A SYSTEM FOR PLANNING AND TIMING ANIMATION

By Glen Keane

PHASE I: PREPARATION

1.Study Storyboard - Know what the main point of your scene is.

2. Listen to Soundtrack - Think about an approach that is unique and entertaining.

3. Number Exposure Sheet - Using odd numbers skipping every other frame.

PHASE II: THUMBNAIL

1.Scenes with Dialog - Use dialog as your reference for timing.

2. Scenes w/o Dialog or Music - Use stopwatch to figure out timing. *Timing for animation tends to be quicker than real time. Time out your action 3 to 5 times taking the average but favoring the shorter length.

3. Phrasing - Break dialog into its basic phrases. A phrase has a natural break in it.

Example:

1. I'll even toss in a little extra ---
2. for your patience.
3. Ah Ha Hahahahah!

These 3 phrases were evident in Dom Delouises reading of this particular line.

4. Thumbnail out the attitudes and action

Thumbnail out the attitudes and action that illustrate the phrases and acting in the scene.

Note: Write numbers down under the thumbnails to indicate how long a specific action will be.

See example: Dom Delouise in Oliver

I'LL EVEN TOSS IN
A LITTLE GESTURE

Note: Thumbnails are basically illustrating the phrases.The corresponding numbers from the exposure sheet are indicated under the pose.

Thumbnailing is the time to explore as many ways of presenting an idea as you can.

In this miniature stage you should be concerned about the poses that have a clear change in line of action from one phrase to another.

5. Plan out action on an exposure sheet

Action showing a pose moving into the next pose.

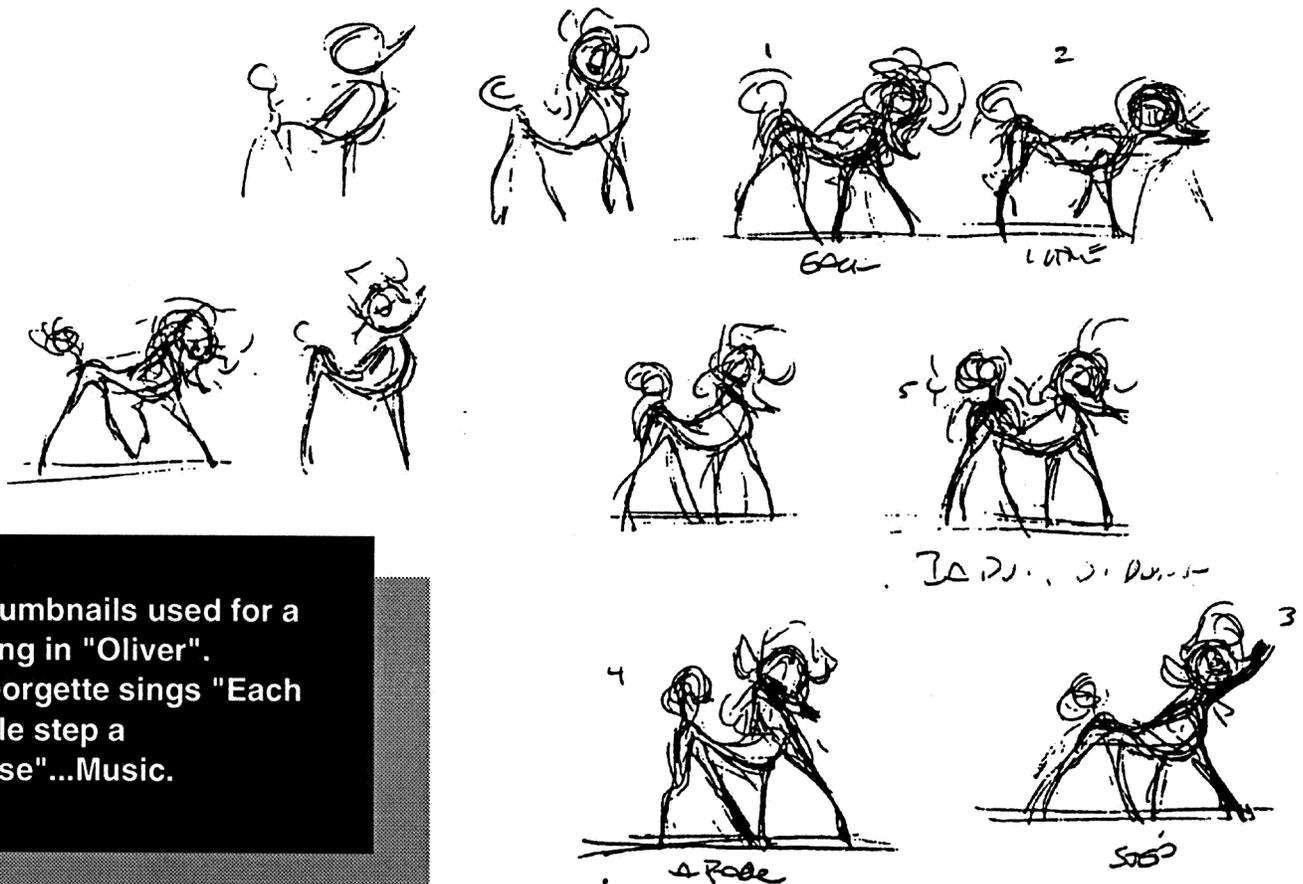Slow in or Slow out.

Pose or Picture.

Straight Ahead Animation.

Action Line.

Phase III : Thumbnails

1. Blow up thumbnails by Xerox or by hand (Be sure to capture the essence of the thumbnails). Use these as a guide post to animate by. They are not your extremes but just poses and attitude you are moving toward and through.

Thumbnails used for a song in "Oliver". Georgette sings "Each little step a pose"...Music.

When you thumbnail out your scene you should be thinking animation. What pose will work best going into the next. Notice on the word "Each" Georgette's head is tucked close in the **squash** position. On the word "step" it is in the **stretch** position. The #3 pose works well as an anticipation into pose #4. As you thumbnail keep in mind you are always setting yourself up for the next pose.

# 2. Thumbnails transferred to Animation Paper
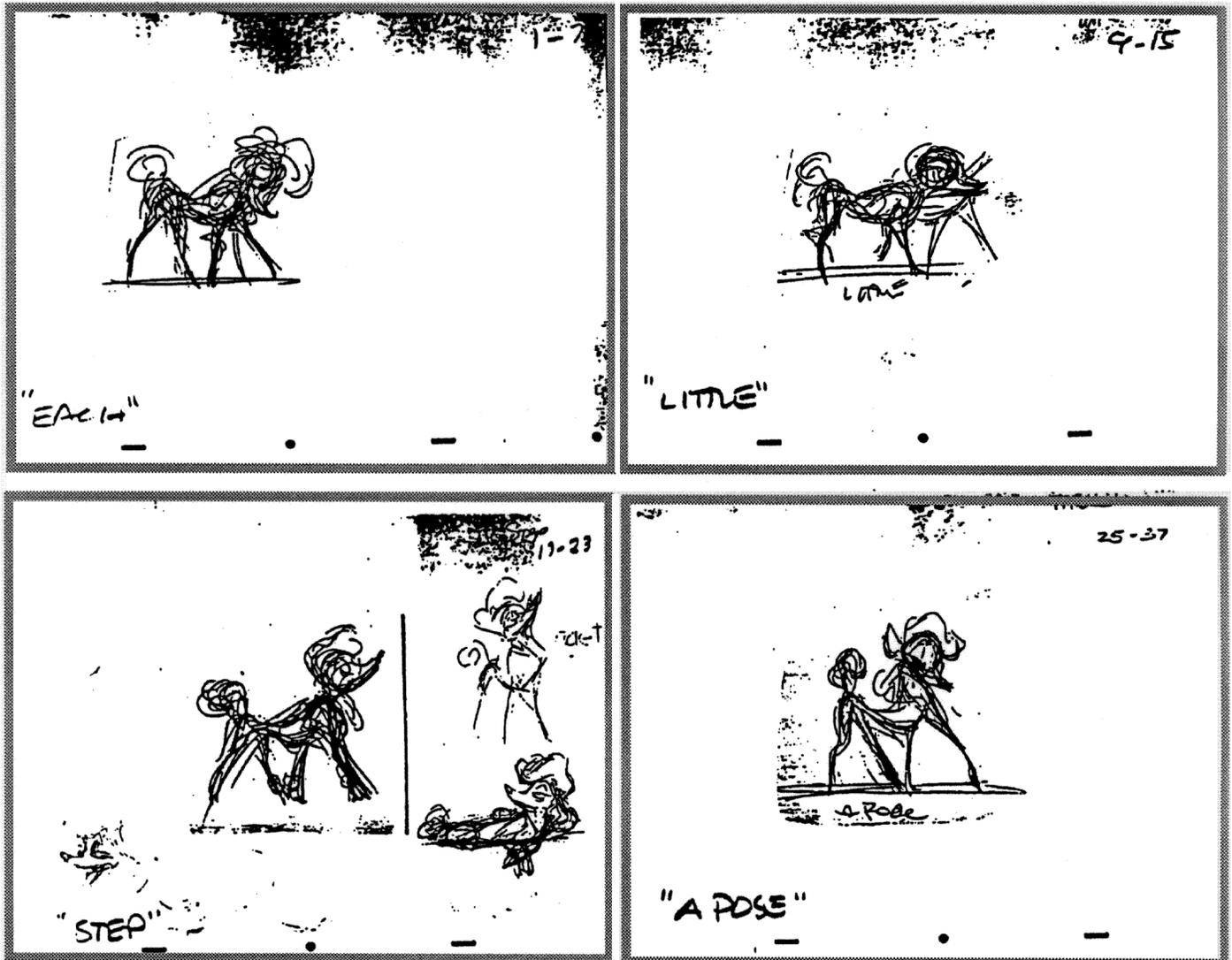
With the key poses in place you can now flip the drawings and get a feeling for the movement. You can also number the poses based on the phrases on the exposure sheet.

Pose Test

3. Do a rough timing test (Pose Test)
This is a quick approach to the scene that should be done without laboring over individual drawings. Instead you should dash through the drawings trying to capture the feeling of the action and gesture of the attitude.

Rough Test Example:
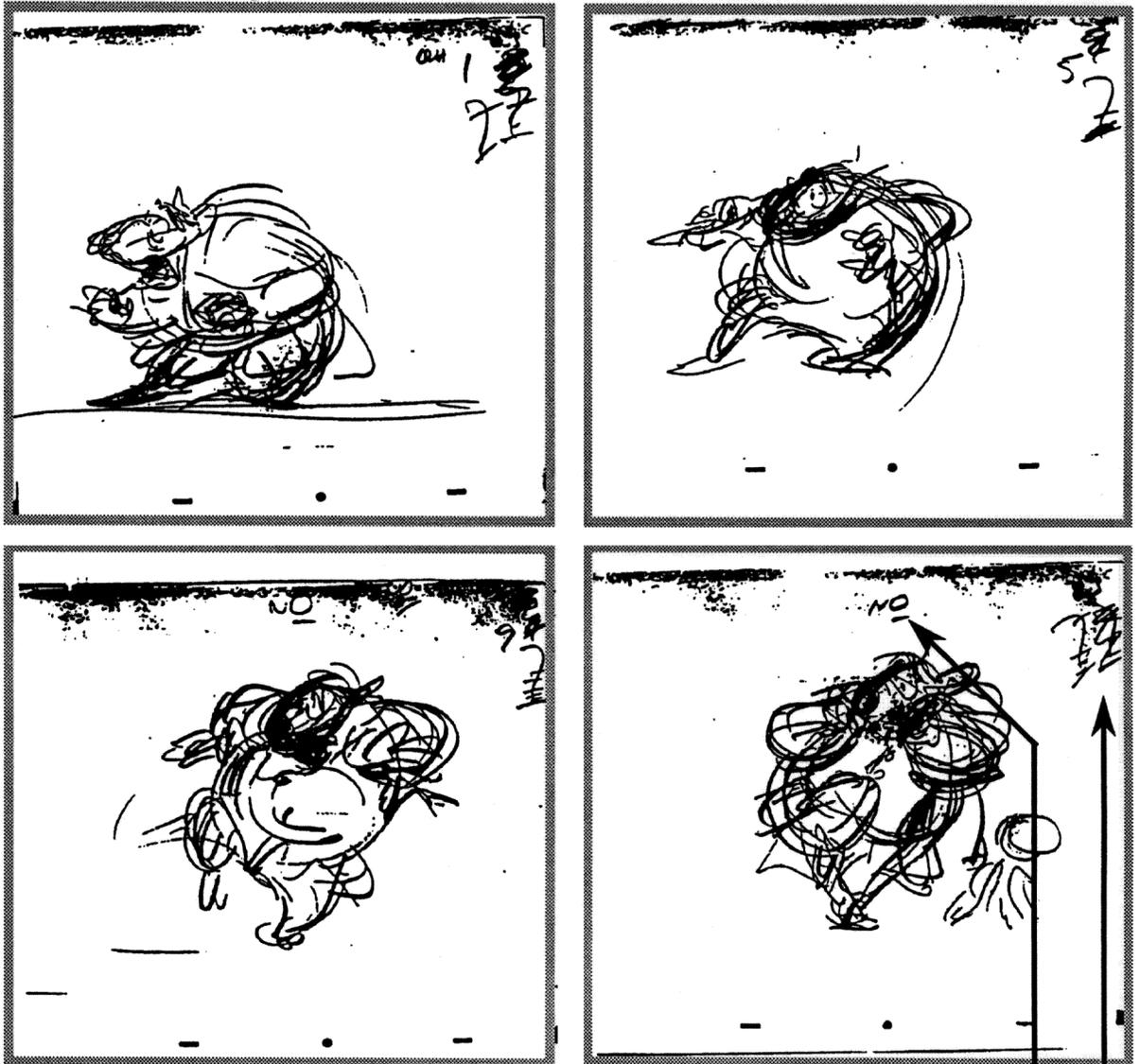
Write the dialog on the top of the drawing , underline the accent of that particular drawing.

Indicate rough timing charts - These will probably change as you get more drawings on the pegs, and can flip them getting a better feeling for the movement. Timing charts go in the upper right corner.

4. Timing charts

A clue to the animators thinking. A guide to show where the drawings are to be placed between the extremes.
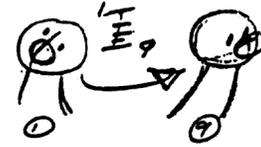
Slow in - Action slows down gradually

A. Different Timings

Slow out - Action picks up speed gradually

Even - Keeps action in a constant speed

B. How many extremes do I need?

Enough to describe arcs and head turns
Enough to describe any changes in shape
Enough to indicate to you a desired effect

In this action the desired effect was an explosive timing that moved from #4 to #6. The timing is on ones and slows into #6 which in turn slows into #10 where the drawings switch to twos.

Animation Seven Essentials

1. Make a positive statement

Do not be ambiguous in your approach
Thumbnail until you have that clear approach and conviction. Be bold and decisive.

2. Animate from the heart

Feel your drawings
Let your action be an extension of how you believe the character feels.
Put yourself in the place of the character your animating - associate.

3. Make expressions and attitudes real and living

Focus on the eyes and eyebrows - mouth and cheeks
Always lead with the eyes.
Be sure the eyes are solid and placed securely in the head.
Study your own attitudes. Ask yourself does this drawing feel the way my face feels.

4. Draw as if you were sculpting

Describe the forms in dimension
Understand the character design in 3D

5. Animate the forces

Allow the momentum of and already animated movement to suggest the next drawing.
Draw the leading edge of forces.

6. Visualize and feel dialog

Be sure you are truly capturing the inflection, volume and tone of the dialog with proper mouth shapes.

7. Simplicity

What is the essence of your scene, your action , your expression - what is indispensable in communicating your thought?

Character Development

"The animator will flounder with indecision unless he can get inside the charcter and know precisely what actions are right for that personality. As long as there is any confusion the drawings will be vague and indecisive."
Johnston & Thomas " The Illusion of Life"

Story

Character makes the story live.
Do I care about what happens to the characters?
The story should bring out the character.
Conflict.

Personality

Some questions to ask.
How does the character feel about himself?
What does he want? His hopes desires and goals.
What is he afraid of?
His weaknesses?
What is his world view.

History

Write a history of your character that brings him up to the present moment.
What events or people shaped him into what he is?

Environment

What is his surrounding world like?*
Hostile- Friendly, Cultured-Naive, Oppressive-Invigorating
Country Farm - College Campus, Luxurious- Desolate
Oriental- Western, Poor-Rich.

Music

What style of music reflects the heart and attitude of your character?

Design

The image your character portrays
Describe his appearance * - Intimidating, sensual, dumpy etc.
Attitude - Is it motivated by who your character is?
Costume - Does it give us insight into the character?
Shapes - Are they simple, clear , communicating and animatable?

* Use Thesaurus and other resources including - Photos, film , drawings, paintings, books, magazine ads etc.

Contrast

Contrast creates an intrigue and curiosity in the audience.

Story - Involving many elements,
character, circumstances and conflict.
What is at stake? What is the character
risking? Is there hope for the audience to
"side" with?

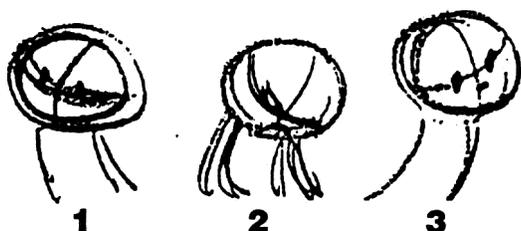## Movement - A signal of intention for the audience

Arcs show anticipation

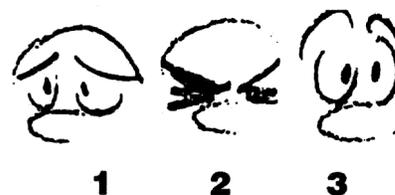## Line and Form - just as in movement a shape can
narrow to anticipate a widening
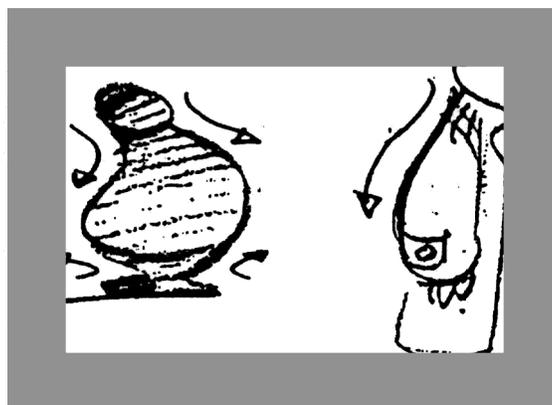
Note Shape changes

Angles and Tilts - Anticipate
with head angles and tilts. Ex: head
angle dips in #2 before #3.

1   **2**   **3**

Expression - Attitudes should
always be set up by the previous
attitude.

1   **2**   **3**

Anticipation

Anticipation is built by clarity - A simple, clear idea that communicates and captures an audience is your goal.

Anticipation Through:

Character - If the audience knows your character they can enjoy anticipating his reaction in a given situation.

Music - A feeling of "Get ready for this!" is largely due to the right music. It can anticipate joy, fear, patriotism, love, etc.

Staging - Your point of view must be clear. What do I want to say with this scene? How do I want the audience to feel in this shot? How you stage the scene clues in the audience to how they should feel.

A Tree

Note how the staging of the tree changes the mood of the shot.

Action-Through powerful and graphic images anticipation can be built for a short period of time.

Relationship- Two opposing characters create an automatic tension and anticipation.

Conflict- An audience is entertained by anticipating a resolution to the conflict.