

# A Critical Review of Jump Trump Rump Bump

Essay by Hank Shih



“Norman McLaren once said that if someone was musical, and also had artistic talent, it was more than likely that they would gravitate to animation (Pilling).” The short film *JumpTrumpRumpBump* by animators Heui-Won Jeong and Justin Murphy is a collaborative piece inspired by Jazz music. The story is based on a little girl’s life in the forest and her collaboration with a [motley?] bunch of musicians. The film raises questions concerning environmental issues such as garbage disposal and recycling. Jeong and Murphy use a unique style of animation that has rarely been done before. They animate a mix of hand drawn characters on brown paper and digitally create puppets in Adobe After-Effects. The strength of the film lies both in its collaboration and its attention to the moment. The music, the animation technique and the story all seem to unfold spontaneously. The narrative, like improvisational jazz is erratic, unsettling, inspirational, and human at the same time.

As student animators, Jeong and Murphy were exposed early to the short *Begone Dull Care* by Norman McLaren. In this experimental film, McLaren and “Evelyn Lambart paint directly on film restless lines that take momentary shapes and

catapult into other forms as they interpret the jazz music played by the Oscar Peterson Trio ([University of Calgary](#)).” Jeong and Murphy were both fascinated by the film, and they wondered how they too could explore jazz and animation together. Jeong was inspired by the animation style of Kenneth Wong, a.k.a Monkmus and his collaboration in several shorts such as the *Fender Bender* and the *Basin Street Blues* with musician Eric San, a.k.a Kid Koala. Jeong tries to achieve something bold and simple like Monkmus by using defined and clean drawing lines on paper. She also uses Cuban jazz music as a score. Jeong and Murphy are animators, not musicians, and so needed to collaborate with musicians. Searching for a collaborative opportunity with jazz musicians prompted Murphy to find a local band on the internet that expressed interest in writing a score and performing it. The resulting score was recorded live in a studio, adding extra life to the animation itself.

In an interview, Murphy states that he finds jazz to be a very improvisational process: “They put up an act while soloing, expressing what they feel at that moment.” The benefit of a live concert performance is that “you can only experience the moment once, once that moment is gone, it’s gone. The next time you hear the same song, the solo is going to be a different experience”

*JumpTrumpRumpBump* aims to create the same improvisational feeling in its audience. There are little things that the audience might not pick up the first time they watch it. “People always ask why is the junkyard there in the first scene? The junkyard is there because that’s how we live now, with a bunch of junk all around us. Junk like old computer monitors, garbage, etc; we might not want to live with it, but they are there” (Murphy). Murphy believes that living side by side with garbage is our future. In the story, the character, Mooney, builds lamps out of a cooking pot, and recycles cans into a telephone to communicate with her grandparents; she and her grandfather also build wind turbines to generate power and a rain collection system as their water source.

Both Jeong and Murphy are adding something of their own to the style of animation: Jeong favours working on brown paper and Murphy contributes his interest in ethnic patterns. According to Jeong, "wrinkling brown paper fills the blank space in the paper; it doesn't feel so flat." This technique is unlike Monkmus' *Fender Bender*, which uses white crayon on brown paper for animation, but it lacks depth of perception. Jeong and Murphy not only render in colour, they also wrinkle the brown paper before scanning it as background, adding an extra texture and a "hand-made" feel to Jeong's animation. Murphy creates patterns of his own or researches patterns from books, magazines, CD covers, or textiles patterns to use them in creation of the background. If the audience watches closely enough, they will notice multiple patterns in the trees, in table cloths, and in the wood grain of the tree house. All this attention to detail is designed to "future-proof" their animation; Jeong and Murphy designed their work for a broad range of venues, including high definition video broadcast.

The successful completion of the short film *JumpTrumpRumpBump* lies in the communication between all members in the collaboration. The difficulty for both Jeong and Murphy in the creation process was to communicate with each other clearly on what they wanted to do. Miscommunication causes delays. Since each member's input was valuable to the film, Jeong and Murphy had to express themselves in a very clear and detailed way. By making this short, Jeong and Murphy gained some valuable experience by collaborating with Allan Johnston's Cuban Band. The connection is now strong; the musicians would like a further collaboration and will possibly give Jeong and Murphy a chance to create a music video for MuchMusic.

The collaboration of jazz and animation in *JumpTrumpRumpBump* will appeal to all ages.

#### Work Cited

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