

'Flatland: The Movie'
By Shawn Badgley
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Who could have guessed – sorry, postulated – that a movie about math would have such a fantasy and sci-fi feel?

In the animated "Flatland: The Movie" – sourced from Edwin Abbott's 1884 novel, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* – we join Hex (voiced by Kristen Bell) and her grandfather, Arthur Square (Martin Sheen), on their journey to discover the Third Dimension. Along the way, they enlist the aid of Spherius (Michael York), a visitor from Spaceland, while outthinking the ruling Circles and their Triangle guards (variously voiced by such locals as Lee Eddy and Shannon McCormick). When Hex wonders out loud about "supersquares" – a line of thought that eventually leads her to the Forbidden Area – Arthur loses his cool, warning her that such "silly" thoughts are forbidden by the Circles. After she asks why, Arthur snaps back, "Why? Because the Circles are wise; that's why." I love it.

The warm, well-written half-hour educational film was a collaboration among Seth Caplan, Dano Johnson, and Jeffrey Travis, a trio with strong Austin connections. The "Flatland" world premiere will take place here on Sunday, May 20, with 3 and 4:30pm screenings at the Arbor (sponsored by the Austin Film Festival), and the DVD will be released on June 15. For more information, see www.flatlandthemovie.com.

Simple shapes star in movie adventure

By Jackie Hyland
Reporter

It's what everyone wants in a good movie— drama, action, adventure and... geometry? That's what *Flatland: A Journey of Many Dimensions* entails.

An adventure where geometric shapes take on the ideas of a third dimension and educate the viewers on geometry concepts, director of animation Dano Johnson presented the movie at 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Kayser Auditorium.

Dr. Lance Littlejohn, Math department chairman, said he met Johnson at a math fest in early August.

He was so impressed with the movie and Johnson's "sincerity about producing educational material," he invited Johnson to come to campus to speak and show the movie.

Based on the book by Edwin Abbott written in 1884, the movie was an idea by director Jeffrey Travis.

Travis approached Johnson asking if he would like to be a part of the production. Together, Travis, Johnson and producer Seth Caplan started creating this movie.

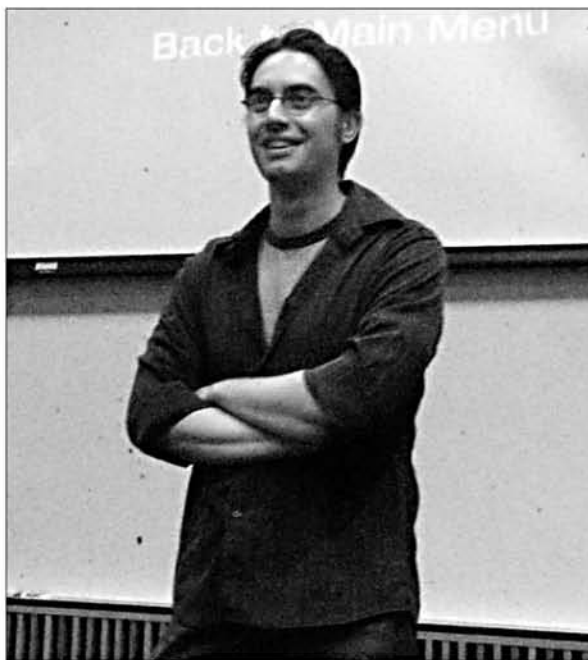
"We aimed at middle school kids, and younger kids really like it too," Johnson said. "Parents are surprised when their elementary kids watch it and then are talking about dimensions at the dinner table."

Dr. Tom Banchoff, geometry professor at Brown University, said the film is to "inspire new generations and teach the enlargement of imagination" in the areas of mathematics.

The movie isn't exactly like the book, but Johnson said they spent a long time on the script trying to decide what to leave in, what to take out and what to change.

The film, which has just been released in May 2007, has already been sold worldwide to schools in Denmark and Australia.

Arthur Square, voiced by Martin Sheen, and his granddaughter, a hexagon, Hex, voiced by Kristen Bell, take on an adventure of finding and proving that there is a third dimension to the people of *Flatland*, even in the face of societal and governmental opposi-



Laurisa Lopez/Lariat staff

Dano Johnson, director of animation for *Flatland: A Journey of Many Dimensions*, presented the educational adventure at 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Kayser Auditorium.

tion.

Other famous actors such as Tony Hale, Michael York and Joe Estevez also play lively geometric shapes.

Fort Worth junior Eric Bunch said he thought the movie was "well made" and really addressed some of the issues that the book raises.

Littlejohn said he wanted Johnson to come and show the film to "rekindle" interest in math and speak about his experiences.