

Beat: Entertainment

## George Pal, the father of Puppetoons

### He was close friends with Walt Disney

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**USPA NEWS** - The Hungarian Hollywood Council "" a widely accepted Hungarian civil organization keeping the memories of very famous Hollywood filmmakers born in Hungary - held its next event in the Eastern Hungarian town of Cegléd.

Cegléd, a town of 40 thousands is the hometown of George Pal, a Hungarian born animator owner of a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, several times Oscar-winner, father of Puppetoons and the creator of the "Pal-methods": stop motion and replacement animation. February 1st, the birthday of George Pal witnessed a great event in the Town Filmtheatre where the Mayor of the town, Mr László Takács opened the memorial day of George Pal.

He underlined that Cegléd, Pal's birthplace is very proud of having this extraordinary great filmmaker as its "žson". Ambassador Balázs Bokor, former Hungarian Consul General in Los Angeles, the President of the Hungarian Hollywood Council in his speech praised the father of Puppetoons and underlined that Pal until his death was very proud of his Hungarian roots. Bokor delivered a lecture on the life and achievements of George Pal presenting some films made by the important filmmaker.

Born György Pál Marczincsak in Hungary in the town of Cegléd in 1908, George Pal was one of the most respected names in science fiction and fantasy. He studied in Budapest and graduated at the Academy of Arts with a degree in Architecture when he was 20 years old in 1928. Until he married Elisabeth "Zsoka" Grandjean he worked for the Hunnia Film of Budapest where Mr. Pal drew lobby posters and created embellished titles for silent movies.

He also quickly learned the craft of motion picture cartooning. Moving across Europe and eventually to the United States, Pal became a pioneer of stop-motion animation with his Puppetoons. At this time, his friend Walter Lantz helped him obtain American citizenship. The president of Paramount Pictures' New York office, saw one of Pal's Puppetoon films at a party. He was so impressed by it that he contacted Pal and offered him a contract to make them for Paramount, either in New York or at their animation studio in Florida.

From 1941 to 1947, he created more than 40 Puppetoon films, and received a special Academy Award in 1943. His studio staffers included Willis H. O'Brien, Ray Harryhausen, Wah Chang, and Gene Warren. He was also close friends with animation producer, Walter Lantz, as well as film pioneer, Walt Disney. These "toons" were made with beautifully-carved wooden puppets, usually using Pal's invented "replacement technique", which involved a separate puppet (or puppet part) for each motion, rather than hinged parts.

A single walking sequence, for instance, could involve 12 pairs of legs for one character. During the peak of Puppetoons, an average feature would use 9,000 puppets. Crazy? Maybe... but the effect is spectacular, and it has many benefits in common with computer animation (such as changeable perspectives and unlimited re-use of a finished model) which is only gaining real strength almost 50 years later.

The novel techniques Pal and his team developed lent themselves well to films dependent on visual effects, and his productions of DESTINATION MOON and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE both won Special Effects Oscars. For a generation of postwar American kids, such images as the destruction of Los Angeles' City Hall by Martian spaceships in THE WAR OF THE WORLDS were burned indelibly into memory.

With 1958's TOM THUMB, Pal took a seat in the director's chair to indulge a fondness for fantasy that would later lead to THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM and 7 FACES OF DR. LAO. The fairy-tale magic of these films illuminates one of Pal's most famous works, THE TIME MACHINE, whose framing device "" H.G. Wells recounting his adventures to skeptical friends "" gives the story the feel of a fable. Whether through time or space, George Pal took moviegoers on journeys to worlds of boundless imagination.

The Hungarian Hollywood Council will make all its efforts to introduce the results, success and achievements of George Pal in Hungary, putting a special focus on the young generations to make them proud of their internationally appreciated and respected fellow country-men who had become proud Americans while staying proud Hungarians, too. George Pal, the father of Puppetoons was

hailed in a ceremony commemorating his birthday in Hungary

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