



Motion and Emotion

Norwich has a long history of producing artists across the spectrum of creativity, so it is no surprise that the city is home to young people working at the forefront of new media. **FULL HOUSE** speaks to Norwich-based award winning animator **Robin Fuller**.

How did you come to do animation?

When I was little I loved drawing – ghosts, monsters, people falling in to pits of acid – and I loved stories. I maintained my love for both into my early teens, and then went to art school where I studied sculpture and the writing took a back seat. I found that with sculpture, I loved making things but it wasn't really satisfying, I wanted to create things that had function as well as being visually affecting. I did not know where to go next and then I met with Suzie Hanna at NSAD who convinced me to try animation. I came to it from the technical side and through it, rediscovered my love of story telling.

Do you see yourself as a filmmaker?

I do now. I'm working on a screenplay which will probably work best as live action and which I hope to produce someday. My aim is to deliver a narrative which is engaging and original but also something which is visually stimulating, something new and exciting – that's the Grail. But I'm not there yet.

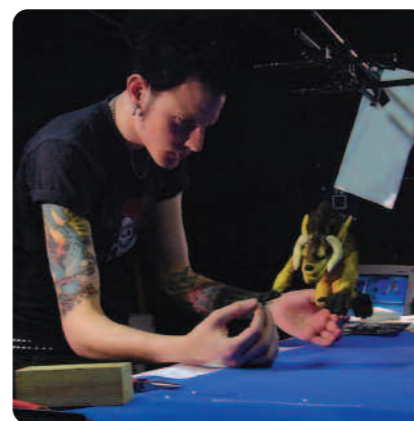
Where do you find inspiration for your stories?

Often I'll start out with just a vague idea, maybe someone will say something or I'll see something which will just give me the beginnings of story. I might start with a excerpt of a scene, or just a feeling, an emotion that I want to convey. Sometimes I get a strong visual or I might start by developing the characters and they will lead me to a story. I use a range of different techniques to build the narrative - prose, screenplay, storyboarding. Sometimes my initial ideas and early story drafts don't actually appear in the final product, but they help me create the world in which the final narrative takes place. "The Ballad of Mary Slade", which tells the tragic story of a young woman forced in to marriage, is narrated by the eponymous heroine but when I was initially developing the project she didn't even exist. I knew how I wanted the story to unravel and I knew the emotional tone I was aiming for, but it wasn't until I'd created a world and let my mind wander around it that the character was actually born.

"The Ballad of Mary Slade" has been shown at nearly 20 festivals since January of this year when it was presented with the Grand Jury Award for Best Animation at Slamdance Festival in Park City, Utah. That must have been special....

It was awesome. The whole Festival was amazing. It was a new experience for me and I was pretty nervous about people seeing the film, but the response was great. People really liked it. Winning seemed ridiculous but I was thrilled of course. It's opened doors for me. A lot of festivals have approached me on the basis of the win and it has given me the confidence to submit the film to other festivals. "The Ballad of Mary Slade" has been shown all over the world- US, Canada, Europe, it's being shown in Taiwan next month.

I try to get to as many festivals as I can, and have attended several in Europe. It's a really rewarding experience. Attending the festivals makes you part of an international community of filmmakers. You meet people you wouldn't otherwise and you see some amazing films. It's a real opportunity to develop ideas and get inspiration from other creative professionals.



Norwich hosts an important international animation festival in autumn, Aurora. What's your experience of the festival?

The Festival brings lots of filmmakers to the city and provides the chance to see what's fresh, what's new in the animation world. It's always very well attended. One of the Festival's strengths



is that there are always a lot of forums and lectures with guest speakers. There are opportunities for discussion and engagement. I think that's really important for the creative industry.

Why do you think Norwich is such a great environment for the arts?

Well the art school is really well known and well regarded. The pace of life gives you the freedom to concentrate on developing ideas, being creative. Plus there's always something going on – street performances, music, festivals. It keeps everything moving, gives everyone impetus to keep going and keep trying new things. Creativity is encouraged, not by all of the community, but by enough of it.

What can be done to help young creative professionals in Norwich?

There needs to be an attitude shift. There's still a notion that to work in the arts, in creative fields, you have to be in London. That really doesn't need to be the case. The internet, the ease of travel, these have made the world much smaller, geography doesn't need to be a feature.

That said, it is really important to have the opportunity to engage with other creative people and I'm not sure if we have the forums to do that in Norwich. The creative community is quite established and it can be difficult to find your place, especially for young people,

and especially in the sort of fields I'm working. In Manchester they have something called Sketch City which is a big social event where young people and students turn up, draw, discuss and just hang out surrounded by their creative peers. Norwich doesn't have anything like this, at least not that I'm aware of.

There's the new media centre opening though, which is helping to make creativity more accessible and making people more aware of the possibilities of creativity. That has got to be a positive thing.

To find out more about Robin's work visit www.robin-fuller.com

Robin is a graduate of **Norwich School of Art and Design**. NSAD offers a wide range of courses from Foundation to Postgraduate level. It is home to Norwich Gallery, which promotes and encourages local interest in contemporary art and design education in the region. The Gallery is open 10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday. To find out more about NSAD and the courses available, visit www.nsad.ac.uk

Aurora, the international animation festival, runs from 7th to 10th November and this year explores the theme 'Possible Worlds'. For more information, including the outline programme and ticket availability, visit www.aurora.org.uk