

Smithsonian Awaits Animated 'Katastrophe'

*By Josh Cohen News Staff
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When Peninsulans Andy Huang, Derrick Auyoung and Juan Anorga began their journey into the field of computer animation three years ago, few would



have guessed the finished product would end up in the Smithsonian National Gallery of Art.

But this July, the Smithsonian is exactly where one will find "Kitchen Katastrophe," the crew's original nine-minute animated film, created locally at PV on the Net in Rancho Palos Verdes.

"My family and I were blown away," Andy said of the honor. "I feel really fortunate. When it comes down to it, my parents were really the ones who gave us the support and helped to publicize the film. We were just going to let it sit because the whole purpose of the project was just to promote PV on the Net and the internship program."

Last featured in the Peninsula News in September 2001, "Kitchen Katastrophe" at that time was awaiting an award from the Asian American Internet Film Festival. It won that contest and hasn't stopped since.

The film has picked up a head of steam and garnered praise across the country. It was screened at the Hawaiian Film Festival, the SmartFest Student Media Arts Festival in New York, the 2002 CalSun International Animation Festival at California State Northridge and the Chicago International Children's Film Festival. In addition, the film recently won a CINE Golden Eagle award and the CINE special jury award, both in Washington, D.C.

The accumulation of honors led to the Smithsonian, including "Kitchen Katastrophe" in its summer Children's Film Program, which will be exhibited in July.

"We are so excited," said Andy's mother, Eleanor. "Some of these honors are really professional, so to share them with names like Ken Burns, HBO and the History Channel ... just being a part of this is what is so special for Andy and Derrick."

Although Derrick, a senior at UCLA, couldn't make the trip to Washington, D.C., he was there in spirit with his younger partner, Andy, a senior at Peninsula High School.

"Derrick and I really did this ourselves, starting with nothing," said Andy. "It took us about a year to finish, a few hours a week and through all of summer.

"I was really honored to win the CINE special jury award, but unfortunately, Derrick couldn't make it," he continued. "In some ways winning the award is a little intimidating because I realize how huge and competitive the industry is. But it's encouraging because I know I eventually want to go into fine arts and film production and design."

PV on the Net

The film is also a big boost for PV on the Net, where "Kitchen Katastrophe" came together. Led by teachers such as PV on the Net Director Ted Vegvari

and David Wadsworth, and with the help of a dozen interns, Andy and Derrick used professional software and equipment to devise the short film, which tells the story of a fork stuck in a microwave and the remaining kitchen utensils' desperate attempt to free their sterling-silver friend.

"We had just been given MAYA 3-D software, and we kind of wanted to see how far we could get with that," said Andy. "We also got to take a trip to the Dreamworks studio and get some advice there ... that was helpful."

Vegvari stressed an environment "where kids with an interest in computer animation can experiment and pursue their creative ideas." He said even he was surprised by the creative energy and patience of "Kitchen Katastrophe's" animators.

"Andy's the genius on the Peninsula," he said.

"This wasn't possible without Ted," said Andy. "He supplied all the software ... everything we needed. Ted gave us a lot of creative freedom and helped on some of the more technical things. I feel fortunate we have something like PV on the Net, otherwise we wouldn't have access to any of these opportunities."

Many who contributed to the project believe "Kitchen Katastrophe" has left behind a legacy of sorts, a standard for young adults interested in pursuing careers in animation.

"There is a lot of interest out there in computer animation," said Andy. "Kids today are exposed to a lot more crazy technology. I hope that the work Derrick and I did together helps make animation really significant at PV on the Net, because there is a lot of talent out there and what we did was just one example of a larger medium."

Andy still lives here in Rancho Palos Verdes and plans to attend either UCLA or USC. With RPV ready to start up an educational access channel with help from

PV on the Net, Derrick said he'll continue to put his talent to use in his hometown.

Former News Staff Writer Michelle Fisher contributed to this story.