16

Making a Statement with Poses, Animations, and Gestures

In This Chapter

▶ Deciphering the lingo

▶ Striking a pose

▶ Creating an animation

▶ Making a gesture

*E*veryone in Second Life (SL) has the same basic poses and animations. For example, your hands go up and down when you type, your feet shift a bit when you stand still, and you primly put your hands on your knees when you sit. But why be like everyone else? Why look like a stiff robot when you can move naturally, give people a thumbs up when you approve of an idea, or flip a cartwheel when you're excited?

In this chapter, we go over the difference between a pose, an animation, and a gesture. We show you how to try out one of each (you can buy one or use one from the Library in your Inventory), and then create your own. Before you know it, you'll have your own distinct style for expressing yourself physically.

Understanding the Terminology

Before you begin, time to lay out some of the terminology to help differentiate between a pose, an animation, and a gesture:

✔ **Pose:** *Poses* are stationary, frozen positions. Your avatar will strike the pose and stay in it until you turn off the pose.

✔ **Animation:** *Animations* are short sequences of movement, such as a dance step, cartwheel, or hand wave. They might or might not loop to repeat until you stop the animation.

TIP

Animation Override: You can purchase a *HUD* (*Heads-Up Display,* see Chapter 4 for more info) that automatically overrides the default animations (the ones given to you by SL when you created your account) your avatar will use while standing, sitting, and talking.

✔ **Gesture:** *Gestures* are combinations of animations, sound effects, and poses. For example, you can buy a complete gesture that makes you wave, say "Hi," and then stop waving. You can also combine your own sounds and animations to make your own custom gestures. Gestures are typically *hot–keyed* (setting up a custom keyboard shortcut to make the gesture easier to use) to be used from the keyboard rather than searching for them in your Inventory each time you want to use them. They can also be associated with words that you might use in chat. For example, when Sarah (co-author) types **LOL** in her chat window, her avatar automatically laughs while clutching its stomach.

TIP

You can upload sounds just like you upload an image, using File⇨Upload Sound. It will cost you $L10 to bring a sound into SL. Clips must be in Wave format (`.wav`) files, and must be 10 seconds or less in length.

TIP

Some folks confuse animations and gestures. When you search for premade ones, you might want to try both search terms.

Creating and Using a Pose

You can, of course, buy poses premade in Second Life, but we start by showing you how to make your own. If you want to discover how to use a pose you already have in your Inventory, you can skip to later in this section.

To make a pose, you need a 3-D posing program, such as Poser (`www.e-frontier.com/go/poser`), but this can be expensive. Look for a great, free alternative — Avimator (`www.avimator.com`) — and its updated version, QAvimator (`www.qavimator.org`). Both are free and easy to use. Avimator has a much simpler interface than the updated QAvimator, but the Q version will give you more control over your animations and poses.

TIP

To start, visit the QAvimator Web site, download the software for your operating platform, and install it.

After you install the software and open the application, you see the QAvimator interface, as shown in Figure 16-1. Lots of options are available in QAvimator for you to play with, but for this example, we focus on the basics — the timeline, the Avatar tab, and the Keyframe tool (key frames mark important changes in the position of the avatar). Movements will be cued to transition smoothly from one keyframe to another at the bottom.
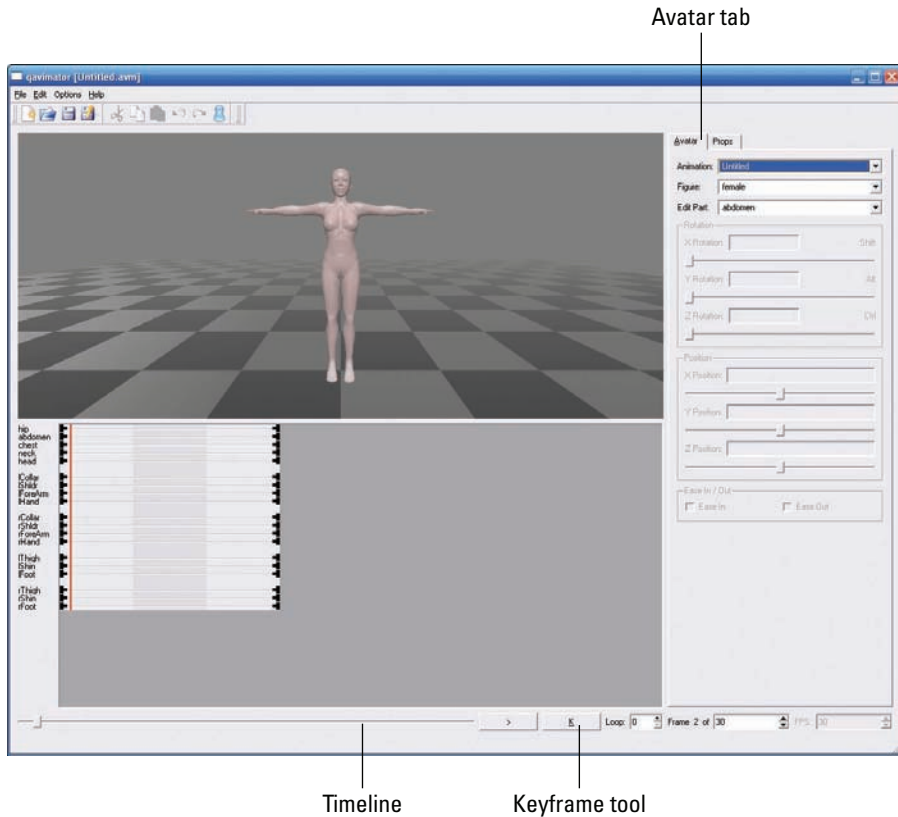
Avatar tab

Timeline   Keyframe tool

Figure 16-1: The QAvimator interface.

Start by making a yoga position. This one is called Sraddha Vrisikasana (or Devotion Scorpion), and is truly a position we could never achieve in real life (although in Second Life, it's easy). To create the Sraddha Vrisikasana, follow these steps:

1. Change the number of frames to 2 in the Frame box at the bottom-right of the screen.

To make a pose, you need only two frames.

2. Move the frame slider at the bottom of the screen to the right.

The slider moves all the way over to the right because we have only two frames in this animation.

This (the second frame) is the frame that will contain your pose.

3. Click the K button to mark this as a keyframe.

You're ready to strike a pose.

4. **Choose Options⇨Joint Limits.**

   After all, most yoga positions require a bit of unnatural bendiness.

   The bottom half of the screen shows a timeline with each poseable body part listed.

5. **Click each and make the following adjustments by using the X Rotation, Y Rotation, and Z Rotation tools on the right side of the program window.**

   You end up with a position that looks like Figure 16-2.

Body Part	*X Rotation*	*Y Rotation*	*Z Rotation*
Hip	167	0	0
Abdomen	–20	0	0
Chest	–55	0	0
Neck	0	0	0
Head	–65	0	0
lCollar	0	0	0
lShldr	0	–92	0
lForeArm	0	0	90
lHand	0	0	0
rCollar	0	0	0
rShldr	0	96	0
rForeArm	0	0	–90
rHand	0	0	0
lThigh	65	0	0
lShin	78	0	0
lFoot	78	0	0
rThigh	65	0	0
rShin	78	0	0
rFoot	78	0	0

6. **Save the pose.**

   Choose File⇨Save As and name your pose. We call ours `scorpion.bvh`.

   Be sure to change the file extension to `.bvh`, or Second Life will not recognize the pose.

7. **Fire up Second Life and choose File⇨Upload Animation, as shown in Figure 16-3.**

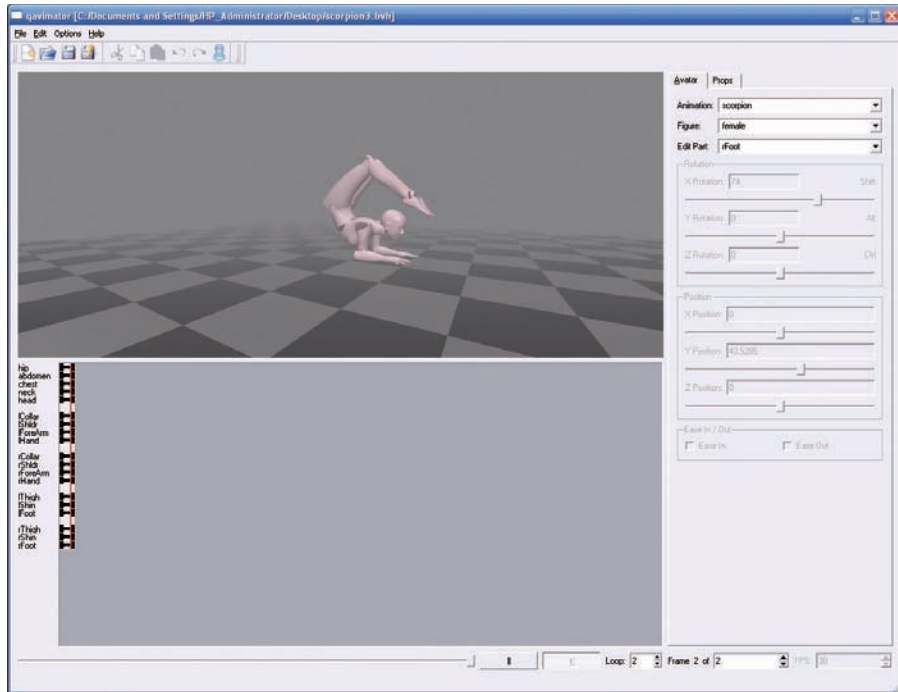   Yes, uploading your pose will cost L$10. Still, the L$10 is worth it to have your very own crazy yoga pose!

Figure 16-2: Quite the amazing yoga pose.

8. **Navigate to the `scorpion.bvh` file and choose Open.**

   An upload menu (as shown in Figure 16-4) appears with some really important options.

9. **Fill in these definitions andmake these settings for your pose:**

   • *Name:* Give your pose a name you can remember so you can easily find the pose in your Inventory.

   • *Description:* If you intend to sell your poses, you'll want to be sure to put in a clear description so others will know what the pose is.

   • *Priority:* This field dictates whether your pose will be overridden by typing animations, default shifting around while your avatar stands and so on. If you make it the highest priority (4), you will hold the pose no matter what else you are doing.

   • *Preview While:* For this pose, we'll preview it Standing. If this were a sitting pose, you'd want to select Sitting from this list so you can preview how your new pose will transition from the basic sitting pose. However, we will add that previewing this one in Walking is pretty funny.

   • *Loop:* Select this check box so your avatar will stay in the pose rather than just doing it once and standing back up.
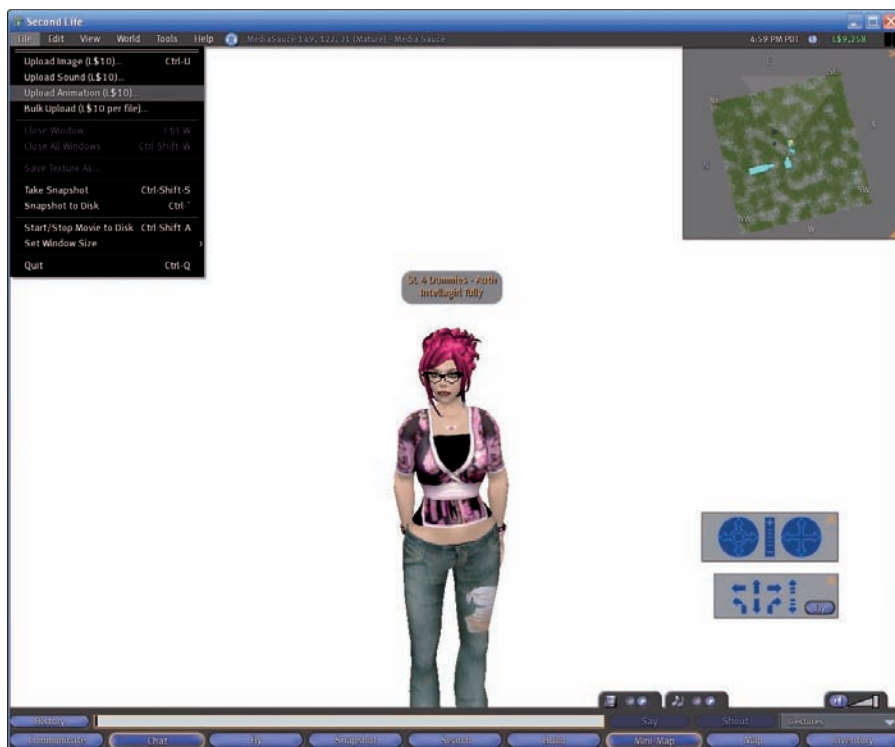
Figure 16-3: Upload your animation.

- *In% and Out%:* These percentages control the speed at which the loop happens. Because we don't want this to visibly loop (thereby giving a still appearance), we put both settings at 0.

- *Hand Pose:* You can't control how your fingers look in QAvimator, so this is where you choose whether you want your fingers to point, be relaxed, or even make a Peace sign. We chose Relaxed so our fingers are spread to look like they're supporting us better.

- *Expression:* This is a fun one. We're setting ours to None, but if you want it to look like you're particularly enjoying your yoga (or maybe it's causing you pain), go ahead and choose a different expression.

- *Ease In (sec) and Ease Out (sec):* These settings dictate how long it takes your avatar to reach the final pose and how long it takes to go back to a normal standing position. We set them both to 0 to get a sudden pose that will stay.

10. **Click the blue Play button to preview your pose.**

    The gray avatar in the blue screen should strike the scorpion pose and stay there. If it does, click the Upload (L$) button.
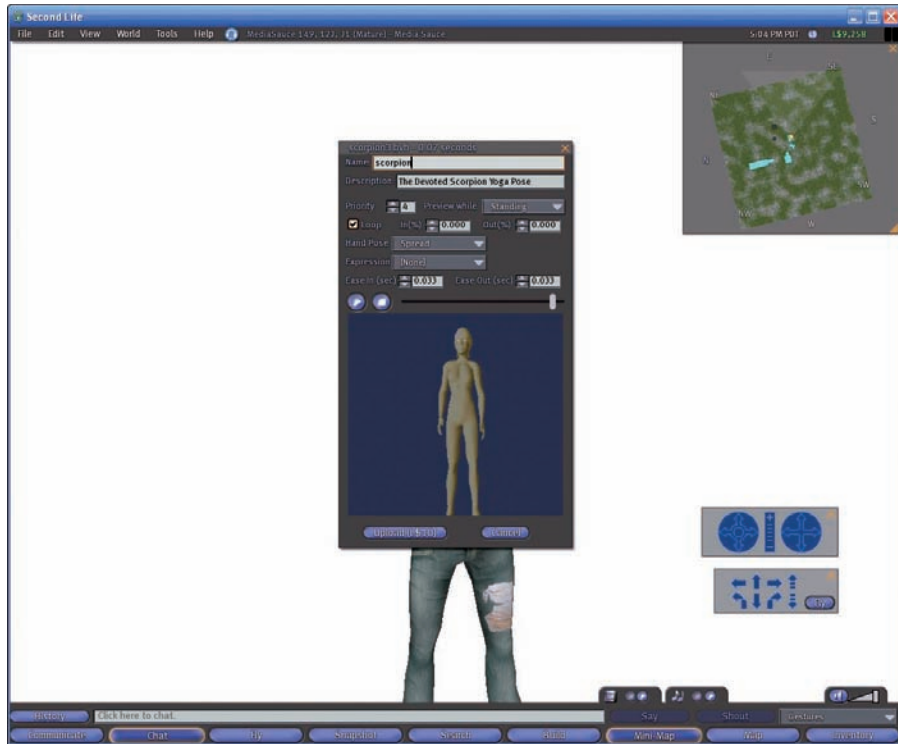
Figure 16-4: Setting some additional pose options.

Your new pose is saved in your Inventory in the QAnimations folder with the name you gave it in Step 9.

Now it's time to try out the pose you just made. Although the following directions are for the pose we showed you how to make in the first part of this chapter, they will work for any pose in your Inventory, including premade and purchased poses. To perform the pose, follow these steps:

1. **Click the Inventory button on the bottom-right of your screen and find the pose in the Animations folder of your Inventory.**

   You'll know it's a pose because it will have a little yellow dancing man next to it, as shown in Figure 16-5.

2. **Double-click the pose to prompt a pop-up window (as shown in Figure 16-6) asking you how you'd like to perform the pose.**

   • *Play in World:* If you click the Play in World button, everyone around you can see you perform the pose.

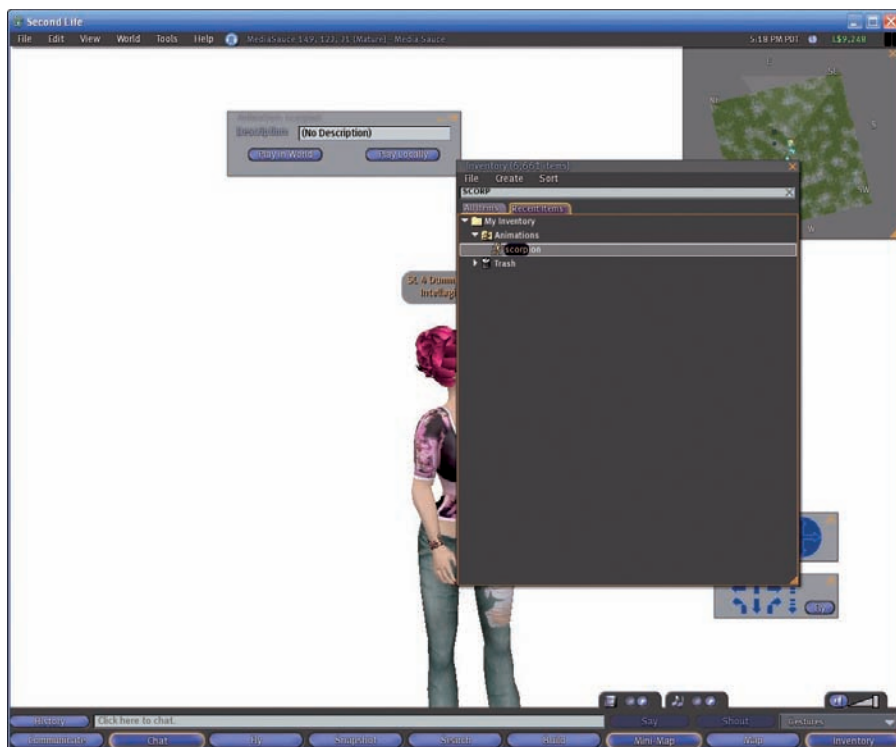   • *Play Locally:* If you click the Play Locally button, only you will see the pose on your screen.
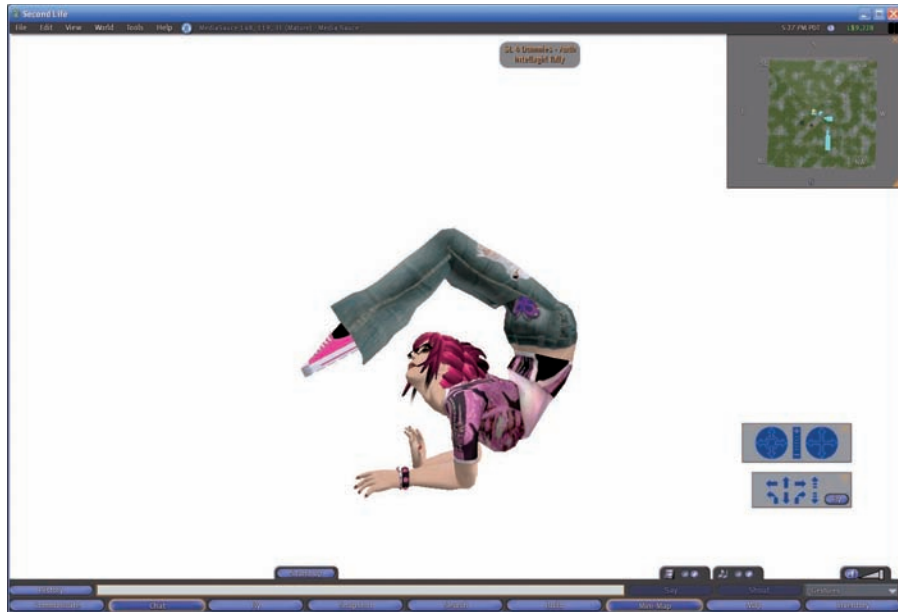

Figure 16-7: Tah-dah! You're a virtual yoga master!

1. **In QAvimator, start a new project by choosing File⇨New.**

2. **Set the number of keyframes to 6.**

   The default setting gives you 30 frames to work with, but you won't need that many for this example.

   When you "raise the roof," you pump your arms from a bent position to a straight position over and over, so each arm pump is two movements (up and down). You also need to get into the position and then back out again.

   To accomplish this, set the following:

   - *Two arm pumps:* Two keyframes each
   - *The initial position:* One frame
   - *The transition back to normal:* One frame

     That's a total of six keyframes.

   a. *Click the hip timeline at six equal distances.*

   b. *Click the K button to create a keyframe at each one.*

3. **Make the animation. Set the X, Y, and Z rotations for each of the parts for each keyframe to match the following tables.**

✔ **Keyframe 1**

Body Part	X Rotation	Y Rotation	Z Rotation
lCollar	65	0	0
lShldr	–4	–88	0
lForeArm	0	0	146
lHand	0	0	62
rCollar	53	0	0
rShldr	0	85	0
rForeArm	0	0	–149
rHand	0	0	–52

✔ **Keyframe 2**

Body Part	X Rotation	Y Rotation	Z Rotation
lCollar	0	–1	–7
lShldr	–2	–89	0
lForeArm	0	0	87
lHand	0	0	41
rCollar	0	0	0
rShldr	0	85	0
rForeArm	0	0	–90
rHand	0	0	–34

✔ **Keyframe 3**

Body Part	X Rotation	Y Rotation	Z Rotation
lCollar	46	4	–11
lShldr	0	–92	0
lForeArm	0	0	59
lHand	0	0	28
rCollar	–46	0	0
rShldr	0	92	0
rForeArm	0	0	–59
rHand	0	0	–28

✔ **Keyframe 4**

Body Part	X Rotation	Y Rotation	Z Rotation
lCollar	–69	0	0
lShldr	0	–91	0

lForeArm	0	0	17
lHand	0	0	12
rCollar	−69	0	0
rShldr	0	91	0
rForeArm	0	0	17
rHand	0	0	−28

✔ **Keyframe 5**

Body Part	X Rotation	Y Rotation	Z Rotation
lCollar	90	0	0
lShldr	0	−92	0
lForeArm	0	0	17
lHand	0	0	0
rCollar	90	0	0
rShldr	0	92	0
rForeArm	0	0	−17
rHand	0	0	0

REMEMBER

If entering all these numbers feels tedious now, when you get used to how to pose the figure in QAvimator, this will all be easy. The numbers become less important and more intuitive.

4. **Save the animation as `raisedaroof.bvh` or whatever filename you like.**

5. **Upload the animation with the following settings for the upload preview:**

   • *Priority:* 2.

   • *Preview While:* Standing.

   • *Loop:* Select this only if you want your avatar to repeat the animation over and over again.

   • *In% and Out%:* These aren't important here because you're not looping the animation in this example.

   • *Hand Pose:* Relaxed.

   • *Expression:* We chose a happy face for the animation. You have several to choose from.

   • *Ease In (sec) and Ease Out (sec):* Leave these set at 0.300.

6. **Click the Upload (L$10) button and then find the animation in your Inventory under the Animations folder. Enjoy!**

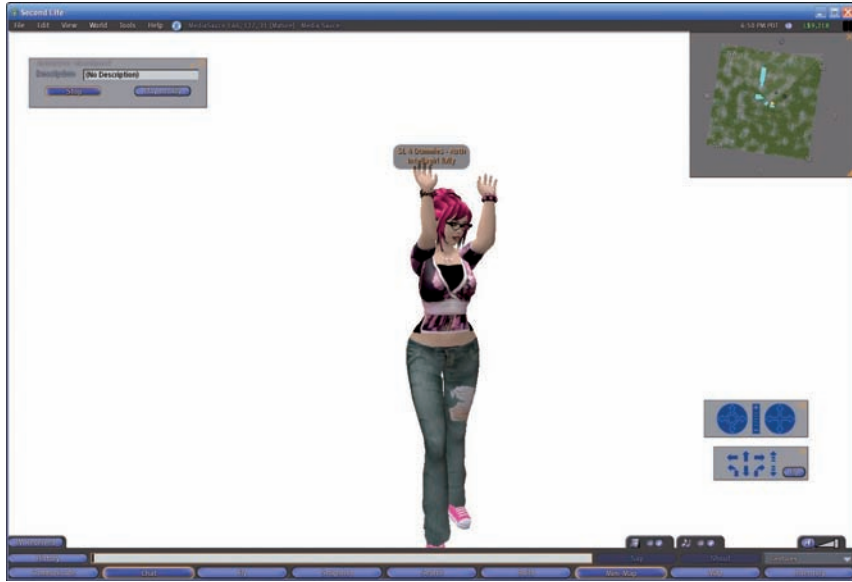   Now you can raise the roof when you want to celebrate, as shown in Figure 16-8.

Figure 16-8: SL rocks! Raise the roof!

Animations and poses can be placed in poseballs very easily. *Poseballs* are used to imbed poses into furniture, to provide dances on a dance floor, and so on. For sample poseball scripts you might want to look at, check out

```
www.netstartel.com/~walton/sl/poser.txt
```

For more on building poseballs, see Chapter 13.

Creating a Gesture

To make a *gesture,* such as waving hello or shaking your head, Gestures can be combinations of poses, animations, and sounds. In this example, we show you how to combine a few animations and sound effects to create something that really announces a party. It's easy and fun, so jump right in!

To create a gesture, follow these steps:

1. **Open your Inventory by clicking the Inventory button on the bottom-right of the screen.**

2. **Choose Create⇨New Gesture.**

   The new gesture appears in your Inventory's Gestures folder and is called New Gesture.

3. **Double-click New Gesture to open it and then give your gesture a name.**

We call ours Celebrate.

The default for the new gesture has the avatar wave and say, "Hello," but we're going to change that.

4. **Start by removing the steps in the right-hand box by clicking each one and then clicking the Remove button until the right-hand box is empty.**

5. **Add the elements you want by clicking Animation in the Library box on the left and then clicking the Add button.**

 You see Start Animation: None in the Steps box. Now you have to tell the gesture what animation to play.

6. **Click the Animation to Play drop-down list, below the Steps box, and scroll down until you see "Celebrate" (or whatever you called your animation in Step 3).**

7. **(Optional) Add a sound to your gesture:**

 a. *Click Sound in the Library box.*

 b. *Click the Add button.*

8. **(Optional, if you use Step 7) Click the Sound to Play drop-down list, below the Steps box, to see some of the sound options.**

 We opt for Comedy 1, which is in the Sounds folder in your Library (found in your Inventory). Here's how:

 a. *Go into your Library and find Comedy 1.*

 b. *Right-click Comedy 1, copy it, and paste it into your Sounds folder under My Inventory.*

 This makes it become an option on the Gesture screen.

 At this point, you have the hand raising and a sound. Continue with the remaining steps to add one more gesture.

9. **Click Animation in the Library box again, click the Add button, and then choose Clap from the Animation to Play drop-down list.**

 Your gesture menu looks something like Figure 16-9.

10. **Click the Preview button to see what your gesture will look like.**

11. **If you're happy with your gesture, click the Save button to save it in the Gestures folder in your Inventory. If you're not happy you can continue to make changes using the menus.**

12. **Select the Active check box at the bottom of the New Gesture window.**

 The gesture is available from the Gestures drop-down menu on the far right of your SL screen.

After you create a few animations and gestures, you'll either want to create more, or, well, have a better appreciation for really great ones you find in SL. Here are a couple of good places to find animations in SL. You'll see the
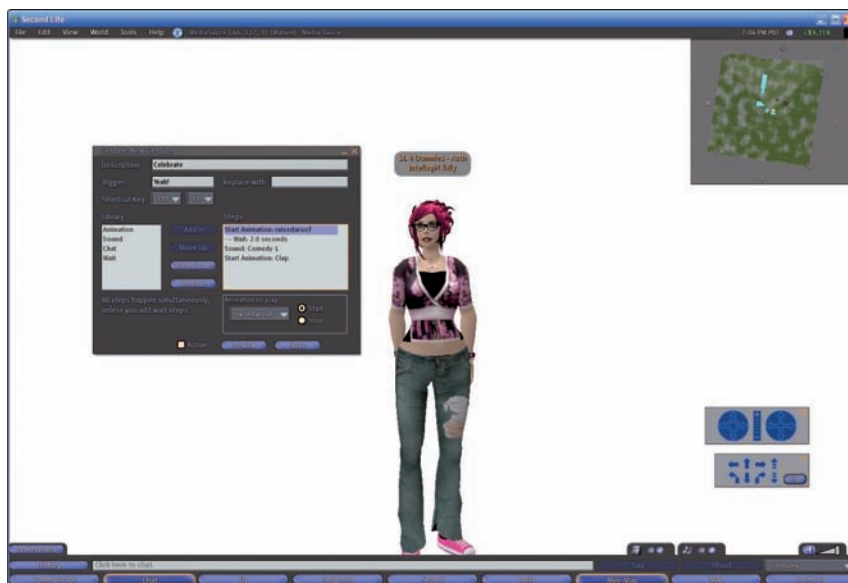
Figure 16-9: Reviewing the New Gesture window.

region name and coordinates for each location. Use these on the Map so you can teleport right to the spot.

Most stores will have pose stands you can use to preview how the animation or gesture will look when your avatar performs it. Expect to pay anything from $L1 to $L100 for each animation.

- ✔ **Bits and Bobs (Resolution; 155, 69, 24; PG):** Here you can find a HUGE selection of animations of mostly couples, ranging from dancing to, well, more "adult" behaviors.

- ✔ **Pose Paradise (Pose Paradise; 158, 117, 21; Mature):** Go here for lots of cute couple's poses, but you can also find great Kung Fu moves as well as sitting, walking, and other animations.

- ✔ **Animation Warehouse (Animation Island; 147, 26, 322; Mature):** This is a huge warehouse of animations from many different vendors.

- ✔ **M&P Shop (The Puppeteer; 142, 144, 31; Mature):** Here you can find a castle with a tower for each kind of animation, furniture with built-in animations, and HUDs for animation override.

WARNING!

Many animation stores sell mature animations. If you're worried about having to look past sexual animations to find sitting, dancing, and other innocent animations, then visit only those animation stores that are marked PG.