by it. This study interrogates three particular interpretations of South African animation in order to build a multifaceted and nuanced understanding of the industry, its outputs and its value. Using a qualitative research approach, this study investigates South African animation in terms of content that is made within South Africa, content that is relevant to South Africa and content that is owned by South Africa. In extension, this research underscores the intricate interplay between supply and demand factors, production conditions, and production environments that shape the dynamics of the local animation industry.

This research offers a new framework for discussing animated texts from the lens of the production landscape which departs from the more prevalent textual analysis approach and discussions of narrative, iconography, and representation. Ultimately, this research serves to contribute towards the efforts to reposition Africa and its creative outputs within the global animation conversation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my parents for their endless support and patience during the course of this long process. Thanks also to Skye, Dawn and Robbie Norfolk and to Lulu White for their love, encouragement and invaluable inputs.

I must also extend my utmost gratitude to all the many industry experts who gave of their time and contributed towards this research thesis. Finally, the University of Johannesburg is acknowledged and thanked for their funding support throughout my academic journey.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

## LIST OF TABLES



## LIST OF FIGURES

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Animation has many forms, many functions, and many definitions. As a mode, animation is characterised by its plasticity and its potential for continuous transformation which makes its parameters largely undefinable and its associated technologies, ever evolving.[1] On a foundational level, animation can be understood as the creation of moving images with the help of technology. As a tool, animation includes processes such as 2D, 3D, Visual Effects (VFX) and more recently, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). Its reach is pervasive as animation has become progressively more integral to many different sectors of our society including the entertainment industry, the gaming industry, the advertising and marketing industry, the architecture and engineering industry among several others. Nearly twenty years ago, animation scholar Paul Wells remarked that animation is "the omnipresent pictorial form of the modern era" (2002:1). With the design and development of Mark Zuckerberg's 'Metaverse' (as well as multiple other metaverses) well underway through immersive animation technologies, Wells's sentiment seems to ring truer for animation today and going forward than perhaps ever before.

Aside from its more glamourous role at the forefront of the fourth industrial revolution, animation and its specific function within the film and television space is perhaps still the role for which it is most synonymous and most beloved. Within this story telling domain, animation acts as a medium through which to entertain, inform, and educate. Long dismissed as merely a reductive 'cartoon' medium for children's entertainment or a "poor second relation" to live-action (Wells, 2002: 3), animation can be understood in opposition to its live-action counterpart[2] and has received, and continues to receive, growing global recognition as a visual language with a unique and legitimate place in scholarship (Darley, 2007: 63; Wells, 1998;

[1] Philip Kelly Denslow, for example, highlights how any definition for animation faces challenges from new developments in the technology used to produce and distribute it by posing the following questions: "Is virtual reality a form of animation? Does computer-generated lifeform simulation qualify? What about the computerized recording of a mime's movements that are later attached to a character which is rendered a frame at a time? Do digital post-production techniques allowing for undetectable compositing and manipulation of live action scenes reduce the shooting of actors into film to merely an image acquisition phase of overall production? Is that production then in reality an animated film?" (1997: 1-2). Denslow goes on to ask further, "Is the determining factor for something to be considered animation the actual existence of separate frames? If a computer is dealing with separate images internally, but to the artist or viewer these frames are always seen as part of constant motion, can this still be animation? If it is easy to create quickly, will it be considered animation, or something else, such as electronic puppetry?" (1997: 4).

[2] This notion of animation is premised upon Paul Wells's (1998) understanding of the term, and which also follows the definition for animation offered by The Association of International Film Animation (ASIFA) which Denslow notes might be summed up as "not live action" (1997: 2).

Furniss, 2014: 3-4). Owing to its neglect within academia, a significant number of more recent studies have been devoted to detailing and recalling the multiple histories of animation and celebrating the exceptional works of artists and filmmakers working in the medium – from the pioneers of animation such as Émile Cohl[3], Berthold Bartosch[4], J. Stuart Blackton[5], Winsor McCay[6] and Lotte Reiniger[7] to influential figures such as Victor Bergdahl[8], Viking Eggeling[9], the Fleischer brothers[10], Walt Disney[11], Chuck Jones[12] and Hayao Miyazaki[13]. The contributions of these internationally renowned and acclaimed animation talents, among many others, have served to illustrate the extent of animation's diverse graphic vocabulary and the inception and growth of animation studios around the world throughout the last century have laid the foundations for the truly global animation industry that now thrives in the 21st century.

The contributions of African creators and animated creative outputs to this global industry are however significantly overlooked, under researched and in some cases, entirely disregarded from the animation discourse. Anthologies of animation such as Jerry Beck's *Animation Art* (2004) for example, have contributed towards the erasure of animation from the continent since his anthology claims to "tell the tale behind the toons…" in a "complete, concise chronicle of an artform's legacy" in which "it is all covered" (Beck, 2004: 7) although Africa sees absolutely no mention. This problematic omission of Africa serves to develop and reinforce the misplaced notion that African animation does not exist and/or is too primitive in its form to be considered alongside American, European, and Asian equivalents (Callus, 2008). In order to counter the marginalised status of African animation and to dispel assumptions related to its low visibility, scholarship serves a crucial role.

Following Maria Silvia Bazzoli (2003), animation from the African content has seen limited and irregular documentation (see also Bendazzi 2004; Edera 1996; Emongo 2001). Despite its

[3] See Wells (1994) and Beck (2004). Cohl is regarded by many as the father of animation. He created the first animated film using what came to be known as traditional animation methods in *Fantasmagorie* (1908) (Furniss 2014, 77).
[4] See Pilling (1997) and Moritz (1999a).
[5] See Wells (1994) and Beck (2004)
[6] See Crafton (1993: 11) and Canemaker (1987).
[7] Reiniger is a seminal stop-motion filmmaker and inventor of the multiplane camera which Disney was hugely influenced by. See Pilling (1992).
[8] See Beck (2004: 27).
[9] See O'Konor (1971) and Pilling (1997).
[10] See Wells (1994) and Raffaelli (1997).
[11] See Raffaelli (1997), Wells (2002), Smoodin, E. (1994), Wells (2002) and Bell et al. (1995).
[12] See Beck (2004) and Wells (2002).
[13] See Raffaelli (1997), Koyama-Richard (2010), MacWilliams (2015) and Napier (2000).

inadequate academic acknowledgment however, many animation industries are growing and thriving on the continent such as in Nigeria (James, 2020; Duruaku, 2013), Madagascar (Dupré, 2015; Sawadogo, 2019), Kenya (Ogutu, 2019), Egypt (Al Shafi'a, 2003; Ghazala, 2017) as well as the focus for this study, South Africa.

Whilst the live-action industry of South Africa has received considerable scholarly attention (See for example, Tomaselli, 1979; Botha, 2007; Maingard, 2007), available literature on the South African animation landscape is particularly limited (Sawadogo, 2019). Few scholars have examined or discussed South African animation outputs and even fewer studies have investigated the operations of the local industry at large. This research therefore broadly aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the South African animation ecosystem and unpacking the very notion of 'South African animation' in terms of content that is made within South Africa, content that is relevant to South Africa and content that is owned by South Africa. By extension, this research serves to contribute towards the effort to relocate Africa and its creative outputs within the global animation conversation.

**Background**

South Africa's animation industry is one of the most well established on the continent although relative to major international markets, the local industry is small. Despite its size, the industry has been acknowledged locally as a rapidly growing part of the Audio-Visual and Interactive Media (AV&IM) sector (SACO, 2019; The Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, 2017: 24). Broadly speaking, the services offered by the local industry comprise 2D, 3D and VFX content development for the broader animation sectors including television, films, advertisements, and interactive media and games, with most local companies offering animation services to more than one particular sector.

For the last decade or so, South Africa has not been recognised as a significant contributor towards the global creative economy and has rather found itself positioned amongst other African nations and Asian countries such as Malaysia and Singapore as an 'emerging animation industry' that "chiefly focuses on serving international markets" (Urban-Econ Development

Economists, Gillis & The Home of Nation, 2014: 19).[14] The local VFX sector of the industry is a core contributor to this positioning as the likes of BlackGinger, Wicked Pixels, and Refinery, among several others, have generated great success servicing the live-action industry in the international film and television market (as well as the local market to a lesser degree).[15]

Beyond VFX, the South African animation industry is driven largely by economic partnerships with the advertising industry (both locally and abroad). Within the entertainment space, servicing also presides as the primary form of work with several studios operating as offshore animation service companies outsourced by major international clients including the likes of Disney, the BBC, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network. In addition to service work, a growing number of studios in South Africa also create original entertainment content. Whilst animation servicing offers significant benefits to the local industry by means of skills development and crucial network building opportunities, the production of original intellectual property (IP) has been identified as the primary goal of many studios working in the entertainment space since it affords local studios and local artists creative control over the stories they want to tell and how those stories are to be told. In addition, owning the rights to the work a studio produces also enables studios to generate revenue from the exploitation of their IP which, in turn, offers a way for companies to become self-sustaining well into the future. It is for this reason that the conversation around the ownership of animation productions is critical.

Through the provision of different animation services, the overall animation industry serves a key economic role within South Africa as a driver of local economic growth and employment generation (SACO, 2019; SACO, 2022). Animation production is very labour intensive and long form narrative animation in particular involves lengthy processes for concept creation, pre-production, production and postproduction. As such, relative to live-action, animation offers considerably longer production cycles and employs between 5 and 10 times more people and for longer period of times – the average live-action production cycle "typically spans 10 to 15 weeks as opposed to the average animation cycle of up to 18 months" (Urban-Econ Development Economists et al., 2014: 15). With the country's unemployment rate at 33,9% in

[14] Countries that have been recognised to generate creative contribution to the global animation industry include Japan, USA, France, Germany, Canada, India, and Australia all of which have very well-established animation industries (Urban-Econ Development Economists, Gillis & The Home of Nation, 2014: 19).
[15] Other notable mentions include Motif Studios, Polycat Visual Effects, Chocolate Tribe and Sinister Studio.

Q2 of 2022, this contribution made by the animation industry should not be underestimated (Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 2022).

Apart from the economic value that the South African animation industry has to offer, the entertainment sector of the industry has also been recognised for its potential to deliver considerable cultural value. In his closing speech at the Luxor African Film Festival in 2015, acclaimed Ethiopian film director, Haile Gerima[16] expressed the following sentiment, "What is wrong with Africa is that we are people whose stories were stolen ... but now, through the cinema, we are reclaiming our history, the stories that were robbed, and presenting it to the world in our own way" (quoted in Henderson, 2014: 7). Animation serves as a medium through which South Africa can seize control of the narrative and represent its people *from* South Africa *by* its people. As such, South African animation inherently possesses great power in that it can oppose the "fragmentary and erroneous vision" of the African continent which has been promoted in Western texts for well over a century (Asión Suñer, 2021: 112).[17]

Like other cultural artefacts, animated texts are coded by perceptions of racial and cultural difference (Gagnon, 2005; Zipes, 1995; Wasko, 2001; Giroux, 1999; Wells, 1998; Bell, Haas, & Sells, 1995). When widely consumed, these texts can leave behind long lasting psychological vestiges in the conscience of audiences, especially for young audiences who as Hall, Evans & Nixon, (2013: 8) argue "unconsciously internalise the codes ... [and] ideas which are communicated to them". Following Ana Asión Suñer, from the early 20th century, animation short films, made by some of the most revered Western animators, served to reflect the racist vision of Africa and its population cultivated through colonialism by ascribing an archetypal image of an African when drawn as a human being – *Jungle Jitters* (1938/Friz Freleng), *The Isle of Pingo Pongo* (1938/Tex Avery) – and also when depicted with features of a jungle animal – *Africa Squeaks* (1940/Bob Clampett), *Congo Jazz* (1930/Hugh Harman & Rudolf Ising) (Asión Suñer, 2021: 112). Within a more contemporary context of animation, the image of sub-Saharan Africa (and its inhabitants) has been constructed through texts such as Disney's *The Lion King* (1994) and DreamWorks's *Madagascar* (2005). As argued by Monika Kin Gagnon (2005), these texts perpetuate the typical colonial thinking that likens African people to animals through its use of anthropomorphised animals in a setting devoid of humans. In

[16] Haile Gerima is best known for his films that focus on the African diaspora, particularly the Black American experience, and for his contributions towards the L.A. Rebellion film movement.
[17] Joseph Azi refers to this cultural value as the promotion of the 'African Renaissance agenda' (2012: 37).

extension, these texts also reflect the misconceived notion that Africa is lacking in civility, teeming with animals and is timeless and primitive (2005: 143). In so doing, as Gagnon goes on to reason, these texts serve to reinforce the "historical tropes of colonialism" and racial difference (2005: 148).

Given that South Africa boasts one of the most advanced animation industries on the continent, it is uniquely positioned to take up the onus of producing content which counters these harmful hegemonic (mis)representations manufactured largely by Hollywood and other Western studios.[18] Serving this agenda would not only be valuable to international consumers of animation as it would offer a diversification of the digital contents that makeup the global digital tapestry but would also be invaluable for local consumers of animation who lack culturally relevant and appropriate content. Although some scholars have criticised South African animation for its failure to adequately respond to this call (Walker, 2019; Blaeser, 2017), the most recent and upcoming slate of projects in development within South Africa at the time of writing offers scope for reassessment and discussion. Crucially however, this discussion of specific texts cannot exist in isolation. Rather it must be underpinned by an understanding of the factors that shape the production of local animation content in South Africa.

**Aims and Objectives**

Existing research on South African animation in the entertainment space has been focused on documenting the history of the South African animation industry (eg. Shapurjee, 2008; Kaye, 2003; Haycock, 2010; Kersh 1996) as well as critically discussing a limited number of local studios (Walker, 2019) and a handful of original outputs from the local industry (eg. Higgins, 2012; De Beer, 2016; Kangong, 2010; Blaeser, 2017). This study specifically intends to address the question, what do we mean when we discuss 'South African animation'? As such, this study focuses on carefully drawing distinctions between the different interpretations of animated outputs linked to a local identity in order to construct a comprehensive understanding of the South African animation ecosystem. By extension, this research aims to underscore the complexity in the interplay between the factors of supply and demand as well as the production

[18] Similar propositions have been made by other scholars including Blaeser (2017), James (2020), Walker, (2019), and Azi (2012).

conditions and production environments that inform the operations of the local animation industry. In many ways, this study therefore follows the 'contextual approach' prescribed by Maureen Furniss (2014: 7), who stresses the importance of the "historical, economic, social, technological, political and industrial" factors that influence the production of content.

In line with this aim, the core research objectives for this study are as follows:

- To offer a historical overview of the development of South African animation;
- To interrogate the notion of 'South African made' content by investigating the supply of South African animation service work as well as original animation productions;
- To interrogate the notion of 'South African relevant' content underpinned by an examination of the role of content demand;
- To interrogate the notion of 'South African owned' content by exploring the value of intellectual property (IP) and the support structures that inform local content creation in South Africa.

Although efforts will be made to highlight key short films produced within the animated medium, as well as notable work produced by independent animators in South Africa, this study is predominantly concerned with a discussion of long-form animation work (ie. feature films and television shows) produced by established local animation studios.

**Organisation and Structure**

This thesis is structured into five chapters, including the introduction chapter. Chapter two describes the methodological approach for this study and the qualitative research design adopted for the data collection process. In addition, this chapter outlines the ethical considerations taken when collecting primary data in the form of twelve semi-structured interviews with stakeholders from within the animation industry.

Chapter three offers a review of existing literature tracing the origins and evolution of South African animation up until 2020. With reference to the work of scholars dedicated to recording and documenting the development of the local animation industry, this section offers an overview of the establishment and growth of key South African studios and notable animation

outputs. This chapter also addresses the first objective for this study and in so doing, serves as the contextual foundation for the discussion of South African animation to follow.

Chapter four serves as the core discussion chapter for this study and is divided into three sections in accordance with the remaining objectives outlined earlier. The first section considers the notion of 'South African made' content in an exploration of the different kinds of animated outputs that are produced by local studios. The second section interrogates the matter of 'South African relevant' content and is constructed largely from an examination of Triggerfish's recent slate of animation work. The third and final section turns to the matter of content ownership and underscores the importance of IP in the development of South African brands. In addition, the role of local broadcasters in the value chain of local animation content production is highlighted and the formal support systems for the South African animation industry are briefly discussed. Finally, in chapter five of this study, the key findings of the research are summarised, several concluding remarks are offered, and recommendations are made for future research.

Rather than adopt a more typical textual analysis approach in this study, I knew from the outset that I wanted to explore South African animation from a broader, more holistic perspective. Retrospectively, the form of this thesis took a long time to fully conceptualise and develop. At the start of my research journey, news was circulating about many new and upcoming animation projects originating from South Africa. As such, I was convinced that South African animation was positioned at the cusp of a new and potentially very exciting period and I wanted to explore that. I was however, largely without a specific direction of travel before I was offered the following candid words of wisdom from a key industry stakeholder,

> *"It needs to be defined what is meant by South African content – do you mean, made in South Africa? Do you mean South African story? Or, do you mean owned by South Africa? Until you get that Venn diagram sorted, you're actually having a bullsh*t conversation."*

My hope for this research is that it may contribute meaningfully towards the growing critical discourse around South African animation. More so, my hope is that the framework that I have used can be applied to future research when discussing and debating the industry and its outputs.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to respond to the aim and objectives of this research, as highlighted in the previous chapter, the methodology of this study involved a qualitative research approach and a multi-layered data collection process consisting of a combination of secondary research and primary research in the form of interviews. The data collection process for this study concluded on 31 December 2021. This chapter outlines the research design of the study, the ethical considerations taken and in addition, details the background information of the represented companies from which stakeholders were interviewed.

### Research Design and Data Collection

To develop a foundation from which to build a discussion around South African animation, a literature review was firstly conducted. The literature review for this research considered both broad and focused readings from academic journal articles, published books and past university research papers and reports which offered historical information about the development of South African animation as well as South Africa's media landscape and creative industries more generally. In addition, research reports (published and unpublished) produced by various organizations including the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO), the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC/DSAC) proved instrumental in offering key contextual information. Literature which specifically discussed and analysed local animated texts (i.e., feature films and television series) and local animation studios were also reviewed in order to inform the basis on which my contextual analysis of contemporary animation outputs in South Africa was grounded.

As a supplement to the literature review of available scholarly material, a desktop analysis was undertaken so as to better develop an understanding of the kinds of projects in development in South Africa and the types of studios in operation. Key online magazine publications (local as well as international) served as a crucial source of information in this regard including *Screen Africa* and *Cartoon Brew*. In addition, social media groups and pages were consulted in order to gather key insights on the most up-to-date developments within South African animation. To this end, I also joined several Facebook groups including 'Animation SA' which proved extremely useful since members of the local animation community use the group as a platform

on which to share information about events, workshops as well as upcoming animation projects.

To further obtain information about the landscape of South African animation, I attended the 2021 Cape Town International Animation Festival (CTIAF). CTIAF is an annual event serving as the "largest dedicated African Animation Festival on the continent" (CTIAF, 2021). Owing to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the event was cancelled in 2020 however the event took place in 2021 in the form of a hybrid event between October 1-3. The live component of the event was hosted at the Old Biscuit Mill in Woodstock, Cape Town with a limited number of physical attendees and was complemented by a virtual offering whereby members of the animation community could attend the lectures, watch the screenings, and participate in the networking sessions remotely from anywhere in the country or further afield. Attending the event in person proved very useful as the lectures and presentations offered by industry professionals served as a vital source of information. In addition, the event offered me the unique opportunity to meet and consult with many industry professionals, several of whom agreed to participate in this research by granting me the opportunity to interview them at a later stage.

Original primary research was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. In order to gather information that would encapsulate a wide view of the industry, I made an effort to reach out to multiple different role players along the animation value chain including broadcasting companies, production companies which had shown interest in local animation as well as local animation studios. In line with my specific research focus, when reaching out to studios, an effort was made to contact companies that mostly offered long form narrative animation services, or which had a history of producing narrative animation in the entertainment space. As such, I purposefully avoided contacting animation studios that specialised in servicing the live-action industry (local and abroad) through SFX/VFX or companies which exclusively produced animated content for the commercial/advertising space or gaming industry.

In total, I reached out to eighteen different companies requesting an interview with a senior representative to assist with this research. In so doing, I was able to conduct twelve interviews with representatives from eleven different companies. For each interview, I developed a list of pre-determined questions and topics of discussion which were sent to the participants before

the interview to allow them time to prepare (See Appendix A). These questions served as a guide to keep the conversation on topic and varied quite significantly between interviewees depending on their particular job title and expertise.

Each interview spanned between 45-150 minutes long and was conducted one-on-one during August to December 2021, either in person or virtually (owing to the COVID-19 situation), through online meeting platforms including Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. Permission to record the interviews was granted in all cases. Interviews were transcribed and recordings of the interviews were stored for subsequent checking and research access. Table 2.1 presents the details of the respondents interviewed for this study.

**Table 2.1:** Interviewee Information Breakdown

| **Position/Department** | **Organisation** | **Type** | **Key** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Board Member | Animation South Africa | Non-profit Company (NPC) | R1 |
| Operations | MultiChoice | Broadcasting and Entertainment Company | R2 |
| Senior Executive | Disney Africa | African Subsidiary for Mass media company, The Walt Disney Company | R3 |
| Partner | Spier Films | Production Company | R4 |
| Development | Triggerfish | Animation Studio | R5 |
| Producer | Triggerfish | Animation Studio | R6 |
| Producer | Sunrise Productions | Animation Studio | R7 |
| Producer | Mind's Eye Creative | Animation Studio | R8 |
| Producer | Pixcomm | Animation Studio | R9 |
| Director | Cabblow Studios | Animation Studio | R10 |
| Director | Bugbox | Animation Studio | R11 |
| Senior Executive | Sea Monster | Animation Studio | R12 |
| | | | |

**Ethics**

In order to protect the rights and privacy of the participants involved in this study, a high standard of ethics was upheld throughout the process of data collection. The following ethical considerations were taken:

- Ethics approval for this research was requested and obtained from the University of Cape Town.

- It was ensured that all participants involved in this research were not from vulnerable communities and that the nature of the topics covered in the interviews was not sensitive.
- All participants gave informed consent to being involved in this research and to having the interviews recorded for research access.
- Whilst the affiliation of participants is denoted in this research, it was approved that all participants would remain anonymous.

**Background on Represented Companies**

*Animation South Africa (ASA)*

ASA serves as South Africa's official animation industry body which represents the interests of the South African animation and VFX industry as well as its professionals. Formed in 2006, ASA is registered with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) as a non-profit company (NPC). Additionally, ASA is registered with the South African Revenue Service as a Public Benefit Organization (PBO), which allows ASA to issue section 18A certificates for donations, allowing donors to claim tax deductions. The core functions of ASA are as follows:

- Make trading conditions more conducive to creating and/or maintaining work opportunities,
- Implement initiatives which transfer and develop scarce and critical skills,
- Conduct/participate in research which accurately reflect and inform future interventions,
- Implement initiatives which result in more commercial activity, including the exportation of South African animation products and services (ASA, 2021)

*MultiChoice*

MultiChoice is a South African broadcasting company (including SuperSport, M-Net and DStv Media Sales) and "Africa's leading entertainment company" (Multichoice, 2021a). Founded in 1995, MultiChoice offers content through Direct to Home (DTH), Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) and online video entertainment services. Key products of Multichoice include the satellite service of DStv (launched in 1995), DStv Now (its online offering of DStv launched in 2014) the DTT GoTV (launched in 2011) and the TV streaming service of

Showmax (launched in 2015). These four entertainment platforms serve as a hub for approximately 14 million people across 50 countries (Multichoice, 2021a). In addition to broadcasting, MultiChoice also invests significantly in local content creation – in 2018, M-Net and MultiChoice spent R2.5 billion on local films and series (Multichoice, 2021a). The company positions its approach to content creation as 'hyperlocal' in response to the "insatiable appetite for authentic local content" exhibited by consumers and in recognition of the business sense that the approach offers (Multichoice, 2021b).

*Disney Africa*

Disney Africa serves as a subsidiary for The Walt Disney Company – a leading diversified international family entertainment and media enterprise. Dedicated to fostering collaboration with content creators in Sub-Saharan Africa and to the promotion of Disney owned IP on the African continent, Disney Africa oversees the operations of the Disney brand in the region which is experienced in a number of ways: in cinemas through the release of its feature films, on stage through its live theatrical performances, online, on TV screens through its designated satellite channels (Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior) and through a wide range of consumer products that are sold at mass market retailers. In addition, for South Africa, it was announced in August 2021 that the company's direct to consumer service Disney+ was to be launched in 2022 thereby offering an additional avenue through which locals can engage with and consume Disney content.

*Spier Films*

Spier Films is a full-service motion picture production company with offices in Cape Town, London, Los Angeles and Reykjavik. The company forms part of a family-owned group of companies that includes at least six of the top South African insurance companies, two food franchises in 30 countries, a wine estate, hotel and conference centre and luxury lodges throughout Africa and India (Spier Films, 2021). Established in 2004, Spier Films develops, produces, and finances films and series and has produced 26 films and TV series of which 16 are international co-productions. Of its diverse slate, notable productions include *U-Carmen eKhayelitsha* (2005/ Mark Dornford-May), *Black Butterflie*s (2013/ Paula van der Oest), *Price of Sugar* (2013/ Jean van de Velde) and the animated feature film, *Khumba* (2013/ Anthony Silverston).

*Triggerfish Animation Studios*

Based in Cape Town, Triggerfish is Africa's largest and most award-winning animation studio. Founded in 1996 as a stop-frame animation studio primarily producing work for commercials and advertising agencies, the company relaunched in 2007 as a computer animation studio. Often touted as 'the Pixar of South Africa', since 2007, Triggerfish has produced high quality 3D animated content in its animation service work for UK based Magic Light Pictures as well as in its original feature films. The studio's content slate up until the very end of 2021, as well as their accolades, includes:

- *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012/ Wayne Thornley) – original feature film. Winner of several awards including Best South African Feature Film at The Durban International Film Festival (DIFF) in 2012 and Animation at Africa Movie Academy Awards in 2013.
- *Khumba* (2013/ Anthony Silverston) – original feature film. Winner of several awards including Best Animation at South African Film and Television Awards and Best Animation at the Africa Movie Academy Awards in 2014.
- *Stick Man* (2015/ Jeroen Jaspaert & Daniel Snaddon) – animation service work for Magic Light Pictures. The short film was awarded the Cristal for best TV production at the Annecy International Animation Festival in 2016.
- *Roald Dahl's Revolting Rhymes* (2016/ Jan Lachauer, Jakob Schuh & Bin-Han To) – animation service work for Magic Light Pictures. The short film was awarded the Cristal for best TV production at the Annecy Festival in 2017 and was nominated for the Best Short Film (Animated) Oscar at the 2018 Academy Awards.
- *The Highway Rat* (2017/ Jeroen Jaspaert) – animation service work for Magic Light Pictures. The short film was the winner of the New York International Children's Film Festival in 2018.
- *Zog* (2018/ Daniel Snaddon & Max Lang) – animation service work for Magic Light Pictures. The short film was awarded the International Emmy for Best Kids Animation in 2019.
- *The Snail and the Whale* (2019/ Max Lang & Daniel Snaddon) – animation service work for Magic Light Pictures. The short film was the winner of the Best Special Production at The Annie Awards in 2021 as well as BAFTA's Children & Young People Awards in 2022.

- *Seal Team* (2021/ Greig Cameron & Kane Croudace) – original feature film released globally on Netflix on December 31.

Owing to the success of its Story Lab initiative hosted in 2015 with support from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) as well as the Walt Disney Company, Triggerfish also has a number of upcoming projects in the TV series space currently in development, most of which are due for a 2023 release. In 2019, it was announced that Netflix had greenlit its first original African animated series in the form of *Mama K's Team 4* to be produced by Triggerfish in collaboration with UK based CAKE. In addition, in early 2021 it was announced that eOne had greenlit the animated superhero series *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* for Disney and France Télévisions. Finally, in mid-2021, it was publicly announced that Disney had partnered with Triggerfish to create the animated anthology series *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire.*

Beyond film and television content production, in 2020, Triggerfish announced its expansion to Galway, Ireland to further develop its gaming sector through Balisti Studios. In addition, Triggerfish serves a core role in the animation community through its animation academy launched in 2019 which is aimed at encouraging young creatives to create their first animated film through a free online learning platform. In recognition of the "pioneering role that the company has played in animation in South Africa, and Africa most widely", Triggerfish was awarded the Mifa Animation Industry Award at Annecy in 2021.

*Sunrise Productions*

Sunrise Productions is a production company with a full-service animation studio, initially founded in 1998 in Zimbabwe and then later relocated to Cape Town in 2005. In 2003, the studio produced Africa's first animated feature film with the stop-motion, *The Legend of the Sky Kingdom* (2003/ Roger Hawkins)[19]. In the same year, Sunrise Productions also launched its flagship series *Jungle Beat* (2003-). The 3D animated series has become a massive hit for the company and is currently in its fourth season distributed by linear broadcasters in over 100 different territories. The Jungle Beat YouTube channel is also hugely successful with 10 million subscribers (as of early 2023). In addition, the series has given rise to two spin-off shows, *The Explorers* (2015-) and *Munki and Trunk* (2016-) and in 2020, Sunrise Productions

[19] The film was produced in Harare, Zimbabwe so whilst it is Africa's first animated feature film, South Africa's first feature film was *Tengers* (2007) – a claymation dark comedy directed and produced by Michael J. Rix.

released *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020/ Brent Dawes) as a Netflix original feature film. In addition to its Jungle Beat franchise, Sunrise Productions is also known for creating animated characters for high-profile sports brands including England Rugby's Football Union, the Welsh Rugby Union, and Juventus Football Club. It has been indicated that several projects are in development at Sunrise Productions however as of the end of 2021, the only future project which has been publicly announced at the time of writing is *David* (expected in 2025/ Phil Cunningham & Brent Dawes) – a CGI biblical epic feature film produced in collaboration with US based Angel Studios (R6, 2021).

*Mind's Eye Creative*

Mind's Eye Creative (MEC) is South Africa's largest 2D animation studio based in Johannesburg and founded in 2011. MEC is an award-winning studio and has produced animated content for some of the leading brands in global entertainment, including Nickelodeon, Cartoon Network, Disney XD, Netflix, Discovery Life, Amazon Prime and Netflix. In addition, MEC also works closely with a number of other local studios to develop local content including the teasers for Lucan's[20] upcoming series, *Isaura* and for the potential future feature film adaptation of Rob van Vuuren's one-man stage play *Electric Juju* with Pete O'Donoghue and Sea Monster. MEC also notably serviced the animation work in PacinaPictures'[21] *Shaka iNkosi yaMakhosi* (Shaka King of Kings) (2022/ Manzini Zungu) which won Best South African Short Film at DIFF in 2021.

*Pixcomm*

Pixcomm is a Cape Town based 2D animation studio founded in 2007 by Nic Buchanan and Roger Hawkins[22], and is the producer of Africa's biggest animated children's show – *Jabu's Jungle* (2016- ). Aimed at early childhood development for viewers aged 4-7, *Jabu's Jungle* is an educational show which is broadcasted across 40 African countries and across the globe in numerous languages. Beyond *Jabu's Jungle,* Pixcomm also has two other shows in development – *Zizi and Hannibal* (2022-) and *Ting-Ting* which is being developed with a Jamaican studio but is still a while away from completion. The studio has also secured the

[20] Lucan is a Cape Town based design and animation studio founded in 2011 working primarily in the commercial space producing content for international and local brands.
[21] PacinaPictures is a Johannesburg based creative production and film platform company that serves as an extension of Pacinamix, an entrepreneurial and creative company.
[22] Roger Hawkins was one of the two founders of Sunrise Productions in 1998 with Phil Cunningham.

rights to create a feature film (the company's first) on the life of Nelson Mandela, supported by the NFVF, however a completion date is unknown at the time of writing (R8, 2021).

*Cabblow Studios*

Cabblow Studios is an award-winning animation and illustration studio based in Johannesburg. Established in 2017 and led by a mother and daughter duo, Cabblow studios specialises in medical animation and found acclaim in their 2D short film about living with diabetes, *3 Teaspoons of Sugar* (2019). The short film was screened online as part of the Annecy International Animated Film Festival in 2020 and also screened at the Africa Rising International Film Festival in 2019 as well as the Lagos International Festival of Animation 2020, reaching the semi-finals in both events. The studio has additionally produced two subsequent short films to supplement *3 Teaspoons of Sugar* (2019) – *When it's Risky* (2021) and *The Little Teaspoon of Sugar* (2022). Furthermore, Cabblow Studios also hosted a Virtual Animation Residency in 2021 wherein it assisted five young local directors to make their own short films.

*Bugbox*

Established in 2003 in Johannesburg, Bugbox is a leading character animation and visual effects facility in South Africa specializing in both 2D and 3D animation. Clients of Bugbox include Kelloggs, Coca-Cola, Nestle and LEGO. In addition to its commercial work, Bugbox has also produced an original faith-based children's DVD series of animated shorts, *The Adventures of Toby* which won Best Animated Film at the International Christian Film Festival in 2009. The studio also produced a further instalment in the franchise a few years later with the short film, *Adventures of Toby: The Gooey Lunchbox* (2015/ Tim Argall).

*Sea Monster Entertainment*

Sea Monster Entertainment is an end-to-end game development studio with its roots in the long form animation space. The studio was formed by a number of previous employees of Clockwork Zoo – Africa's largest animation studio from 2005-2010 which produced the 2D long-form series *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006-2009) for SABC 3, the fifth season of *Caillou* (2010) for the Canadian Treehouse TV and *Florrie's Dragons* (2010) with Wish Films (UK) for the Disney Channel UK. After the closure of Clockwork Zoo in 2010, Sea Monster was established in Cape Town in 2011 as a studio offering full, cross-platform animation and game development services, in addition to augmented reality and virtual reality

solutions that drive business and social outcomes. The company was named among the top 20 in Fast Company South Africa's Most Innovative Companies in 2021 and has most recently, pivoted its key service offering from animation to game development.

The inputs of stakeholders from these different companies served as a core source of insight into South African animation on which I rely significantly in the forthcoming discussion chapter of this study. As such, whilst my investigation is not limited to an examination of the projects highlighted and the studios interviewed, they do form a key part of my exploration of South African animation. The following chapter traces the evolution and development of South African animation up until the end of the 2010s. In so doing, a springboard is offered for the focused discussions around South African animation in the contemporary context to follow.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANIMATION INDUSTRY: 1915-2020

Paul Wells explains that "to animate, and the related words, animation, animated and animator, all derive from the Latin verb, *animare,* which means 'to give life to'" (1998: 10). Wells goes on to describe that, "Within the context of the animated film, this largely means the artificial creation of the illusion of movement in inanimate lines and forms" (1998: 10). Prior to the advent of the animated film however, the origins of storytelling through motion far pre-date the cinematic era, harking back to the early shadow puppetry of 200 A.D. Through technological innovation, animation has evolved through the centuries into a medium which has consistently offered story tellers and filmmakers greater opportunity to be "more imaginative and less conservative" than its live-action counterpart (Wells, 1998: 6). Throughout its evolution through the cinematic, the televisual and to most recently, the digital epoch, the use of animation has developed in a variation of ways in different parts of the world and in some instances, has cultivated a strong relationship with national identity. The reason for this phenomenon is owed in part to the innate connection that animation shares with other forms of art as explained by Wells, "… in the field of animation, the fine art traditions of indigenous cultures are translated into moving iconographic statements about art and ideology in their specific contexts" (2002: 34). To this end, scholarship has served a crucial role in recording and preserving these distinctive animation traditions and histories.

In the birthplace of the infamous Walt Disney and the empire which he left behind, a cornucopia of scholarship has been devoted to celebrating and reviewing the tradition of animation in America – from recounting the medium's development[23] to discussing its key studios[24] and to commemorating standout individuals in the industry. Beyond its borders, as equally the most influential producer of animation in the global context, according to Raffaelli (1997: 112), Japan and its tradition of anime has seen global acclamation and has also received notable academic consideration (Teru, 2010; Napier, 2000; LaMarre, 2009; MacWilliams, 2015; Brophy, 2005; Clements & McCarthy, 2015; Novielli, 2018; Koyama-Richard, 2010;

[23] Attention has been paid, for example, to American animation prior to the emergence of Mickey Mouse (Crafton, 1993; Frierson, 1997) and since (Barrier, 1999; Bryman, 1995; Byrne & McQuillan, 1999; Finch, 1973; McCall, 1998).

[24] For a discussion of the infamous Walt Disney Studio (see Barrier, 1999; Bryman, 1995; Hollis & Sibley, 1988; Peary & Peary, 1980; Smoodin, 1994; Giroux, 1999; Wasko, 2001; Yoe & Morra-Yoe, 1991; Johnston & Thomas, 1981; Maltin, 1980; McCall, 1998; Raffaelli, 1997; Finch, 1973 *inter alia*), Warner Bros. (see Beck & Friedwald, 1989, 1997; Schneider, 1998; Sandler, 1998; Raffaelli, 1997) and Pixar Studio (see Paik, 2007; Price, 2008).

Raffaelli, 1997; Beck, 2004). The traditions and histories of the unique animations produced in other parts of Asia are too, well recorded such as for *donghua*[25] and inkwash animation from China (Quiquemelle, 1991; Macdonald, 2016; Lent, 2001; Lent, 2003; Lent & Ying, 2013), and *hanguk aeni*[26] from South Korea (Park, 1997; Lent, 2001; Choo, 2014) among many others.

Turning to Europe, the abundance of distinctive animation techniques and traditions (both historic and current) that proliferate across the continent has also been recognised and thoroughly surveyed in Britain (Gifford, 1987); France (See Pilling, 1997) Germany (Moritz, 1997b; Russet & Starr, 1976), Russia (Russet & Starr, 1976), Czechoslovakia (Pos, 1991; Wells, 1999; Moritz, 1999); Hungary (Kuttna, 1970); Poland (Giżycki, 2014; Kuc & O'Pray, 2014), and Sweden (O'Konor, 1971; Andersson, Sundholm & Widding, 2010).

Additionally, ample literature is available which celebrates and examines animation in the context of the Middle East (van de Peer, 2017), South America (Lent, 2001; Furniss, 2014: 113) as well as Oceania (Beck, 2004; Bradbury, 2001). For Africa as a whole, however, extant scholarship on animation production is severely lacking. Consequently, African animation is often undervalued and misunderstood (Emongo, 1996: 111).

When it comes to Africa, it must be mentioned that any assessment of its history and culture is marked by the effects of colonialism, as Dare Arowolo laments, "two hundred years or so of colonization were not only destructive in terms of cultural heritage and values for which Africa was famous before colonialism, but also precariously retrogressive as the continent was robbed of decades of opportunities for self-development, self-government and self-styled technological developmental pace" (2010: 3). That said, the African continent is home to many great artists who make use of the animated medium. Notable individuals include DRC's Jean Michel Kibushi whose work demonstrates the influence of Congolese popular painting, otherwise known as *Ukumbusho* (derivative of the Swahili verb 'to remember') (Fabian, 1996; Callus, 2010: 65; Convents, 2003; Benimana, 2001); Niger's Moustapha Alassane, often regarded as the father of African animation (Sawadogo, 2019) and South Africa's William Kentridge whose poignant and expressive animated drawings have garnered international acclaim (Penn, 2009). The animated works produced by these three artists offer key

[25] *Donghua* translates to "Chinese animation" or "Chinese anime".
[26] *Hanguk aeni* literally translates to "Korean animation".

contributions to the global creative economy. It must be recognised however that their work represents the minority of the kinds of animation produced on the African continent which is overwhelmingly characterised by short fiction films and animated documentaries produced by animation studios (Sawadogo, 2019). Following Boukary Sawadogo, this particular preference for animation production should be understood within the larger context of the scarcity of funding for animation in Africa, which "prompts storytellers to choose to work on short productions or educational pieces that are most likely to get institutional support" or which are commissioned by the advertising industry (Sawadogo, 2019: 74-75).

Relative to other African nations, South Africa has one of the most well-established animation industries and one of the longest running historical engagement with the medium. Through a review of available literature, an overview of the history of animation in South Africa and the development of its animation industry is discussed. Specifically, this investigation traces the formation of different studios and the notable outputs produced in South Africa for both television and film. In addition, a brief overview is also provided for the development of animation education and training, and the emergence of local animation festivals in South Africa.

Following Botha (2007: 20), in order to adequately contextualise the developments of the South African audio-visual industry, consideration is afforded to the political and cultural context of animation production during Apartheid as well as post-1994 (albeit limited owing to the brevity of this overview). This review does not consider the 19th century history of animation technologies and the introduction of 'optical toys' in South Africa as thoroughly documented by Thelma Gutsche in her comprehensive assessment of the early South African film industry in her book, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940*[27]. Rather, this discussion begins from the point at which the first animated output was produced within South Africa in the early 20th century.

**The Beginnings**

The origin story of South African animation begins, somewhat, a little over a century ago with the American Harold Shaw who directed *An Artist's Dream/ The Artist's Inspiration* (1915).

[27] Her book was initially completed for her PHD dissertation in 1946 and was only officially published in 1972.

Shaw's film, about an artist whose drawings come to life which combines techniques of both 2D animation and live-action, is considered by many as the first animated film made on South African soil (and the first on the African continent) (Callus, 2008; Bendazzi, 2017a: 88; Parsons, 2018; Shapurjee, 2008: 35; Gutsche, 1972).

Shaw's film was produced by Africa's first motion picture studio, African Film Productions Ltd., which was established in Johannesburg by New York native, Isidore W. Schlesinger in 1915 (SAHO, 2011; Parsons, 2018; Gutsche, 1972; Shapurjee, 2008: 34). At the time, (the Union of) South Africa was operating as a self-governing dominion of the British Empire. Consequently, early South African animation is marked by its foreign influence as, throughout the early 20th century, animation studios in the country were owned and run by foreigners and South African animators working in the industry were trained and advised by predominantly foreign professionals, namely Americans and Europeans. It is for this reason that, for the vast majority, the modes of animation production within South Africa replicated that of America and Europe at the time (Shapurjee, 2008: 37).

During the first four decades of the 20th century, animation in South Africa was primarily produced through Killarney Film Studios and Alpha Film Studios. Killarney Film Studios became the new name for Schlesinger's African Film Productions and served as a major producer of local films as well as the country's long-running weekly news program, *African Mirror*. For animation, Killarney Film Studios primarily produced special effects animation including optical effects and titling for the studio's live-action projects (Shapurjee, 2008: 36). For Alpha Film Studios, the studio specialised in the production of traditional hand-drawn cel-animation mainly in the forms of commercials (for television and for screening before films in theatres) as well as "the popular limited animation form known as the 'drawtoon'" (Bendazzi, 2017a: 195).

The animation produced by these two local studios was, to a large extent, driven by economic partnerships with the advertising industry. More so, animation served to play a supportive role to the local live-action industry which meant that much of the content produced was primarily aimed at an adult cinema-going audience (Bendazzi, 2017a: 195). This continued to characterise the local animation industry during the country's political state of emergency during the 1950s up until the introduction of television to the country in 1975, at which point the industry's focus swiftly shifted.

**Animation for Television**

The advent of television in South Africa, and the formal inauguration of the country's first television broadcaster – the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) – in early January of 1976, coincided with a tumultuous period in the country's history. The racial segregation enforced by the South African Government and its policy of Apartheid in the country from 1948 was met by condemnation from the international community and since the television was viewed as a crutch for the advancement of the ideologies of the Apartheid government at the time, most European nations boycotted the sales of their programming to South Africa (Shapurjee, 2008). Consequently, television in South Africa in the 1970s was dominated by limited programming from the USA, France and Germany with the imported foreign-language titles mostly dubbed into Afrikaans (the predominant language of the leading political party), whereas the American titles were left to broadcast in the original English.

The broadcasting model of the SABC was greatly influenced by that of the BBC as expertise from European broadcast specialists were procured in order to assist with its operations in the 1970s (Shapurjee, 2008: 67). At the time, original animation produced by the BBC positioned animation as a medium purely for children entertainment with stop-motion and puppet-based animation residing as the primary modes of animation production rather than traditional cel-based animation owing to their lower production costs (Shapurjee, 2008; Walker, 2019: 23; Kaye, 2003). Both the BBC's categorisation of animation as a children's-only medium as well as its particular preference for puppetry to produce animation for children was adopted by the SABC in its own production of original animation content for television.

Mindful of the effects of television on young viewers, the SABC (SAUK in Afrikaans) set out to develop programming that was rich in educational content and significant attention was therefore paid to presenting children's and nursery programs in an engaging way. The SABC Animation Unit was consequently set up and local in-house productions from the SABC in the 1970s saw the debuts of puppet dominated, Afrikaans, children's shows such as *Haas Das se Nuuskas* (1976-1980/ Louise Smit); *Wielie Walie* (1976-1996/ Louise Smit); *Liewe Heksie* (1978-1982/ Louise Smit) and later, *Interster* (1982-1986/ Dirk de Villiers)[28]. Many of these

[28] The science-fiction show *Interster* was created in response to Gerry Anderson's *Thunderbirds* and featured the use of electronically controlled puppets.

programs, such as *Wielie Walie,* were used to promote good behaviours such as precautions against veld and forest fires, pollution, road safety, healthy eating habits etc. (Shapurjee, 2008).

The animation unit at the SABC, headed by Matthys Andries 'Butch' Stoltz[29] from 1975, who was then later replaced by Gerard Smith in 1986, also created content for children's programming in the form of animated entertainment inserts and special effects (ie. opening logos). In addition, the Animation Unit produced several five-minute animations for the SABC, supervised by Stoltz, including *Oceano Jollo*, *Wolraad Woltemade* and *Die Bremenstad se Musikante* and Stolz also animated the cartoon as well as the live-action inserts for a live-action series on Charles Dickens (Shapurjee, 2008).

Despite the fact that the Animation Unit of the SABC had facilities that were "on a par with international standards" (Shapurjee, 2008: 75), the unit shut down its in-house operations in 1988. The reason for closing down was owed to mismanagement and, according to Shanaz Shapurjee (2008: 77), "the Corporation's lack of knowledge about the field of animation coupled with its inability to understand and provide the necessary requirements of the medium". Shapurjee (2008: 83) goes on to insist that the Animation Unit at the SABC was merely a peripheral component of the Children's Programming department, slotted into the broadcasting hierarchy somewhere below the Scenic and Décor and Graphics departments because they failed to recognise the potential of the medium of animation and therefore neglecting to expand the animation unit into an in-house/resident studio. After the demise of the Animation Unit at the SABC, four key studios were left behind which were the most significant for producing animated works for South African television at the time: Annie-Mation Studios, Dave McKey Animation Services, Glenn Coppens Cartoons and later, Butch Stoltz Productions.

Annie-Mation Studios was established in 1978 by Gretchen Wilsenach in Johannesburg with the aim of providing animated content for the SABC television network. The studio produced the notable animated series *Bobby the Cat* (c.1980/ Gretchen Wilsenach) for the SABC which, according to Shapurjee (2008: 81), was the only recorded animation outsourced by the SABC

[29] In 1957, Matthys Andries 'Butch' Stoltz joined Killarney Studios as a young animator on producing 'Film Ads of the Week' for cinema release. At the time, Stolz had just completed three years of training in England under George Merino, an ex-Disney animator who was credited with effects animation on *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937) (Shapurjee, 2008: 71).

at the time, with all its other children's programming of that period being created by its in-house Animation and Scenic and Decor Departments. Owing to the prior experience of the core animators at Annie-Mation Studios[30], the studio adopted a Disney inspired style to its work which is demonstrated in the cel animation style of *Bobby the Cat* (Walker, 2019: 25). The show consisted of 26, 5-minute episodes and took two years to complete due to limited staff and funds at the studio (Shapurjee, 2008: 50). During the production of the show, the studio was forced to also create animated commercials for the SABC to remain solvent (Shapurjee, 2008: 50). In the early-mid 1980s the studio took on two big projects in the form of *Thandi*, a 30-minute African themed story, and an animated feature of *Jock of the Bushveld*.[31] The pressure of such big projects was crippling for the studio and owing to monetary circumstances and tight deadlines coupled with insufficient staff members, the studio was forced to close in 1987, at which time only a pilot for *Jock of the Bushveld* had been made (Shapurjee, 2008: 51).

Dave McKey studio, Glenn Coppens Cartoons and Butch Stoltz Productions were all animation studios operating in the 1980s geared towards producing advertisements for the local cinema and the local television broadcaster. Dave McKey studio was established in 1967 by Dave McKey and is recognised as a key player in the history of South African animation for being the "major producer of animated cinema adverts in the country, averaging 7000 commercials per annum" (Kersh 1996, 23) as well as for producing the well-known short entitled *The Story of Bath*[32] (Bendazzi, 2017b: 404).

Glenn Coppens was a Belgian-born animator who came to South Africa from America in 1982 after having been apprenticed at the Disney studios in Burbank, California. In 1983 he was hired to be a studio manager at Annie-Mation Studios for the production of *Jock of the Bushveld* and when the studio closed, was forced to work as a freelance animator at the Dave McKey studio, where he animated inserts for film commercials (Shapurjee, 2008: 52). In an attempt to further develop the local animated commercials industry, Coppens established his own studio in 1988 – Glenn Coppens Cartoons. Coppens recognised the lucrative potential of selling advertisements to the national broadcaster and so embarked upon a symbiotic relationship with

[30] Employees of the studio included Glenn Coppens, Gerard Smith and Butch Stoltz all of whom had exposure to Disney techniques and workflows earlier in their careers which largely shaped their animation styles (Walker, 2019: 24-25)

[31] *Jock of the Bushveld* explores the true story of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's dog Jock which was first published in 1905.

[32] There is a lack of information regarding what happened to *The Story of Bath* after its release.

the SABC. The studio however declared bankruptcy in 1999 owing to significant financial constraints (Shapurjee, 2008: 52).

After leaving the SABC in 1979-80, Butch Stoltz joined Annie-Mation Studios, where he worked on animated advertisements (Shapurjee, 2008). He then returned to the SABC in 1980 and continued to produce animated material for broadcast until 1986, when he resigned and opened his own business – Butch Stoltz Productions. The studio continued to do freelance work commissioned for television broadcast with notable productions including the First Rugby World Cup promotion as well as several animated advertisements such as *Citruseal, Mum for Men* and *Simba Chips* (Bendazzi, 2017b).

In addition to these four studios, the 1980s also saw the establishment of the first South African animation studio dedicated to the production of stop-motion clay animation – Klaybow Films. Founded in 1981 by the Romanian-born, Ted Berenson, the studio hired and trained local artists in the medium owing to the lack of any animation schools or available courses at the time (Haycock, 2010: 133). Between 1981 and 1987, Klaybow Films produced approximately 595 minutes of clay animation, most of which was commissioned by the SABC including the clay animation series, *The Adventures of Dr Kleiman* (1981), *The Wonderful World of Dr Kleiman* (1982) and the studio's most successful and noteworthy work, *Bimbo's Books* (1985–1987). In 1987, Berenson relocated Klaybow to England in order to escape the sanctions and boycotts placed on South Africa from the international community at the time (Haycock, 2010: 66). Taking with him recruits and their families, Klaybow worked on a commission by the New York based Billy Budd films[33] to produce a short clay animation adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Star Child* which was completed in 1989. Due to financial difficulties however, the studio was also forced into closure in 1989 – two years after the relocation (Haycock, 2010: 68).

In the 1990s two other notable animation studios were established which also specialised in claymation production: XYZoo Animation and Triggerfish founded in 1991 by Lindsay Van Blerk and 1996 by Jacquie Trowell and Emma Kaye respectively. Lindsay Van Blerk was one of the artists hired and trained by Berenson at Klaybow Films in the 1980s and who, after the studio's unsuccessful operations in London, moved back to South Africa to work for Miros

[33] Founded in 1993, Billy Budd Films is a production company located in New York City and led by Frank Moynihan.

Productions[34] for a short period before founding his own company – XYZoo Animation in Cape Town. XYZoo specialised in the production of animated commercials but also produced several award-winning films for Billy Budd Films. The lower production costs offered by South African studios in the 1990s made XYZoo an attractive company to which to outsource animation production, primarily from the US and the UK. This was made possible at the time given that South Africa was on its way to becoming a democracy and therefore was no longer restricted by economic sanctions and boycotts (Haycock, 2010: 79). Van Blerk first produced the eight-minute clay animated short *The Prodigal Son* (1993) for Billy Budd Films after which, XYZoo Animation was commissioned to make four 24-minute films for Billy Budd – *Michael the Visitor* (1995), *The First Christmas* (1998), *The Chimes* (2000) and *The Velveteen Rabbit* (2003) (Haycock, 2010: 82).

Jacquie Trowell, an employee at XYZoo during the early 1990s, broke away from the studio to create her own model animation studio located in Cape Town with Emma Kaye[35] in 1996. According to Haycock (2010: 100), Kaye and Trowell identified the potential for creating a niche within the fractured animation market through the development of a stop-motion studio with a culturally specific production aesthetic. As such, Triggerfish was born and would go on to steer away from "the detailed, recognisably American character performances associated with XYZoo, and instead opt for more stylised character" (Walker, 2019: 31). The studio initially involved itself with creating claymation commercial work but later got involved in developing content for broadcast television in the early 2000s which saw the company's rise to great prominence. Simultaneously, just over the South African border in Zimbabwe, Phil Cunningham, Jacqui Cunningham and Roger Hawkins formed a partnership to bring Sunrise Productions to life in 1998 which also made use of stop-frame animation and would go onto make Africa's very first feature length animated film in the early 2000s.

The political reform promised by the South African government at the beginning of 1990[36] ushered in a "new era in South African broadcast history" (Shapurjee, 2008: 81) since the decade saw massive reform in the television and animation industries of South Africa and in the SABC specifically which restructured and developed a new policy regarding locally

[34] Founded in 1982, Miros Productions is a boutique commercial production house based in Cape Town.
[35] Emma Kaye had previously been working as a producer in the live-action sector (Haycock, 2010: 99).
[36] In 1990, then President, F.W de Klerk announced the lifting of the ban on political parties such as the African National Congress, which had opposed the ruling National Party, and the release of Nelson Mandela from jail. A period of social and political reclamation followed, leading to South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994.

produced content as well as cross media ownership and control (Shapurjee, 2008: 81). This shift also saw the emergence of animation training initiatives across Africa "in an attempt to empower Africans with new media skills" (Shapurjee, 2008: 82) and resulted in the establishment of several small studios centred primarily in Cape Town. Despite this growth within the industry, the new broadcast model adopted by the SABC actually resulted in a decrease in the number of local animations commissioned by the broadcaster which instead, opted to purchase older American television animation which could be acquired more cheaply than commissioning local animation productions (Shapurjee, 2008: 31). Consequently, the local animation landscape of the 1990s was characterised by the appearance and disappearance of tiny independent animation studios, as a result of a relatively small, competitive market (Kaye, 2003). At the time, most South African animation studios resorted to producing work for television commercials. The production of commercials however did become a particularly attractive endeavour when international sanctions and boycotts were finally lifted which allowed South African studios to conduct business once again with international clients.

Beyond South Africa, within the context of global animation, the 1990s marked the dawning of a new age – the CGI revolution, ushered in by the developments of US based studios like LucasFilm[37] in the 1980s and Pixar in the 1990s[38]. The CGI revolution would go on to trigger a "dimensional transformation" (Parkinson, 2012: 206) in the world of animation in the years to come as new technologies redefined the potential of the animated medium. In response to these new technologies available to animators and filmmakers, South Africa became involved in CG animation during the late 1990s, specifically within the VFX space, albeit in a limited capacity. According to Walker (2019: 42), studios aimed to "model themselves after large scale American and European VFX houses focusing on high-end quality without the market or budgets to sustain them". This ultimately led to many studios closing down or being forced to amalgamate. During this period, two of South Africa's most successful VFX houses were established – Refinery was formed in 1998 after Digital Direction merged with Sixth Street Studios and, at around about the same time, The House Next Door fractured with Reg Nance-

[37] The company is celebrated for the use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) in film production, which was first used in *Star Wars: Episode VI - Return of the Jedi* (Richard Marquand /1983). The company is also lauded for the creation of the visual effects company, Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) that has worked on many blockbuster films and has won numerous Academy Awards.

[38] In 1995, Pixar released *Toy Story* - the first CGI feature-length animated film. The film would secure Pixar's place as a permanent fixture in the animated film industry and ushered in the era of digital animation which largely rewrote the potential for animation as a medium.

Kivell, Gavin Hong and a financier by the name of Johan Kruger to form The Works[39] (Walker, 2019: 42). Beyond the adoption of CG tools to develop the local VFX industry, South Africa would also go on to recognise CG as a viable medium for serving its advertising sector in the early 2000s and several years later, CG animation would make its way into the local entertainment space led prominently by Sunrise Productions and later, Triggerfish (Walker, 2019: 43).

**Television and the Feature Film in the new Millennium: 2000-2020**

According to Andrew Haycock (2010: 131), between 2000 and 2005, the animation industry began to grow substantially, and South African studios became "increasingly involved in the production of animation for international clients". Despite the preoccupation with animation production for the advertising sector, the early 2000s also saw the development of some of South Africa's most noteworthy TV series for the SABC as well the advancement towards the production of feature length animation for the cinema.

For Trowell and Kaye's Triggerfish, the end of the previous decade saw the production of several widely known commercials executed in various experimental stop-motion techniques and styles such as: *Soviet Clothing* (1997), *Plascon Woodcare* (1998), *Royco Potato Bake* (1999), *I-Net Bridge* (1999) and *Slo-Jo* (1999). The innovation demonstrated by the company attracted the attention of The Children's Television Workshop[40], which at the time was looking to outsource animation production on the American children's educational show *Sesame Street* in order to reduce costs. After impressing the Children's Television Workshop in 1999 with the completion of twenty animated commissions, each between twenty and thirty seconds in length, a South African version of *Sesame Street* named *Takalani Sesame*[41] was commissioned and released the following year (in 2000).

*Takalani Sesame* was created through the collaboration between the Sesame Workshop, the Department of Education of South Africa (DoE), South African Broadcasting Corporation of South Africa (SABC), Sanlam (a local financial services provider) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Dongo, 2015: 56). Promoting basic school

[39] Both Refinery and The Works remain two of South Africa's most well renowned VFX studios.
[40] The Children's Television Workshop later became known as 'The Sesame Workshop'.
[41] The title, 'Takalani Sesame' translates to "be happy Sesame" in Venda.

curriculum based on numeracy, literacy and life skills, *Takalani Sesame* (2000 – present) is the longest running and most successful children's educational series in South Africa to date (Kangong, 2010: 37; Dongo, 2015; Haycock, 2010). One of the initiatives by the Sesame Workshop was to create an adaptation of *Sesame Street* to address issues that affected South Africa (Sithole, 2015)[42]. This was also motivated by the lack of preschool education available in the country – at the time only one in six children had access to a formal preschool in South Africa (Sithole, 2015). *Sesame Street* therefore served as a substitute preschool for those unable to afford a formal preschool education and as a wholesome supplement to those that could (Dongo, 2015; Ghebregziabher, 2012; Mbogo, 2004). This purpose was facilitated by the SABC in accordance with the mandate of its education sub-business unit[43] – to deliver compelling educational content for diverse audiences in South Africa and the rest of Africa (Dongo, 2015).

In addition to localising the content of *Takalani Sesame*, the show tackled some issues relevant to South Africa. For example, the show broached the issue of HIV/AIDS by introducing the first HIV positive character, Kami to the show in 2002 (See Callus, 2008). On the artistic aim of the project, Haycock (2010: 104) reports that Triggerfish wanted to fabricate puppets that were based on the street arts and crafts sold at local markets[44]. According to Haycock (2010: 104), the success of Triggerfish peaked in 2001 when the studio was commissioned to produce forty minutes of animation for a second season of *Takalani Sesame*. At the time, this was the single largest international animation commission ever received by a studio in South Africa and required Triggerfish to subcontract other South African studios to produce the animation for the series.[45]

[42] Following Cortze (2011:31), through the 'Sesame Workshop model', "*Sesame Street* has been adapted in over 20 countries to local versions across the globe. The content of the country specific co- productions is localized to specifically tackle local issues relevant to the target market". Coertze (2011: 31) goes on to note that "adaptations of *Sesame Street* differ from adaptations of other international shows in this respect - where other shows simply dub the audio to a local language or present subtitles, *Sesame Street* goes the extra mile to create local storylines, new characters, settings and animations specific to the adapted country".

[43] The SABC Education unit was stablished in 1996. Early Childhood Development (ECD) is one of the most important focuses of the SABC Education unit. They believe that "through the children's unit programming stimulates early learning and helps bring preschool children to a level of school preparedness by providing basic numeracy, literacy, language, learning, communication, problem solving life skills" (Dongo, 2015).

[44] Local street art typically includes the creation of wireframe armatures decorated with tin, beads and plastic shopping bags (Haycock, 2010; Walker, 2019).

[45] Ten local studios in total came together to work on the project. Reflecting on the experience, current Triggerfish CEO Stuart Forrest described the collaboration on the show as follows: "The whole industry came together, probably for the first time… and it was hugely successful" (Quoted in Vourlias, 2021).

Beyond partnering in the production of *Takalani Sesame*, the SABC also served as a core financial partner in the educational series aired on SABC 2 several years later, *The Magic Cellar* (2006-2007). Developed by Mfundi Vundla, the founder of Morula Pictures[46] in collaboration with Canadian based, Chocolate Moose Media[47], *The Magic Cellar* was Africa's first long-form 3D animated series (Dongo, 2015: 58). The show was aimed at preteens and takes its young viewers on an imaginary journey through the world of African-originating folktales in a series of short stories (Kangong 2010: 17). The award-winning show[48] was conceived to offer African children an understanding of their own culture. In extension, the show's five young protagonists, all from different ethnic backgrounds served to mark "the first time South African children saw their own image reflected in an animated series" (Dongo, 2015: 58). The show initially ran for two seasons on SABC consisting of 26 episodes in total and was thereafter successfully sold to the US Home Box Office (HBO) channel (Azi, 2012) as well as to several other platforms in territories around the world.

First aired in the same year as *The Magic Cellar* and also aimed at the preteen market, *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006-2009) saw its debut on SABC3 in the form of 104 episodes over its three years on the broadcaster. The animated series was produced by Clockwork Zoo[49] and was primarily funded by the SABC who also owned the IP rights. Much like *The Magic Cellar,* the series centred around multiracial characters with black South Africans in the principal roles and much of the storyline was premised on connecting with an African heritage (De Beer, 2016: 59).

Apart from its limited commissioned animation work, other animated series aired by local broadcasters in South Africa, and which were produced by local studios, include *Jozi Zoo* (2003-2004); *Supa Strikas* (2008-present); *Bun&Bunee* (2009-2011), as well as *Jabu's Jungle*

[46] Vundla is a well-known television producer in South Africa. He has produced numerous local productions including the successful long running local soap opera, *Generations*. Morula Pictures is recognised as South Africa's largest black-led studio.
[47] Established in 1995 and founded by Firdaus Kharas, Chocolate Moose Media is an animation and documentary creator specializing in social and behaviour change media productions to better the human condition.
[48] Magic Cellar won 42 international awards, including Gold and Silver World Medals at the New York Festivals, a Platinum REMI Award, First Prize at the Chicago International Children's Film Festival (CICFF), the Grand Festival Award (Berkeley), two Telly awards, a Chris Statuette, two Aurora Platinum Best of Show, two Aegis Winners, a Gold and a Silver Davey, a Silver at the World Media Festival, the Best Animated Film FADE IN Award at the IBFF, the Silver Plaque (Intercom Chicago), a Silver Screen and two Certificates of Creative Excellence (the US International Film and Video Festival).
[49] Clockwork Zoo was founded in 2005 and originally operated as a sub-division within Octogon CSI South Africa, but later became a separate entity.

(2017-present). *Jozi Zoo* was originally conceived in 2003/4 by Mike Scott of Mike Scott Productions/Mikdog[50] and local comedian John Vlismas as a tongue-in-cheek look at the inhabitants of Johannesburg expressed through limited line animation. From its adult orientated pilot, the show was subsequently adapted into a children's program animated by Art Attack[51] and produced by Red Pepper which was aired weekly on Saturday mornings on e.tv.[52] *Supa Strikas* aired on SABC 1 and SABC 2 from 2008 and explores the super league's 'greatest' football team based on the pan-African football (soccer) themed comic[53] of the same name. The comic is one of the most successful from the African continent – it has been distributed worldwide across Africa, Latin America (Colombia, El Salvador, Panama, Brazil, Honduras, and Guatemala); Europe (Norway, Sweden, Finland) and Asia (Malaysia and the Philippines). The animated show was produced by Strika Entertainment[54] up until 2019, at which time the entire franchise was acquired by Moonbug Entertainment[55] and production on the show relocated from South Africa to Malaysia. Luma Animation's[56] *Bun&Bunee* which follows the antics of two unusual Bunee brothers was sold to SABC and aired exclusively on SABC 3 from 2009-2011[57]. The short form animation series makes use of sophisticated 3D graphics and takes the form of 52 one-minute animated episodes which serves the filler market. Finally, Pixcomm's *Jabu's Jungle* is an educational show aimed at early childhood development for viewers aged 4-7 that follows the adventures of 9-year-old Jabu and his magic talking drum in their exploration of the jungle helping animals in need. Since its first season debuted in 2017, the show has been broadcast within South Africa on SABC 1 and is also broadcasted across forty other African countries and across the globe in numerous languages making it Africa's biggest animated children's show. [58]

[50] Mike Scott is an independent 2D animation creator based in Plettenberg Bay.
[51] The company was founded in 2000 by Michael Buckland, who wanted to create high-quality animation that would appeal to children and families.
[52] The scripts for the show were written by Stephen Francis and character designs by Rico - both of the local comic strip, *Madam & Eve*.
[53] For more on the graphic novel, see Sidogi (2008).
[54] Strika Entertainment is a Cape Town based studio that specialises in creating visual communication solutions tailored to corporate communication needs from product-education comic books to safety procedure animations.
[55] Moonbug Entertainment is a global entertainment company based in the UK founded in 2016 by René Rechtman - former President of Nickelodeon International and SVP of Viacom International Media Networks.
[56] Launched in 2001 in Johannesburg, Luma Creative Studios specializes in character animation, visual effects and game development.
[57] See Buthelezi (2014) for a discussion of the show's production pipeline.
[58] *Jabu's Jungle* is distributed by Ireland-based Monster Entertainment – the same distributor of Sunrise Production's series, *Jungle Beat*.

Turning from local broadcasting to the cinema, very few South African studios have had the capacity to produce feature length animation which is why it has been of the vast minority of outputs from the local industry. The 2000s however saw the landmark release of South Africa's first animated feature film as well as several others in the 2010s. Whilst the Zimbabwean originating studio, Sunrise Productions is credited with producing the first Southern African animated feature film with its *Legend of the Sky Kingdom* (2003)[59], South Africa's first feature film came four years later with *Tengers* (2007). The film was produced on a low budget in a stop-motion claymation technique and was written, directed, and produced by Michael J. Rix.[60] The film satirically explores life in contemporary Johannesburg and was selected for a number of international festivals and won the category of 'Best Animated Feature Film' at the DIY Film Festival in Los Angeles in 2007.

Just as *The Legend of the Sky Kingdom* had been the first stop-motion feature film to originate from the continent, Sunrise Productions (which relocated to South Africa in 2005) had intended to produce the first full-length CG feature film in Africa with *The Lion of Judah* (2011/ Deryck Broom & Roger Hawkins). In 2006, Sunrise Productions had completed the script, and had also begun pre-production on the Christian comedy-drama film however, due to contractual complications, the studio eventually limited its involvement in the project to narrative and pre-production design, with Character Matters[61] taking over the CG animation production, and American distributor Rocky Mountain Pictures taking over the proprietary rights and later distributing the film in Europe and America (Walker, 2019: 48). Owing to these complications, *The Lion of Judah* is often discredited as the first South African CG feature length film with the credit generally attributed rather to *Jock the Hero Dog* (2011/ Duncan MacNeillie) which was released shortly afterwards in the same year.

[59] *Legend of the Sky Kingdom* (2003) was a self-funded film which was produced on a low budget making use of found and reclaimed materials.
[60] Rix graduated from the Pretoria Technikon Film & Television School in 1996 and produced the film 'Tengers' between 1999 and 2007. Rix established Mirror Mountain Pictures (MMP) in 2006 in order to facilitate the completion of the film. MMP now operates as a fully functioning film and television production company based in Johannesburg.
[61] Character Matters is a Cape Town based studio founded by Chris Schoultz. The studio also wrote the original treatment for *Zambezia* (2012).

Produced and directed by Duncan MacNeillie[62], the stereoscopic 3D animated film adapted from Sir James Percy FitzPatrick's *Jock of the Bushveld*[63] is considered a cornerstone in animated film development within the country. Despite its landmark achievement however, the film's limited budget of R70 million (de Waal, 2011) and its small production team of 25[64] which predominantly consisted of students and recent graduates, resulted in crude animation and visuals which generated significant critical beratement (Sinkins, 2010; Higgins, 2012: 27). As argued by Koenderman however, the film did well from a market-related perspective, "securing deals with Woolworths clothing for children, an advertising deal with Suzuki motors South Africa, Bobtail dogs foods and Nestle Smarties" in addition to an arrangement with Penguin Books to produce "several special editions of the book geared to different age groups" (Koenderman, 2010: 60). The film is also credited for attracting significant star power in the form of musical great, Bryan Adams as the voice behind Jock and South Africa's beloved Desmond Tutu lending his voice to Baba, the wise old owl.

After restructuring and relaunching as a CG studio in 2006 under the new management of Stuart Forrest[65], Triggerfish released its very own first feature film, *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012/Wayne Thornley), one year after the debut of *Jock the Hero Dog*. The film follows Kai – a naive, but high-spirited young falcon who travels to the bird city of Zambezia in order to uncover the truth about his origins. In an interview with CNN Entertainment, Forrest explained that the film broaches the theme of reconciliation and approaching communal understanding within a South African context, whilst being targeted at audiences both within South Africa and internationally (Kermeliotis, 2012). The film was funded from multiple sources including the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and features a star-studded vocal cast including the likes of Samuel L. Jackson (Tendai) and Jeff Goldblum (Ajax). The film was distributed

[62] MacNeillie studied Film/Video and Photographic Arts, Graphic Design at Maritzburg College. Prior to *Jock the Hero Dog*, he produced the live-action *Jock of the Bushveld* film in 1986.
[63] See Higgins (2012) for a detailed discussion of the animated film as an adapted text.
[64] According to Higgins (2012), MacNeillie sourced local animation professionals to make up his production team, which was headed by production supervisor Kerry Liss. As production wore on however, MacNeillie and his team found it increasingly difficult to source local talent and technical specialists able to run and maintain the expensive imported equipment. team of approximately twenty-five animators were assembled, with experience from all different sectors in the South African animation industry (Higgins, 2012: 26-27).
[65] As detailed by Walker (2019: 43), in 2003, Kaye and Trowell sold a portion of Triggerfish to Stuart Forrest who had previously been employed as a stop-motion animator at the studio. Forrest brought with him a business partner named James Middleton, who had prior involvement in the British broadcast industry. Their plan was to digitise the company, which until then had been operating on 35mm film. In 2005, Trowell and Kaye sold the company in its entirety to Forrest and Middleton.

internationally by Cinema Management Group (CMG) and Sony Pictures Entertainment. Despite its modest budget of under $20 million[66] (Kermeliotis, 2012), the film was awarded several accolades[67] and generated global acclaim becoming Africa's most successful film export since *The Gods Must Be Crazy*[68] (1980/ Jamie Uys), released over thirty years earlier (Carstens, 2013). Albeit its very first CG feature film, the high quality of animation showcased in *Adventures of Zambezia* demonstrated the sophistication of Triggerfish as a studio which did not go unrecognised by the international community. As such, the film served to plant one of South Africa's first significant footprints on the map of global animation production and the visibility of Triggerfish in the international landscape has only grown since.

*Khumba* (2013/ Anthony Silverston) was Triggerfish's second CG animated feature film and was released just 15 months after *Adventures in Zambezia*. The film centres around a young zebra born with only half of his stripes and explores the themes of community and multiculturalism and the acceptance of one's individuality. Featuring the vocal talents of Steve Buscemi (Skalk), Laurence Fishburne (Seko) and Liam Neeson (Phango), the film was well received internationally and has been praised for its "use of allegory to engage with the distinctly local subject matter of racial difference and transformation" which "results in a narrative which is unashamedly South African yet does not alienate itself from an international audience" (Wittenberg, 2017: 80-81). The film was 100% locally funded, supported by the IDC, DTI, the NFVF as well as the local production and finance firm, Spier Films[69]. The film was widely distributed and generated just over $28 million globally. Whilst in terms of revenue, the film was less successful than the company's feature film debut, *Khumba* still ranks as one of the five highest-grossing South African films of all time.[70]

After the release of *Khumba* in 2013, feature length CG animation production saw a hiatus from both Sunrise Productions and Triggerfish as both studios directed their attention to other

[66] For comparison, Disney's *Brave* (2012/ Brenda Chapman, Mark Andrews) released in the very same year had a budget of $185 million.
[67] *Adventures of Zambezia* was nominated for two Annie Awards and won the Africa Movie Academy Award for Best Animation (2013) as well as the Golden Horn Award for Best Animation (2013).
[68] *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is a 1980 comedy film written, produced, edited and directed by Jamie Uys. The film stars a cast of non-professional actors from the Himba tribe of Namibia and was a critically acclaimed for its humor, performances, and its ability to convey serious messages in a lighthearted manner – in particular, the effects of Western civilization on indigenous people.
[69] *Khumba* was the first animation project with which Spier Films had been involved.
[70] The other four top grossing local films are as follows: *District 9* (Neill Blomkamp / 2009) - $210.8 million, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (Jamie Uys / 1980) - $100 million +, *Zambezia* (Wayne Thornley / 2012) - $34.4 million, and *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (Justin Chadwick / 2013) - $27.3 million.

work. For Sunrise Productions, the studio prioritised the development and expansion of its successful and award-winning *Jungle Beat* franchise[71]. Initially released in its first season in 2003, *Jungle Beat* is a series of CGI animated self-contained dialogue-free, 5-minute episodes focusing on different animals and the bizarre situations they encounter in nature. The show has been broadcasted in over 180 countries worldwide, including South Africa on the SABC and on Showmax. From the world of *Jungle Beat*, two further shows were created – *The Explorers* and *Munki and Trunk.*

*Munki and Trunk* was distributed on Nickelodeon in 75 territories worldwide by Aardman Animations. The non-dialogue pre-school series, aimed at 4-7 years olds is a comedy adventure set in the jungle which follows the shenanigans of Munki, a banana-loving monkey and his best friend, Trunk, a big-hearted elephant. *The Explorers* is a 26-part series of 2-minute-long episodes geared at a pre-school audience which lives on Sunrise Production's YouTube channel. On the same channel, all the episodes of *Jungle Beat* as well as *Munki and Trunk* can also be found. The channel is hugely successful with the company announcing 1 million YouTube subscribers for *Jungle Beat* in early 2019 and in early 2023, the channel reached 10 million subscribers. In addition to its multiple series spin offs, Sunrise Productions also released the feature film, *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020/ Brent Dawes). Unfortunately, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the film did not see a cinema run but was released globally in 2020 across Netflix and was also licenced to Showmax. Unlike in the series, the animals in the film can speak and they do so in their collaborative effort to help an alien back to his spaceship to try save the world.

For Triggerfish, its service work for the UK based Magic Light Productions comprised of the studio's primary outputs from 2015 to 2019 during which time the studio dedicated efforts towards developing concepts for future projects. Key to this development phase was the Story Lab incubator project devised by Triggerfish in 2014, in partnership with the NFVF and Disney Africa, to which African writers submitted stories for potential future development into animated feature films or series (Walker, 2019: 46).

[71] The series won "Best Series for Children" at the South African Film & TV Association's Awards in 2007 and "National Film Board of Canada Award for Best Animated Short" at the Freeze Frame International Festival hosted by Canada in March 2007. In 2012, the episodes, "I've Got A Lovely Bunch of Coconuts" and "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" both received Platinum Awards at the 4th Annual Pixie Awards held in November last year.

Beyond the efforts of Triggerfish and Sunrise Productions, it must also be noted that in 2019, Mike Scott Animation released *Bru and Boegie* (2019) which marked another 'first' for South African animation in that it was the first full-length film produced entirely in a 2D format. In line with the humour of Mike Scott's other work which he shares on YouTube, the film follows two best friends, Bru and Boegie, in underpants as they contemplate the making of the first South African 2D film with the majority of the film devoted to a character sitting and meditating. As the winner of Nickelodeon's annual Global Animated Shorts Programme designed to identify and develop original comedy-driven content for kids, Mike Scott was also responsible for *MooseBox*, a 20 x 90-second episode show produced by Mind's Eye Creative. The concept was chosen out of 850 global pitches, along with another international short form animation, and follows Moose and CatBox (AKA 'MooseBox') – two best friends who play, explore and survive an unpredictable video game world called 'The Cube'.

**Animation Education and Festivals**

Owing to a lack of formal education offered in animation training to prepare people for working in the industry, up until the end of the 20th century, animators in South Africa had no choice but to teach themselves how to animate or be hired and trained by professionals within a studio. Marking a significant milestone, South Africa's first dedicated Animation School opened its doors in 2000 and several other institutions have subsequently begun offering animation courses and qualifications.[72] Table 3.1 illustrates a number of the local higher educational institutions which offer practical degrees or diplomas in animation in 2022.[73]

**Table 3.1:** South African educational institutions offering courses in animation

| **Institution** | **Location** |
|---|---|
| The Animation School | Cape Town and Johannesburg |
| City Varsity Film, TV and Multimedia School | Cape Town and Johannesburg |
| Oaklands College | East Rand, Pretoria, Somerset West |
| SAE Institute | Cape Town and Johannesburg |
| Centre for Fine Art Animation and Design (CFAD) | Cape Town |
| Friends of Design - Academy of Digital Arts | Cape Town |

[72] It is noted that the earliest establishment of an institution offering Animation studies in South Africa dates back to the early 1980s, with the Green Side Design Centre in Joburg (SACO, 2022: 28) however, animation was not the dedicated focus of this institution therefore the establishment of the first Animation School is arguably more important.

[73] A 2022 SACO report found 17 local institutions in total that offer an education in animation however they were not listed by name.

| | |
|---|---|
| The National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) | Johannesburg |
| False Bay TVET College | Cape Town |
| STADIO (Previously Prestige Academy) | Cape Town |
| Greenside Design Centre | Johannesburg |

*Note: In the absence of official data, this list was compiled through an internet mediated search applying a standard rapid assessment framework.*

Whilst the increased introduction of learning opportunities in tertiary education institutions positively reflects the growth of the local animation industry, several efforts have also been made towards increasing the number of sponsorships and alternative training avenues for talented individuals who may lack resources and/or access to formal education in the country (Tuchow, 2022; Tshimologong Precinct, 2019). The importance of this cannot be understated. The nature of the animation industry is characterised by predominantly contract-based work requiring highly specialised skills and as such, it has ostensibly made it a difficult and risky vocation to enter. Access to the industry within South Africa has therefore often been limited to "those from wealthy, mostly white, families who can afford to go to film school, given the risk of being frequently unemployed afterwards" (Stakeholder quoted in Collins & Snowball, 2013: 21). It is part of the core agenda of the NFVF and Animation South Africa (ASA) to combat this specific problem of industry inaccessibility in order to better transform the industry to be more inclusive of black South Africans, who were previously excluded from many opportunities under apartheid (Tuomi 2007).

Opportunities that have been created to make the industry more accessible for all include, for example, a series of internationally funded animation training opportunities that have been offered over the years by organisations such as the UNESCO/CFI who funded Animated Afrika! workshops. These workshops took place in 2004 and 2005 across South Africa as well as Kenya and Tanzania to develop children's programs that truly reflect local culture and imagination (Azi, 2012: 49; Sawadogo, 2019: 73). In 2019, the NFVF and the Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (a South African start-up innovation hub), signed official partnership agreements at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival with the Paris-based animation school Gobelins and the French Embassy in South Africa with the intention of growing "the local animation industry's skills pipeline by offering training, internships and scholarships to animators in Africa" (NFVF Annual Report, 2020: 14). South Africa has also received support from international networks such as Cartoon Network whereby in 2021,

Cartoon Network Africa announced that it greenlit its first-ever domestic superhero series, *Garbage Boy and Trash Can*. The 10 x 2.5-minute comedy-driven series about a boy with imaginary superpowers who fights for justice with his trusty sidekick was created by Nigerian animator Ridwan Moshood who won Cartoon Network Africa's Creative Lab competition in 2018 – an initiative intended to discover and develop African creators rather than relying purely on North American and European-produced Cartoon Network content (Amidi, 2018).

Within the context of our digital age, the internet has also played a major role in democratising education. As such, many young aspiring animators can look to free online platforms such as YouTube to learn animation techniques as an alternative to seeking formal training. It is through the availability of online learning materials that self-taught artists can hone their skills and share their creations on platforms like YouTube, Vimeo and TikTok in order to generate income off their work and for a chance to get recognised which in turn, can offer an avenue through which artists gain access to the formal job market within the industry (Nunis & Treanor, 2020). It is in this vein that the self-taught South African Jonas Lekganyane is celebrated for producing the popular animated socio-political satire series *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba* which was picked up by Soweto TV and Ekurhuleni TV after Lekganyane posted the early episodes of the show on YouTube in 2013 (Sidogi, 2020). To this end, Triggerfish must also be celebrated for the efforts of their online academy whereby free and mentored courses presented by professionals from the Triggerfish Animation Studio are offered to anybody interested in building a career in animation on the continent. In so doing, the initiative also tries to discourage up-and-coming animators from seeking greener pastures outside the borders of South Africa.

Beyond education and training, animation within South Africa has also increased in prominence in recent years such that South Africa boasts two festivals devoted to celebrating animation: The Cape Town International Animation Festival (CTIAF) and FUPiTOONS African Animation Festival. Established in 2011, CTIAF is the largest dedicated animation festival on the African continent. The festival is renowned for presenting world-class content to attendees as well as offering attendees an opportunity to engage with global industry leaders[74]. Its programme involves screenings of local animated films, workshops and

[74] At CTIAF in 2019, Peter Ramsey (director of *Rise of the Guardians* (2012) and *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018)) was the keynote speaker and other international speakers included Aron Warner (previous vice president of production at Twentieth Century Fox and producer/writer for the Shrek franchise as well as *The Book*

masterclasses, business-to-business sessions, roundtable sessions, producer events, networking opportunities as well as government panel discussions. The CTIAF also promotes animation to the next generation by hosting an annual student competition, family programmes as well as outreach initiatives.

In a partnership between the African Animation Network (AAN), Ster-Kinekor Cinema Nouveau, Cartoon Network and The Animation School, the FUPiTOONS African Animation Festival was founded as the first "Made in Africa for Kids" animation short film festival[75]. First established in 2017, the festival runs parallel to DISCOP Johannesburg before embarking on a Pan-African tour. Underpinned by the intention to celebrate African animation excellence and build an audience for African animated content, the festival showcases a variety of African animation talent from around the continent. The festival is also increasing its reach throughout Africa every year – in 2018, the festival toured nine countries in Africa and in 2019 it toured eleven countries.

Both CTIAF and FUPiTOONS form part of the growing emergence of animation festivals on the continent alongside the likes of the Lagos International Festival of Animation (2016-), the Yaoundé African Cinema Animation (2017-) in Cameroon, Ghana's ANIMAFRIK (2009-) and Accra Animation Film Festival (2019-) as well as the newest arrival on the African festival landscape – the Kwetu International Animation Film Festival (KIAFF) launched in 2021.[76]

**Conclusion**

The growth of South Africa's animation industry has been slow, especially in its first eight decades of existence (ie. prior to the 1990s). The new millennium however saw a significant spike in growth for the industry in terms of animated outputs, the inception of animation training programs, as well as in the establishment of many new animation studios primarily located in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

*of Life* (2014)) and via skype, Aaron Blaise (21-year veteran of Disney Animation Studios and co-director on Brother Bear (2003)).

[75] The festival showcases content aimed at audiences 2 to 12 years old.

[76] The first edition of the festival took place online from April 2-3 (due to COVID-19). The second edition of the Kwetu International Animation Film Festival is set to take place from April 10-12 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

Through her detailed enquiry into the Animation Unit, situated within the SABC from 1976 – 1988, Shanaz Shapurjee's research revealed that the SABC was one of the primary driving forces behind animation production during the development of its industry (especially within the entertainment space). Her investigation of early animation produced in South Africa highlighted how the industry was forged largely through the efforts of mainly non-South African individuals (Americans and Europeans) and as such, the ideologies and modes of production adopted within South Africa replicated those of 'the West'. Furthermore, Andrew Haycock's research from 2010 highlighted that 3D stop-motion animation, although a marginal and neglected form in most parts of the world, has played a vital role in the evolution of South African animation.

The local animation industry that exists to date has been shaped by the historical context offered by this chapter. Against this backdrop, the chapter to follow will investigate contemporary South African animation outputs within the framework provided by the three remaining study objectives and will rely significantly on the information gathered during the interview process with local animation stakeholders.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

There is an urgent need to establish and interrogate the layers of meaning behind the questions, "What does 'South African' content look like; what *should* it look like, and what role should it serve?". Within much of the existing scholarship on the local industry, there seems to be a unanimous belief that locally produced content should express a level of 'South Africanness'. As such, scholars have often evaluated local animation outputs in relation to their ability to reflect their locality – narratively and/or aesthetically.[77] Below, I offer an overview of some of the key arguments scholars have made about South African animated content in this vein. In so doing, I wish to highlight the merit of the arguments whilst also flagging their limitations in order to ground my discussion to follow.

Beginning first with Triggerfish's acclaimed *Takalani Sesame* (2000), both Andrew Haycock (2010) and Kelly Walker (2019) celebrate the show's narrative locality and contend that the show exhibits a uniquely local stop-motion aesthetic with a strong link to South Africa's local art tradition. Haycock argues that "Triggerfish's 'trash' aesthetic characterised by a mixture of urban debris, styles and curio puppets, is representative of the diversity and multiculturalism of the New South Africa" (2010: 135-136). On the potential of this style of animation, Haycock further explains as follows, "Considering that South African traditional art is predominantly three-dimensional, stop-motion animation would be specially suited to creating other uniquely South African animation aesthetics. There is still a wide range of three- dimensional African sculpture in wood and metal that can serve as future references for stop-motion material that would be unique to South Africa and highly innovative in terms of stop-motion created in other parts of the world" (2010: 137). Furthering this point, Walker stresses that the success of the show lies in the fact that "many of the aesthetic conventions derived from cultural practices or traditions, street art and access to materials that are reflected in the work of various South African artisans are also present within the stop-motion animation produced by Triggerfish" (2019: 79). Walker then goes onto clarify that, "This, in conjunction with Triggerfish's clear divergence from established mainstream modes of production, confirms Haycock's assertion that Triggerfish did successfully conceive of an identifiably local stop-motion aesthetic through the incorporation of narrative themes and visual language distinctive to a South African context" (2019: 79).

[77] See Freddy (2015) and Sawagogo (2019) for a detailed discussion on the aesthetic articulation of 'Africaness'.

Similarly, Walker (2019: 33) offers high praise to the animation techniques used in Sunrise Production's *Legend of the Sky Kingdom* (2003) and specifically the way in which it references local street art made from wire, beads, old bottle tops, cans, and other recycled commodities. Through the film's reinterpretation of reclaimed objects to construct its unique visual language in the film's unique 'junkmation' aesthetic, Walker argues that the film "successfully establish[es] recognisable cultural signifiers and, as such, clearly convey[s] locality" (Walker, 2019: 117).

Unlike the early stop-motion work produced by Triggerfish and Sunrise Productions, the CG productions from the studios have not received high praise. For example, in Tanya Blaeser's (2017) thesis: *A postcolonial analysis of colonial representations in Triggerfish's animated films Khumba (2013) and Adventures in Zambezia (2012),* Blaeser critiques both films for being representative of fragmented imperial structures of power. She argues that both films "perpetuate the long-reigning regime of representing Africa as a homogenous mass of scenic landscapes and as a site of colonial-style adventure" (2012: 86). This harsh remark is echoed in the review of Kavish Chetty, writing for *Mahala* Magazine, who argues that *Khumba* (2013) "[allows] the dull drift of market forces to blunt its "locality", turning Africa into a placeholder for the projection of western fantasy" (Chetty, 2013). In defence of the film, Wittenberg has praised the narrative of *Khumba* for being "unashamedly South African" (2017: 80-81). In addition, Walker offered the following remark, "when it comes to environment design, *Khumba* very successfully establishes landscapes that speak to a South African history of segregation and issues of identity, reconciliation and retribution within shared spaces" (2019: 117). Walker additionally goes on to note that, "*Khumba…* creates a multi- faceted approach to sound design that is distinctly South African through its adoption of multiple voice overs in order to preserve local voices for local audiences" (2019: 117). That said however, Walker (2019) does criticise *Khumba* for adopting dominant American conventions of production design.

Despite the few arguments in favour of the films' attempts to positively represent their South African locality, the vast majority of literature has condemned both *Adventures in Zambezia* and *Khumba*. Likewise, in her assessment of Sunrise Production's *Munki and Trunk* (2016) series, Walker offers an overview of her critical analysis as follows,

> "*Munki and Trunk* (2016)… constructs a narrative which is reflective of the oral tradition of storytelling in South Africa through its implementation of hyperbolic

> pacing and divergent action sequences and boasts far more nuanced, fluid performances than those which succeeded it in earlier seasons of *Jungle Beat* (2000-present), establishing and communicating characterisation, emotion and intent. However, despite all of these refinements, the series' overall treatment of movement, three- dimensional forms and spaces is not distinguishable from the sort of mainstream commercial animation which is widely produced and distributed in Europe or America, and the sound design does little to improve this situation as, despite the sporadic inclusion of African instruments, the voice tracks lack audibly African signifiers. Consequently, *Munki and Trunk* (2016) does not establish a recognisably South African animation aesthetic" (Walker, 2019: 116).

Beyond her stern critique of the series given its adoption of Westernised aesthetics and sound design, Walker does importantly note however that, "The series makes no claim towards Afrocentrism" (2019: 116). She goes on to explain as follows, "the filmmakers have definitively declared that their aim is to establish a production model which allows for the mass distribution of easily marketable and digestible content to the widest audience possible, as a means of procuring the capital needed for future investment in authentically South African stories for animated feature film development" (2019: 116). The importance of digestibility and commercial marketability within the South African animation production model is a key argument I will revisit in my discussion to follow.

Apart from the work produced by Triggerfish and Sunrise Production, Adam de Beer (2016), in his assessment of Clockwork Zoo's *URBO: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006-2009), also raises several key criticisms in relation to representation and locality. Despite acknowledging the show's active engagement with African signifiers, De Beer (2016) critiques the show for its limited illustration of "iconographically specific African images or symbols used in the visual design of the series" (2016: 58). De Beer goes onto claim that "the series entrenches contemporary racial and gender stereotypes within the prevailing hegemonic hierarchy" (2016: 60) and additionally raises the issue of the show's representation of African characters which is complicated and problematised by the fact that the key creatives on the show are all Caucasian (bar Tumiso Tsukudu) (De Beer, 2016: 59). Within this critique, De Beer raises an important point about South African animation in general. Albeit beyond the scope of this particular study, De Beer calls for a recognition of the fact that "within a South African context, identity, what it means, and who controls the construction of representations of identity, is

deeply contested due to the country's socio-political history" (2016: 48). It is for this reason that transformation remains such a core part of the local government's agenda for businesses within South Africa including the creative industries (See for example, Collins & Snowball, 2013; Creative Economy Masterplan, 2021).

Without discrediting the assessments of South African animation made above, it is noteworthy to highlight that arguments solely constructed to evaluate how 'African' a text is or how 'South African looking' a text is in terms of its signifiers have often arrived at the same conclusion: what attempts have been made are insufficient. In many ways, this echoes the caution of speaking about content produced within Africa highlighted by David Murphy (2000) who explains that "debates upon the nature of African cinema have too often been trapped within a reductive opposition between Western and African culture. This argument proposes that an 'authentic' African film must not only exclude all things European or Western, but must also set itself up in opposition to them" (2000: 241). To this point, Kelly Walker for example explicitly states that the aim of her comparative analysis of the work produced by Triggerfish and Sunrise Productions is to "identify whether or not either studio successfully established a recognisably South African aesthetic, or if they instead resorted to adopting dominant American conventions of production design" (2019: 4). In so doing, Walker attributes the notion of a 'South African aesthetic' in direct contrast to that of Western animation.

I contend with the likes of Walker (2019) and Blaeser (2017) that a great potential of South African animation lies in its ability to offer culturally relevant content which counters the problematic legacy of Western representations of Africa in terms of its place and its people. I am also in agreement that in order to achieve this, South African animation must assume a level of opposition or divergence to what it is set out to oppose. That said, I believe that this is but one of many forms and functions that the South African animation industry serves. As was highlighted in the previous chapter, the South African animation industry is in many ways historically tied to Western aesthetics and ways of production. As such, I accept that the animation produced by studios that have been so heavily influenced by non-African techniques and traditions would naturally exhibit that influence in one form or another. In addition, I contend that beyond narrative and aesthetics, 'South Africanness' in animation can be described by, expressed through and attributed to several other more pertinent factors.

My discussion to follow therefore diverts from an exclusive assessment of animated texts in terms of their aesthetic, stylistic and narrative functions and rather involves an examination of the South African animation industry (and its outputs) within the context of the local and global market of cultural production and consumption. My investigation is divided into three core sections. The first section looks at the supply of animation content from South African studios. In this section, I make a point of highlighting the role and importance of animation service work which is so often overshadowed by that of the much more glamorous, original animation productions. The second section of my investigation focuses on original animation outputs and seeks to understand the matter of South African relevant content by assessing the demand for South African content and how this demand has informed and shaped the kinds of content produced. In this section, I construct my argument through an examination of the recent productions of Triggerfish. Finally, in the third section of this investigation, I shift focus to address the matter of South African animation ownership. In so doing, I highlight the importance of intellectual property (IP) and consider the role of the local broadcaster as well as the funding models that exist within South Africa that shape the production process.

**South African Made: Who is Making What?**

Within a South African context, it has been highlighted that there exists an underlying issue in the reporting of the local animation industry. From the perspective of Animation South Africa (ASA) in particular, it was expressed that reported data on the animation industry fail to offer a clear indication of the actual contributions (employment numbers and revenue generation) made by the industry. According to a representative from Animation South Africa, the contributions of the local animation industry are rather often "grossly undervalued" owing to the propensity to cluster animation with other segments of the creative and cultural industries in the reporting process, either as a part of the film and television space or as a component of the audio-visual and interactive media sector (AV&IM) (R1, 2021).[78] In a similar vein, although certain studies have been conducted which have attempted to detail the ecosystem of South African animation, there is a lack of accurate and comprehensive data on the industry

[78] It was estimated that annual turnover for the gaming and animation sectors in the 2017/18 financial year was R476 million and that, in 2018, the South African gaming and animation sectors created 1225 direct jobs - 768 in animation (SACO, 2019). The reliability and applicability of this data, as highlighted, is questionable.

which has meant that it is unclear exactly how many studios are currently offering animation services in South Africa.[79]

As a reflection of this lack of data, when asked to describe the contemporary animation landscape in South Africa, stakeholders emphasised its highly fragmented nature (R1, 2021; R12, 2021). Within its fragmentation however, the local industry has been celebrated for its vibrancy, talent, and accomplishments. This is particularly the case for original long form animation work from established South African studios that continue to boost the visibility and reputation of South Africa when performing on a world stage. This type of creative work is however few and far between and comprises the vast minority of the outputs of the local industry as a whole (R1, 2021). There is a pressing need therefore to look beyond the renowned long form animation projects that do make it out of local studios and to acknowledge the array of alternative work that local animation studios produce and the reasons why this work is being created.

According to industry stakeholders, within South Africa, contract-based service work presides as the most dominant form of work for the animation industry with many companies offering cross-over services and specialisations feeding into the local (and international) advertising sector as well as the international (and local) entertainment industry (R1, 2021; R12, 2021). As a territory, there are several key reasons why South Africa is a strong offshore servicing destination for international studios. First and foremost, the decreasing value of the South African currency has made outsourcing animation production in South Africa attractive to foreign companies and partners (Tuomi, 2007; Collins & Snowball, 2013: 6; SACO, 2022). In addition, relative to other territories that also serve as popular offshore animation production hubs for Western studios, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and India, South Africa has been recognised for the quality of its talent and supreme production value offered. According to a report compiled for DAC, for well-established international studios, "Although costs are in most cases cheaper in China and India, the quality is often not "up to standard". South Africa is therefore a competitive production location and service provider" (Urban-Econ Development Economists et al., 2014: 36). From a Disney Africa executive, the advantages of South Africa as an animation service provider were described as follows:

[79] In a 2022 SACO report, 68 different animation studios in South Africa were identified. After review however, the reliability of this data is uncertain.

> *"I think South Africa has some great advantages: it has got production companies of high quality that are known and growing in their reputation, generally speaking economics are a positive here and the use of the English language makes working here very attractive."* (R3, 2021).

In addition, the South African time zone (operating on Central African Time) was cited as another key advantage when working with European studios in particular (R4, 2021). For Sunrise Productions who work with a number of different studios located around the world, the benefits of working within the South African time zone were described as follows,

> "*Beyond easy access to all of Europe, it splits the world in a really useful way between the far-east and the far-west and it gives us the unique opportunity within one day to work with our studios out in Indonesia and Singapore… and to engage with some of our partners in the US. We are fortunate to be uniquely positioned to do that and it lets us create a much longer production day by bridging those two worlds"* (R7, 2021).

For many of South Africa's studios, the production of service animation work is either a strategic priority or a necessary supplement to the production of original work. According to one respondent, "*Many local studios are happy just doing service work because for them, it might not be about creating original stories, it may just be about creating animation and getting paid"* (R6, 2021). For this respondent, the primary benefit of offering and delivering service animation work lies in the implication that it is an easier option through which to generate revenue and ensure a level of sustainability and security in the industry.

As a supplement to this point, a respondent from Mind's Eye Creative offered the following statement, "*To state the obvious, making long form animation (feature film or series) is a very expensive task because it takes hundreds of people over a period of several years"* (R8, 2021). Beyond the skilled labour required and the long production timelines of animated projects, the in-house production of long form animation also requires a robust and diverse pipeline comprised of devoted departments for concept creation, pre-production, production and post-production. Many local studios simply lack the capacity to perform each of these roles and as such, service work presides as an option through which studios can leverage their specialised expertise within one or two particular phases of the animation pipeline in order to attract work.

Service work, particularly in the production and post-production phases of the pipeline, has also been suggested to offer a logical and necessary starting point for most local studios like for Cabblow Studios, who described taking on service work as "*a way for us to find a way to enter into the industry"* (R10, 2021). More so, service work has been described as a crucial steppingstone for studios who do have ambitions of creating a concept and executing through original animation work. This was articulated by a respondent from Spier Films as follows:

> "*You must first start with servicing other people's projects and technologies and it's only through servicing that you learn how to do it yourself and then you can create it yourself. Our local industry has been driven by servicing and it's necessary to continue doing that because of the foreign direct investment and also because of the upskilling on the creative side for out crews*" (R4, 2021)

The benefit of skills development that comes with working on big animation projects with highly trained individuals has also been cited as a huge advantage for taking on international service work for local studios to gain experience such that, when they are ready to make original content, it will be at a much higher calibre (R1, 2021). This upskilling route is in many ways the one taken by studios like Triggerfish and Clockwork Zoo with their collaborative work for the UK based Magic Light Productions and Disney respectively.

Despite managing to produce original long form animation in the form of the DVD series, *The Adventures of Toby,* for the Johannesburg based studio Bugbox, service work was suggested to be a means to an end and in some ways, a distraction from the long-term goal of the studio. This was described by an executive as follows,

> *"I've never really enjoyed advertising work, but the returns are good, and it worked so well that it almost became a bit of trap because we were so dependent on it that it swallowed up a lot of our resources and time to try and pursue the actual dream [of producing original work]"* (R11, 2021).

For other studios, service work has proven instrumental to their development such as for the Hidden Hand studio who are acclaimed for producing the animation on the top tier show, *Primal* (2019 / Genndy Tartakovsky)[80] with the French based, Studio La Cachette. From the

[80] *Primal* is an American adult animated action horror television series created and directed by Genndy Tartakovsky for Cartoon Network's late-night programming. The show is set in an anachronistic and fantastical

experience gained through creating animation for the show among some of the best 2D artists in the world, the founders of the Hidden Hand, Lesego Vorster and Ross Lelliot, have expressed their future intentions of producing a feature film with a high-end African 2D aesthetic and narrative in the form of their passion project, *Blood of a Fellow*. Prior to the eventual dream of a feature film, Vorster and Lelliot indicated that they would first make the project into a short film and then a series before pursuing production on a feature (See Figure 4.1). In the interim, the studio is also involved with servicing the animation concepts of other local creatives like Lola Alma Aikins with whom the studio worked on the creation of the animated short film *Naledi* (2022) about a grief-stricken athlete who injures herself and has to find a way to get her life back on track (See Figure 4.2).

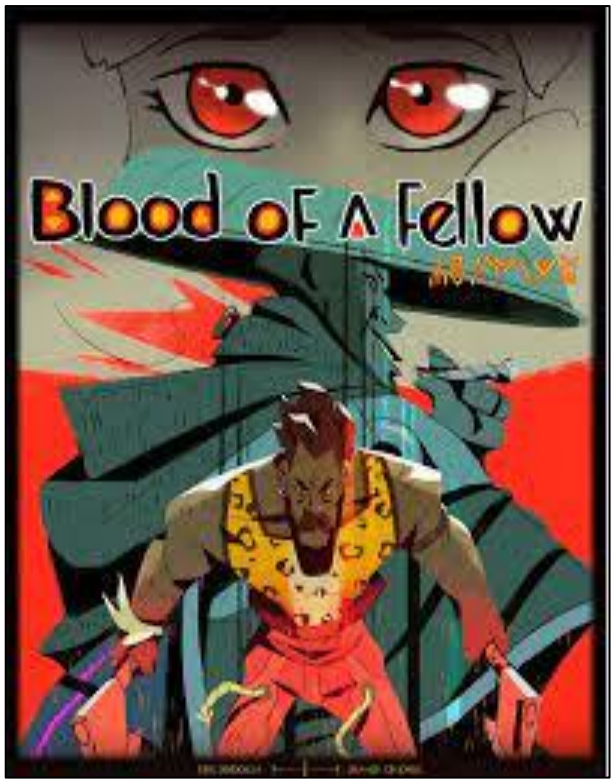


**Figure 4.1:** *Blood of a Fellow* Concept Poster

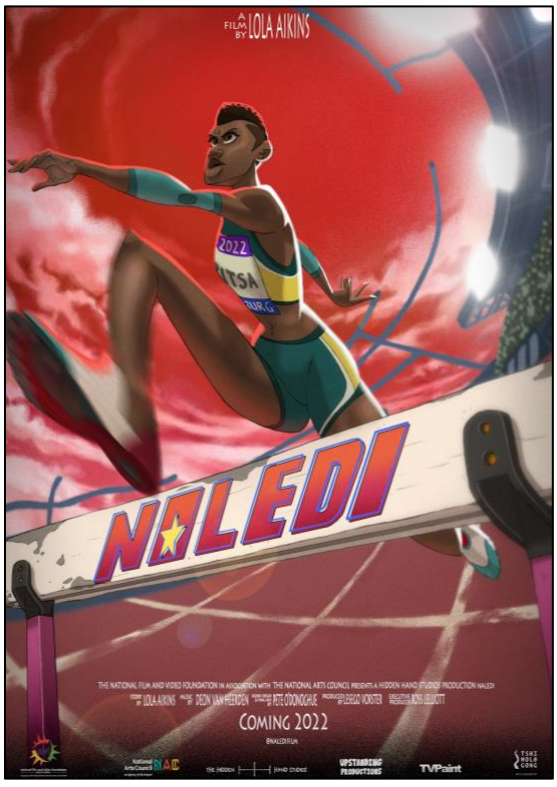


**Figure 4.2:** *Naledi* (2022) Film Poster

For Sunrise Productions, a representative from the studio indicated how service work formed a part of the company's growing pains before pursuing original concept animation production,

prehistoric world and the premise is a bond between a Neanderthal named Spear and a female Tyrannosaurus rex named Fang as they struggle to survive in the environment.

> "*We've worked with a number of partners in the capacity of service providers, co-production partners and we view that as very important. We are going into a phase now whereby we are telling our own stories*" (R7, 2021).

Key to this new phase of the studio is its upcoming biblical epic feature film, *David* (expected in 2025/ Phil Cunningham & Brent Dawes). With its beautiful CG animation (See Figures 4.3 and 4.4), *David* is anticipated to deliver the moving authenticity of DreamWorks Animation's *Prince of Egypt* (1998/ Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner & Simon Wells) paired with the modern animation and musical fun of Disney's *Moana* (2016/ Ron Clements & John Musker) or *Tangled* (2011/ Nathan Greno & Byron Howard). In so doing, the hopeful vision behind the film is that it will delight the global faith audience while also drawing a broader mainstream audience so as to become the most-viewed animated film of all time. To accomplish this bold mission, the film is set to have the largest budget of any South African feature film which the studio has acquired, in part, through global fundraising efforts with angel funding[81].

**Figure 4.3:** Still image from the promotional video for *David*

[81] The studio's funding efforts with Angel Studios can be seen on the film's website: https://www.thedavidmovie.com/.

**Figure 4.4:** Still image from the promotional video for *David*

Beyond Sunrise Productions, another local studio making the shift from production servicing to creation is Cape Town-based, Lucan. The company recently announced its plans to expand from basic production services into the development of original IP, starting with a series called *Isaura*. The 12-episode scripted series is due to follow the story of a young girl from a fishing village in Mozambique who attains the ability to breathe underwater and communicate with turtles. The show is intended to have a strong conservation message and comment on a number of social and political climate change issues. The animation style of the show takes inspiration from the animation of Studio Ghibli[82], and is being made in collaboration with the Johannesburg based studio, Mind's Eye Creative.

An additional newcomer to the feature film space is Luma Animation. Its debut feature film *HEADSPACE* (2023/ Paul Meyer & Gerhard Painter) about miniature aliens that want to take over the world is highly anticipated. For other local studios forging their way into the original concept animation scene, notable mention must be made of Polycat[83] and Na Aap Productions. For Polycat, their entry into the original animation space began in 2020 with the launch of their web-series *Noodle and Bun* (2020/ Gottfried RoodtLloyd Wilgen) and there are rumours that

[82] Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation studio based in Tokyo renowned for its range of animated feature films including *Spirited Away* (2001/ Hayao Miyazaki) and *Princess Mononoke* (1997/ Hayao Miyazaki).
[83] Polycat is a Cape Town based animation and visual effects studio that specialises in computer animated media for television, games and film.

the studio intends to also develop a feature film. [84] Na Aap Productions led by Deidre Jantjies[85] also recently contributed to the animated web-series space with, *Stories in die Wind* (2021) and has similar ambitions of creating a feature film. Final credit must also be afforded to the creators behind *Kwezi*[86] – South Africa's first superhero comic – who aspire to follow the recipe of Marvel's *Black Panther* (2018/ Ryan Coogler) and get their graphic novel turned into a local TV series in the near future.[87]

For these local studios and individual creatives, collaborating with other South African studios is a crucial way to get animation products created and delivered whilst also supporting the greater animation ecosystem. In particular, the development of animation shorts and animation trailers has been cited as a critical part of the marketing and sales efforts for an animated project in order to enter festivals and markets in search of funding and/or distribution partners for a potential long form animation project. To this end, a representative from Mind's Eye Creative commented on the studio's work with other local creators as follows,

> *"In the past few years, service work has been quite locally driven. We've done several Canadian projects but locally we have also done a lot of work with producers to develop promos and teasers for their shows to pitch around markets. We've just entered a short film called Shaka Inkosi Yamakhosi which has won quite a few awards[88] and that project is now in discussion about a potential feature film which is quite exciting. We're also in discussion now about developing a local series called Twende (all based in East Africa) so there's a lot that's happening behind the scenes where we are pushing for local content. In addition, we also helped create My Better World[89] with MAAN so*

[84] This was mentioned at CTIAF 2021 but no further information has been released to date.
[85] Deidre Jantjies is a Khoisan film producer and is doing her part to ensure that more of South Africa's indigenous languages are showcased, normalized, and revitalized on screen. She has produced a web series entitled "Stories in die Wind" (Stories of the Wind), in which she tells stories of Nama Peoples in Afrikaans with Nama subtitles. "Stories in die Wind" is a passion project from Jantjies, which tells the story of a young Nama girl born with a gift to communicate with the rain, animals, and plants, who is on a mission to find her destiny (Ferris, 2021).
[86] The creators behind Kwezi are Loyiso Mkize, Clyde Beech and Mohale Mashigo (aka Carol Mashigo). Kwezi follows a 19-year-old boy that discovers he has superpowers and is set within a contemporary South Africa.
[87] This was indicated at a presentation by Team Kwezi at CTIAF 2021.
[88] *Shaka Inkosi Yamakhos* (Shaka King of Kings) was directed and produced by Manzini Zungu with PacinaPictures and tells the well-known story of Shaka, the builder of the Zulu nation, focusing on his difficult childhood and the troubles he and his mother Nandi went through after they were kicked out of the royal house. Beyond receiving the Best South African Short Film award at the Durban International Film Festival, the short film has won Best Animation Award at Paris Cinema Awards and received Best Short Film Animation at Genesis International Film Festival. It was released on Netflix in late 2022.
[89] *My Better World* was produced by Johannesburg based animation studio, MAAN (with Fundi Films), and it was recently announced that the show was awarded an international Emmy in the category, Kids: Factual & Entertainment. MAAN also produced *Sam the Hedgehog* - a 12-minute short film written by Julia Smuts Louw

*there is a lot of local projects that we do in between the international servicing gigs"* (R8, 2021).

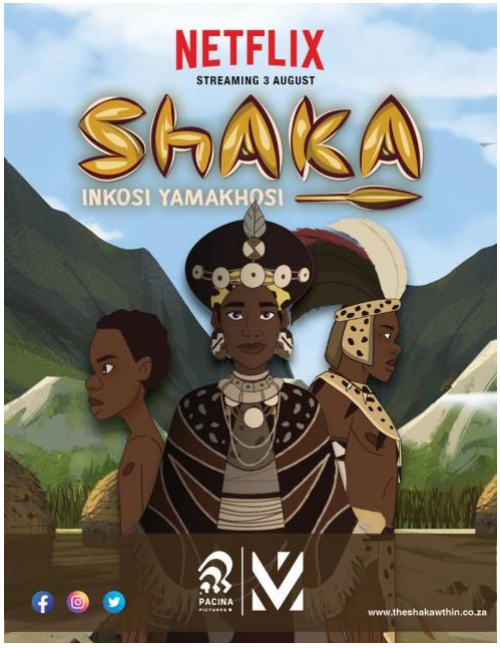


**Figure 4.5**: *Shaka Inkosi Yamakhosi* (2022) Film Poster


**Figure 4.6:** *My Better World* Poster

that sheds a light on the experience of autism spectrum disorder children and their parents. The film is self-funded and has been in production for seven years (SACO, 2022: 47).

For one local studio, Pixcomm, service work has been a part of its history but is not a strategic plan for its future. Established in 2007, the studio's early work comprised service work for the SABC in the form of fillers for children's' programmes in addition to a large animation job (156 episodes) for M-Net. Beyond that, the studio also undertook several commercials and some educational animation work (R9, 2021). Most notably, Pixcomm is also the studio behind *Jabu's Jungle* – a 2D animation children's show which follows the story of Jabu, a young and intrepid nine-year-old from Masiphumelele, Cape Town, and his magic talking drum. According to a senior executive from Pixcomm, "*We should [still] be surviving on service work rather than producing our own intellectual property but somehow, we're making it work*" (R9, 2021).

As can be ascertained, in the form of both service work and original animation projects, there is a diverse and extensive range of animation products being created on South African soil – some of which have a distinct South African identity and some which do not. In many ways, this wide variety of animation content production reflects the talent and skill of the local industry. It has been articulated however, that within South Africa, supplying quality animation has never been a problem, rather the issue for the industry has been a historical lack of demand for locally produced animation – specifically original concept work (R12, 2021). This sentiment brings me to my next line of inquiry into South African relevant content and the related demand for it (or lack thereof).

**South African Relevant: What Does it Mean and Who Wants What?**

Nations such as India, France and Nigeria boast robust domestic demand for their local film and television industries (Collins & Snowball, 2013: 28; SACO, 2019, 2022). For animation specifically, the local consumption of animation in countries such as Japan and China have proven instrumental to the success and sustainability of its industries (R1, 2021; Napier, 2000). It was found that, in Japan, only 5% of animation content is imported (Japanese Economy Division, 2005) and in China, 70% of its animations are locally produced (Forgione, 2010).

Within South Africa, local support for home grown animated content is regrettably absent. Beyond animation specifically, this lack of support from the domestic market extends across the broader audio-visual industry as the NFVF found, in a 2008 report, that most South African film productions do not cover even 50% of their costs at the local box office (Collins &

Snowball, 2013: 28). In addition, a report published by the Department of Trade and Industry described the demand in the local market as "small, and relatively weak" indicating that "the growing export markets for South African AV&IM content is likely to be a key strategy in sector development" (DTI, 2005: 34). Although both of these cited sources are outdated, it was affirmed by stakeholders interviewed that the situation within South Africa has not undergone much change and that overall sentiment remains the same (R1; 2021; R12, 2021).

As an aside, to account for this lack of domestic support, Collins and Snowball suggest that a challenge for local productions is, "the current taste preference of South African audiences for sophisticated Hollywood-produced films, which means that, unlike the Nigerian film industry, South African productions struggle to compete, even in local markets" (2013: 26). The authors go on to conclude that "Until local productions can compete in terms of appeal and sophistication with Hollywood productions, they are unlikely to be able to capture a significant share of local demand" (Collins & Snowball, 2013: 28). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this study to delve deeply in this matter, I would contend that, in a contemporary context, the reason behind the limited local uptake does not lie in the local industry's inability to create quality products that have local (as well as universal) appeal as there are many local examples that offer evidence to the contrary.

Given the lack of local support for original South African animation, the necessary counteractive approach adopted by the local industry has been to leverage the global appeal of products in order to drive international consumption. This strategy has been adopted and implemented by Triggerfish and was described by a respondent from the studio as follows, "*As Triggerfish, we want to reach the world partly because the budget is so big that we have to – there's no business plan otherwise*" (R6, 2021). As a supplement to this point, Triggerfish CEO Stuart Forrest recalled in an interview with Kelly Walker (2019: 92) that just 4-4.5% of income generated by *Zambezia* and *Khumba* came from the African continent.

Albeit a strategic priority, producing content from South Africa to reach a global audience has been an uphill battle. Many stakeholders expressed that the challenges of gaining access to the global market of cultural consumption have been ongoing for South African studios since the inception of the local animation industry (R1, 2021; R3, 2021; R12; 2021). One respondent from Triggerfish described this challenge as follows:

> "*We have always had lots of concepts and projects which we have tried to get off the ground, but nobody was asking for them when we tried to pitch them. There was always question marks around them because it was unknown"* (R6, 2021)

Despite the hesitancy surrounding South African animation in the past, several stakeholders highlighted how the appetite in global demand for entertainment content has undergone a seismic shift over the last few years (R1, 2021; R2, 2021; R3, 2021; R6, 2021; R7, 2021). This shift has impacted the local industry in a number of different ways and can be accounted for by two recent events: the advent of streaming as well as the global call for greater diversity in the creative industries.

*The Disruptive Impact of Streaming*

The introduction of new digital forms of creation, production, distribution, access and participation in the 21st century revolutionised a number of industries including book publishing, music as well as film and television. In the early 2000s, e-books began to compete with traditionally printed forms of reading material[90] and music streaming services like Spotify[91] began replacing physical CD sales and digital downloading. With the growing sophistication of broadband access introduced at the time, the film and television industry also underwent a radical transformation with the advent of its own streaming revolution, led by Netflix in the over-the-top (OTT) space.[92]

The emergence of Netflix dramatically disrupted the linear television industry around the world. At the end of 2021, Netflix's operations spanned across more than 190 countries[93] with roughly 214 million global paid memberships (Stoll, 2022). Founded in 1997 by Reed Hastings and Marc Randolph, Netflix[94] initially functioned as a by-mail DVD rental service competing against the established brick-and-mortar video rental businesses at the time. In 2006, Netflix recorded 6.3 million subscribers with 7 million rentals a week (Daly, 2008: 69) however its business model was to be transformed in 2007 when it released its subscription video on demand service (SVOD). The OTT service offered customers the ability to stream a television

[90] The first Kindle was released in 2007.
[91] Founded by Daniel Ek and Martin Lorentzon in 2006, Spotify is the largest music streaming service in the world with 172 million premium subscribers worldwide as of the second quarter of 2021 (Götting, 2021).
[92] Over-the-top refers to any streaming service that delivers content over the internet. Other examples of OTT offerings include: HBO Now, Hulu, Amazon Video and YouTube.
[93] Some notable exceptions include North Korea, Syria, China, and Iran.
[94] The business was initially called Kibble.

show or film on a variety of internet connected devices (computer, tablet, mobile phone, or gaming device) and consumers were given the freedom to watch what they wanted, when they wanted, and how they wanted to. This meant that they were no longer limited to a schedule, interrupted by commercials, or forced to leave their homes in order to consume the entertainment they wanted. This offering quickly gained traction and the company's subscription base grew such that the company now stands as the world's leading subscription-based video service (Stoll, 2022).

In recognition of increasing internet speeds and the opportunities afforded by the digital distribution of media in the first decade of the 21st century, other OTTs such as YouTube[95], Amazon Prime Video and Hulu were launched at a similar time to Netflix (2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively). These services have also experienced exponential growth (Stoll, 2021) and the last two years has seen the introduction of several new players to the streaming scene with Disney+ (launched in 2019), Apple TV+ (launched in 2019), WarnerMedia's HBO Max (launched in 2020) and Peacock (launched in 2020).

The rise of streaming services and their growing dominance within the home entertainment space has meant that many people around the world have migrated away from traditional linear TV. As an illustration of this, according to Gruenwedel (2021), an estimated 27% of American households planned to cancel paid cable services in 2021 (i.e., more than 35.5 million households). Furthermore, as more streaming services establish themselves in the market, the competition to attract subscribers in a war for viewership becomes more fierce. As a result, streaming services have had to produce and seek out more and more content to appeal to the appetite of a growing consumer base.

As a supplement to the growing need for content *quantity*, the importance of content *variety* to satisfy the preferences of a diverse international audience has also been raised. To this end, Netflix, as an example, released a statement expressing that "As a global business that spans all over the world, it's incredibly important for us to make sure our slate reflects the diverse cultures and experiences of our members" (Ghettuba quoted in *Screen Africa*, 2020). Within this vein, the business case for diverse content has been firmly cemented by the resounding

[95] YouTube is a free to use OTT service which does not require a paid subscription like Amazon Prime, Netflix, Disney+ and the like.

success of South Korean content within the global creative economy exemplified by Bong Joon-ho's film, *Parasite* (2019) as well as the series, *Squid Game* (2021/ Hwang Dong-hyuk).[96] This phenomenon echoes the notion that,

> *"Local stories don't just resonate within their local market but they tend to resonate around the world because people are always looking for things that are different"* (R12, 2021).

Beyond the need to provide a service that appeals to a global audience, the need for diverse representation in the greater film and television industry has been underscored by calls for change in the traditional Hollywood system of content production. A respondent described this need as follows,

> *"The Hollywood model has become tiresome… for too long the movie making model has been serving a very specific core group of people and audiences are tired of it and the inequality that comes with it."* (R7, 2021).

Key movements such as Black Lives Matter[97] and Me Too[98] have served a crucial role in shifting the cultural climate of America, and in extension, the world. This has put pressure on traditional Hollywood studios to diversify their offerings and implement greater representation of minorities and marginalised groups in front of and behind the camera.

*Championing Diversity*

An industry-wide effort to give more than just lip service to the calls for greater diversity has meant that the film and television industry has taken active steps towards creating a more

[96] Beyond film and television, South Korea has also seen great success within the music space with its exports of KPOP such as BTS and BLACKPINK.

[97] Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a human rights movement dedicated to ending violence and systemic racism against Black people. The movement was established in 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, who killed 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in Florida. Since then, BLM has gained widespread recognition and momentum, particularly after the deaths of several Black Americans, including George Floyd, at the hands of police. The movement seeks to raise awareness and bring about systemic change through protests, advocacy, and community organizing. The goal of BLM is to end police brutality and systemic racism, and to secure justice and equality for Black people (Campbell, 2021).

[98] The Me Too movement is a global movement against sexual harassment and assault, founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke and popularized in 2017 on social media. The movement encourages survivors of sexual assault and harassment to come forward and share their stories, with the aim of showing the widespread nature of these issues and promoting the importance of consent. The movement has led to a greater public conversation about sexual assault, harassment, and the need for systemic change in the ways these issues are addressed and prevented. It has also encouraged more survivors to come forward and seek support and justice, leading to greater accountability for perpetrators and a shift in cultural attitudes towards these issues. (see Global Fund for Women, n.d).

inclusive and equitable industry by telling more diverse and representative stories that challenge and shape cultural attitudes and values. Within the world of animation specifically, Disney's recent slate of feature films arguably reflects this trajectory in many ways.

With its history of problematic and clichéd depictions of people of colour that have often descended into racist stereotyping (See Setiawati, 2008; Felperin, 1997; Giroux, 1999; Scheinin, 1993; Miller & Rode, 1995; Booker, 2012), Disney's more recent attempts at diverse storytelling and representation have been significantly more sensitively executed. Disney has come a long way since its first black protagonist, Tiana was introduced in *The Princess and the Frog* (2009/ John Musker & Ron Clements).[99] Of late, the company has increasingly looked to other parts of the world to base its stories and has made efforts towards authentically integrating the cultures of the people represented into the components of the story and its themes – eg. *Moana* (2016/ Ron Clements & John Musker), *Coco* (2017/ Lee Unkrich & Adrian Molina), *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021/ Carlos López Estrada & Don Hall) and *Encanto* (2021/ Byron Howard and Jared Bush). As a core producer of global culture, Disney must therefore be recognised for its role in championing diverse storytelling that has served to introduce its global audience (children and adults alike) to new cultures and places. More so, the greater diversity in its different protagonists specifically has meant that a more diverse array of people around the world can now see a reflection of themselves in the content that the company produces. For the African diaspora specifically, Disney's most significant contribution to date in this vein has come, not from animation, but rather in the form of Ryan Coogler's live-action film, *Black Panther* (2018).

The superhero film, based on the Marvel Comics character of the same name, follows T'Challa (Chadwick Boseman), the king of Wakanda, a technologically advanced African nation, who must step up to lead his people and protect Wakanda from external threats. The film was a huge commercial and critical success grossing over $1.3 billion worldwide making it one of the highest-grossing films of all time and the highest-grossing film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Hughes, 2018). The film received numerous award nominations and wins, including seven Oscar nominations, making it the first superhero film to receive a Best Picture nomination.

[99] Although Tiana has become a popular figure, the film took immediate flak for its handling of race. Disney recently announced that Tiana will be getting a dedicated mini-series on its streaming service, Disney+. In addition, beyond Tiana, Disney introduced its first black protagonist in Joe Gardner's feature film, *Soul* (2020).

At its inception however, *Black Panther* was a risk for Disney. For decades, the leading producers of mainstream Western media have held the position that films with a strong African identity would be inaccessible to global audiences (Callus, 2008; Iger, 2019). Disney CEO, Robert Iger, in his autobiography, describes this position within the Hollywood system as follows, "There's a long held view in Hollywood that films with predominantly black casts, or with black leads, will struggle in many international markets. That assumption has limited the number of black led films being produced, and black actors being cast, and many of those that have been made had reduced budgets to mitigate the box office risk" (2019: 170). As such, as Iger writes, "The Marvel sceptics in New York weren't the only ones who felt that a black-led superhero movie couldn't perform at the box office" (2019: 170).

With its primarily black cast, the success of *Black Panther* is celebrated for ostensibly shattering the psychological barrier that Afrocentric stories could not sell. More so, the Hollywood blockbuster has been lauded for its ground-breaking representation of black people and black culture (See Neumann, 2018; Smith, 2018). Despite its global acclaim however, the film is not without its issues. Most importantly, critics have raised serious concerns over the film's depiction of African culture as a melting pot of African identities and identifiers. From within this criticism, it was noted by an interviewed respondent that the film's failings have opened up a unique opportunity for African creatives,

> *"It feels like we almost had to wait for a film to come out by Disney like Black Panther which did a lot of good but also got a lot wrong. It highlighted that we need African creators to tell our own stories to combat the stories that are being told by the West on our behalf. This is such a key opportunity that provides so much scope for what more there is to be done"* (R6, 2021)

With the global appetite for African related content whet by the efforts of Disney, a number of African live-action productions have served this mandate of actively supplying the global creative economy from Africa. For South Africa, *Queen Sono* (2020/ Tebogo Malope) was Netflix's first script-to-screen commission from Africa and marked the start of the streaming giant's investment in the continent. The series received a very positive reception and served to drastically increase the visibility and representation of African stories on the global stage. Beyond Malope's spy-thriller, the success of Netflix's original series *Blood & Water* (2020/ Nosipho Dumisa) served to once again disprove the belief that you cannot sell African content

to the rest of the world – that there is indeed an audience for it.[100] In addition, beyond entertaining diverse audiences world-wide, the emergence of globally celebrated content led by strong, complex and dignified black protagonists served to satisfy and develop an African audience[101] who had been previously starved of creative content that reflected themselves and their culture on screen in a positive and empowering way.

To this end, whilst *Black Panther,* and to a lesser extent, *Queen Sono* and *Blood & Water,* affirms the universality of a unique story told well, creating content that specifically appeals to an African audience has also been cited as the next natural progression for the global media industry given the growth of Africa in particular as an audience segment. To this point, a respondent highlighted the following,

> *"The African continent is growing in population and the population of everywhere else is declining. We know that by 2050, one in every four people in the world will be African and so by that time, there will be so many more consumers to satisfy"* (R4, 2021).

Within America specifically, the intersection in the rise of streaming and the greater appetite for content that services and responds to the African diaspora has led to the establishment of new niche SVOD services such as KweliTV[102] and BET+[103]. These platforms are dedicated to the promotion of black voices and stories that still remain largely unrepresented in mainstream media and offer a space for black creators to share their stories and reach a wider audience. In a similar vein, larger SVODs like Netflix and Disney have looked beyond the borders of traditional content producing regions to Africa as a promising new source of original content to add to their catalogues in order to meet the evolving expectations and preferences of its global audiences. This begs the question, with Africa in many ways in the spotlight for the very first time, how and in what ways can South African animation participate in and respond to this newly surfaced demand?

[100] The success of *Blood & Water* led to the development of a second season, further indicating its popularity and impact.
[101] I make use of this term in a generic sense to reference individuals of African descent as well as individuals who strongly connect with the African diaspora.
[102] The platform launched in 2016 and was founded by DeShuna - an American entrepreneur and media executive with a background in journalism and digital media.
[103] BET+ is operated by Tyler Perry Studios and Paramount Streaming, a division of Paramount Global. The service was first announced on June 24, 2019, and launched on September 19, 2019.

*South African Animation Responding to Demand*

It has been flagged that South Africa's history in the live-action industry and animation servicing space has played a crucial role in helping to solidify its role as a quality African production house for original concept animation. A representative from Disney emphasised this matter as follows:

> *"Before, we would come here and would make use of the servicing work from ideas that originated from LA but now, we're looking at original stories from this continent partly because our experience here has been so good. That has opened the door for investing in the country… We are certainly seeing, in our business, more and more interest in producing content from this continent than ever before."* (R3, 2021)

With the reputation it has earned through the creation of high-quality original feature films and the award-winning service work produced for Magic Light Productions, Triggerfish has largely been recognised as the "*doorway to the continent for animation*" (R6, 2021). This, in part, explains why the studio has recently attracted significant interest from the likes of both Disney as well as Netflix. This interest emerged publicly between 2019 and 2021 when news circulated about several key local partnerships, initiatives and upcoming animated projects led by the two international media goliaths.

Firstly, in April of 2019, it was announced that Netflix had picked up its first original animated series from Africa, *Mama K's Team 4* to be produced by South Africa's very own Triggerfish in collaboration with the British kids' and family entertainment production company CAKE for a 2022 release (Vourlias, 2019). In early 2021, Disney also announced a collaboration with Triggerfish to produce a 10-part sci-fi anthology of original animated short films called *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* to premiere globally in 2022. For both series, their release dates were subsequently extended to 2023. Around a similar time in 2021, Disney confirmed that for its Disney Junior channel and Disney+, it had picked up a new preschool series which follows a young superhero and her two best friends called *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* from Triggerfish and eOne for a 2023 premiere. Finally, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Triggerfish's most recent original action-comedy feature film *Seal Team* was confirmed to receive a global Netflix

debut on the very last day of the 2021 calendar year.[104] The section to follow will specifically investigate these four projects.

Beginning with *Seal Team* (2021)[105], the film was financed with assistance from the IDC, the DTI as well as the Cinema Management Group (CMG) with CMG also handling the film's global sales and distribution.[106] The CGI action-comedy film follows the journey of an orphan seal, Quinn as he assembles a military team of misfit recruits to stand up to a gang of great white sharks in order to reclaim the open ocean. Like the studio's two previous feature films, *Seal Team* features vocal performances from several prominent global superstars including Patrick Warburton as Geraldo, Kristen Schaal as Beth, British singer-songwriter Seal as a singing seal by the name of Seal Seal, Dolph Lundgren as Dolph (a dolphin) as well as a number of prominent local stars including John Kani as Brick. As a point of difference from its previous feature films which exhibit quite a generic Disney/Pixar-esque approach to the look of its animation (Walker, 2019), the visual style of *Seal Team* is refreshingly unique. The film adopts a stylised and chunky aesthetic used for comedic effect in line with the vision of writer-director, Greig Cameron[107] who intended the film to serve as "a love letter to the silly, over-the-top 80s and 90s action movies" (Quoted in Roux, 2021). With a wild colour palette featuring an abundance of bioluminescent elements and exaggerated line-work which references the influence of anime, the '*Finding Nemo* meets *The A-Team'* film demonstrates a *"very different Triggerfish than ever seen before*" (R6, 2021) (See Figures 4.7 and 4.8).

[104] Beyond these South African examples, in December of 2020, Disney also announced its landmark collaboration with the Nigerian studio Kugali, led by Ugandan Hamid Ibrahim and Nigerians Ziki Nelson and Tolu Olowofoyeku, with the production of Iwájú - a long-form series "steeped in science fiction" based in a futuristic Lagos, Nigeria (BBC, 2020). The project marked the first time that Disney would work with African storytellers to create an animated series set on the continent and is due for exclusive release on Disney's subscription video on-demand streaming platform, Disney+ in 2023.

[105] Owing to the fact that the film was released at the very end of the research period for this study, my discussion of the film does not consider the critical reception of the film and is rather limited to available media information as well as information sourced from my personally conducted interviews.

[106] CMG is a full-service international sales company launched in 2003. The company also handled the worldwide sales on *Adventures in Zambezia* as well as *Khumba*.

[107] Cameron's career began as a staff writer on *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* and as a writer and director of 45 episodes of *Supa Strikas.* Cameron has also served as a writer for *Moosebox* and for Sunrise Production's *Munki and Trunk.*


**Figure 4.7:** *Seal Team* (2021) Poster


**Figure 4.8:** *Seal Team* (2021)

With its core characters reflecting the marine life of the Western Cape[108] and with the diegesis of the film set just off the coast of Cape Town (with the recognisable V&A Waterfront making an appearance), the film is deeply rooted in its South African origin, much like *Khumba*. As a talking animal adventure film however, *Seal Team* in many ways represents a return of the same from Triggerfish. From the perspective of critics, the film is susceptible to criticism

[108] The seals in the film are identifiably modelled on Cape Fur seals.

owing to the fact that the film is once again, largely devoid of human characters and the visual language of *Seal Team*, albeit unique, lacks any specific African identity.

In response to the lack of human representation in the film, a stakeholder from Triggerfish explained how the decision to rely on animal characters related to the market demands (or lack thereof) in 2013 – the year in which the idea for *Seal Team* was first pitched:

> *"In order to get funding, you have to be able to reach a lot of people, so you need to go for something accessible…. We didn't want to do three talking animal movies in a row, we wanted a diverse slate. Seal Team however gained interest easier [than other ideas] and got an easy sell... The whole human aspect of concepts was something that we weren't avoiding"* (R5, 2021).[109]

Speaking to the capabilities of the studio at the time as well as the advantages of animal characters in the film, the Triggerfish respondent went onto explain as follows,

> *"The talking animal aspect [of the film] was a strategic decision because we know that they [talking animal films] can be dubbed in different languages easily. We also know that anyone around the world can relate to the characters (because they're animals and not specific people) and because people are more difficult to animate well so budget-wise it made sense for 2013 which was a long time ago"* (R5, 2021).

Given the studio's previous achievements beyond the borders of Africa[110], the matter of global receptiveness to and transferability of *Seal Team* was paramount to its potential success. As such, the direct link between the film's title and the American concept of navy seals was highlighted as a strategic decision from the company with the hopes that the connection would help the film easily cross over to American audiences (R5, 2021). Although the film saw a global release on Netflix at the end of 2021, in addition to the film's limited cinematic

[109] This argument echoes the justification for the reliance on animal characters in *Khumba* as expressed by the film's director Anthony Silverston who explained that "The studio's decision not to portray people within *Khumba* was not as a result of the intention to represent Africa as wild or untamed, but as a result of budgetary restrictions and the desire not to remove the audience from the animal's world" (Walker, 2019: 80).

[110] This sentiment harks back to the aforementioned fact that, according to Triggerfish CEO Stuart Forest, only 4.5 % of the total revenue accrued over both Adventures in Zambezia and Khumba came from the African continent, with 95.5% originating from foreign territories (mainly the United States and Europe) (Walker, 2019: 92).

release[111], it was suggested by stakeholders from Triggerfish that American and European audiences will once again comprise the primary viewership of the film (R5, 2021).

Whilst the partnership with Netflix crucially allowed the film to travel to parts of the globe to which it never would have made if a traditional global distribution plan had been executed (R5, 2021), in many ways *Seal Team* reflects the typical markers of a South African animated film geared primarily for international consumption. This can be understood in relation to the context of the cultural climate in which the film was first incepted (in 2013). As an interesting comparison, some of the future projects of the company suggest the potential dawning of a new era as all three of the upcoming projects from Triggerfish differ significantly from the studio's previous work in that all three are human-led and Afrocentric in their narratives. It was flagged by a respondent that the reception of these projects will be "*a little bit like a litmus test to evaluate the true appetite of African and global audiences for South African made content like this from us"* (R5, 2021).

The idea for *Mama K's Team 4* (previously titled *Mama K's Super 4*)[112] was conceived and pitched by Zambian Malenga Mulendema – one of 1 400 creatives who took part in Triggerfish's Story Lab initiative in 2015. The show was selected for development and was subsequently picked up for production by Netflix and is due for global release in 2023. The series follows four teenage girls living in a neo-futuristic version of Lusaka, Zambia who have been recruited by former secret agent Mama K to help save the world (See Figure 4.9). The show directly responds to the lack of black female representation on television, especially in the superhero genre. The significance of the show is emphasised by Melissa Cobb, vice president of original animation at Netflix, who remarked, "*Mama K's Team 4* has the potential to give a whole new generation of African children the opportunity to see themselves on-screen in the powerful, aspirational characters they look up to" (quoted in Screen Africa, 2019).

[111] The film saw its cinematic debut in select theatres in the Netherlands in October 2021. Albeit unconfirmed, the film is unlikely to ever see a cinematic release in Africa.
[112] Upon public release, the series was eventually called *Supa Team 4.*


**Figure 4.9:** *Mama K's Team 4* Poster

According to Mulendema, the four lead characters of the show reflect the diversity of African girlhood "from their hair, body types, skin tones, tribe, economic background, interests etc, each of the four characters brings a different perspective" (quoted in Nsiah-Buadi, 2019). Speaking to the challenges of the project and the vision for its design, a Triggerfish respondent explained as follows:

> *"Mama K's Team 4 features human characters… and so representing African hair properly became a priority, for example…. Our pre-production team did an amazing job of creating a "superhero" version of Lusaka, reflecting the vibrant African patterning and colours of a world that really hasn't been represented much on screen before, and they have created a very unique look for the show"* (R5, 2021).

The animation of the show produces a CG 3D world with a 2D rendered effect creating a visual look for the show that is stylised and quite painterly with Cameroonian artist Malcolm Wope's designs of the characters of the show taking inspiration from retro-'90s R&B and hip-hop girl groups. Although not specifically influenced by indigenous African visuals per se, the designs of the characters in *Mama K's* exhibit a distinct sensitivity towards its representations of

'Africanness'. Along the same lines, although the series is to be produced in English, the vocal cast of the show's first series makes use of 36 voice actors from the African continent (R6, 2021). The sourcing of local vocal artists was highlighted as a significant challenge but was executed as an important component of the show (R5, 2021). As such, unlike other shows, the way the show sounds will help distinguish itself and its identity as authentically African and more importantly, as specifically Zambian.

As a project conceived in 2015, the development phase of *Mama K's Team 4* preceded the release of *Black Panther* and the BLM movement and the subsequent rise in demand for specifically African geared content. As such, the project did not align with the appetite of the global market at the time, as explained by a Triggerfish representative,

> *"When we did the story lab [in 2015], we developed a number of projects, some of which were specifically African and some which weren't. At that time, Mama K's was the biggest risk because it was so specifically 'African' and as the world changed, it became ready around the concept"* (R5, 2021).

The happy timing coincidence of the show's entry into development from 2015 for release in 2023 is important to note. The production of *Mama K's Team 4* by Triggerfish, in collaboration with Netflix, was kickstarted at a time when the world still had reservations about the viability of identifiably African content. This serves to reflect a genuine intent from both companies to play their part in promoting African (and female) voices and producing work which offers relevant and culturally appropriate representations of African characters to the world. It is within the same vein that Netflix should be applauded for entering into agreements with free to air channels in Zambia and other African territories allowing them to license *Mama K's Team 4* so that Zambians (the people reflected in the show) can access the show without having to pay for it (R6, 2021). By compromising on its economic prerogative in this way, I would argue that Netflix demonstrates an acute awareness of the social responsibility dimension of creating culturally relevant content and making it available to those who will benefit from it most – in this case, Africans throughout the continent and especially Zambians. It is also noteworthy that these agreements were made at a time when Netflix had not yet arrived in Africa.

As *Mama K's* offers a fresh addition to Netflix's catalogue, Disney's collaborations with Triggerfish on *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* as well as *Kiya* also contributes towards the

diversity of its own slate of content. The upcoming *Kizazi Moto* anthology for example comprises ten short films curated by creative talents from across six African nations (Uganda, Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, and Nigeria) under the guidance of the Oscar-winning, Peter Ramsey (director of *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse*) who acts as executive producer on the project, and Triggerfish's Tendayi Nyeke and Anthony Silverston who serve as supervising producers. The short films are anticipated to be action-packed sci-fi and fantasy stories which present bold visions of advanced technology, aliens, spirits and monsters imagined from the perspectives of African visionaries (See Figure 4.10). In many ways, the show echoes the theme of Afro-futurism that was turbocharged by *Black Panther*. A Triggerfish respondent explained the show's intentional and direct relationship to Coogler's film as follows, "*The Kizazi Moto anthology was… specifically related to Black Panther in the way that it was pitched – 'What would audiences watch now after Black Panther?'*" (R5, 2021)


**Figure 4.10:** *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* Promotional Image

Speaking further to the matter of Afro-futurism, the Triggerfish respondent explained the particularities of the exploration of the theme within the context of an African production,

> *We realised there's a lot of baggage around the term 'Afro-futurism'… some of the directors pushed back against the idea of making stories for the future for this specific anthology, … the whole point of it [the anthology] was [to create] the future of Africa*

*by Africa. It is directed towards looking ahead and giving the opportunity to look ahead in African hands for once – let us imagine our own future in a positive way."* (R5, 2021)

The Triggerfish respondent also made a point to highlight the attempts being made to offer variety in the representation of Africa throughout the anthology. This was articulated as follows:

"*We want to show different perspectives of Africa's future, and by its very nature, each of the short films have a totally unique aesthetic style… And even though it is sci-fi, the stories are also based in places that draw on the country of that specific film's director, so we have locations that cover South Africa, Egypt, Nigeria, and Uganda for example. We really want each film to lean into the specific aspects that can help differentiate them from one another – Africa is not a country after all!"* (R5, 2021)

Triggerfish serves as the lead studio for the anthology, working in collaboration with animation studios across the continent and globally. It was flagged however that the initial intention with *Kizazi Moto* was to make more use of African resources in the show's creation. To this end, a respondent explained as follows,

*"We were hoping to reach out to African studios and to produce it all on the continent but that was too expensive, so it had to be pulled back from that ambition a bit"* (R6, 2021).

Inherent in this sentiment is a crucial point to emphasise: demand for African creative products does not directly relate to grand opportunities for African creators and studios to exclusively supply that demand. Like *Kizazi Moto*, the idea for *Mama K's* was conceived in Africa and is led by a strong African creative direction but it is not solely developed on the continent, rather it is produced in collaboration with the UK based studio CAKE. To this end, whilst Triggerfish benefits as the studio responsible for the design and pre-production on the show, CAKE benefits as the studio responsible for the production of the CG animation (R6, 2021). For Disney's final African acquisition, *Kiya* (Figure 4.11), the matter of international collaboration and co-production can be further interrogated given the prominent role played by the French studio, TeamTO Animation in its production.


**Figure 4.11:** *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* Promotional Image

*Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* is being developed by Triggerfish for Hasbro/eOne and is set for a 2023 release. The series follows Kiya and her high-action dance and martial arts adventures with her two best friends, Jay and Motsie in the South African-inspired Kimoja City. Whilst *Mama K's* and *Kizazi Moto* are geared for a slightly older audience, Disney's acquisition of *Kiya* particularly serves the pre-school market as evidenced by the show's 7-year-old protagonist.

It can be argued that *Kiya* has a South African identity for several reasons: it was conceived by South African duo Kelly Dillon and Marc Dey, it contains characters that reflect the inhabitants of South Africa, it explores local themes[113] and is set within a local geographical context. That said, the show is a far cry from being proudly South African. On the production of the show, a respondent lamented,

> *"Kiya is being made in France (production and pre-production) by TeamTO. It's great for Disney and for France but it's not good for South Africa since it was an African concept to begin with and now none of it is being produced on the continent. Only the creators are African and some of the show looks and feels a bit African but that's really it."* (R6, 2021)

[113] The series is said to explore the philosophy of Ubuntu (R6, 2021).

As such, whilst *Kiya* might contribute towards providing culturally relevant and diverse content to the world (including Africans) through Disney as its facilitator, the fact that the project fails to deliver employment opportunities to Africans in the process is cited as a significant problem. A similar example to *Kiya* in this vein, would be the animated series, *Kiff* from South African creators and executive producers Lucy Heavens and Nic Smal (Figure 4.11). *Kiff* was ordered by The Walt Disney Company for the Disney Channel and is overseen by Kent Osborne[114] as co-producer and story editor. The series is due for a 2023 release and will follow the whacky friendship between a squirrel, Kiff, and a bunny, Barry. Beyond its two South African creator credits, *Kiff* will not have any further ties to the continent as the animation for the show will be undertaken by the US based studio, Titmouse[115].


**Figure 4.11:** *Kiff* Poster

[114] Kent Osborne has worked on major animation titles including, *Adventure Time* and *SpongeBob SquarePants*.
[115] Titmouse Inc. is an American animation studio founder by Chris Prynoski in February 2000.

These two projects illustrate an extraction of original and unique ideas from Africa by Disney. In so doing, it suggests the potential beginnings of a kind of 'creative colonisation'[116]. This serves as a caution against the thinking that a greater global demand for African creative products will translate into direct opportunities for African creatives to make them. Whilst it is noteworthy and relevant that South Africans lead the creative concepts behind quality animation projects like *Kiya* and *Kiff*, at the end of the day, it must be acknowledged that the 'making' often happens elsewhere and that the Walt Disney brand remains the primary benefactor of its investments into Africa.

To this point, a core difference between Netflix and Disney (specifically it's SVOD, Disney+) must be flagged. Whereas Netflix (like Hulu, Amazon Video and others) has a model in which it employs a rotating slate of licensed (and some original) content that is added and removed from the platform as licensing agreements expire and new ones are signed, every piece of content on Disney's platform is owned by The Walt Disney Company. For the foreseeable future, it is suggested that there won't be any licensed content available on the service. It is for this reason that Disney will reap all benefits from the exploitation of the IP within its Disney brand. The importance of brand in this context leads me to my third and final discussion section for this chapter on content ownership within South African animation.

**South African Owned: Who Owns What and Why Does it Matter?**

It has been highlighted that, despite some of the great long form projects that South African animation studios work to produce, most of the final products are not owned by South African studios. As a result, South Africa fails to reap the benefits of the annuity income generated from animated projects beyond their release and distribution. In turn, for these projects, the major advantages of the arduous animation production process are largely reduced to the provision of labour and talent development for South African individuals during the production phases of the animation process.[117]

[116] A similar phrase was used by a respondent (R6, 2021).
[117] This is in no way to downplay the importance of the long-term employment opportunities provided by the local animation industry that drive the country's GDP and the additional benefits of talent development highlighted in the first section of this discussion chapter.

In order to fully realise the potential of the local animation industry, the matter of content ownership needs to be addressed. As such, within the process of animation production, the stage in which funding is secured and control of intellectual property (IP) rights is established is of key importance. According to a report prepared for the Department of Arts and Culture, this stage generally occurs during the initial concept creation stage for a project with available "gaps and opportunities to realise further patent and IP rights for example, re-evaluation of funding requirements and available funding and identifying ancillary opportunities" (Urban-Econ Development Economists et al., 2014: 32).

Within the wider film and television space, income generation off a creative product has been suggested to come primarily through the licensing and merchandising of IP. Retaining the ownership (or part ownership) of animated projects has therefore been cited as a necessity in the development of South African brands and the long-term sustainability for local studios and the greater South African animation industry. It is, however, an area of weakness for the local industry, particularly in the case of long-form animation (R1, 2021; R12, 2021). This section is not concerned with detailing the particularities of IP and patents rights, rather my discussion to follow considers the broad ways in which IP ownership can benefit the local animation industry and highlights how the matters of ownership, distribution, funding, and policies within South Africa are inherently intertwined.

Within the delivery and distribution phase of an animation project's life cycle, it has been acknowledged that international SVODs like Netflix and Disney+ play a significant role in boosting the visibility of South African made and South African relevant content for global audiences. It is critical to deepen this conversation by taking a closer look at the local distribution channels within South Africa and in particular, the role of the local public broadcaster – the SABC.

Although the local consumer base is slowly growing, there is a very small percentage of South Africans that actively consume content from international SVODs like Netflix and Disney+.[118] Two core factors account for this limited local uptake: South Africa's poor broadband penetration and the high cost of mobile data (SACO, 2022). In addition, for the local satellite

[118] A City Press news article published in May, 2022 reported that Netflix had 337 local subscribers to its platform (Phiri, 2022). No data was available for Disney+ subscribers.

television service, DSTv owned by MultiChoice, the company reported 9.1 million local subscribers towards the end of 2022 (Moneyweb, 2022) – with its population of around 60 million, that equates to about 15% of South Africans. Across the entirety of South Africa's population, the local analogue television presides as the primary form of mass media transmission (SACO, 2022). For this reason, the local broadcaster serves a fundamental role in shaping the lives of South Africans, particularly those from the lowest economic groups in the country, by dictating the content to which they are exposed.

The mandate of the SABC is to offer "a range of programmes that are informative, educational and entertaining, and advance the national and public interest" (Creative Industry Masterplan, 2022: 77). In extension, given its prominence in the country, the public broadcaster also has a mandate to provide support for the local audio-visual industry. There is however a consensus amongst industry stakeholders that the broadcaster does not sufficiently serve this role, particularly for the local animation industry (R1, 2021; R12, 2021; SACO, 2022; Creative Industry Masterplan, 2022). This is in stark contrast to territories such as America and across European nations like France and Germany, wherein the local animation industry is chiefly supported by state broadcasting networks (Dorra, 2011; CNC, 2012).

It has been well documented that there is very limited local animation content broadcast on local networks such as SABC, eTV and M-Net. To this end, the public broadcaster in particular has been criticised for its pension of acquiring internationally syndicated animation for its children viewer slots (R12; 2021). Examples of international animated shows aired on SABC include *Dragon Ball Z* (1989–1996) – a Japanese anime produced by Toei Animation, and *Yu-Gi-Oh! Arc-V* (2014–2018) – a Japanese anime series created by Kazuki Takahashi and animated by Gallop. These animated texts do little to enrich the lives of young African audiences. Beyond providing pure entertainment, these shows do not offer young South African audiences an opportunity to see their own stories and interpretations of relevant experiences reflected on the screen

Furthermore, the SABC has also been criticised for its unwillingness to commit to licensing deals with local animators and studios, preferring rather to hold all ownership rights (NFVF, 2020; SACO, 2019; Haycock, 2010; Walker, 2010). To this point, one stakeholder adamantly expressed the following,

> "*The SABC has a policy of retaining the ownership rights of the content they commission, and that policy is fundamentally flawed"* (R12, 2021)

The political, financial and regulatory failings of the SABC have been well documented in industry reports (See NFVF, 2020; SACO, 2019; SACO, 2022, and Creative Industry Masterplan, 2022). Despite the major downfalls of the local broadcaster, I would suggest that there is merit in highlighting the handful of examples wherein local animated projects have been made with the SABC as a collaborative partner in the production process.

In the early 2000s, the SABC played a major role in the production of two key animated shows – *The Magic Cellar* (2006-2007) and *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (2006-2009). The case of *Urbo* in particular has been cited as a key reference point for the collaborative advantages that result from the partnership between private animations and the SABC. Through the support of the local broadcaster, Clockwork Zoo was, at its peak, able to scale to over 120 people in one of the largest animation pipelines in South Africa's history. It has been suggested that the industrial capacity reached on the production of *Urbo* is an example of what can be achievable through effective public and private collaboration which is fundamental to the sustainable supply of local animation as well as the growth of the local animation industry (R12, 2021).

Beyond these two examples, stakeholders indicated their awareness of two further animation shows in which the SABC has been an invested partner – the animated sitcom *Systraat* (2015), for SABC3 and the broadcaster's YouTube channel, and *Jabu's Jungle* for SABC1.[119] *Systraat* was produced by Stemmburg Television and follows the Kotze family in South Africa's version of *The Simpsons*. Beyond the fact of its production, there is a dearth of readily available information about the local reception of the show and its impact. For Pixcomm's *Jabu's Jungle* however, the show offers a current example of how support from the local broadcaster has led to great success.

From a visual perspective, the 2D animation in both *Systraat* and *Jabu's Jungle* is rudimentary relative to other locally produced animated outputs (especially from studios like Triggerfish

[119] The SABC also bought Luma Animation's *Bun&Bunee* (2009-2011) but did not play an active role in the show's production hence why it is not included in this discussion.

and Sunrise Productions). Commenting on this, a respondent from Animation South Africa raised the following point,

> *"Because of the low production value of the products available on the broadcaster, people formulate an assumption about South African animation based on those works which is not at all reflective of our actual abilities, so we do have to be mindful of how we speak about such low-cost content*" (R1, 2021).

Despite the public criticism that may come with it, it must be understood that the low-quality animation on the shows is by design. More specifically, rather than (inaccurately) reflecting the capabilities of the local animation industry, the animation in *Systraat* and *Jabu's Jungle* reflects the local broadcaster's very limited funding capacity for animation.

In order to service the SABC whilst also facilitating its budgetary constraints, the production pipeline of *Jabu's Jungle* and the Pixcomm studio itself had to be setup in a very particular way. A Pixcomm executive described this as follows,

> "*We ended up starting up a studio in the townships in Cape Town with really affordable rent and we trained up township residents to become animators and that was the way that we managed to create Jabu's Jungle… For us, we had to try to come up with an African model of animation that was basically cheaper than the Chinese and the Indians can do it so that we could start telling our own stories."* (R9, 2021).

On the matter of the animation quality on the show, the respondent went on to explain,

> *"The decision to make use of 2D and to have only one main character was very much budget driven and skills driven. There's no way we could have pulled off anything bigger or better than what we pulled off with the money that we did manage to raise. It's all driven by money, that's the bottom line."* (R9, 2021).


**Figure 4.13:** *Jabu's Jungle* Poster

Despite the show's limited production value, it was highlighted that for the intended audience, the medium does not dilute the show's impact or its messaging. To this end, a respondent made the following comment,

> "*Story is the most important thing, especially with our specific age group where they don't really know the difference between 2D and 3D. For them it's about colour, it's about fun and it's about entertainment"* (R9, 2021).

Credit must be afforded to *Jabu's Jungle* for delivering on these key points and for reaping the consequential success, as recalled by a Pixcomm executive,

> *"Within about 5 weeks of airing, we were the most watched show in the country – the show aired on Saturday and Sunday mornings and got around 2 million views on a weekend"* (R9, 2021).

Beyond South Africa, the show is also widely broadcast across Africa and the globe including The Africa Channel in the US to address the additional need for "*[young] African Americans to have culturally correct content to grow up with"* (R9, 2021).

**Figure 4.14:** *Jabu's Jungle: Season 1, Episode 1 – Anteater*

Apart from their stark visual and aesthetic differences, *Jabu's Jungle* in many ways demonstrates similarities with Sunrise Production's internationally acclaimed series, *Jungle Beat* – both shows are geared for a similar audience, both shows are set in the animated jungle, and both shows incorporate animal characters within the narrative. The main point of difference for *Jabu's Jungle* is in the presence of its young African protagonist, Jabu, to which children can relate. With the audience loyalty that the show has built, and the wide African footprint the show has developed, it was expressed that this character forms a critical part of the brand when thinking about how to exploit the show by entering into the merchandising space. Beyond a revenue generation stream, Pixcomm indicated the need for South African brands to enter into this space in a meaningful way, as follows,

> *"What nauseates me is seeing township kids walking around with Barbie and Ben 10 backpacks – it's so wrong. So, our bigger goal as a company is to culturally reappropriate the space for kids and we're looking forward to replacing brands like Disney (with Mickey Mouse paraphernalia) on township kids' lunchboxes and backpacks."* (R9, 2021).

For Pixcomm, *Jabu's Jungle* is the company's first successful brand which it intends to build upon further. The studio also plans to embark upon a similar route to leverage its future shows to maximise their potential in the local consumer space (R9, 2021). This includes the studio's

most recent female led title, *Zizi and Hannibal* (2022) – a show about Zizi, an adventurous and curious five-year-old girl and her fun-loving hippo best friend, Hannibal who explore Africa and meet the animals that live there.[120]

In terms of the decision to collaborate with the public broadcaster, as opposed to the privately owned DSTv, a Pixcomm executive explained the intentionality behind the primary target audience of the show as follows,

> *"We are largely talking to the township and not the suburb. On DSTv you might get a few hundred thousand viewers whereas we get 2 million on SABC so that's why we consciously went for public broadcast TV"* (R9, 2021).

Despite its more specific targeted reach, DSTv and its owner, Multichoice, has been looked to as a supplementary source of support for the local animation industry beyond the SABC. As Africa's self-confessed 'most-loved storyteller', Multichoice has expressed the great pride it has for its 'hyperlocal' approach to content creation in response to the "insatiable appetite for authentic local content" exhibited by consumers and in recognition of the business sense that the approach offers (Multichoice, 2019; 2021b). This is particularly well illustrated in the live-action reality tv shows that the company produces, including titles like, *Big Brother Mzansi!* (2022)[121], *The Real Housewives of Cape Town* (2022), *Real Housewives of Durban* (2021), and *Come Dine with me South Africa* (2011).

MultiChoice is credited for its investments in local infrastructure, technology and empowerment initiatives, which facilitate a supply chain that is supportive of local business and communities. In a practical effort to grow and enable the film and television industry in South Africa, the company invests R2,5 billion into local productions each year serving to create thousands of jobs in the sector (Multichoice, 2019). When asked what percentage of this investment was dedicated to animation productions, an executive from Multichoice indicated the following,

> *"A fraction of it goes towards animation if any. The truth is that most of it is for live-action dramas and reality. There is a push to start looking at animation. Back in the day there were a few animated programs that were created but currently there is not*

[120] The show premiered on SABC 2 in December, 2022.
[121] The show was formerly known as *Big Brother South Africa*.

*much investment going into the animation side of things at the moment, at least from our perspective."* (R2, 2021).

When pressed further about whether the company would consider offering greater support to the local animation industry, the respondent replied as follows,

*"From Multichoice's point of view, it just hasn't been a focus to date. There would need to be a reason why we would want to look into animation. We would need to look into the business case of making that viable for us. Live-action has made business sense for us until now"* (R2, 2021).

From the perspective of South African animation, this general sentiment expressed by Multichoice is a cautiously pessimistic one. That said, there are signs that the company may have indeed uncovered a business case for animation given that, as a representative from Mind's Eye Creative disclosed, Multichoice has recently confirmed plans to embark on a new, locally produced animation show called *Twende.*

Beyond content commissioning, Multichoice and its Showmax platform in particular, was also praised for the support it offered on Sunrise Production's recent feature film, *Jungle Beat: The Movie* (2020). In particular, the role the company played in distributing the various iterations of the film to its intended audience was crucial, as a Sunrise Production respondent explained,

*"Multichoice was just terrific. Showmax has been amazing for us in Southern Africa specifically. We love that the film has been translated into Afrikaans and Xhosa and a number of other languages too. It's through these kinds of partnerships that you can offer something more, something special and important and Showmax gave us that opportunity here. We are really grateful for their support."* (R7, 2021)

The respondent went onto explain the deal that the studio made with Multichoice as follows,

"*The Multichoice deal allows them to run the film across all their platforms – M-Net runs the English version, KykNet runs the Afrikaans localisation and Mzanzi Magic runs the iXhosa and Zulu conversions*." (R7, 2021).

Whilst these extracts offer some glimmers of hope in the function being served by the local broadcasters, it is undeniable that a great deal more could be done and, as many stakeholders argue, should be done by the local broadcasters to support the local animation industry. To this

end, it has been suggested that the regulator of the AV&IM sector, ICASA, play a more active role in the sector. ICASA issues licenses to all telecommunication and broadcasting service providers and enforces compliance with rules and regulations, such as local content quotas. As such, it has been suggested that the local broadcaster quotas need to be regulated to include local animation content in order to stimulate production within the industry. It is noteworthy that this specific suggestion was made in a report prepared for DAC in 2014 and it prevails as a request from industry stakeholders today (See Urban-Econ Development Economists et al., 2014). A representative from Animation South Africa articulated the need for quotas as following,

> *"I maintain that even if they [local broadcasters] cannot afford to make entire animations, they should still start making an investment in animation. My suggestion would then be that local content quotas be required specifically for animation"* (R1, 2021).

Beyond ICASA, stakeholders have also cited that considerable transformation and reform is needed in the regulatory and policy environment of South Africa in order to better support and incentivise animation production in the country (Walker, 2019; SACO, 2022; SACO, 2019). To this end, it has been raised that the Copyright Amendment Bill (CAB) and the Performers' Protection Amendment Bill (PPAB) are two linked legislative bills that are negatively impacting the animation industry and hampering foreign investment and agreements to produce original content (SACO, 2022: 5; Walker, 2019; NC). In addition, the available funding models of the NFVF and IDC, as well as the current incentive schemes for animation production offered by the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) have also been cited as sources of great frustration and despondency for stakeholders in the local animation industry (See SACO, 2022: 5; Walker, 2019; R1, 2021; R12, 2021).

## Conclusion

As its starting point, this discussion highlighted the need to speak of South African animation in terms that go beyond a critical assessment of narrative, style and aesthetic forms and their expression of a local identity. This chapter therefore unpacked three different dimensions of South African animation namely, animation produced by local studios; animated content that is relevant to South African audiences and animation that is owned by South Africa.

From the perspective of South African made content, it has been illustrated that a vast and diverse array of animation products are being created in and supplied by South Africa and that these different products serve different niche roles in their contributions towards the global creative economy of animation. From the perspective of South African relevant content, the cultural zeitgeist and the matter of content demand provided a crucial springboard from which upcoming local projects of Triggerfish were discussed. Within this investigation, the lack of translation between demand for South African animation and the direct supply of animation from South Africa was highlighted as a key takeaway. Finally, the third and final focused discussion on South African animation found that ownership of IP is fundamental to the development of South African brands. Within this section, it was also flagged that there is still much reform needed in local policy and legislation in order to better support the local animation industry.

Arguably, in the venn diagram that can be created from these three different dimensions of South African animation explored, a sweet spot lies within their intersection. The final chapter to follow will serve as the conclusion for this thesis and will offer key insights on the findings of this research as well as some closing thoughts on future research directions.

# CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Like animation itself, South African animation as a construct has many forms, many functions, and many possible meanings. This study sought to explore three particular interpretations of South African animation in order to build a multifaceted and nuanced understanding of the industry, its outputs and its value. In so doing, this research was intended to diverge from many previous scholarly assessments of South African animation which have been constructed on the basis of analysing local outputs in terms of their narrative, stylistic and aesthetic expressions of locality. More specifically, as set out in the introduction, this thesis had four core objectives and the findings from those objectives will be summarised and discussed below.

## Key Findings and Contributions

The first objective set for this study was to provide an effective historical overview of the development of South African animation. Building on the archival work undertaken by key scholars including Shanaz Shapurjee (2008) and Andrew Haycock (2010), this objective was met in the third chapter wherein the evolution of the contemporary animation industry was traced back to its roots at the beginning of the 20th century. In this section, the slow growth of the South African animation industry, the ostracism of its operations under the apartheid regime, and the industry's ties to the local advertising sector were highlighted. In addition, the formative roles played by non-South African individuals in shaping the local industry were discussed.

Within the chronological account of the development of South Africa's animation landscape, the many different animation milestones in the industry were also identified. Many of these milestones also serve as firsts for the continent such as Africa's first long-form 3D animated series in the form of, *The Magic Cellar* (2006-2007) which also plays a crucial dual role as the first time South African children saw their own image reflected in an animated series. Within the film space, *The Legend of the Sky Kingdom* (2003/ Roger Hawkins) from Sunrise Productions has been recognised as the first stop-motion feature film to originate from the continent, and although the company was very nearly attributed for producing the first South African CG feature length film as well with, *The Lion of Judah* (2011/ Deryck Broom & Roger Hawkins), the credit is in fact bestowed upon *Jock the Hero Dog* (2011/ Duncan MacNeillie).

Finally, in this vein, Mike Scott is celebrated for producing South Africa's first 2D feature film, *Bru and Boegie* (2019).

In addition to the animation milestones of the industry, this chapter also emphasised the importance of South Africa's emerging education and training support systems for animation as a vocation. Moreover, the festival landscape in South Africa was flagged as an optimistic indicator of the growing prominence of the animated medium on the continent.

This historical chapter served a critical role in underpinning my discussion of contemporary animated outputs in chapter four. This discussion chapter was divided into three sections and was preluded by a summary of pre-existing literature around the outputs of South African animation from Tanya Blaeser (2017) and Kelly Walker (2019) among others. The first section of this chapter set out to specifically address the second objective of this study – to interrogate the notion of 'South African made' content by investigating the supply of South African animation service work as well as original animation productions. It was highlighted that South Africa is a popular offshore servicing destination for international studios due to its quality talent and production value, competitive pricing, English language, and favourable time zone. It was further revealed that service animation work functions either as a strategic priority or a necessary supplement to the production of original concept work for many local studios. Service work was also underscored as a logical starting point for many South African studios as a way to leverage their specialised expertise in order to attract work.

Beyond service work, the local industry is also recognised for its increasing interest in original animation production. From a big-budget biblical epic feature film underway from Sunrise Productions to animated web series from Polycat and Na Aap Productions, it was found that the original animation production space within South Africa is extremely diverse and vibrant. To this end, in the form of both service work and original animation, the supply of South African animation was emphasised as a strength within the animation industry as a testament to the abundance of creative talent and skill in South Africa.

My discussion of South African animation shifted from a broad discussion in the first section, to a more focused discussion of the animated outputs of Triggerfish in the second. These key projects served as the primary texts on which my interrogation of South African relevant content was based. Within this investigation, it was found that Triggerfish's upcoming

productions for Netflix and Disney will serve a crucial role in increasing the visibility of South African content in the global creative economy. More so, whilst it was highlighted that these projects will diversify the slate of Netflix and Disney's catalogues in order to appeal to the growing global appetite for diverse content, three of its upcoming projects will also contribute greatly towards providing relevant, relatable and inspiring content to African audiences. For this reason, the release of *Mama K's Team 4*, *Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire* as well as *Kiya and the Kimoja Heroes* is highly anticipated. It was argued however that, as shows that are tied to the continent exclusively through their South African creator credits, *Kiya* and *Kiff* offer initial evidence for America's newest conquest of Africa in the form of cultural colonisation by Disney. For this reason, the importance of looking beyond the surface of African relevant content and interrogating where content is produced was stressed in order to adequately evaluate the value (or lack thereof) that these cultural texts create for the South African animation industry.

Finally, the third and final section of the discussion chapter served to investigate the critical matter of content ownership for South African animation in response to the final objective of this research. Within this section, it was emphasised that the value of IP ownership lies in its ability to generate annuity income for studios and develop African brands. The approach undertaken by Pixcomm's *Jabu's Jungle* was cited as a particularly strong case for the necessity of local brand development in the animation space. Beyond this point, this section also served to flag the role of local broadcasters in commissioning local animation content and the need for legislative and policy reform in order to better support the South African animation industry as a whole.

Ultimately, this research broadly set out to establish a new way of understanding and speaking about South African animation. In so doing, this research contributes towards the growing critical discourse around South African animation as well as the wider effort to relocate Africa and its creative outputs within the global animation conversation. As a foundation, this research also offers fertile ground for future investigations.

**Future Research Directions**

Within the broad context of South African animation, there are several key areas of research that could be undertaken in order to address the existing knowledge gaps in scholarship and

provide conducive scope for further inquiry. In order of priory, I would suggest that there are three key directions that future research should explore on this topic.

First and foremost, in chapter four, it was briefly discussed that there is a lack of adequate reporting on the animation industry. It is critical that this be remedied so that South African animation can be effectively benchmarked against other local sectors and industries and so that the growth trends within the animation industry can be accurately measured. Without a fundamental understanding of the ecosystem of South African animation, and its different role players along the value chain, research on the sector will remain unnecessarily difficult.

Secondly, there is a pressing need to develop a more comprehensive record of the history of South African animation. As such, further research needs to be undertaken in order to address the existing knowledge gaps on key studios and local animated texts that have been neglected from scholarship.

Thirdly, whilst my detailed investigation focused on exploring narrative animation primarily geared for the entertainment industry, a similar methodological approach could be applied to an investigation of local animation within the VFX sector as well as within the gaming sector. These contributions would serve a vital role in fleshing out an understanding of South African animation in terms of its full spectrum of meaning.

## REFERENCES


Al Shafi'a, R. 2003. Il Cinema di Animazione in Egitto. In M. S. Bazzoli (Ed.), *African Cartoons* (pp. 25-32). Milano: Editrice Il Castoro.

Andersson, L.G., Sundholm, J. & Widding, A.S. 2010. *A History of Swedish Experimental Film Culture: From Early Animation to Video Art.* London, UK: John Libbey.

Arowolo, D. (2010). The Effects of Western Civilization and Culture on Africa. *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 2229-5313.

ASA. 2021. About Us. Available at: https://animationsa.org/about/ [Accessed June 22, 2021].

Asión Suñer, A. 2021. La visión de África por parte de la animación clásica estadounidense: una historia lastrada por el racismo. *Con A de animación*, 12, 112-126.

Azi, J.I. 2012. Appraising the Role of Afrimation (African-Animation) in Promoting Africa's Rich Cultural Heritage in a Digital Age. *International Journal of Computer Graphics & Animation* (IJCGA), 2(2/3), 37-54.

Barnard, H. & Tuomi, K. 2008. How demand sophistication (de-)limits economic upgrading: Comparing the film industries of South Africa and Nigeria (Nollywood). *Industry and Innovation*, 15(6), 647-668.

Barrier, M. 1999. *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Bazzoli, M.S. 2003. *African Cartoons.* Milano: Editrice Il Castoro.

BBC. 2020. Disney announces landmark African collaboration with Kugali. *BBC*. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55278034 [Accessed January 2, 2021].

Beck, J. 2004. *Animation Art: From Pencil to Pixel, the History of Cartoon, Animé & CGI*. London, UK: Flame Tree.

Beck, J. & Friedwald, W. 1997. *Warner Bros. Animation Art: The Characters, the Creators, the Limited Editions.* Burbank, CA: WB Worldwide Pub.

Beck, J. & Friedwald, W. 1989. *Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

Beck, R.S. 2000. *History of South Africa*. Westport CT: Greenwood Press.

Beinart, W. 2001. *Twentieth-Century South Africa.* Oxford University Press.

Bell. E., Haas, L. & Sells, L. (Eds.) 1995. *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bendazzi, G. 1994. *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation*. London: John Libbey.

Bendazzi, G. 2004. African Cinema Animation. *Enter Text: An Interdisciplinary Humanities e-Journal*, 4(1), 10-26.

Bendazzi, G. 2017a. *Animation: A World History. Volume I: Foundations - The Golden Age.* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Bendazzi, G. 2017b. *Animation: A World History. Volume II: The Birth of a Style - The Three Markets.* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Bendazzi, G. 2017c. *Animation: A World History. Volume III: Contemporary Times.* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

Bhattacharjee, K. 2001. Local Content Rules in Broadcasting. Article 19.

Bjorvatn, K. & Eckel, C. 2006. Policy competition for foreign direct investment between asymmetric countries. *European Economic Review*, 50(7), 1891-1907.

Blaeser, T. 2017. A postcolonial analysis of colonial representations in Triggerfish's animated films *Khumba* (2013) and *Adventures in Zambezia* (2012). MA Dissertation. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Bordwell, D. & Staiger, J. 1985. Technology, style and mode of production. In D. Bordwell, J. Staiger & K. Thompson (Eds.), *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (pp. 247-269). New York: Columbia University Press.

Bordwell, D. & Thomson, K. 2012. *Film Art: An Introduction* (10th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Botha, M. 2003. Current film policy in South Africa: The establishment of the National Film and Video Foundation of South Africa and its role in the development of a post-apartheid film industry. *Communicatio*, 29(1-2), 182-198.

Botha, M. 2007. Post-Apartheid Cinema: Policy, Structures, Themes and New Aesthetics. In M. Botha (Ed.), *Marginal Lives & Painful Pasts*. LIPCO Chambers: Genugtig! Publishers.

Bradbury, K. 2001. Australian and New Zealand Animation. In J. A. Lent (Ed.), *Animation in Asia and the Pacific* (pp. 207-224). Sydney: John Libbey.

Brophy, P. 2005. *100 Anime.* London, UK: BFI.

Bryman, A. 1995. *Disney and his Worlds.* London and New York: Routledge.

Byrne, E. & McQuillan, M. 1999. *Deconstructing Disney*. London and Sterling: Pluto Press.

Callus, P. 2008. Creative Comment and Critique: Animation filmmaking in Africa. *Africa in Motion.* Edinburgh African Film Festival, 23 October – 2 November 2008.

Callus, P. 2010. Animation as socio- political commentary: An analysis of the animated films of Congolese director Jean Michel Kibushi. *Journal of African Media Studies*, 2(1), 55-71.

Callus, P. 2017. Animating the DRC: An Interview with Congolese Animator Jean-Michel Kibushi. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 11(1), 179-183.

Campbell, A. 2021. What is Black Lives Matter and what are the aims?. *BBC*. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53337780 [Accessed October 2, 2021].

Canemaker, J. 1987. *Winsor McCay: His Life and Art*. New York: Abbeville Press.

Canemaker, J. (Ed.) 1989. *Storytelling in Animation.* Los Angeles: American Film Institute.

Canemaker, J. 1996. *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*. New York: Da Capo.

Cavalier, S. 2007. *The World History of Animation*. California: University of California Press.

Chetty, K. 2013. Khumba. *Mahala.* Available at: www.mahala.co.za/culture/khumba/ [Accessed June 21, 2021].

Choo, K. 2014. Hyperbolic Nationalism: South Korea's Shadow Animation Industry. *Mechademia*, 9, 144-162.

Clements, J. & McCarthy, H. 2015. *The Anime Encyclopedia a Century of Japanese Animation* (3rd Edition). Berkeley, CA: Stone Bridge Press.

CNC. 2012. French television programme exports in 2012. CNC.

Convents, G. 2003. Da artigiano a professionista. La lunga e difficile strada di una passione. In M. S. Bazzoli (Ed.), *African Cartoons* (pp. 67-71). Milano: Editrice Il Castoro.

Coertze, G. 2011. Open Sesame! Learning Life skills from Takalani Sesame: A Reception Study of Selected Grade One Learners in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. MA Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal. UKZN Centre for Communication, Media & Society.

Cook, R., Carpenter, L. & Cattul, E. 1987. The Reys Image Rendering Architecture. *Computer Graphics*, 21(4), 91-102.

Collins, A. & Snowball, J. 2013. Transformation, job creation and subsidies to creative industries: The case of South Africa's film and television sector. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21(1), 41-59.

Crafton, D. 1993. *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1989-1928*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Creative Economy Masterplan. 2021. Creating and Designing for Growth: South Africa's Creative Industry Masterplan to 2040. A Report of the South African Creative Industry Masterplan Project [Unpublished].

Cunningham, S.D. 2002. From cultural to creative industries: Theory, industry, and policy implications. *Media International Australia Incorporating Culture and Policy: Quarterly*, 102, 54-65.

Daly, K.M. 2008. Cinema 3.0: How Digital and Computer Technologies are Changing Cinema. PhD Thesis. Columbia University, NY.

Darley, A. 1997. Second-order realism and post-modern aesthetics in computer animation. What is animation and who needs to know? An essay on definitions. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp.16-24). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Darley, A. 2007. Bones of Contention: Thoughts on the Study of Animation. *Animation: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2(1), 63-76.

De Beer, A. 2016. Animating a South African identity? The case of *Urbo: The Adventures of Pax Afrika* (SABC 2006–2009). *Communicatio*, 42(4), 47-62.

De Waal, M. 2011. Fine Film-Making, Clever Marketing Set to Make Jock Top Dog. *Daily Maverick.* Available at: www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2011-07-11-fine-filmmaking-clever-marketing-set-to-make-jock- top-dog/ [Accessed June 3, 2021].

Denslow, P.K. 1997. What is animation and who needs to know? An essay on definitions. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 1-4). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Dongo, C. 2015. The Use of Interactive Educational Animated Series to Enhance Second Language Development in Preschool Children. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Dorra, N. 2011. *Coproducing with Germany: How to plan a film project with German involvement*. [eBook]. Helsinki: Nick Dorra.

Dupré, C. 2015. Cinéma malgache: la renaissance passe par l'animation. *La revue des medias.* Available at: https://larevuedesmedias.ina.fr/cinema-malgache-la-renaissance-passe-par-lanimation [Accessed July 23, 2021].

Duruaku, T. 2013. Animated Graphics Films for the Rejuvenation of Fading African Culture: The case of an Igbo Heritage. The 2013 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings Orlando, USA.

Edera, B. 1996. African Animation. In J. Greene & D. Reber (Eds.), *Drawing Insight: Communicating Development through Animation* (p. 111). Penang, Malaysia: Southbound Publishers.

Emongo, L. 2001. *Homage to Black African Cinema Animation.* Strasbourg: Studio Malembe Maa ASBL.

Felperin, L. 1997. The thief of Buena Vista: Disney's *Aladdin* and Orientalism. What is animation and who needs to know? An essay on definitions. In, J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 137-142). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Finch, C. 1973. *The Art of Walt Disney: From Mickey Mouse to The Magic Kingdom.* New York: Harry N. Abrams.

Forgione, M. 2010. *The Creative Industries in China*. London: IVCA.

Freddy, B. 2015. A study of an 'African aesthetic' in character designs for animation through an analysis of the work by Kenneth Shofela Coker. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Frierson, M. 1997. Clay animation comes out of the inkwell: The Fleischer brothers and clay animation. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 82-92). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Furniss, M. 2014. *Art in Motion: Animation Aesthetics.* Sydney: John Libbey & Company Limited.

Gagnon, M.K. 2005. Race-ing Disney: Race and Culture in the Disney Universe. Thesis. Simon Fraser University.

Ghazala, M. 2017. From the Pioneers to the Revolutionaries: The Art of Animation in Egypt. In S. van de Peer (Ed.), *Animation in the Middle East: Practice and Aesthetics from Baghdad to Casablanca* (pp. 196-216). London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Ghebregziabher, S.T. 2009. Localization of foreign content: A case study of Takalani Sesame MA Thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Gifford, D. 1987. *British Animated Films 1895-1985*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Giralt, G.F. 2017. The Interchangeability of VFX and Live Action and Its Implications for Realism. *Journal of Film and Video*, 69(1), 3-17.

Giroux, H.A. 1995. Memory and Pedagogy in the "Wonderful World of Disney" Beyond the Politics of Innocence. In E. Bell, L. Haas & L. Sells (Eds.), *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (pp. 43-61). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Giroux, H.A. 1999. *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence.* NY: Rowan & Littlefield Publications.

Giżycki, M. 2014. Avant-Garde and the Thaw: Experimentation in Polish Cinema of the 1950s and 1960s. In K. Kuc & M. O'Pray (Eds.), *The Struggle for Form* (pp. 83-92). London & New York: Wallflower Press.

Glenn, I. 2008. Film Viewing in South Africa in 2007: Some Vexed Questions. *Communitas*, 13, 1-15.

Global Fund for Women. n.d. 'Me Too.' Global Movement. Available at: https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/me-too/ [Accessed November 25, 2021].

Gruenwedel, 2021. Report: 27% of U.S. Households Plan to Cut Cable TV in 2021. *Media Play News.* Available at: https://www.mediaplaynews.com/report-27-of-us-households-plan-to-cut-cable-tv-in-2021/ [Accessed June 20, 2021].

Gutsche, T. 1972. *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa 1895-1940.* Cape Town: Howard Timmins.

Hall, S., Evans, J. & Nixon, S. (Eds.) 2013. *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices.* London: Sage.

Haycock, A. 2010. South African Stop-Motion Animation from 1980 – 2005. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Henderson, L. 2014. A postcard from the Luxor African Film Festival. *MadaMasr: Independent, Progressive Journalism.* Available at: https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/04/04/feature/culture/a-postcard-from-the-luxor-african-film-festival/?__cf_chl_f_tk=QmNjAmNhof64LE39eQBF.iaKl9uy9rXGscamDx2BZMU-1642466516-0-gaNycGzNB70 [Accessed 20 August, 2021].

Higgins, L. 2012. Adaptation in the Lowveld: A comparative case study of the live-action to 3D animation filmic adaptation of Duncan MacNeillie's Jock of the Bushveld. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Hollis, R. & Sibley, B. 1988. *The Disney Studio Story*. New York: Crown.

Hughes, M. 2018. 'Black Panther' Stalks $1.3 Billion At The Worldwide Box Office. *Forbes.* Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/markhughes/2018/04/02/black-panther-stalks-1-3-billion-at-the-worldwide-box-office/?sh=3601242c2ef9 [Accessed 10 July, 2021].

Iger, R. 2019. *The Ride of a Lifetime.* London: Transworld Publishers.

James, L. 2020. Development of Animated Cartoon Characters from Indigenous Nigerian Sources. In S.E. Ododo, A.I. Tijani & R. Vogels (Eds.), *Cultural Sustainability, Performance and the Sustainable Development Goals in Time of Crisis* (pp. 519-535). Etchwise Consulting: Maiduguri, Nigeria.

Japanese Economy Division. 2005. *Japan Animation Industry Trends.* Tokyo: JETRO.

Johnston, O. & Thomas, F. 1981. *The Illusion of Life: Disney Animation.* New York: Disney Editions.

Kangong, R. 2010. 3D Animation as a Medium of Cultural Representation and Education: A case study of Magic Cellar. MA Thesis. University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Kaye, E. 2003. The history of animation in South Africa. In M.S. Bazzoli (Ed.), *African Cartoon* (pp. 43-48). Milano: Editrice II Castoro.

Kermeliotis, T. 2012. 'Zambezia': 3D Animation Puts South Africa Film in the Picture. *CNN.* Available at: edition.cnn.com/2012/07/26/showbiz/zambezia-animation-south-africa/index.html. [Accessed July 12, 2021].

Kersh, S. 1996. History of South African Animation. *Screen Africa,* 22.

King, R.G. 1988. Computer Graphics and Animation as Agents of Personal Evolution in the Arts. *Leonardo* (Supp), 1, 43-46.

Koenderman, T. 2010. 'Jock' could be a landmark: South Africa ready to enter the big time. *Finweek*, 60.

Koyama-Richard, B. 2010. *Japanese Animation: From Painted Scrolls to Pokémon.* Paris: Flammarion.

Kriedemann, K. 2009. Biz sees bright future on all screens. *Variety*, 415(9), A2.

Kuc, K. & O'Pray, M. (Eds.) 2014. *The Struggle for Form: Perspectives on Polish Avant-Garde Film, 1916–1989.* London & New York: Wallflower Press.

Kuttna, M. 1970. *Hungarian Animation: A Survey of the Work of the Pannonia Studio, Budapest.* Budapest: Hungarofilm.

LaMarre, T. 2009. *The Anime Machine: A Media Theory of Animation.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Lent, J.A. 2001. *Animation in Asia and the Pacific.* London, UK: John Libbey.

Lent, J.A. 2003. The New Age of Asian Animation. *Asian Cinema*, 14(1), 3-12.

Lent, J.A. & Ying, X. 2013. Chinese animation: An historical and contemporary analysis. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 23(1), 19-40.

Lutz, E.G. 1920. *Animated Cartoons: How They Are Made, Their Origin and Development.* Bedford, MA: Applewood.

Macdonald, S. 2016. *Animation in China: History, Aesthetics, Media.* Abingdon: Routledge.

MacWilliams, M.W. 2015. *Japanese Visual Culture: Explorations in the World of Manga and Anime.* Abingdon & New York, NY: Routledge.

Maltin, L. 1980. *Of Mice and Magic.* New York: New American Library.

Maingard, J. 2007. *South African National Cinema*. London: Routledge.

May, K.T. 2016. A New Age of Animation. *The Atlantic.* Available at: https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/05/a-new-age-of-animation/483342/ [Accessed July 20, 2021].

Mbogo, F.K. 2004. Creative Performance for Education: A Case Study in Takalani Sesame. MA thesis. University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

McKenzie, J., Crosby, P., Cox, J. & Collins, A. 2019. Experimental evidence on demand for "on-demand" entertainment. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 161, 98-113.

Moncho–Maripane, K. 2020.Someone like me: How cartoons represent the black child. *City Press.* Available at: https://www.news24.com/citypress/trending/south-african-kids-see-characters-that-look-like-them-20200315 [Accessed June 10, 2021].

Manovich, L. 1997. 'Reality' effects in computer animation. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 5-15). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Manovich, L. 2001. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MASS: MIT Press.

McCall, D.L. 1998. *Film Cartoons: A Guide to 20th-Century American Animated Features and Shorts*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Moneyweb, 2022. DStv stops bleeding Premium customers. Available at: https://www.moneyweb.co.za/news/tech/premium-customers-stop-ditching-dstv-but-it-has-a-bigger-problem/ [Accessed January 5, 2023].

Moritz, W. 1997a. Restoring the aesthetics of early abstract film. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 221-227). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Moritz, W. 1997b. Resistance and subversion in animated films of the Nazi era: The case of Hans Fisherkoesen. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 228-240). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Multichoice. 2019. Celebrating the Cape Town Carnival. *News.* Available at: https://www.multichoice.com/media/news/having-fun-is-serious-business [Accessed December 4, 2022].

Multichoice. 2021a. About Us. Available at: https://www.multichoice.com/about-us [Accessed August 25, 2021].

Multichoice. 2021b. African content for African people!. Available at: https://www.multichoice.com/media/news/african-content-for-african-people [Accessed August 25, 2021].

Murphy, D. 2000. Africans Filming Africa: Questioning Theories of an Authentic African Cinema. *Black Camera: An International Film Journal*, 12(2), 338-357.

Murphy, I. & Walker, S.J. 2019. Make It More Invisible: Hollywood VFX Training Crosstalk on the Transatlantic Fiber Optic. *Animation Studies*. Available at: https://journal.animationstudies.org/ian-murphy-saint-john-walker-make-it-more-invisible-hollywood-vfx-training-crosstalk-on-the-transatlantic-fiber-optic/ [Accessed September 20, 2020].

Napier, S.J. 2000. *Anime from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing Contemporary Japanese Animation.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF). 2020. 2019/20 Annual Report.

Neumann, M. 2018. Introduction: On Coogler and Cole's Black Panther Film (2018): Global Perspectives. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 11 (9), 1-12.

Novielli, M.R. 2018. *Floating Worlds: A Short History of Japanese Animation*. Boca Raton: CRC Press, Taylor & Francis.

Nsiah-Buadi, C. The Creator of Netflix's First Animated Series Is Out to Shatter Stereotypes About African Girls. *Shondoland.* Available at: https://www.shondaland.com/live/a27276236/malenga-mulendema-mama-k-team-4/ [Accessed 15 November, 2021].

Ogutu, R.N. 2019. Substance and Structure of Animation Films in Kenya: A Study of Selected Films. PHD Thesis. Kenyatta University.

O'Konor, L. 1971. *Viking Eggeling 1880-1925, Artist and Filmmaker – Life and Work.* Stockholm: Almqvist & Mikswell.

Paik, K. 2007. *To Infinity and Beyond!: The Story of Pixar Animation Studio.* San Francisco: Chronicle Books.

Park, C. 1997. The Changing Winds of Korean Animation. *Animation World Network.* Available at: https://www.awn.com/animationworld/changing-winds-korean-animation [Accessed July 26, 2021].

Parkinson, D. 2012. *100 Ideas that Changed Film.* London: Laurence King Publishing.

Parsons, N. 2018. *Black and White Bioscope: Making Movies in Africa 1899 to 1925.* Bristol: Intellect Books & University of Chicago Press.

Peary, D. & Peary, G. (Eds.) 1980. *The American Animated Cartoon*. New York: Dutton.

Peghini, J. 2015. Review of Guido Convents. Images et animation. Le Cinéma d'animation en Afrique centrale. Introduction au cinéma d'animation en République démocratique du Congo, au Rwanda et au Burundi. *Afrika Filmfestival*, 190-192.

Penn, R. 2009. Metamorphosis as a narrative strategy in selected South African animated films. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Phiri, J. 2022. The downfall of Netflix: not paying enough attention to content for black and brown people. *City Press.* Available at: https://www.news24.com/citypress/trending/the-downfall-of-netflix-not-paying-enough-attention-to-content-for-black-and-brown-people-20220512 [Accessed July 7, 2022].

Pilling, J. (Ed.) 1992. *Women and Animation: A Compendium*. London: British Film Institute, Exhibition & Distribution Division.

Pilling, J. 1997. *A Reader in Animation Studies*. Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Pos, J. 1991. *Kratky Film: The Art of Czechoslovak Animation.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers.

Price, D.A. 2008. *The Pixar Touch*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Prince, S. 1996. True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory. *Film Quarterly*, 49(3), 27-37.

Prince, S. 2004. The Emergence of Filmic Artifacts: Cinema and Cinematography in the Digital Era. *Film Quarterly*, 57(3), 24-33.

Quarterly Labour Force Survey. 2022. Statistical Release: Q2: 2022. Issued by Statistics South Africa.

Quiquemelle, M.C. 1991. The Wan Brothers and sixty years of animated film in China. In C. Berry (Ed.), *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema* (pp. 175-187). London: British Film Institute.

Raffaelli, L. 1997. Disney, Warner Bros. and Japanese animation. In J. Pilling (Ed.), *A Reader in Animation Studies* (pp. 112-136). Sydney, AUS & London, UK: John Libbey & Co.

Rodowick, D.N. 2009. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge, MA & London, UK: Harvard University Press.

Roux, E. 2021. New animation to celebrate Quinn, a seal living off the coast of Cape Town. *The South African.* Available at: https://www.thesouthafrican.com/culture/entertainment/breaking-seal-team-cape-town-quinn-netflix-triggerfish-animation-watch/ [Accessed December 14, 2021].

Russet, R. & Starr, C. 1976. *Experimental Animation.* New York: Da Capo.

SACO. 2019. Establishment of the Film Sector as a Catalyst for Economic Growth. Submitted to the Department of Arts and Culture.

SACO. 2022. South Africa's Animation Industry: Ecosystem Analysis. Submitted to the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

Sandler, K.S. 1998. *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros. Animation.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP.

Sawadogo, B. 2019. *African Film Studies: An Introduction.* Abingdon & New York: Routledge.

SCFilms International. ND. Headspace. Available at: https://scfilmsinternational.com/current-films-animation-titles/headspace/ [Accessed December 4, 2022].

Scheinin, R. 1993. Angry over 'Aladdin'. *Washington Post.* G5.

Schneider, S. 1990. *That's All Folks!: The Art of Warner Bros. Animation.* London, UK: Aurum Press.

Screen Africa. 2019. Netflix announces first original African animated series, *Mama K's.* Available at: https://www.screenafrica.com/2019/04/18/tv-radio/business-tv-

radio/netflix-announces-first-original-african-animated-series-mama-ks-team-4/ [Accessed June 12, 2021].

Screen Africa. 2020. Netflix increases investment in Africa. Available at: https://issuu.com/sun-circle-publishers/docs/scaf-april20_web/s/10390467 [Accessed May 3, 2022].

Setiawati, B. 2008. Americanization of Non-American Stories in Disney Films. *Register Journal*, 1(1), 81-114.

Shapurjee, S. 2008. A Historical Enquiry into the Animation Unit, Situated Within the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) 1976-1988. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Sidogi, P. 2018. Supa Strikas. Transnational Afropolitan Superheroes. *International Journal of Comic Art*, 20(1), 242-254.

Sidogi, P. 2020. (South) Africa's online animation revolution: The case of Jonas Lekganyane's *The Adventures of Noko Mashaba*. *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, 12(5), 702-718.

Sinkins, E. 2010. Animating Jock. *News24*. Available at: www.news24.com/Archives/Witness/Animating-Jock-20150430 [Accessed May 12, 2021].

Sithole, S. 2015. The Case of *Takalani Sesame*. *USAid.* Web. 23 Jan 2015.

Smith, J. 2018. The Revolutionary Power of Black Panther. *Time Magazine.* Available: https://time.com/black-panther/ [Accessed August 20, 2021].

Smoodin, E. (Ed.) 1994. *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Snowball, J., Collins, A. & Tarentaal, D. 2017. Transformation and job creation in the cultural and creative industries in South Africa. *Cultural Trends*, 26(1), 1-15.

South African History Online [SAHO]. 2011. A History of the South African Film Industry timeline 1895-2003. Available at: https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-south-african-film-industry-timeline-1895-2003 [Accessed July 21, 2021].

Stoll, J. 2021. Number of Disney Plus subscribers worldwide from 1st quarter 2020 to 4th quarter 2021. *Statista.* Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1095372/disney-plus-number-of-subscribers-us/ [Accessed December 2, 2021].

Stoll, J. 2022. Number of Netflix paid subscribers worldwide from 3rd quarter 2011 to 2nd quarter 2020. *Statista.* Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/250934/quarterly-number-of-netflix-streaming-subscribers-worldwide/ [Accessed January 24, 2022].

Tay, K.Y. 2019. On African Animation, Comics and Cartoon Network. *Squid Magazine.* Available at: https://squidmag.ink/african-animation-comics-cartoon-network/ [Accessed June 21, 2021].

Teru, S. 2010. Japan Animation: From Commercialism to Art. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2(5), 7327-7332.

The Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage. 2017. *South African Government.* Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201706/revised-3rd-draft-rwp-ach-february-2017.pdf [Accessed 7 August, 2021].

Thompson, L. 2001. *A History of South Africa* (3rd Edition). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tomaselli, K. (Ed.) 1979. *The South African Film Industry*. Johannesburg: African Studies Institute.

Tomaselli, R., Tomaselli, K. & Muller, J. 1989. Broadcasting in South Africa. *Studies on the South African Media.* Cape Town: Anthropos.

Tomaselli, R., Tomaselli, K., Muller, J. & Tomaselli, K. 1988. *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South African Cinema*. London: Routledge.

Tshimologong Precinct. 2019. NFVF strengthens its ties with France to support SA's animation industry. *Screen Africa.* Available at: https://www.screenafrica.com/author/tshimologong-precinct/ [Accessed April 20, 2021].

Tuchow, R. 2022. Netflix pledges US$1 million for African students. *Kidscreen.* Available at: https://kidscreen.com/2022/01/20/netflix-pledges-us1-million-for-african-students/ [Available at January 28, 2022].

Tuomi, K. 2007. Organisational shifts in the feature film industry: Implications for South Africa. *Transformation,* 63, 68-91.

Urban-Econ Development Economists, Gillis, G. & The Home of Nation. 2014. Strategy for the South African Animation Industry: Final Draft. Prepared for The South African Department of Arts and Culture.

van de Peer, S (Ed.). 2017. *Animation in the Middle East: Practice and Aesthetics from Baghdad to Casablanca.* London & New York: Bloomsbury.

Vourlias, C. 2019. Netflix Picks Up Its First Animated Series From Africa, 'Mama K's Team 4'. *Variety.* Available at: https://variety.com/2019/tv/news/netflix-first-animated-series-africa-mama-k-team-4-triggerfish-1203189786/ [Accessed March 5, 2021].

Vourlias, C. 2021. Triggerfish CEO Stuart Forrest on How African Animation Has Found Its Moment. *Variety.* Available at: https://variety.com/2021/film/news/triggerfish-south-africa-annecy-1235000155/ [Accessed August 8, 2021].

Walker, K. 2019. A Comparative Analysis of the Transition from Stop-Motion to CG Animation at Two South African Studios: Sunrise and Triggerfish. Masters Research Report. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Wasko, J. 2001. *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. Williston, VT: Blackwell.

Wells, P. 1998. *Understanding Animation*. London, UK & New York, US: Routledge.

Wells, P. 2002. *Animation: Genre and Authorship*. London, UK: Wallflower.

Wittenberg, H. 2017 Animated Animals: Allegories of Transformation in Khumba. In W. Woodward & S. McHugh (Eds.), *Indigenous Creatures, Native Knowledges, and the Arts: Animal Studies in Modern Worlds* (pp. 139-159). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Yoe, C. & Morra-Yoe, J. (Eds.) 1991. *The Art of Mickey Mouse*. New York, US: Hyperion.

Zipes, J. 1995. Breaking the Disney Spell. In E. Bell, L. Haas & L. Sells (Eds.), *From Mouse to Mermaid: The Politics of Film, Gender, and Culture* (pp. 21-42). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS


### ABOUT

The purpose of this interview is to investigate and understand the contemporary South African animation landscape.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may terminate it at any time. None of the questions are sensitive, but should you deem them to be so, you are free to ignore them. All responses will be used for academic research purposes only and your identity will remain anonymous. By taking part in this interview, you agree to participate in the research which will be used in my thesis and possibly in publications that may arise from said thesis.

Thank you,

Arabella Rogerson
RGRARA001@myuct.ac.za

### QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe the local animation industry in South Africa?
2. There seems to be an increasing global appetite for ‘African’ content (live-action and animated) which has accelerated in more recent years. Can you please comment on the timing of this most recent wave of interest in and investment into Africa (potential catalysts/influences)?
3. The notion that local studios need to/should produce content with a distinct ‘local identity’ in order to be to be relevant, what is your take on that?
4. Could you please comment on your studio’s dual role as a service industry for the West whilst also producing local content in-house.
    - Are both roles necessary for the company?
    - Where do you think lies the greater potential for growth for South Africa?
5. How would you describe the visual style of animation produced by your studio?
6. Could you please speak to the challenge(s) of financing (original) animation projects in South Africa?

- Do you think collaboration/partnerships with international studios/companies (like Disney and Netflix) is necessary for the survival of animation studios within South Africa? Please elaborate.

7. What is the importance of IP for South African animation?
8. Could you please comment on the challenge of content distribution and the role of online streaming services (SVOD services - Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney, Showmax)?
    - Do you foresee a shift towards digital consumption and distribution as a potential positive/negative factor for your business model, if it would affect it at all?
9. How would you describe the role of government for the local animation industry?
10. What is the direction of growth for your studio?
    - What do you envision the future of [Studio name] to look like and what kind of content would you ideally like to be making within the next 5-10 years?