

## Rats and love rule at the Computer Animation Festival

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Animated shorts were as varied as the countries they came from at the Computer Animation Festival held concurrently with Siggraph 2006 this week. Over 75 films were included in the festival.

The Best of Show winner of the festival was the amazingly realistic "One Rat Short," by Alex Weil of Charlex. He told the story of a city rat who follows a small Cheetos bag only to find true love with an imprisoned white lab rat. The mingling of the rat's textured world of fur and city grit with the sleek shiny lab of white and silver robots made for two very different looks in one short.

Many of the films had no dynamically nameable plot, but were just plain cool. "Doll Face" showed a material girl struggling in a mechanical world with dire consequences, while "Carlitopolis" demonstrated that there is more than one way to kill a rat and put him back together. "My Date From Hell," a collaborative effort out of Germany, showed the problem with being an overweight middle-aged devil incarnate looking to settle down.

"Tread Softly" by Heebok Lee of Carnegie Mellon University used the W. B. Yeats poem "He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven" as its script for a visual exploration of love. A modern woman in a kimono is interwoven with visual representations of the artist's feelings toward her. Viewers are taken from the grandeur of a mountain scene that quickly becomes a passage for goldfish to a flowery world of apple blossoms and beyond as Lee plays with perspective and texture to convey emotion.

Each screening in the main venue kicked off with a kitschy audience participation routine sanctioned by the Ohio Art Company, in which reflective paddles given to the audience were used to control the world's largest Etch A Sketch.

Posted by Candace Lombardi