



## TESTING MYTHS Q&A



Testing is a hot button issue in animation and everyone has an opinion about it. Many of us have taken tests over the course of our careers, though the general consensus is that we'd rather get a job on the merits of our past work and hard-earned reputations. It would be nice to banish testing altogether, but the fact is that "skill evaluations" have been around for as long as the animation industry has existed. But that doesn't mean that we need to accept testing as a necessary evil.

Many of our members are working in positions where they have to make hiring decisions. Showrunners, directors, storyboard supervisors, art directors and other managers play a crucial role in deciding who gets hired on a production, and unfortunately quite a few of them don't realize that they do not necessarily need to hand out a test in order to find the right person for the job. Too many members assume that testing is the only way to go, or that they're expected to test when there is a job at stake. Testing has become a habit, but habits can be broken! If we all take a more thoughtful and deliberate approach to hiring, we can change the culture of testing in the industry from the top down.

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**THE PEGBOARD** is published monthly by The Animation Guild  
and Affiliated Optical Electronic and Graphic Arts Local 839 IATSE,  
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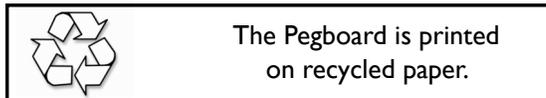
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IATSE LOCAL 839

Engaged members and leadership at the Guild have been working on the issue of testing for the last few years. Members have been urged to send in tests that they've been given, and many of them have pulled through and turned over skill evaluation assignments that range from what we might call "reasonable" to monster jobs that would require days (if not weeks) to complete. The Testing Committee has discussed ways to reach out to members and educate them on the perils, problems and sometimes even the merits of testing so that we can all make informed decisions if we're faced with the task of creating or handing out a test if we're in a position to hire, or taking a test if we're looking for a job.

In the course of this work, Testing Committee Chairperson Danny Ducker has collected a list of myths about testing in the industry. Former committee chair Paula Spence answers these hypothetical questions in an effort to dispel those myths.

**Question: Why is testing considered bad now? That's how I got into the industry!**

**Answer:** I actually got my first job in animation by doing a test, and since I work as a manager (and hirer) of artists I have mixed feelings about the issue. Everyone has a different opinion about testing, and not everyone thinks it's bad. It's usually the people in the position of seeking a job who don't like the idea of doing work for free in order to convince someone that they're the right person. Unfortunately, many members in the position to make hiring decisions assume that they're expected to use testing to find the best person for the job, so they go along with the idea of handing out tests, and in order to cast a wide net, they sometimes hand out *too many* tests when there are only a limited number of positions to be won. We'd like hiring managers to think twice before testing job applicants because there are better ways to find talented people.

**Q: Is unpaid testing even allowed under our union's contract?**

**A:** Sideletter J in our contract notes the concern from our Local (expressed during a past bargaining session) that some tests are excessive, and acknowledges the agreement that such skill evaluations should require only a reasonable amount of work to complete and should be related to hiring. We know from industry history that testing has been around for a long time, but NOTHING in our contract says it's required.

**Q: I was just asked to take a test for an open position. Do I have to take the test in order to be considered?**

**A:** You don't have to take a test in order to be considered for a position if you apply through the same application channel as everyone else. When the hiring team looks at your application, you're being considered for that position. Unfortunately, no one but that hiring team can decide if an applicant will advance in the consideration process, test or no test.

**Q: How do I know if a test I've been asked to do is considered "abusive"? What should I do when asked to take a test like that?**

**A:** Do you think the test would take longer than four to eight hours to complete? If so, that doesn't sound reasonable, does it? Decide whether or not you want to do the work and share your thoughts (professionally) with the people who are asking you to do it. It's okay to say something like, "I can only spare four hours to give you an additional example of my work, so I may not complete the entire test. If you'd like to pay me for my time, I'd be happy to do it all and bill you for the hours I work."

**Q: What are some alternatives to taking a test if I still want the job?**

**A:** If you're asked to take a test, you can offer to show more examples of your existing work, give the hiring manager links to view your projects in completed form, and share your resume and professional references. It's always a good idea to be courteous and clearly explain your reasons for not taking the test. One good reason? "I'm too busy to take an unpaid test because I'm working on other projects. If you'd like to give me a small paid assignment, I can make time in my schedule."

**Q: If I don't take this test, I don't think I'll be considered for the job and I really need the work. How can I protect myself?**

**A:** Decide how much time you want to put into the work and then stick to that. If you choose to complete only part of the test, you can point that out politely to the employer and tell them why. A thoughtful and professional message can actually make you a more attractive candidate!

**Q: I'm scared that if I don't go "above and beyond" on this test, I won't stand out from the crowd and the job will go to someone else. What am I supposed to do?**

**A:** Follow the test directions carefully so that you can give the employer exactly what they're asking for with a reasonable amount of work. Don't think that doubling the number of storyboard panels that they ask for is a good idea because you may be showing that you can't follow directions or work economically. What you show with your test is what you will be expected to do every day if you get the job, so be responsible and honest!

**Q: I heard studios are required by the union to post open positions, even if they already know who they want for the job. Is that true?**

**A:** There may be state laws that require employers to post job openings and consider applicants outside the studio, but there is nothing in the Guild's contract that requires those employers to waste anyone's time with a test or by pretending to consider others for a job when they already know who they want to hire. The union can't control hiring!

**Q: I'm a director/supervisor/showrunner and I'm being asked to make and distribute tests to staff our show. Do I have other options?**

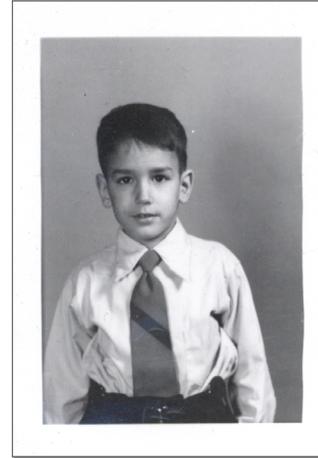
**A:** YES! First, tell your Producer that you'd rather not ask anyone to do unpaid work to prove their worth when there are other tools (portfolios, resumes, professional references) to help you make a decision. If using a test is absolutely necessary, push to make it a PAID assignment so that your fellow members are respectfully compensated for their time and effort, and then construct a meaningful test that will show you what you need to know and that will take only a reasonable amount of time to complete – no more than four hours, if possible, and never more than eight. If you're in a position to make hiring decisions, you've got the power to influence the way your production and your studio does it!

**Q: I believe that the culture of unpaid, abusive testing is a problem, but I don't know how to change it! What can I do?**

**A:** Three things: 1) Send complete copies of any recent test to the Guild (e-mail [tests@tag839.org](mailto:tests@tag839.org)); 2) Join the Testing Committee and help us discuss strategies for changing the way tests are used in the industry; and 3) Talk to your coworkers and managers about the idea of NOT using tests when making hiring decisions. Sometimes it just takes one thoughtful and brave person to point out that testing need not be a requirement for finding the right person for the job.

**MEMBER PERSPECTIVE**  
**ROBERT ALVAREZ**

**WHAT THE  
GOLDEN AWARDS  
MEAN TO ME**



This year the Guild will reintroduce the Golden Awards. This is the recognition of achievement that the Guild presents to its members for 50 years of service to the craft. This award is an opportunity for all Guild members to say congratulations and thank you to the honorees.

We all start our careers with great ambition and enthusiasm but not ever imagining longevity. Somehow we managed to survive. By surviving, we find ourselves standing on the shoulders of those women and men who inspired us and built this community we call animation. It is fitting that the Guild acknowledges those who gave 50 years of service to our community. The honorees give back to those that follow inspiration, a purpose, a goal to be achieved.

For most of our members the history of this award is not well known or even understood. The plaque on the award states “For 50 years of service to the craft”. The significance of that will perhaps have a different meaning to each honoree other than the 50-year benchmark. But what does it actually signify?

For me, the award represents many things. It restores memories of events, work and people from the past – my first job, meeting and working with so many of the animation greats, late nights carving out the footage, deadlines, friends and coworkers who are gone but always remembered, disappointments, joy in success, favorite productions, the good feeling of making it to this point in my career. Time seems to slip away and then suddenly you realize that you’ve been on a very long journey in animation, one that has lasted 50 or more years.

The Guild would like for all those who are eligible for this award to be recognized. They’ve narrowed the field for consideration to members who may have been working in the industry since about 1970. Online

questionnaires have been sent to those members who might be reached by e-mail, and letters sent to those for whom there is only a mailing address. There are a few members whose records at the Guild are not up-to-date – contact information may no longer be current – and some of our older members may not have access to e-mail or a computer to complete the questionnaire to determine eligibility. If you think of someone who might qualify please notify the Guild so that those members can be honored at the Golden Awards this fall. And if you happen to know one of our 40- to 50-year industry veterans personally, please reach out to them to say hello and ask if they're aware of the current effort to reach them. The Guild needs to hear from them in order to honor them.

We work in this craft because of our great love of the art of animation. Let us join together to celebrate and acknowledge those who have achieved a great accomplishment.



*Robert Alvarez (center) at one of the first Golden Awards ceremonies in the 1980s, with friends Tim Walker (left) and Mark Kausler (right).*

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***Please get in touch with the Guild office if you have contact information for a potential Golden Awards nominee. If you have received a link to the online questionnaire, we need to hear from you by the end of June so that you can be honored at an event in the fall! Call Brooke Keesling at (818) 845-7500 for help in determining eligibility.***

# MEET OUR NEW FIELD REPRESENTATIVES

With almost 4,700 artists, writers and technicians under Local 839's jurisdiction, the Executive Board determined that our growing membership needs more staff to serve them in the field. Our recent search for a Field Representative yielded several incredibly qualified and great candidates, including Steve Kaplan – formerly TAG's Organizer – and Leslie Simmons, who will now work alongside Steve to ensure our members are getting the support they need. Meet Steve and Leslie here!

## Steve Kaplan

Many of you already know Steve Kaplan. He worked at the Local between 2010 and 2015. He is also on the Animation Guild's Executive Board, serves as a Trustee and participated in contract negotiations.

What you may not know about him? That he is a zythophile (look it up!) and brews his own beer with his wife, Violet. They share three children – Carlos (21), Ethan (9) and Zachary (7) – live in North Hollywood and love visiting family in Santa Barbara.



*Steve and his wife, Violet, at the 2019 Member Party at Clifton's.*

Now, after spending three years at the IA organizing visual effects and non-traditional motion picture and television production work, he returns back to Local 839 as our new field representative. We spoke with the Guild's newest employee to learn more about his role.



### **What will you be doing day to day?**

I'll be interfacing with the membership on a daily basis. Jason is an effective business agent because he's increasing engagement, increasing operations and enforcing contracts but that has kept him in the office. I will be out at the studios, engaging the membership, answering questions, and addressing workplace concerns. I'm also eager to continue organizing to keep non-union studios from undercutting our contract's workplace conditions and minimum wages.

### **Where will members see you?**

I will be going desk-to-desk to introduce myself, handing out business cards, and asking if you have any concerns. I am an additional resource for you and I am happy to answer any questions you might have – from health benefits to the finer points of contractual language. If you don't feel comfortable chatting at your studio, I'm available by phone (818-395-4346) and email ([steve.kaplan@tag839.org](mailto:steve.kaplan@tag839.org)).

### **How will you engage writers or individuals who may not always be at a studio?**

There needs to be more of an effort on our part to engage writers and other off-site professionals working under our agreement to ensure they feel part of our union. If you don't work at a studio location, reach out and let's get a cup of coffee!

### **How does a field representative help us organize more effectively?**

Through the regular visits at studios that have signed our agreement, I will be able to build a rapport with the membership, which will be useful when members are interested in organizing a non-union studio they may be working at in the future.

## **Leslie Simmons**

### **Tell us a little bit about your professional experience.**

I started my career as a journalist working for various print and online publications over the course of 14 years, including several L.A. Times community newspapers, Inside.com and The Hollywood Reporter. I specialized in legal reporting for most of my career but for the last couple years while at THR, I also covered the industry's unions and guilds as well as two studios, Fox and Sony, as a film reporter.

In 2008, I took a position working for the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) as National Manager of Communications. I was later promoted to National Assistant Director of Communications & Marketing for AFTRA and then the merged SAG-AFTRA.

Working for a large national union like AFTRA introduced me to the other side of the labor movement and I quickly loved the work the union did on behalf of its members. I love advocating for the rights of members! At AFTRA, I worked on several organizing campaigns including those for broadcasters, music video dancers and the big one – the merger with the Screen Actors Guild to form SAG-AFTRA.

In 2015, I left SAG-AFTRA and spent a year consulting for a variety of organizations and labor unions, including the Teamsters, Firefighters Local 1014 and Change-to-Win/Port Truck Drivers campaign.

In 2016, I became the Communications and Field Services Director for the California Association of Professional Employees (CAPE, AFL-CIO), a public sector union representing professionals working for the County of Los Angeles, where I built a communications program, as well as bolstered and upgraded their Delegates program (similar to Shop Stewards).

In addition to the work I've done with labor unions, I also teach at the weeklong Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor School. The labor school is one of the last of its kind, providing education for union members and staff, from rank-and-file to elected officers. I teach the Communications course, focusing on how we talk about unions to membership, as well as the public. The course also focuses on utilizing social media and various apps and programs for effective education and outreach.

## **What will you be doing day-to-day at TAG?**

As a Field Representative for TAG, my role is to provide outreach, support and education to our members in the field. My daily routine ranges from studio visits to organizing meetings and negotiations. Along with fellow Field Representative Steve Kaplan, we are here to help TAG members in any way we can, whether it's a question about the 401k plan or a workplace issue. We're here to help!

## **How do you hope to help support TAG members in the industry?**

Meeting members face-to-face is the most important part of the Field Representative's duties. I was a member of two labor unions while I was earning my BA in journalism and in the beginning of my journalism career. I never met one union rep or had anyone from the union visit me in the workplace or send me any communication about member benefits, issues, negotiations, etc. – and these were big national unions! Pulling from my personal experience, I know and understand the importance of providing all the support possible to TAG members and visiting work sites. It's also a two-way street when it comes to communications with TAG members, so they should not be shy in contacting me or Steve!

There is obviously a bit of learning curve coming into the Animation side of the industry, as opposed to my union experience working with broadcasters, recording artists and performers. But I look forward to learning about the work TAG members do and keeping track of the trends and changes in technology that may affect them. As I'm just starting with TAG, I'm hoping members are open to educating me on the work that they do so that I can better represent them!



*Leslie enjoys LA community events!*

## **Tell us a little bit about yourself personally?**

I'm a native Angeleno, born and raised in the San Fernando Valley. Burbank is a second home to me as it's my dad's hometown and I've lived here now for 19 years.

Although I don't have a background in Animation, I like to say that Animation built our family here in Los Angeles. My grandfather was a lead violinist in the Disney Orchestra going back to the *Silly Symphonies* through *Bambi* (his last film before he died in 1942) and an oil painter active in the Laguna Beach arts scene. He was a member of AFM Local 47 so unions also built our family! Plus, my brother is an artist for Imaginering so I grew up watching his creativity blossom!

I've participated in 13 marathons, several more half marathons and 5ks but due to injuries, I now just enjoy hiking our beautiful mountains here and abroad. I love traveling!

I also believe deeply in giving back. For 27 years I was a volunteer zookeeper for EFBC's Feline Conservation Center. I now volunteer for Downtown Dog Rescue, supporting their Skid Row Pet Resource Center and monthly low-income pet clinic in South LA. I also volunteer when I can for the California State Parks Foundation and Mountains Restoration Trust.

I'm a die-hard Los Angeles Galaxy fan and season ticket holder, as well as a fan of Manchester United.

I'm owned by two dogs (Ming-Mei and Kyra), a cat (Maximus Thundercat) and a red eared slider turtle (Snurtle).

## **How can TAG members contact you?**

By email, I'm at [leslie.simmons@tag839.org](mailto:leslie.simmons@tag839.org) or by phone 818-845-7500 or by cell phone 747-238-0287.

*These articles have been reprinted from the weekly eBlast This Week @ TAG. Sign up for emails at <https://animationguild.org/about-the-guild/email-list/>.*

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[actorsfund.org/workshops/every-artist-insured-la-2](https://actorsfund.org/workshops/every-artist-insured-la-2)

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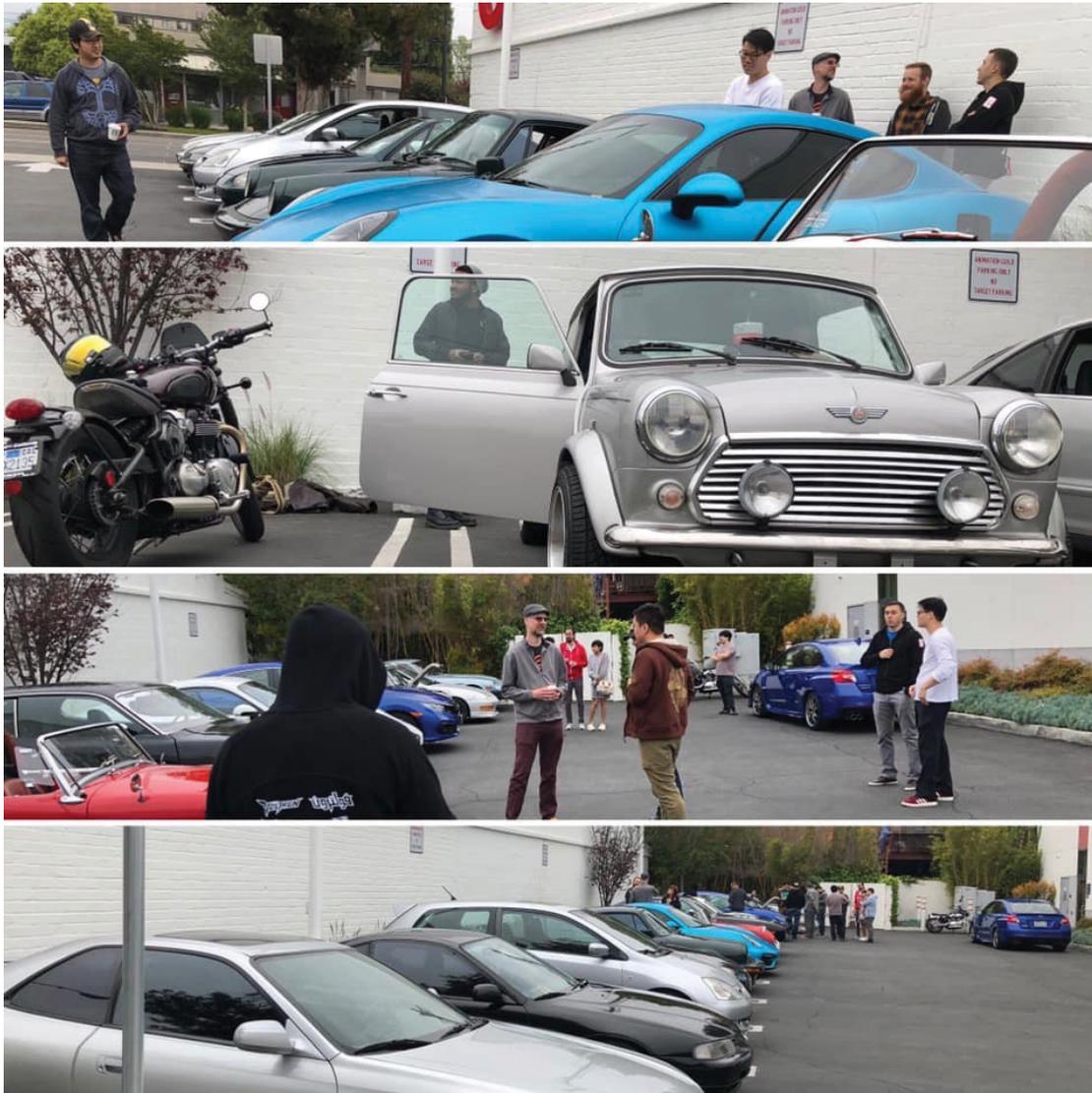
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# COFFEE & CARS



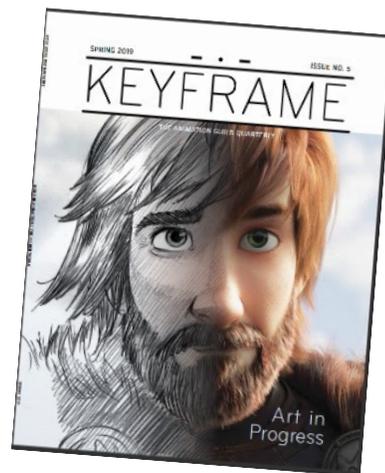
*Members enjoy Coffee & Cars at the Animation Guild parking lot on April 20th. Photograph montage by Fill Marc Sagadraca.*

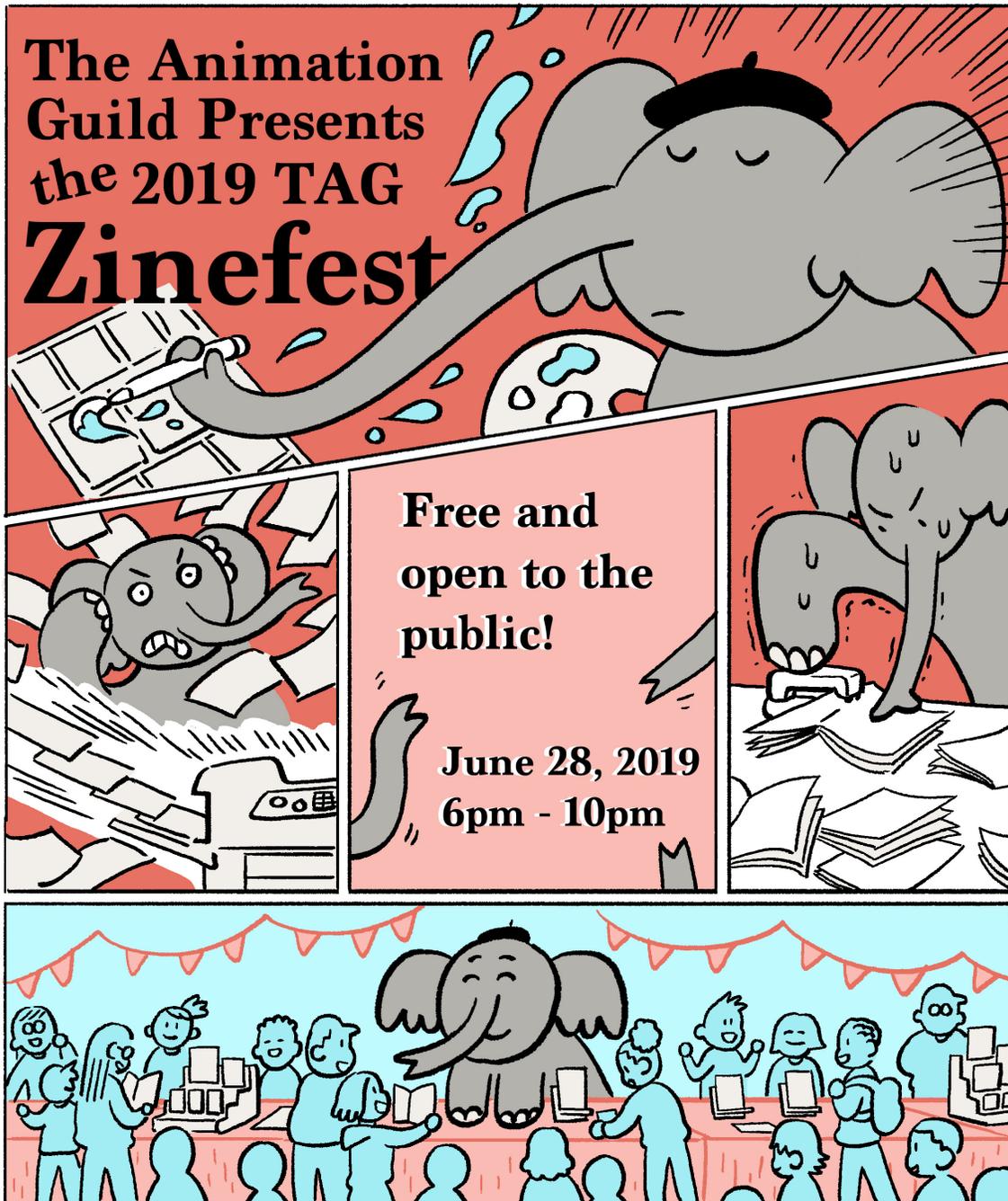


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# **THE CARTOONIST GOLF TOURNAMENT IS BACK!**



**JUNE 2ND**

**AT THE LOS VERDES GOLF CLUB  
IN BEAUTIFUL PALOS VERDES**

**GOLF! LUNCH! CASH PRIZES!**

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# IN MEMORIAM

Assistant Animator and children's book author ***Diana LeBost*** passed away on April 23, 2019 after a long battle with cancer. Though much of her career had been at DreamWorks, she also spent time at Film Roman, Ken Duncan Studios and Turner Feature, among other studios. She recently did cleanup animation on *Mary Poppins Returns* and was proud of her work on *The Iron Giant*.

***Jack de Mello*** passed away on April 28, 2019 at the age of 102. He was a composer for Hanna-Barbera, and is best known for his synthesis of Hawaiian melodies and lush, contemporary orchestral music. He composed music for various Hanna-Barbera Productions' animated series including *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons*.

***Chris Reccardi*** passed away suddenly on May 2, 2019 at the age of 54. He worked in multiple roles – designer, storyboard artist, visual development artist, writing, director, producer and musician – on animated series and feature films over the course of his three-decade career, perhaps most notably on *The Ren & Stimpy Show*, *The Powerpuff Girls* and *Samurai Jack*. Chris also enjoyed his work as an illustrator, fine artist and musician, and had been married to fellow artist Lynne Naylor for 25 years.



# In June at Gallery 839



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CGMA ALUMNI

### OPENING DATE & COCKTAIL PARTY

June 8, 2019 Saturday  
5:30 PM to 8:00 PM

### ART DIRECTION WORKSHOP

June 8, 2019  
10:00 AM-5:00 PM

### GALLERY AND WORKSHOP

The Animation Guild Gallery 839  
1105 N. Hollywood Way Burbank CA 91505

**Regular Gallery Hours 8:30 am to 5 pm**

# UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE ANIMATION GUILD

**May 19th** – TAG839 Free Portfolio Review Day

**May 27th** – Contract Holiday: Memorial Day

**May 28th** – TAG Tuesday! Wear your TAG T-shirt to work.

**May 28th** – General Membership Meeting  
*(Refreshments at 6:30, meeting starts at 7 pm)*

**June 3rd** – AAI Summer 2019 Semester starts

**June 7th-9th** – 2019 IATSE District 2 Convention

**June 7th** – Gallery 839 New Show Opening 6-9 pm

**June 13th** – Lunch and Learn: Meet TAG's Field Reps

**June 25th** – TAG Tuesday! Wear your TAG T-shirt to work.

**June 28th** – TAG ZineFest

**July 1st** – MPIPHP Open Enrollment starts

**July 4th** – Contract Holiday: Independence Day



*Members enjoyed food, fun and friends at the TAG Member Mixer on April 1st at Golden Road Brewery. Don't miss out on the next mixer – watch your e-mail for information!*

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