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James Hart



JHART

James Hart

James' illustrations seem to be so character-filled that they almost move on the page - no wonder this artist is currently working for an animated TV show. With a long list of clients through his illustration, comic book and animation career he kindly shares his experience and process with Outline.

Outline: Did you study illustration formally? How did you develop into a character and comic artist?

James: I did. I studied the Diploma of Illustration at Chisholm Frankston straight out of high school. Then continued on with the multimedia course then a year at RMIT doing the Bachelor of Multimedia focusing on animation. And recently completed a short character design course through Schoolism with Stephen Silver.

Seems a cop out to say that I've always loved comics and cartoons, but it is true.. Since I can remember I have always been drawing and coming up with my own characters and stories. I remember being 5 years old sitting in the class room trying to think of different members of a group of He-man inspired characters that I'd called the Blood-Men.

My illustration career has been quite varied in the type of work I've done, but the last couple of years I've sat down and focused on what direction I want to take. I was doing a lot of rushed jobs (many of these being educational text books) and wasn't happy with what I was producing and found my folio suffering. I knew that if I wanted to get

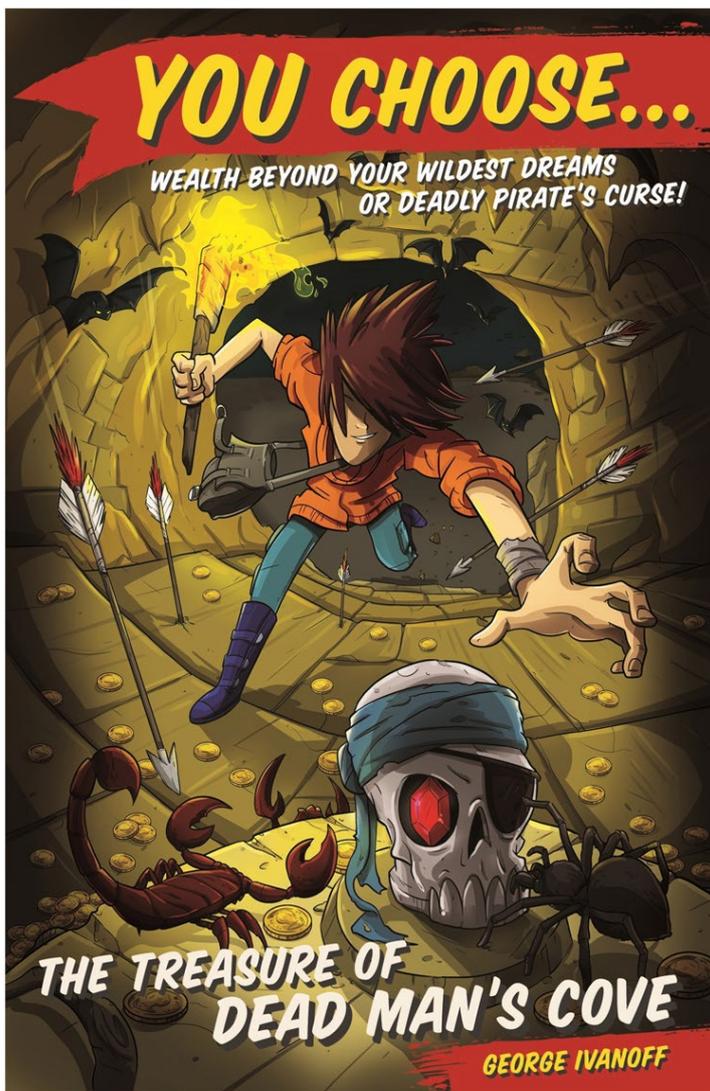
different work that I could enjoy, and in the areas that I loved, I needed to get better. So the last 2 years I've been pushing myself to improve so that I CAN be proud of my folio and have better work out there. I think I got lazy and lost a bit of my passion along the way, and maybe became a little confused as to what areas of illustration I did want to be a part of as it is quite vast.

Outline: We'd love to hear about an "average day in the studio" for you.

James: Currently I'm working full time on the animated TV series of Andy Griffiths' *The Day My Butt Went Psycho* with Richmond based Studio Moshi. I'm fortunate enough to be able to work half my week at home and a couple of days in-house. An average day in my own studio starts with sorting out 2 toddlers with my wife. Then trying to jump into work at a reasonable hour (9ish). Oh and coffee. Coffee is important.

Then it's quick social network updating/checking, emails, messages and working through a list of allocations of props (anything a character interacts with from a toilet paper roll to a truck) and characters and sometimes backgrounds for





spending a lot of additional time on drawing what I wanted and doing more and putting more out into the world. This included exhibitions, gallery openings, meet ups, drawing days and nights, conventions, social media etc.. A long that journey I have met so many new people and amazing artists. I was excited to meet Chris Kennett, an exceptional illustrator I'd followed online for a few years and whose work I love. He was working on a show about bums and suggested me to help out on *The Day My Butt Went Psycho*. My role has been to work with a team of designers on the props, characters and some backgrounds for the show. It's been one of the best jobs I've worked on. It's exactly where I wanted to be. As well as working with some amazing people I also got to design *Zombie Butts from Uranus!!* *ZOMBIE BUTTS FROM URANUS!!* The 5 year old me is constantly thrilled and giggling.

You can Check out more about the show at the facebook page here :

[www.facebook.com/
TheDayMyButtWentPsychoOfficialTVSeriesAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/TheDayMyButtWentPsychoOfficialTVSeriesAustralia)

And watch it on TV on Kids WB - Saturday mornings at 7:30am on GO!

Outline: Great to see a revival of the "Choose Your Own Adventure" I loved in the 80's! Could you tell us about the upcoming "You Choose" series?

James: I'm so excited that choose your own adventure books are coming back! These were part of my childhood too! I've been working on these in the evenings after the Psychobutt days. At the moment there are 4 books in the series. Hopefully if they are popular there'll be more. The first 2 are out in May, then the next 2 are set for release in July, I believe.

They're written by Melbourne sci-fi author George Ivanoff. He's cleverly written the tangled stories with a fun video game feel, full of lots of creepy characters and danger at every turn!! Random House actually found me through Illustrators Australia and asked me to do a sample for the first cover.. and they must have been happy as they asked me to do all four books. Loved every minute of working on these and cant wait to see them in book shops! They still have book shops right?

Outline: What mediums to you most like to use for illustration and animation work?

James: I used to have a process that involved penciling, scanning, printing, inking, scanning, colouring and more for most of my work. Now I have moved to have a completely digital paperless studio. Paperless even with my documents and paperwork. Quicker and neater. The design for animation process is similar to working on other illustrations and books. Except that a lot of the time you can bypass a rough stage with some props and expressions.

the weeks episode. There can be a lot of work involved in design for animation and some elements may just need one view, some may need multiple angles, expressions or poses.

Usually finish about 5pm so I can get into home mode and be with my family. Then as it gets to 10.30-11pm I drag myself back to my studio to do 3-4 hours additional freelance work or personal projects before crashing in a crazed heap in bed, ready for similar the next day or an early morning train ride if its an in-house day.

Outline: What do you think makes an amazing character illustration?

James: A clean clear piece that's easy to read and not overcomplicated. Good use of shapes and space. I also like extreme exaggeration. Be it proportions, perspective. Pushing the idea to the extreme and an added level of humour is good.. The ultimate goal of a character designer is to make the character appealing. Often a simplicity in the design is what can be appealing.. Or the expression or attitude they project.

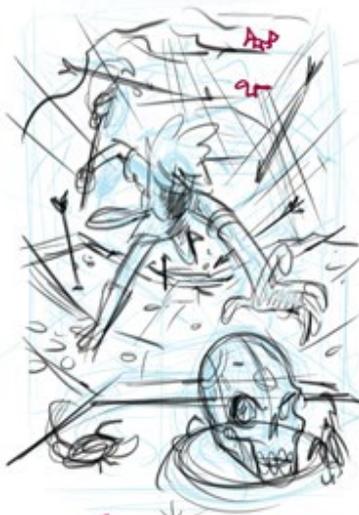
Outline: How did you get involved in *The Day My Butt Went Psycho* (surely the best animation title ever invented!). What is your role contributing to the series and how has this experience been?

James: Part of shifting my focus in my career meant

ROUGH LAYOUTS:



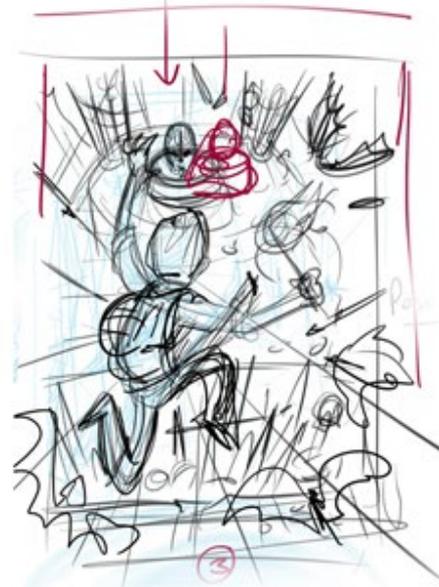
JAMES HART
ILLUSTRATION



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done myself.. I guess it's trying to do a good job, meeting and exceeding expectation and just being honest and friendly. I also try to keep social media places like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram updated (links below).

Outline: What other projects are you excited about, either upcoming or from the recent past?

James: I'm excited about the future of comics and animation in Australia. I feel so privileged to be involved. What I've worked on the past year has been really fun, both cartoon work and books. I'm about to restrict my extra freelance work so I can focus on some of my personal projects for the rest of 2014. I have a few stories I want to expand and develop into graphic novels and comics. Its going to be a lot of work but I can't wait to get them going and set them free into the wild public! Watch this space! 

{ CLICK! } James Hart

Website <http://jameshart.com.au>

Facebook www.facebook.com/JamesHartIllustrator

Twitter @JHart_illustr8s

Instagram @spewtank

This is helpful for the tight turn around of each episode.

I'm starting to use more reference material in my work now too. So that if I need to draw a certain animal I'm not just drawing it from my head. Mostly I still do, but when I remember to look it up I usually get a better result.

When I'm out and about I try and take in different shapes and structures around me to help with creating stuff later. Especially mechanical elements and different types of people on trains and in the street. If I have time I might sketch some stuff down. Or try and draw from memory later, which I'm finding to be a good exercise in observation and memory.

In terms of tools it can depend on the job. I use a few different programs. Photoshop, illustrator, Flash, Sketchbook Pro and Toon Boom Harmony. I recently completed some reader books only using sketchbook Pro as I'm loving the tools in this program and the feel of it just seems very natural and produces some nice line work digitally.

Outline: In the past, what have you found the most successful ways to market your illustration and animation work?

James: I've actually had a lot of my work come from people finding me on the Illustrators Australia website. This is one of the first places I think potential clients look. Then word of mouth has been one of the main "successful" elements in my marketing. And it isn't anything I've really



Learning more about our ABCs

Outline got in touch with the ABC to find out more about their animation programming. Thank you to Chris Rose, Commissioning Editor, ABC Children's TV for answering this interview.

Outline: Could you give our illustrators an overview of ABC for Kids? The structure, aims, and programming of this division of the ABC?

ABC: ABC Television operates two children's channels: ABC4Kids and ABC3.

ABC4Kids is the home to many trusted and loved pre-school programs including Play School, Gigggle and Hoot, Bananas in Pyjamas, Sesame Street and more.

Broadcast daily from 6am to 7pm, our programming schedule follows the pattern of daily life in a modern Australian pre-school home. From getting up and eating breakfast, time for learning, lunch and naptime to dinner and bed time ABC4Kids always offers appropriate and quality programming.

ABC3 is the No.1 television destination for school age children in Australia. It is a free, dedicated Children's channel that reflects the world and sensibilities of its audience. ABC3 offers a distinctly Australian voice to its viewers while also offering the very best in international content.

On air fifteen hours every day from 6am, ABC3 provides a wide diversity of program styles and genres of interest to our audience including drama, animation, comedy, factual entertainment, news and documentaries.

Outline: Not knowing much about the operations of the children's animation industry, it would be great if you could give us an overview of the industry as a whole. For example, internationally where are the biggest markets? How hard is it for an animation studio to create a series and have it networked?

Asia and the USA naturally are the biggest animation consumers due to the sheer size of their population. Animation production however is a global effort with a number of the larger studios residing in Europe, North America and Asia. To facilitate production, a number of countries offer financial incentives to animation producers, such as Canada, Ireland and most recently the UK. Australian producers are able to tap in to federal and territorial incentives.

Outline: We'd love to focus on the animation programs the ABC commissions (if you do). When working with animation studios, do they usually come to you with a concept or finished series? Or does the ABC team begin with an idea which is then materialised through a studio?

ABC: We commission and acquire a number of different formats and genres, including animation, from Australian and international producers. An acquisition of a completed

series usually happens once the production is complete. We do commission a number of animated programmes, predominantly for our older ABC3 audience, throughout the year. These are projects that we work closely with the producer on for a number of years – from early development (often a very short 1-2 page pitch document) through to the financing of the show and then production. Animation is a lengthy process so you need patience and good relationships! What we would ask though is that the project is pitched to us by an experienced animation producer.

Outline: Having a 2 year old, I am beginning to get more acquainted with the ABC2 kids programming - with animation series from all over the world! What criteria do you use to select the animations? How are they discovered and what makes them the right fit for the ABC?

ABC: We schedule a diverse range of the best programmes from around the world to help our audience learn, play and explore. Play School (now in its 49th year) and Gigggle & Hoot are our two home grown key brands that talk directly to our young audience.

Outline: Could you share with us some of the most successful animation series the ABC has run? (For example, I distantly remember Pingu playing when I was a child!). In your opinion, what has made this series so successful?

ABC: Our very own Bananas in Pyjamas is immensely popular with our ABC4Kids audience, as is the wonderful Peppa Pig. Octonauts is a great example of soft learning through great storytelling.

Outline: Are there any technological developments that have changed the way animations are created in recent times?

ABC: Computers have really changes how 2D, CG and mixed media animation is produced. TV struggled in the early 2000's with CG as it couldn't replicate feature film quality, but technology advances all the time, software improves and the animators become even more experienced. I think we're seeing some of the best animation – technically – at the moment, though great storytelling has always been the essential ingredient.

Outline: What programs are you excited about this year?

ABC: In May we are hugely excited to be launching a fully Australian produced animated series on ABC3 called The Flamin' Thongs and later in the year we have new episodes of ABC4Kids favourites including Octonauts, Mike the Knight and Chuggington. **1**