

## Will Vinton Studios (Portland)

Written by Marc Spess

Tuesday, 25 May 2010 20:09 - Last Updated Thursday, 18 August 2011 20:53

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Here is a collection of commercials, films and behind the scenes documentaries about Will Vinton Studios. This studio was one of very few studios in America churning out a consistent amount of Claymation work. Claymation is the term Will gave to the process of animating clay and a term that many people use to describe stop motion.

They were without a doubt the best at working with clay figures in the world. Even today's Aardman Animations made of clay do not compare to some of these shots. From morphing to character appeal and animation, the studio was simply the best. Unfortunately some of these clips have audio that is out of sync with the animation.

Here are two documentaries, a studio tour (from [Kevin MacLean](#)) and an interview with Theresa Drilling detailing some of the happenings at the studio.

{youtube}h7DSqcx\_faA{/youtube}

{youtube}hd\_U\_VU1igl{/youtube}

{youtube}1VsoqbZd7g4{/youtube}

{youtube}YXD0\_yzVGUY{/youtube}

Here is an early Claymation documentary before Will Vinton became famous for his California Raisins.

{youtube}hAFSu8rUiHI{/youtube}

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{youtube}Wbc5Nc4GQ5c{/youtube}

After Michael Jackson saw the California Raisins, he wanted to become one. So the studio made a life cast reference of his face for the animators and talked about how they could make it happen. Here was the result.

{youtube}Kka0jDxzzQo{/youtube}

After Michael Jackson got involved, the studio was headed for the moon with the popularity of the Raisins. They were merchandising all sorts of games, toys, t-shirts and gadgets around them. Then they decided to make two TV specials. Something that was big back in the 80's and 90's. They were called Meet the Raisins and Raisins Sold Out. The Raisins were also animated in a Christmas special in 1986.

{youtube}9ld\_zlbrz18{/youtube}

{youtube}ebS3ZVA5xNo{/youtube}

{youtube}xrFqVXGuyOc{/youtube}

Dominoes Pizza also tried to gain popularity by using a clay mascot called The Noid. It was a huge success, everyone knew this character from many hours of late night air time.

{youtube}Str8GOI-iYA{/youtube}

Kentucky Fried Chicken also jumped on the bandwagon hoping that the studio could help them sell more chicken. They ended up making many ads for them such as this one:

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{youtube}tcSY2T2OYHs{/youtube}

The studio thrived off of odd jobs. They allowed their animators to use the equipment for free to make personal projects. One of those that became popular was Mr Resistor.

{youtube}t-b\_LXBquxk{/youtube}

"This five minute claymation sequence, realized by Will Vinton, is an excerpt from Come Back Little Shiksa, second episode of the fourth season of Moonlighting."

{youtube}-Gf9HEIAumg{/youtube}

The studio itself still exists, creating feature films like Coraline more recently under the name [L aika](#)

. During the early 2000's Vinton himself was removed from the studio due to financial problems and allegations of poor management. Once the studio became public (on the stock exchange) Vinton lost most of his shares to the CEO of Nike (

[Phil Knight](#)

) who took over as head owner. Essentially saving the studio from bankruptcy and giving all the local artists a place to work and animate. For more information on the history of the studio

[go here](#)

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