

Sourcecast: Phil Weinstein Interview

Transcribed by Skulblaka_Shur'tugal

Skul: We're here today to interview Phil Weinstein, who is the director of a whole bunch of animated films, including *Balto II* and *Balto III*, *The Lion King 2*, *Hop*, and many others. First of all, Phil, welcome to Sourcecast. It's a privilege for us to have you here.

Aniu: Yes, thank you so much.

Phil: Thank you, it's good to be here.

Skul: So, our very first question is one of the most-asked questions that a lot of Balto fans have wanted to know: First of all, the six pups in *Wolf Quest*—of those, only four actually had names, those being Aleu, Kodi, Dingo and Saba [goes on to give alternate pronunciation]. We were wondering, even if it was just inside the production team, did the other two pups actually have names?

Phil: Oh, boy.

[laughter]

Phil: That's a tough question. I would have to go and find the original script. I'm sure I have it in my garage, but I can't remember off the top of my head. After I'm done, I promise I'll go and look and see if there's anything in the script.

Aniu: Okay.

Skul: Okay.

Phil: Yeah, it goes back such a long ways, some of this stuff I just don't remember. But I do have the original script that I put notes on and stuff from way back then, and I can look.

Skul: Okay.

[Note from Skul: Phil contacted me after this and reported that, no, there were no official names for the other two pups]

Skul: Second question: Was it ever discussed among the production team what became of Balto's father?

Phil: Let me think about that. I don't think so, mainly because we were just following the original theatrical version. That template was already set up, so we just went from there.

Aniu: I've got it: so it's more of just a "follow the leader" sort of thing, and nothing could really be brought up, because it was unneeded.

Phil: Yeah, and also a lot of the story and stuff, especially with *Balto II*—the way it worked at Universal, the script was written and then I was brought on board. So a lot of whatever was happening story-wise during development, pretty much happened before I was brought onboard, so I didn't have a chance to make notes and things. But in terms of development, there was a final script that was generated before I came in for the show.

Aniu: Okay.

Phil: If we had conversations about who Balto's father was, and a number of other things, there were other directors in consideration that were making various notes, and then I came along. So I'm not sure where they went back and forth with that, so I —[garbled] So that's a question better asked to the writer, really.

Aniu: All righty. [laughs]

Skul: Makes perfect sense.

Aniu: [moving on to next question] Though there is no official *Balto IV* planned, what do you think of the fan projects that are coming along? And along the same topic, if there *were* a *Balto IV*, what would you want it to be about?

Phil: Well, yeah, I haven't seen any—I don't really follow any fan projects. Every so often, I check into your site, and I look around and see what's going on. I know there's tons of interest in it.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: I hear stuff from people all around the world all the time about it. You know, I'm not at Universal Studios, though I do occasionally talk to them and say "How about it? How about another one?" But nothing's really happened, officially, even though I've gotten a ton of emails and stuff. I would *love* to do another one; for me, career-wise, that was probably one of my favorite projects to work on. I'd be really eager to do it, but they haven't talked about doing it. And, as far as what I'd like to see, I really like Steele from the original, so I'd like to see something with him. And I thought Aleu was a great character; I'd love to see her come back and help her father in some way. And maybe there's even some great revenge thing with Steele, and Aleu comes back to save her dad. Or something along those lines. And that's personally what I'd like to see, if I were in charge of handling the story. And I'd love to tie up all the loose ends, especially between the first two stories.

Aniu: That'd be really neat to see.

Skul: Yeah, definitely.

Aniu: Let's change people who were working on projects. [laughter]

Phil: Yeah, I know. I mean, it's just—it's one of those movies that—I've worked on a lot of different things, but that's the one that I get the most fanmail about, is the

Balto movies. And I'm sure Simon Wells, the guy who directed the original, must also gets as well. It's worth a lot of levels for a lot of people; I'm not exactly sure why, but it did—even the video sequels. And so people still ask—it's been a long time, right? It's been...ten years? Has it been that long? Nine years since the third one was released?

Aniu: That almost sounds about right. I'd have to check for sure.

Skul: As far as I remember, *Wolf Quest* was released in '02, and *Wings of Change* in '04. I might be wrong, but that's what I remember.

Aniu: Okay.

Phil: So not quite as long as I was thinking of when I came on board and started working on it. I think in 2000, that's when I started, but they're eighteen-month productions, then it's released. That would make sense.

Aniu: Yeah.

Skul: Okay.

Aniu: Well, in regards to *The Lion King 2*, how involved were you as far as production of the movie and, I guess, story-wise?

Phil: For *Lion King 2*, I was a storyboard artist, and I was—believe it or not, the movie went through a series of directors that were hired and fired in *Lion King 2*. The very first directing/producing team that was on-board, I was actually part of the very original development group that was on that. So I was developing characters, and we were working on story scenarios. And one day they fired that director and writer team. And I stayed with Disney, but I moved on to some other director/video projects. And then a couple of years later, I came back to the project as a storyboard artist. And I ended up storyboarding a lot of songs, so I think—if I remember—I storyboarded or helped storyboard a lot of the songs. I can't remember all of them, but that's—Most of those direct-to-videos back then had one or two songs, and pretty much all of them from the *Aladdin* sequels on forward had them, even *Lion King 2*.

Skul: Okay.

Phil: And by the way, that's how I ended up doing work on the *South Park* movie: *South Park: Bigger, Longer and Uncut*. I don't know if you guys ever saw that. But that was because I was storyboarding musical numbers for the direct videos at Disney—almost all of them, back in that time. And one of the producers, the producer on the *South Park* movie—and that's how I ended up working on that movie, they wanted somebody to storyboard the musical numbers in that movie. So that's how I ended up working in the film.

Aniu: There sure were quite a few musical numbers in that movie. [laughter]

Phil: Yeah.

Aniu: Can't forget when I first saw the film, how much I laughed.

Phil: Yeah. Most of those songs—I didn't do "Blame Canada", but I did work on most of the others. The opening number, et cetera. So there were some pretty crazy songs.

[Note from Skul: At this point, Rusty was listening in but couldn't talk because he was busy packing for a trip. He was done packing by now and hopped on so he could help take part in the interview.]

Rusty: Were there any plot points or characters that you ended up scrapping from the final product for one reason or another?

Phil: I honestly don't remember; remember, I was a storyboard artist on *Lion King 2*. So there really—the people who had been making those decisions would have been the writer and the producer and the director on that project. You know, as a storyboard artist, generally you're given, or they hand out a certain sequence, and you storyboard it out. And sometimes things are thrown away later, just to try and improve the story. But I don't remember if there were any specific things; you'll have to ask the writer and director those questions.

Rusty: Now that we've brought that question up, let's go to some of the other projects that you've done, where you *did* take on a direct position. Do you remember any secondary characters that you ended up having to scrap for any other projects?

Phil: You mean the ones I directed?

Rusty: Yeah.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: Gosh...No, I don't remember throwing out any characters. Sometimes we expanded roles or diminished roles for characters in some of the stories. Like, for example, I think I mentioned before that Kodi in *Balto III* in the original script did not go out and rescue his father. Didn't save his dad.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: That we added later. It just seemed, for me personally, like something he would obviously go do, what a hero would do.

Aniu: Yeah, I know if it were *my* dad, out there lost, I'd be one of the first people out there after him.

Skul: What made you want to become involved in animated films in the first place?

Phil: Well, I like storytelling. I don't know that I was such a big fan of animation in the beginning. But really, honestly, I don't think I was; I didn't watch cartoons when I was a kid growing up, and I didn't really study that too much either in college or

anything. But I like to draw, and when I learned about storyboarding—you're kind of the director in animation in a way, because you're storyboarding, placing where your camera's going to be, what the characters are going to do, how they're going to act, and I like that a lot. That way, you can be your own storyteller. So that to me was really appealing. And being able to step it up to the next level, go from storyboard artist to director is great, because you're dealing with concept and design and voice actors, even that much further. It's a really interesting process. Even today, after all these years, it's still pretty fascinating to see it actually all come together in one way. For better or for worse, it all comes together in the end.

Skul: And I bet it's a heck of a fun job, huh?

Phil: Yeah, it is a fun job, it really is.

Aniu: All righty. We were wondering what you would consider to be your greatest achievement in the animation business?

Phil: Oh, gosh. I don't know.

[laughter]

Phil: I think my best achievement is that I'm really, really lucky and happy to continue to work, and get some good projects. You know, some are okay, some are not great, and some are great. Really, the *Balto* ones are my favorites to work on, just because I love those stories a lot. And I just had a lot of fun with those characters. You always—especially what I've been doing career-wise. What I've been doing are videos and TV shows, and you're always going to get a restricted time frame, and restricted budget, and there's a particular way of putting these shows together. So you don't have five years to draw out a story; you've got eighteen months beginning to end, start to finish. It's interesting to work under that kind of time constraint, so sometimes it works. It comes out and it's perfect. Other times, it's not perfect, and it takes a little working over to make it better. So when you're doing the stuff that I've done all these years, you don't have that luxury of time, so it's interesting when you're working under the gun. Everybody's trying to make it as great as they can, and sometimes you just don't have the time to do it. And I, in a way, kind of like the pressure, saying, "This is it. It's got to be animated by this point. If it's not working, can we fix it later?" So it's kind of fun. It's a little different with storyboarding; if you ever seen behind-the-scenes features, featuring storyboards or animatics from big-budget Pixar movies or Disney movies, they'll sometimes show you those early storyboards or animatics. And oftentimes, they're kind of clunky, doesn't quite work right—you know, they all start the same way, but the difference is that they have more time to work on it. That's the main extreme between low-budget and big-budget stuff, but it starts, really, in the same place. And oftentimes it is the same talent: same storyboard artists, same designers. It's very interesting.

Aniu: Well, cool. And on a similar note, you've won an Emmy, and you've been nominated for another. How does it feel to have such an accomplishment under your belt?

Phil: Oh, it's cool. Very cool.

[laughter]

Phil: It's great. I was thrilled to win an Emmy, and it was really cool to get the nomination for another one a couple of years ago. It's really always an honor to be part of that. The show I'm working on right now just got nominated for a Daytime Emmy. Really happy about that, too. Mickey Mouse Club House.

Aniu: Oh yeah, I've seen a couple episodes of that in the morning.

Phil: Yeah, it's a preschool show.

Aniu: Yeah, when I'm getting ready for work.

Phil: It's really cool, and going to the awards show is—for me, that was 1997, and it doesn't seem very real.

Skul: Okay.

Aniu: Are you familiar with Kopa, the original son of Simba and Nala? And if so, was there a reason you all opted not to put him in *The Lion King 2*?

Phil: No...what was his name?

Aniu: Apparently his name was Kopa, and it was—I forget exactly where the fan knowledge comes from, because I'm not—

Skul: [interrupting] I can answer that. Kopa was the son of Simba and Nala in a series of books that were published immediately after *The Lion King*. And there were six books total, all of them 100-page kids books, but they all had Kopa in them.

Phil: Wow. No, I wasn't aware of that.

Skul: Yeah. A bunch of people have been wondering why it was Kiara instead of Kopa in *Lion King 2*. And, I guess not even you know the answer.

Phil: No, you're going to have to track down—gosh, I can't even remember. Who was it...was it Darrell Rooney that directed *Lion King 2*? Is that right? I think he was the one who ended up taking it to the finish line.

Aniu: Okay.

[Note from Skul: Yes, Darrell Rooney was the director]

Phil: So you'll have to find him or one of the writers and ask them. They might know.

Aniu: Okay. We'll definitely have to track him down and ask that question eventually.

[laughter]

Rusty: Ah, let's see. On to the next question, are there any future movies that you are working on currently that you can discuss with us?

Phil: Did you say "feature movies"?

Aniu: Future. Like any projects—

Phil: Oh, *future*. Yeah, I've been developing my own project for a long time now. Not really ready to talk about it yet, but it's a future film.

[laughter]

Phil: But yeah. Hopefully.

Rusty: Which *Balto* sequel did you enjoy working on the most?

Phil: I like them both for different reasons. I like the story of *Balto II*; I remember reading the script and just—I like the ending when Aleu left and said goodbye to her father. It just gave me a chill. I remember when I first read it in the script, I thought, "Wow, that just works already." And I like the story of *Balto III* too, and I remember having some more experience doing *Balto III*, so I had a better feel for what we could get away with in animation, to try and make it look better or work better. So, both of them for different reasons. They were both pretty good stories, I thought.

Rusty: It sure did seem like they were—the production atmosphere behind the two movies seemed to be different in the way they were created and how the animated sequences ended up being. I mean, with *Wolf Quest* and *Wings of Change*, particularly with the more 3D approach to scenery *Wolf Quest*. It's just the way they animated scenery to portray different production styles.

Phil: Yeah, well that's true, especially the dream sequence. The dream sequence was done completely by an independent animator, not by the main team. But yeah.

Skul: The things you learn when you interview people.

[laughter]

Aniu: All righty. Well, on to something completely different, how was it working on *Hop*, since it's a mix between CGI and live-action—and as such, sort of out of the norm?

Phil: Well, I was assigned in the visual effects unit for that movie, and my supervisor was a visual effects supervisor. What my unit primarily did was storyboard; we storyboarded the entire movie, so we mainly focused on scenes where digital characters were interacting with humans. I'm pretty sure we storyboarded the whole thing, front to back. And the storyboarding process was almost exactly the same. We were definitely pitching ideas, trying to work out where the camera was going to go, and how they're going to act. It really isn't any different from what I would normally do for a storyboard kind of job. But the main difference was that, when they were filming the movie, we were on set pretty much every day; some

representative of the team was always on set there with pen and paper. So if the director was setting the camera up to do whatever shot, and he's looking at the storyboard and he says, "You know, you guys in this kitchen scene, for example, and now we're in the real kitchen and you can't really put a camera here. Now what do you do?" So you come back to the storyboard team and sketch out a better way to present that scene.

Aniu: Okay.

Phil: That's what was different. We were pretty much on set during the entire shoot. That was pretty much it. But other than that, it was very much the same—surprisingly, it was a similar process.

Skul: Okay. Sounds like fun.

Phil: Yeah, it was a *lot* of fun. I mean, especially when you're on location and there's no—it's not like you have a drafting table, or someplace special. You just end up pulling out a rock somewhere and pull out your sketchpad, hope you have your sharpie. Wherever you are, you sort of make it work.

Skul: Well, someone wanted to know if you love cheese pies.

[laughter]

Rusty: Someone who wrote in to our mailbag.

Phil: Interesting question, right? I was looking through that, and I don't even know what a cheese pie is!

[laughter]

Aniu: We don't either.

Rusty: We have not a clue.

Aniu: We really don't, either. Somebody posted that on there and we went, "Well...all right."

[laughter]

[incomprehensible]

Phil: Yeah, somebody in your group wrote, asking for questions to ask—and by the way, I don't mind you asking me questions, if people said they thought the movie sucked or whatever, that's fine. You can ask whatever you like. But somebody asked about me going to college, that was related to Sean Astin.

Aniu: Oh, yes. That one

Phil: And I was curious about that. How did they know that? That's amazing.

Rusty: I didn't even know that.

Aniu: Yeah, I read that, and I went "Huh?" Creepy people on the Internet.

[laughter]

Aniu: There's no telling where people find out those kind of things.

Phil: Well, first of all, I'll tell you that's true. And honestly I can't—I don't remember if I even consciously remembered. Remember, I was in college in '82 through '86, and it wasn't much. The way the rooms were set up—I think I was a sophomore—you had a room and a roommate, and another room and roommate, and you shared a bathroom. I'm pretty sure the person they were thinking of was a suitemate. We were in a suite, and he was in the room on the other side of the bathroom area.

Aniu: Yeah, I've got you. Actually, we have that same system where I went to college. I just graduated yesterday. [laughter] But yeah, we had that same sort of system.

Phil: Right, so anyways, I read that post, and it reminded me that, that's true. I roomed with someone related to Sean Astin, and I honestly don't remember if I was even consciously aware of that at the time that I was making *Balto III*. Because I don't remember; I was like, "Wow, I certainly would have mentioned it to Sean when we were working together. So I was just trying to figure out how that person on the Internet knew, because I sure didn't remember that until they mentioned it.

Skul: That is incredible.

Phil: Maybe I remembered; it's possible I remembered it at the time that there was a little connection. But no—the question was, did that influence the casting decision, and it was definitely no. I mean, our guy at Universal found him, and at the time he was—gosh, he was being considered for an Oscar for his work in *Lord of the Rings*. And I just thought, "He's out of our league, a little bit." And I was surprised when he accepted the offer, so it was a thrill to work with him.

Aniu: I know a couple of people around the site who are kind of interested in somehow getting involved in voice acting. And I was wondering if you had any advise to give to those people who might be interested in getting started, or what to do.

Phil: Oh, gosh. I'm not really sure. The voice talent and the people that we get when—When you're up for a job, it generally comes from a voice director. So, the best thing you can probably do is—some of these people, like Susan Blu, she used to teach classes out here, and it's been a while. I need to check and make sure if she still does that, but she's one of the more well-known voice directors out here. And the thing is, you sort of have to get on a voice director's radar, because—

Aniu: Okay.

Phil: Because that's how directors or other writers would become aware of you, because we'll call a casting director or voice director, and say we need a certain part. And then they'll send over an email over here of a dozen possibilities. So they're the gatekeepers almost, as the casting director or voice director. I think everybody has a different idea of what they'd like for voices, but me personally, I like more natural-sounding voices, maybe the way they are at Pixar. The voices don't sound forced or cartoony-pushed.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: You know, if you look at something like Patton Oswalt, who did Remy in *Ratatouille*, he pretty much just sounds like that in real-life.

[laughter]

Phil: Somehow that glides with me personally; I just prefer that. Feels more real.

Aniu: I think so, too.

Phil: Yeah, like Lacey Chabert, who did Aleu—I mean, that's pretty much what she sounds like.

[laughter]

Phil: You know, she has a nice quality to it. She doesn't have to put on something.

Skul: Yeah, she has been cast for a lot of child-like roles, so I guess I personally assumed that's how her voice sounded.

Phil: Right.

Skul: If you could go back and redo any movie you made, which one would it be, and why?

Phil: Okay, well they're collaborative efforts, any of them. Whether you're directing or storyboarding, or whatever your job is, it's a very collaborative effort. You know, you're never really in a position where you can make it exactly what you imagined or envisioned, even when you're working on it. Every movie you work on, you have your own idea on the way it should work, and even the writer does and the director does and the storyboard artist does—everybody does. Everybody sort of contributes in that way, so it's sort of impossible in animation to be some kind of an *outré*, so I don't know that I would really redo any of them. It's a group effort. If you get to watch a finished product, then that's effort. Sometimes in the execution, you never really are quite sure—it's a sampling of everybody's ideas. We collectively either made it really great, or really stink.

[laughter]

Phil: But from what I've worked on, none of us are working on the project thinking, "We're going to make the suckiest thing we can try to make." Everybody's really—

it's a sincere effort to make it really great. And then—it's like 50/50. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't work. But everybody's pitching in, and everybody's trying to make it work. Same effort goes into making a good film as goes into making a bad film.

Aniu: I can understand why you wouldn't wanna go through the whole—doing it all over again.

Phil: There's always the little things all the time. Sometimes I'll look at animation, and I'm like "Oh, gosh. Why'd I call that as a retake?" Or you know, why didn't I really push for this storyline to happen? Or maybe, I put Rosie in one little tiny scene in the beginning of *Balto III*, maybe I should have used her a little more. Anyways, that kind of stuff.

Skul: Yeah, the little things.

Rusty: And then I have a question. What are the differences between working on a DTV film, and then a TV series?

Phil: What are the differences?

Rusty: Yes.

Phil: Again, it's mostly the time you have to work on it. So, in that tier of how things work, you can start a feature film where you have—generally, on a big-budget feature, there's about five years total between the beginning and the ending and it going into theaters. Sometimes, three to four of those years are just warping that story into shape. When you step down to something like direct-to-video, at a place like Disney, they have a little more time than I remember. I haven't worked on one of those in years, but you still may have a couple of years, or maybe even three years, to sort of work it out and make it function. And then the direct-to videos that I've directed, again, it's eighteen months beginning to end. That's how it goes. Then you step down to television, and it's much tighter. So we have—the writers are given a certain amount of time to write the script. Maybe it's three or four weeks, sometimes a lot shorter. Storyboard has six weeks. It's very finite; you have checking and timing, and a certain amount of time in animation, so it's very rigid. It goes out the door, it gets to animating, it goes through post-production, and there's no "Let's just think about this for six months and come back to it."

[laughter]

Phil: It's a time issue.

Rusty: So for TV series, it's pretty much in-out and then work on the next thing?

Phil: The way it works is, they're overlapped. So if you're doing a series of twenty-two shows, all your shows will be in various stages of production at one time. So they may be in script, they may be at story, they may be calling retakes. So you'll start a script, and you'll hand it out to the designers one week, and then a week to

two weeks later you're starting the next script. And when that first script is done, design is going into storyboard. When the second script is done with design, that goes into storyboard. When the Storyboard gets done, it goes into editorial. You're overlapping, so right now we're working on Mickey Mouse Clubhouse, and I've got a group of shows I'm working on; I think about ten of them. They're all in various stages of production, ten episodes.

Aniu: Oh, wow.

Rusty: Oh, wow.

Skul: Oh, wow.

Rusty: I was thinking it was just one at a time.

Phil: Yeah, it would be nice, but you can't really do it that way, because it takes so long to make one. You sort of get it all done, and get it animated. These shows are all kind of rolling along. They kind of ramp up and then back down.

Aniu: Yeah. All righty, well we were also wondering how you feel about the decline of DTV movies, particularly of the animated ones?

Phil: I don't know. I think it's a question really for *you* guys. I mean, what do you think about that? Is the general impression that they suck, because they are videos and oh brother, here we go? Or is it hey, we really enjoy these things, and they have a cult following for the film? What's your opinion on that?

Aniu: Well...

Rusty: I think it's almost a double-edged sword. I mean, people have a misconception that, if something is direct-to-video, it's not as good as say a more higher-budget movie. I think with DTV's, I think it's more also like a doorway for small productions to get their word out, and possibly make more money to move on to bigger and better projects. So, I think it's unfortunate that the whole decline is happening right now with them, just because that gateway is easier to open up for some people.

Aniu: Yeah, I think Rusty pretty much said it exactly right. [laughter]

Phil: No, that's an excellent observation. I think a lot of people out here feel the same way: that's something they're chasing dollars, because a feature film made a lot of money, so they're like, "We'll just make a sequel." And then other times, it's exactly what you said: it's an opportunity to try and tell a good story. And when you don't have \$100 million, it's easier to make it. Totally true. I'm really excited too, with the whole idea that fans are still interested in it after all these years, and still want to see it happen. I want to see it happen, too. I'd like to see a 3D *Balto*—not a 3D, a CG *Balto* film.

Aniu: That would actually be really interesting. And I think that's one of the things I haven't actually haven't heard a lot of people talking about, that I think it would be really interesting to do that, too. I know I'm blaspheming, according to a couple of people on the site. But, CG [or 3D] is definitely a new form of media that is opening up, and a lot of people have shown interest in it.. And I think it would be a good idea.

Phil: Did you guys see the...what's it called? I saw the trailer for it, and I thought, "Oh, looks like a new *Balto IV*."

Aniu: You mean *Alpha and Omega*?

Phil: Oh, was *that* what it was called?

Aniu: *Alpha and Omega*.

Phil: Right, *Alpha and Omega*. I saw that, and—I didn't see the movie, but I saw the trailer, and there were some things in the trailer that made me go "Wow, that' just like—" It had elements in the trailer that had a kind of *Balto* ring to it. Was there a talking goose?

Aniu: I haven't seen it, but—

Rusty: Yeah, there were.

Aniu: Oh, there were?

Rusty: Yeah. There were a few.

[laughter]

Phil: I thought that was kind of funny. Anyways...now I'm curious. Got to check it out. But you know, somebody got out there and told another wolf-in-the-wild story.

[laughter]

Aniu: Let's see. One of the users wanted to know about Aleu's attitude. And they've noticed that she was very childish in the beginning of the movie, and they were wondering what the purpose was for that, why she was so childish, and why she suddenly wasn't towards the end, I guess.

Phil: You know, I haven't watched it in a long time, but I'm guessing what this person is responding to is, they probably wanted to see more of her maturity through her journey out into the wild.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: I think that's what the person was trying to say is, why was Aleu getting wiser and more mature. And then with the wolves out there, and maybe they didn't feel that, they didn't sense that. So maybe that's their reaction, with her being childish and now she's mature. That could be a valid question; I'd have to watch it again and

see it. If I saw it that way—you know, at the time, it just seemed like it all worked, but oh well.

Aniu: Yeah. [laughter] I understand. All righty, that's actually a pretty good answer, and I need to make sure I go beat on their door to make sure they can hear it.

Skul: Okay. Any idea about blu-ray editions of any of the films that you've worked on?

Phil: Oh, gosh, I don't know. That would be really cool. You know, the output—well, you've also got the point where it's digital, but back to *Balto II*, it was probably still on film at that point. It'd have to be rescanned to be released as a blu-ray. *Balto III* I can't remember if we got it all-digital or if that was created on film. I don't know that they would do it, but obviously there's that technical aspect, as to how to uprise this stuff to blu-ray.

Aniu: Okay.

Rusty: All right.

Aniu: And one per—oh, were you going to ask something, Rusty?

Rusty: No, no.

Aniu: Okay. I was going to say, one person heard that Steele was supposed to be in *Balto III*, and I'm not sure exactly where they got that information, either. [laughter]

Skul: It was from a previous interview that he had with Steet or someone. It's on the forums.

Aniu: Okay. Well, they were wondering, what made you change your mind?

Phil: Actually, the—it wasn't in the script, only in the ideas.

Aniu: Oh, okay.

Phil: So, no it was never written there. My thought was, here they are—I'm just going to repeat basically the same thing as is on your forums—that Balto says, I'm going to try and find this pilot. Pretty sure this guy's crashed, and I'm going after it. And nobody wants to join him, right? Everyone's still like, you're on your own. This guy took our jobs away, and we're not going to do it. And Balto's going to do the right thing; he's going to go out there. And I thought, how cool would it be, if in that point of the movie, Steele steps forwards, and says I'll go.

Aniu: Oh, wow.

Phil: Now you have this situation, where anyone who follows the storyline, they'll go "Wow." And his reason is, he basically needs to improve his image. [gibberish] He needs to sort of prove that he can be helpful, in a way.

Aniu: Yeah, okay.

Phil: And you know, the audience: when they go off into the wild, this guy's going to betray Balto, because also the first thing Steele would want to do is get that guy and get rid of him once and for all. See what he's really like. So I thought, how cool would that be, to have them go off to look for the pilot? And you would really be on edge the whole time; you wouldn't know if Steele was honest, or scheming.

Aniu: Yeah.

Phil: But they didn't go for it, but it was pretty late in the production.

Skul: In your mind, if Steele had gone with Balto, would it have been genuine, or would he have really wanted to get rid of Balto?

Phil: Well, in my vision, I wanted him to be the villain. He's like, now I've got him out here. You ruined my life, you ruined me forever, and you don't have your buddies here this time. It's over. And *that's* when Kodi was going to come back in and save his dad. That was the point of the film where that happened.

Skul: There needs to be a director's cut of *Balto III* now!

Phil: And Kodi would have come back right then. So instead, Kodi was the one who saved his dad at the avalanche in the cliffs. And Steele would be buried under that, and so finally, Steele is once and for all done. Then Kodi makes up with his dad, and they find the pilot.

Aniu: Well, thank you again, so much, for getting on and doing this interview with us. We can't tell you how much we loved it.

Phil: Cool. Glad to be part of it. I think it's really cool you guys are all over the country.

Skul: Thanks a whole lot for this interview.

Phil: Sure thing, my pleasure.