



Killer role

John Lithgow soars in his serial-killer role on Showtime, **E2**.



STRANGE BUT TRUE

By Bill & Rich Sones

What bird flies faster than a jet?

Q • Birds aren't suddenly flying faster than they used to, so how did we just get a new "fastest bird," looking like "a little magenta fireball dropping out of the sky"?

A • With a new mode of speed analysis using not feet or meters per second but body lengths per second (blps), says Susan Milius in "Science News."

During courtship displays, the male Anna's hummingbird dives from on high, whizzing past a female so fast his tail feathers chirp in the wind. As he pulls up to avoid crashing, he experiences forces greater than nine times the force of gravity, more than any known vertebrate stunt flier outside a cockpit.

When zoologist Chris Clark of the University of California, Berkeley, analyzed the dives, he found that, adjusted for body length, the hummingbird's speed reached 385 blps, easily topping the 200 blps of the peregrine falcon.

"A fighter jet with its after burners on reaches 150 blps and a space shuttle screaming down through the atmosphere hits 207 blps."

Q • Long before there was a Bing Crosby, how was the famous 18th-century composer Ludwig van Beethoven given to what today has been called the "White Christmas effect"?

A • When researchers experimented with the popular Crosby song back in the 1960s, they found some test subjects reported hearing it at lower and lower volumes, in some cases even when it was never turned on, says Oliver Sacks in "Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain."

One time, a highly musical friend of Sacks reported enjoying a favorite Mozart record, then discovered when he went to turn it over that he had never put it on.

Under proper motivation, it seems, the mind will fill in blank auditory spaces or silent gaps embedded in familiar songs, even detectable by functional MRI scans.

Such deliberate mental imagery is clearly crucial to professional musicians. It arguably saved the creative life and sanity of Beethoven after he had gone deaf and could no longer hear any music except in his mind; perhaps the loss of normal auditory input even intensified his musical imagery, with his auditory cortex becoming hypersensitive.

"And though voluntary musical imagery may not be easily available to the relatively unmusical, virtually everyone has involuntary musical imagery."

Q • Can you spell out the difference between a wolf and a "woof"? Can we even be sure they're not the same species?

A • Dogs are descended from wolves, probably the gray wolf, and some scientists argue that because dogs and wolves do interbreed, they shouldn't be considered separate species at all, says Pat Shipman in "American Scientist."

Although the ability to produce fertile offspring suggests varieties of a single species, the reality is more nuanced: "We cannot know whether dog-wolf hybrids will thrive and survive, or die out, in the long run."

Certainly distinguishing a dog from a wolf is something we expect to be able to do. Domestic dogs are wildly variable in size and shape, thanks to several hundred years of selective breeding.

Their most telling feature is the snout, shorter and wider than wolves' snouts. Only a few breeds such as Irish wolfhounds with extremely elongated, slender noses, surpass wolves in "snoutiness."

Also, domesticated dogs are genetically disposed to seek out human attention and accept human leadership; wolves are not.

Probably in the distant past, adopted cubs that were aggressive were cast out, while the more agreeable ones were fed and kept around for their keen noses and hunting skills. From wolf to woof under the watchful human eye, but not (we trust) under the same roof!

Q • When a 40-year-old woman becomes pregnant, how old is the fertilized egg?

A • All or almost all female mammals are born with their full complement of eggs, so the egg in question is 40 years old — the likely reason birth abnormalities increase with the age of the mother, says Chris McGowan in "Diatoms to Dinosaurs: The Size and Scale of Living Things."

Send STRANGE questions to brothers Bill and Rich at Strangetrue@cs.com

A Berkshire Film Heritage



Photos by Darren Vanden Berge / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Eugene Mamut and his wife, Irina Borisova, pose for a portrait in their AniMagic Museum in Lee, which showcases Berkshire talent in special effects.

Making movie MAGIC

Lee couple create a showcase for Berkshire talent in special effects

By Lisa La Plante
Special to The Eagle

They never dreamed of a career in the movie industry. They never aspired to be members of Hollywood's elite.

But somehow Ukraine natives and now Lee residents Eugene Mamut and Irina Borisova found their way to that level of success.

It was quite by accident, if you ask them. Mamut is an electrical engineer; Borisova, an artist who studied architecture. Their separate talents landed each of them a place in the creation of special effects and animation for Hollywood films like "Predator (1987)," "Ghost Dad (1990)," and "Dirty Dancing (1987)," as well as small-screen commercials for Burger King, Hallmark and the Michigan lottery.

Still, Mamut's first love remains science, and for Borisova it is art. They've combined their talents to create Animagic, a museum of science and art at 77 Main St. that showcases the work of Berkshire people who have been involved in the making of Hollywood animation and special effects.

Mamut displays his own 1996 Academy Award for his work on creating a camouflage visual effect in "Predator" and an elastic effect in "Ghost Dad" and "9 to 5."

Borisova displays her drawings, sculptures and the clay models used in various television commercials.

The museum is three rooms, the front one facing Main Street has its window and walls filled with toys. Mamut chuckled on a recent tour as he used a "magic wand" to make a



The Academy Award in science and engineering that Mamut won in 1996 for his work on the movie 'Predator' is on display at the museum.



Clay models, above and cutout at top right, were created by Borisova for use in animated television commercials.

ring of paper float through the room. "It's static electricity," he admitted.

A globe, suspended in air, rotates as if on an axle. In fact, it is held in place by a magnet above and a computer below, Mamut said, adding: "This is all about science."

The front room also showcases Borisova's artwork, including drawings, sculptures and an illustrated children's book called "Cats Who Quilt."

In the second room, movie posters line the upper walls, and a "Berkshire Special Effects and Animation Family Tree," like a family tree, shows people in the industry, where they began, how they came together in the Berkshires and where they are now.

Life-like clay models of penguins, a Mr. Potato Head, and a crab, all

ANIMATION, continued on E3



Film Tech night in the Berkshires

What: "Film Tech: An Evening with Eugene Mamut and the Animagic Museum" presented by Valleywood Productions.

When: Monday starting with exhibits from 5:30 to 7 p.m. and a multimedia presentation at 7 p.m. on the history of movie production in the Berkshires.

Guest speakers will be Larry Jackson of Amherst, an independent producer and director; and Tom Gasek; and Diana Walczak of North Adams, who worked with Jeffrey Kleiser to create the special effects for "Spiderman, the Ride" in Florida.

Diana Pearlman, who was the producer of visual effects for the movie "The Matrix," and who is now president of the Berkshire Film Commission, will answer questions.

Where: The Colonial Theatre, 111 South St., Pittsfield.

Tickets: \$15 and \$20 adults; \$10 and \$15 students.

Information: Call (413) 997-4444 or visit www.thecolonialtheatre.org

It's app time — college, not iPhone

By Beth J. Harpaz
Associated Press

If you're throwing around the term "app" a lot but it has nothing to do with iPhones, you must have a high school senior in the family working on a college app.

Application, that is. And while it's stressful for teenagers to deal with college applications in addition to their regular school work, volunteering, clubs, sports and jobs, it can also be stressful for parents.

For those of us who grew up in an era when parents had virtually nothing to do with the college application process, it can even be downright bewildering. Suddenly the family calendar is covered with scribbles about campus tours, standardized test dates, financial aid workshops and application deadlines. Postcards, catalogs and invitations from schools you've never heard of arrive

daily in the mailbox. Clutter in your living room includes a Barron's guide to colleges and an SAT prep book. You may even be getting phone calls from recruiters wondering if you and your child will be attending their open house.

Marie Carr has been through all this three times, and this year she published a book about the process, with her three daughters' help, called "Sending Your Child to College: The Prepared Parent's Operational Manual."

"It's not about nagging," she said. "It's about trying to help them organize and prepare, and scale this big project down into manageable bits."

One approach to keeping track of all the options and deadlines is to create a graph, spreadsheet or folders that you can look at together.

"Kids do really well when they have visuals," she said.

Carr's book has sample checklists and

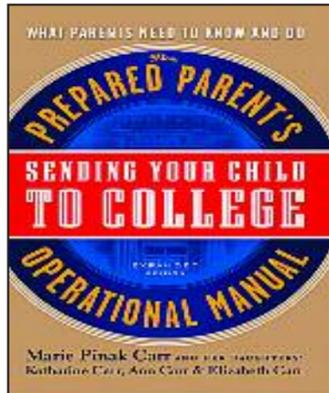
charts that you can use or adapt, but if you're making one up from scratch, be sure to include teacher recommendations, resumes, essays, interviews, test dates, application deadlines and other requirements for each school on the list. Every time a task on the chart is completed, "putting a check in that box can be very rewarding," said Carr.

A wall chart or computer spreadsheet also gives you a neutral way of talking about a looming deadline or an undone task.

"Instead of asking 'Is the resume done, is the resume done,' you can say, 'I want to get this done in a timely fashion. Let's look at the components,'" Carr said. "This way you're not nagging, you're working together."

Be sure to emphasize that money spent on late fees for missed deadlines is

COLLEGE, continued on E3



Cover of "Sending Your Child To College: The Prepared Parent's Operational Manual" by Marie Pinak Carr and her daughters.

Associated Press

What's Playing

In Music: Top 10

Singles

1. "Whatcha Say" Jason DeRulo
2. "Fireflies" Owl City
3. "Empire State of Mind" Jay-Z + Alicia Keys
4. "Down" Jay Sean w. Lil Wayne
5. "Party in the U.S.A." Miley Cyrus
6. "Paparazzi" Lady Gaga
7. "Run This Town" Jay-Z, Rihanna & Kanye West
8. "3" Britney Spears
9. "Bad Romance" Lady Gaga
10. "Jump Then Fall" Taylor Swift

Country Albums

1. "Fearless" Taylor Swift
2. "Southern Voice" Tim McGraw
3. "The Foundation" Zac Brown Band
4. "Lady Antebellum" Lady Antebellum
5. "American Ride" Toby Keith
6. "Revolution" Miranda Lambert
7. "Wide Open" Jason Aldean
8. Soundtrack: "Hannah Montana – The Movie"
9. "Doin' My Thing" Luke Bryan
10. "The List" Rosanne Cash

Albums

1. Soundtrack: "Michael Jackson's This Is It"
2. "Full Circle" Creed
3. "Fearless" Taylor Swift
4. "Soulbook" Rod Stewart
5. "Night Castle" Trans-Siberian Orchestra
6. "If On A Winter's Night..." Sting
7. "Crazy Love" Michael Buble
8. Soundtrack: "The Twilight Saga – New Moon"
9. "Southern Voice" Tim McGraw
10. "The Blueprint 3" Jay-Z

R&B/Hip-Hop Singles

1. "Pretty Wings" Maxwell
2. "Empire State of Mind" Jay-Z + Alicia Keys
3. "Forever" Drake w. Kanye West, Lil Wayne & Eminem
4. "Papers" Usher
5. "Wasted" Gucci Mane w. Plies
6. "I Invented Sex" Trey Songz w. Drake
7. "Bad Habits" Maxwell
8. "Regret" LeToya w. Ludacris
9. "Number One" R. Kelly w. Keri Hilson
10. "Under" Pleasure P

Country Singles

1. "Toes" Zac Brown Band
2. "Welcome to the Future" Brad Paisley
3. "Cowboy Casanova" Carrie Underwood
4. "Need You Now" Lady Antebellum
5. "Only You Can Love Me This Way" Keith Urban
6. "Do I" Luke Bryan
7. "Gettin' You Home (The Black Dress Song)" Chris Young
8. "I'm Alive" Kenny Chesney and Dave Matthews
9. "Fifteen" Taylor Swift
10. "Consider Me Gone" Reba

R&B/Hip-Hop Albums

1. Soundtrack: "Michael Jackson's This Is It" Jay-Z
2. "The Blueprint 3" Brian McKnight
3. "Evolution of a Man" BeBe & CeCe Winans
4. "Still" Triple C's
5. "Custom Cars & Cycles" Whitney Houston
6. "I Look to You" Tech N9ne
7. "K.O.D." Trey Songz
8. "Ready" Maxwell
9. "BLACKsummers'night" Maxwell
10. "So Far Gone (EP)" Drake

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At the Movies

Regal Berkshire Mall 10 (Lanesborough)

- The Fourth Kind** (PG13) 11:40, 2:10, 4:40, 7:20 & 9:40;
Couples Retreat (PG13) 2:35 & 7:45;
Christmas Carol (PG) 11:30, 12, 2, 2:30, 4:30, 5, 7, 7:30, 9:30 & 9:45;
Michael Jackson: This Is It (PG) 12:20, 12:50, 3:30, 4, 6:40, 7:10, 9:05 & 9:35;
Men Who Stare at Goats (R) 11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 7:40 & 9:50;
The Box (PG13) 12:30, 4:10, 6:50 & 9:25;
Step Father (PG13) 12:05 & 5:05;
Paranormal Activity (R) 12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:50 & 9:55;
Where the Wild Things Are (PG) 12:40, 4:20, 6:30 & 9.

Triplex Cinema (Great Barrington)

- The Box** (PG13) 12, 3 & 7;
A Serious Man (PG13) 1:20, 4:20 & 7:20;
The Men Who Stare at Goats (R) 12:30, 3:30 & 7:30;
Coco Before Chanel (PG13) 12:10, 3:10 & 7:10.



Images Cinema (Williamstown)

- Inglorious Basterds** (R) 1:30 & 7;
The Men Who Stare at Goats (R) 4:30.

Canaan (Conn.) Colonial Theatre

- Christmas Carol** (PG) 7;
Couples Retreat (PG13) 7.

At Home: Top 10

Video Rentals

1. "Transformers: Revenge ... Fallen"
2. "The Proposal"
3. "Land of the Lost"
4. "Drag Me to Hell"
5. "Year One"
6. "Ghosts of Girlfriends Past"
7. "Wrong Turn 3: Left for Dead"
8. "Monsters vs. Aliens"
9. "Imagine That"
10. "X-Men Origins: Wolverine"

DVD Sales

1. "Transformers: Revenge ... Fallen"
2. "The Proposal"
3. "Monsters vs. Aliens"
4. "Snow White ... Seven Dwarfs"
5. "Transformers"
6. "Land of the Lost"
7. "X-Men Origins: Wolverine"
8. "Drag Me to Hell"
9. "Wrong Turn 3: Left for Dead"
10. "The Wizard of Oz: 70th Anniv."



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Movie special effects created in Berkshires

ANIMATION from E1

once used in animated commercials, fill a glass case. Borisova created the characters, beginning with sketches and storyboards. She, sometimes working with a team of sculptors, then created the models.

The third room of the museum is the workshop, where visitors, for a fee, can create their own clay models and have them "perform" in a short animated film, which they then get to take home.

These days, Mamut devotes most of his energy to running Animagic and hopes to expand the museum to show off more of Berkshire talent.

Monday night, he will be among a number of presenters talking at the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield about the history of movie production in the Berkshires.

The event, intended as a business networking opportunity, as well as a showcase of local talent, will feature some of Animagic's exhibits in the lobby from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Multi-media presentations will follow at 7 p.m.

Borisova, who said she was "born with a pencil," attended art school in Ukraine beginning at age 10 and later went on to achieve a degree in architecture. But she has never worked as an architect.

Mamut is a scientist at heart and earned a master's degree in electrical engineering.

"I was never interested in movies," he said. "I don't see movies. I don't know actors. For me, it's optics. It's machines. It's computers."

As an electrical engineer, he began designing equipment for

movie production while working at the same movie studio in Kharkov where Borisova was volunteering her talents.

In 1978, Mamut emigrated to the United States and settled in Queens, New York. There he began sending out resumes to electrical engineering companies and movie studios. He got two responses from engineering companies, neither of which interested him, and one from a movie production company, Digi-tal Effects in Manhattan.

The owner, Judson Rosebush, said he didn't have a job to offer, but was interested in learning what Mamut could do, since he had been working on computer-generated movies in Ukraine.

Mamut said his English was so limited at the time that he had to draw pictures of what he was trying to say.

'Don't call us.'

Rosebush referred Mamut to Joel Hynek and Jeff Kleiser, who at the time, were working on visual effects at a EFX Unlimited, another Manhattan production company.

"They said 'Don't call us. We'll call you,'" Mamut remembered, and he left certain there would be no job offer.

The following morning, however, he got a call asking if he would be willing to take a job cleaning film — about the lowest in the movie industry. Not proud, he took it. The first film he worked on was "Blue Lagoon (1980)."

It took about three months before a position opened up in contact printing—transferring the original negatives to film. It was a

job Mamut found scary because, in those days, if an error was made, either by the operator or the machines, the entire film was a loss. And though the job was more important than what he had been doing, it was only one step up from the lowly cleaning position, he said.

It wasn't until Mamut made suggestions that eventually led to the creation of the so-called "elastic effect" in movie imagery that he began to move up in the film industry.

Slit-scan effect

On lunch break one day, he said Kleiser — who would later establish his Kleiser-Walczak special-effects company at Mass MoCA in North Adams — was telling him about a slit-scan effect used in Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)."

The effect of squeezing the image was created, Mamut said, by moving it slowly on an optical scanner instead of leaving it immobile.

"I was amazed," Mamut said.

He proposed to Hynek and Kleiser that the image be moved step-by-step in order to create a different, "elastic" effect.

"They gave me the keys to the studio and said 'Do what you want and we'll see what you can do,'" Mamut said, adding that they granted him full access to all the film and resources he needed to do his experiments.

It was then that he created the elastic effect that made objects look stretched or bent. It was first used in advertisements for the movie "Flash Gordon (1980)."

Now computers can create the

same effect, but in the early 1980s, the technology was new and unexplored, Mamut said.

When Hynek moved that year from EFX Unlimited to R. Greenbush Associates, also in Manhattan, Mamut reluctantly followed.

At the time, Mamut said he was planning to return to electrical engineering, thinking that computers would soon replace all of the work he was doing mechanically in animation. Hynek said he could guarantee him another 10 years.

Meanwhile, Borisova remained in Ukraine, developing her art at the Kharkov movie studio and acting as art director of the Kharkov State Puppet Theatre.

During a visit to friends in the United States in 1993, Borisova and Mamut reunited and they married two years later.

Came to Lee in 1996

The couple moved to Lee in 1996 when both went to work in the animation division at Mass Illusion, a special effects company established by film director and special effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull, who "made movies in Hollywood, but dreamed about the Berkshires," Mamut said.

Trumbull had worked on the slit-scan technology used in Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey," and also directed "Silent Running" in 1972, which featured a Spaceship Berkshire. He still owns a studio in Southfield, where he works on research and is currently concentrating on astronomy, Mamut said.

Mamut, Borisova, Hynek and Tom Gasek, the key animator for the movie "Chicken Run (2000)," and one of the creators of "Wallace and Gromit (2005)," all

worked in the animation division of Mass Illusion. Mamut worked specifically on early stages of research for the visual effects later used in such movies as "Starship Troopers (1997)" and "The Matrix (1999)."

When Mass Illusion moved from Lenox to San Francisco in 1997, Gasek opened his own company, Out of Hand Animation in Great Barrington, which he still owns and operates.

Worked on commercials

Borisova worked with Gasek on several animated commercials, which employed stop-motion filming of the clay models she created.

Stop-motion animation requires 30 pictures per second of movement with producers literally moving and bending the flexible clay models between each picture. A typical 30-second commercial would take roughly five months to create, Borisova explained.

The models they used included talking penguins for the Michigan Lottery, a conducting Mr. Potato Head for Burger King and a crab for Louis Kemp Crab Delights.

Borisova continues to work for the state puppet theater. She will be returning to Ukraine later this month for the opening of a children's Russian fairytale "Snow Maiden" at the Kharkov Puppet Theatre. She had been working on the project for the past year, creating 10 characters as well as sets for the production.

Mamut and Borisova opened Animagic in 2002 to showcase all of the Berkshire talent in special effects and animation. While the movies were made in Hollywood, the special effects for many were created locally or by local people, Mamut explained.

Many still remain in the Berkshires dreaming and hoping for the future, he said.

Meeting teen resistance

COLLEGE from E1

money that won't be available for other family expenses, Carr said.

And don't forget that filling out the financial aid forms is your job.

By now, college-bound seniors should have all their letters of recommendation lined up, but if some are missing, "your child is going to have to nag the teacher," Carr said.

You might suggest that your child compile some notes the teacher can refer to in writing the letter. Was there a project the student took a leadership role on, or a challenging assignment that earned a high grade, or a topic your child absolutely loved learning about? Providing information like that could make it much easier for a busy instructor or guidance counselor to complete the missing reference letter.

But what if your teenager resists your efforts to help? Should you back off or go into overdrive with a kid who skips a test or just won't finish that 500-word essay?

"Personally I wouldn't back off, but I don't think you can nag either," she said.

Some students are secretive about essays and other aspects of the application process. If your child doesn't want you to see what he's written, encourage him to meet with a teacher, a counselor or some other adult who can provide feedback and make sure all spelling and grammar errors have been caught.

Carr also made an observation that will ring true for many of today's parents: Constant distraction from text messages, electronic devices and the Internet makes it hard for teenagers to complete tasks that require hours of sustained attention — like filling out college applications.

"This generation needs a lot of help with life skills. They can triple up on tasks, but they can't stay focused," she said. "They're the smartest kids ever, but in some ways, they're the saddest kids ever."

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