"Spumco" Layout Theories

Economy
Be stingy with your drawings. We are doing "limited animation". Each scene should have enough clear information for the animator to understand the scene.

Don't add actions
Do not rewrite scenes by adding actions that are not in the storyboard. I understand the urge well. At the normal studio that uses scripts, the shit never works. It isn't funny and the artists are thought of as low-life forms. So to do something to make it entertaining, you add stuff to at least make it weird, which is better than being boring. Our storyboards do work, and they are funny, and now what they need are great drawings that tell the story even better than the storyboard.

No breakdowns
Drawing breakdowns is the animator's job. There is no way a layout artist can know the positions of these actions without knowing the precise timing of the scene. Breakdowns don't register to the audience, so I don't care about them. I care about drawings that read. The holds.

Make poses relate

Stay in field/Make it read
This is almost always a problem. A lot of good drawings have been destroyed because arms or heads were cuff off on TV. Be absolutely sure your drawings are in the TV cutoff.

Don't cram
This is related to the above problem. Don't over crowd your characters so they have no room to move. Look at all the actions your characters have to perform and give them room to do it. Do they have to bend over? Reach for something? Hop up and down? If you don't leave room for action you are sluffing the problem off to the animator; you are making his job twice as hard. It's exactly like when a writer writes a scene that is impossible to stage. He is luffing off his problem to you.

Stage in silhouette
Make sure your poses read. Don't stage action in front of the body. Create negative spaces in order to draw our eye to the positive area that we need to see.

Create distance for action
If you have to move something from here to there, make sure there is space to move it across. Otherwise the action, when animated, will be slow and not noticeable.

Use the camera if needed

Acting

The acting scenes are the scenes that would normally have the most drawings, but each drawing should have a definite purpose. Draw only each expression or pose that tells a particular change of attitude between the characters.

Life:Character the Model

Follow board attitudes

Clarity-no ambiguity

Reuse poses and gestures

This is a tricky one. Rather than draw a new pose for each change of expression, try to use 1-4 body poses in different combinations. A lot of scenes will only need one pose! Don't add actions just to have them. That way the animator will have less work to do also, and the easier the job, the better the work.

Do your set-ups first

Go through your handout list. The left column that lists the new bg's. You should plan each of these set-ups first, before going ahead and finishing any particular scene. Plan your actions very roughly (including the work-out-of's) to be sure you have room to play out each scene. When you have all your set-ups done, then go back and tighten up your most extreme poses from each set-up. Then do you work-out-of's or less important poses. If you plan your approach this way, you will have a more realistic idea of how many poses you can really put into each scene and still make your 15 scenes a week (or more, if you have assistants).

Pace yourself

The quota is approximately 15 scenes a week. Mainly character scenes. The key bg's are being done by Jim Smith. The remaining bg's are fairly simple. If you know you have to do 15 scenes a week, then do three a day. If you aren't doing three a day, then you have to asses the situation and figure out why. Otherwise you will end up killing yourself on the last night.

Read storyboard theories

Ask Cheryl for the notes on storyboards and story boarding for limited animation. There is helpful information on staging you can use.

Xerox

If you have a great pose or expression on the board, use it. Don't feel you have to redraw it because you'd be "cheating". Xerox it up! You may have to adapt it or add a bit of construction but make it easy on yourself. There will be plenty of scenes that you'll have to draw form scratch.