



The Story of LAIKA/entertainment

In July of 2005, Phil Knight, businessman and entrepreneur announced the creation of a new entertainment and media venture called LAIKA. Animation leader, Vinton Studios, which Knight acquired in September, 2003, was absorbed into the new entity with entertainment and feature film activities to be conducted under the LAIKA/entertainment banner and the commercial/video production work under the name, LAIKA/house.

LAIKA will build upon Vinton Studios' 30-year history of excellence and innovation as a leading producer of computer generated animation, stop-motion animation, and cel animation, boasting an Academy Award winning director, 11 Prime time Emmy Awards, and over 100 international accolades.

“For the past year, we’ve been creating the infrastructure of a new, independent feature film animation studio,” said Knight. “Now, with director Henry Selick (“Nightmare Before Christmas, James and the Giant Peach”) bringing his unique vision to our creative efforts, it seemed an appropriate time to tell the world about LAIKA.”

“Something’s definitely going on here in Portland,” says Selick, who joined the company as Supervising Director in May, 2004. “It reminds me of early days at Skellington Studios where, with the same blend of super strong artists, storytellers and brilliant technicians, “The Nightmare Before Christmas” was made. “Nightmare” broke the rules for what family animation was supposed to be and succeeded. And that’s what we’re going to do here at LAIKA, with a great roster of projects including a buddy comedy, a ghost story, a mystical fairytale, and an alternate universe crime story. We have new directors who have proven themselves as superb storytellers on some of the most successful films in the last decade; eye-catching designs from international artists; a solid animation foundation, and great musicians to score our films and write songs for them. And, best of all,

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not only has our owner Phil Knight committed the marketing and financial resources to make all this possible, he also brings his indomitable maverick sensibility to the mix.”

The short film, “MoonGirl,” is Henry Selick’s first all CG effort and is the studio’s first entertainment product. It has won the Short Film Special Jury prize at the Ottawa Film Festival and is slated to become a children’s book in 2006.

LAIKA Entertainment, which will produce animated films in the \$50 to \$70 million dollar range, has greenlit *Coraline*, based on the Hugo Award-winning, international bestselling children’s book by Neil Gaiman. Henry Selick will direct the feature length CGI animated project, which LAIKA will produce in association with former Fox Filmed Entertainment Chairman and CEO Bill Mechanic and his *Pandemonium* films.

Another key strategy in the move into feature film production was the recent appointment of Fiona Kenshole, formerly Publishing Director of Oxford University Press Children’s Books and a major force in international publishing, as head of worldwide literary scouting operations. Through her unique contacts within the publishing world, Kenshole continues to identify hot literary properties for LAIKA/entertainment.

LAIKA will continue to be headquartered in Portland, Oregon. As to the name itself, Knight, who as cofounder and Chairman of the Board of Nike, Inc., is thought to know a thing or two about branding, says simply, “The Studio staff came up with hundreds of names and, truthfully, I just thought that ‘LAIKA’ sounded right. It seemed to fit who we are.”