

DCC CAFÉ WEEKLY

Magic Cellar is South Africa's first 3D animated children's show

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Every so often a story comes along that you just have to write about. This is one of those stories.

I recently heard about a South African children's show that started airing March 25 of this year, called Magic Cellar. In many ways this is a typical children's show: each episode is a unique story, built to keep the little buggers from running around and causing havoc. At the end, there is always a moral lesson.

But there are also many things that are not at all typical about this show. For one, each story is lifted from native South African tradition. In fact, most of the stories come from oral interviews of chiefs from South African tribes.

There is one more thing that is also very untypical of Magic Cellar, and it is the reason that I have chosen to write about it: it is animated in 3D, the first of its kind from South Africa; in fact, it is the first of its kind from the entire continent of Africa. To be fair, saying that this was entirely an African endeavor would be disingenuous: it was co-produced by Canadian firm Chocolate Moose Media Inc. (The South African firm that produced Cellar is Morula Pictures, located in Johannesburg).

The episodes were made almost entirely in Maya. Each character was modeled to look like the children in Africa. To be certain of not excluding any race that has ever lived on, visited, or thought of the continent, the show features a child of every race.

It doesn't feature the best looking animated characters ever. However, each character is pleasantly simplistic. I was able to get my hands on an episode, and it was captivating. Certainly this will be able to hold the attention of youngsters all over South Africa, while transmitting important folklore and moral messages.

As of its first broadcast, the show was available in English, Sesotho, Afrikaans and isiZulu, the four most spoken languages in South Africa. Eventually the show will aim to make it available in all 11 official South African languages, which would make the show accessible to children all over the country.

Finally, children of Africa will have a television show with characters that look and talk like they do. It's always great to hear about such positive uses of 3D animation software.

This also shows the power of the "democratization" of 3D animation tools. Now they are cheap and usable enough for countries all over the world to use them to great

success. Hopefully there will be much more country-specific, homegrown 3D animation in years to come. As the experience with Japanese “anime” shows, when form of animation spreads globally, everyone is enriched by its products.

For more information, visit

<http://www10.dcccafe.com/goto.php?http://www.magiccellar.tv>.