



Teek and Tom Explore Planet Earth Bonus Episode: Behind the Scenes of Teek and Tom

TRANSCRIPT

Michael Pai

Hi guys, my name is Mike Pai and I'm an animator on NOAA's Climate Alive Teek and Tom animated series. And today I'm here to pull back the curtain and give you a little behind the scenes look at how we create an animated series like this and all the science and silliness of the magic that goes on. So won't you join me?

Teek

Let's go!

Michael Pai

Alright, let's get started. Usually after we get a script, we go right into pre-production and we start making these concept drawings and we do a lot of pre-production work. Right here we have model sheets of Teek. You can see these character poses that we've done and these are passed out to the animators to keep the models consistent across the animation.

Fun fact, Teek was actually named Ziggy before, but the animation business is very collaborative and everything is up for debate as long as it's going to make the animation story better.

Here on screen we have the storyboards, which is arguably the most important phase in an animation. On the bottom left you can see the final picture, contrasted with the storyboards. Talk about change—at this phase we're constantly swapping out different visuals to make the story better. But you can see that it's almost shot for shot the same because that's when we nailed down the story.

Over here we see a part of the character rigging process. After we've created the characters, like this is Teek done in Illustrator, we bring it into a program like Character Animator where we can add bones and make it into a puppet and you can see me at the top right acting out the facial expressions and whatnot. So these puppets are passed along to other animators that can then do their parts. So the work is very front-end loaded where we do a lot of the building characters and then the acting later is done by the animators.

And over here we have the third character in the trio, BARY, which is Teek's spaceship / companion. BARY's a little bit more complicated because we had to have exteriors of BARY,

and interiors of BARY when Teek and Tom are sitting inside of BARY. Over here you can see that we have a bunch of cameras just filming a kind of swim cycle of BARY. So, we're able to get the mundane animation out of the way. And so we have time to focus on the more complicated shots. And same thing for the LCD here. I just drew a bunch of different ones and we're able to kind of make a fake 3D. And over here you can actually see the Maya version of BARY, the more dynamic version where we're able to manipulate BARY in a way where it's not just a regular animated cycle. So you have to actually put some acting into it.

On screen now is a process of how I generate most of the backgrounds. This one was a still for one of the scenes, so it has Teek and Tom in it as well. But as you noticed, I approach it like I'm painting on canvas. I'll start with very, very light colors, muted colors, and I'll start to fill in the details, finer details. And you can see me doing a light trace of Teek and then going over what we call the cleanup process. Here the painting process is much like real animation or traditional animation where I would create another layer and just start painting the color underneath that layer. And here's the finished scene where BARY's kind of like throwing shade on Tom for making a generic castle.

And last but not least, I kind of wanted to end on a quick sketch of Teek, because you know what, ultimately this is where it all starts, you know, putting that first pencil to paper. And you know, even though this is not pencil, I'm drawing on a tablet monitor, a lot of techniques are the same. You build it with constructs, and you know, you just start off simple. And most important thing is to have fun with it. If you like it, you sign your name and if you don't, just control Z or crumple your paper and start all over. It's practice, practice, practice.

Well, that's it. I hope you had fun on this behind the scenes look at our Teek and Tom series. Thanks for joining me and I hope you guys enjoyed it as much as we did creating it. Thank you.

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