



The 14th century revolutionary epic poem 'Divine Comedy' explaining Dante Alighieri's theological odyssey through the circles of hell and into purgatory, has been animatedly brought to life in the precise and overtly executed 'Dante's Inferno Animated' by Master Films Productions.

Narrated in the poet's own words, the animated rendition of Inferno from the Italian masterpiece has been directed by Boris Acosta and adapted for the screen

by Dino Di Durante. Staying true to the poet's vision, this animated version of Dante's Inferno is resourceful for those reading or studying Alighieri's literary works for the first time.

Alighieri's vision of the after life is infectious for those who seek to go into the depths of what he foresaw. Studying The Divine Comedy in primitive Italian at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles), gave director Acosta the idea of adapting this great story into a film. At-

tending an Adobe presentation at NAB in Las Vegas, Acosta realized that the animation for Dante's Inferno could be easily created using Adobe After Effects.

The animated film took shape after a few clips were featured in Dante's Inferno Documented, a 2-hour feature documentary narrated by Jeff Conaway and featuring Eric Roberts, to be released later in 2010 or early in 2011. With the first clip complete, Acosta was thrilled to see Alighieri in motion and one clip led to

another. Taking these ideas to another level, Acosta decided to make a short animated film for children using Alighieri's own words mainly because no film in history had been narrated in primitive Italian up to date, and never with children in mind. To make it accessible to a larger audience, the English version of the film was also in the making.

Acosta describes the animation in the film as historic. He says, "This is an epic story that has taken a lot of time to produce, particularly because I wanted to make sure that it was interpreted correctly and according to Dante's vision. So, the initial illustrations were revisited time and time again until I felt that they were accurate. I consulted with Riccardo Pratesi, a Florentine Dantologist, to make double sure that the illustrations which the animation clips were based on were accurate and final."

Drawing from the rich illustrations and paintings depicting Alighieri's journey, the animation is simple and easy to understand. The film has captivating images and tells a visually compelling story. The expressive narration paves the way for the viewers to follow Alighieri in his quest into the after life. Guided by Virgil, Alighieri and the viewers chronologically journey through the circles of hell.

The visual art has been gracefully represented in the animation along with impactful narration and images. The creative team also went about combining the several colour illustrations for the comic book and magazine series. Revisiting the scenes several times, every illustration has nearly 50 versions, every illustration has nearly 50 versions, some even crossed 100. Acosta says, "Our work is much more accurate than when we thought it was at the beginning. Sometimes, I let the images sleep in my brain for a while, then I would come back to them with a much clear vision on how they should look. It's certainly been a learning experience and a great preparation for the upcoming 3D feature film."

The film takes off with Alighieri lost in a deep dark forest. Though the illustration seemed simple, it was difficult to place Alighieri astray in the forest. To give

the scene an authentic look the creative team tried out different types of rock colours. After giving much thought to this scene, Acosta realized that Alighieri was not just talking about any dark forest, but a particular one in Cuma, Italy at a particular time in the year: April.

To find out what really happened to some Cuma forests during April, Acosta investigated how forests in Cuma might



have looked like 700 years ago. The landscape was changed but this was not enough. He called the University of California in Berkeley to get correct information. Based on this research, it was observed that a lot of the trees were olive trees with the olives in the early stages of their growth. Researching on the area, he came up with the ruins of an ancient Acropolis and the arcs of Jupiter, which are tourist's attractions till today.

The most challenging scene was the one with the thieves. The scene being complex in nature included morphing, transmutations, souls burning into ashes, souls resuscitations, many kinds of reptiles, half humans, half monsters. To interpret this scene accurately Acosta consulted his Dantologist friend in Florence, Italy and this scene was reviewed countless times. The animation produc-

tion team at Image Venture, India, found the shot of character Centaurus (a creature with the head, arms, and torso of a man and the body and legs of a horse) very challenging. Senthil Kumar from Image Venture likes the artistic appearance and stylization of the whole film and its presentation the most and with a team of 10 animators, the shots were delivered on time.

After a series of consultations to interpret the story accurately Acosta explains that the editing process was quite tedious. The tricky moments in production were waiting for the new clips to be done or the updated images to be done. The length of the film will be around 40 minutes. After Effects, Photoshop, Premiere Pro and Soundbooth in a quad-core based computer were the main software used.

The soulful music has been put together by music composer Aldo De Tata, who is well versed with the entire poem. It was composed following the text and not the film. Acosta feels a great sense of accomplishment after working on this historic film. He feels that animation films in general are a great way

to influence children and also to give them tools to understand complex stories.

'Dante's Inferno Animated' will not only open children's eyes about the afterlife, according to Christianity, but also will serve as a guide for The Divine Comedy students worldwide. Hopefully it'll encourage people to make films that make a difference and are good for mankind", says Acosta.

The film, both in English and Italian, will be available for free online to educational institutions worldwide that teach *The Divine Comedy*. Teachers and professors are welcome to make a formal request from the contact page of the official website: [www.DantesInfernoAnimated.com](http://www.DantesInfernoAnimated.com)

– Joyce Lemos