



Balrogs, Eel Girl and the Hamsters from Hell

If you've ever wondered what cinema blood is based on*, or how the vast cathedral-like caves in the *Lord of the Rings* films were created, Paul Campion (MA Computer Animation 1999) can tell you.

Paul has had a fascination with models and special effects since he was a child. He began his working life as a self employed designer of book covers, but then the digital revolution appeared and commissions dried up. Seeing the way the wind was blowing, he capitalised on the knowledge he had of special effects, accumulated from the magazines he'd subscribed to for years, and signed up for his MA here at BU. Most of those on his course wanted to be animators, but he spotted a gap in the market, and went from his MA straight into a job as a texture painter at Framestore, one of the largest visual effects and computer animation studios in Europe.

* Golden syrup, would you believe! Horribly messy and none too popular with the acting profession.



He wasn't there long before the opportunity came to work on the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy in New Zealand. It's a great place for making films as apart from being relatively cheap, it has a huge range of scenery, from the spectacular mountains that were such a feature of the Rings trilogy to villages that can double as small-town America. Paul loves it for the extreme sports and outdoor activities, and many others of the "Bournemouth Mafia" have since joined him out there. BU has a great reputation for producing animators and special effects graduates and there are clusters of them working on most big special effects films. Such insider contacts are also a feature on many of BU's Media courses – Paul's MA in Computer Animation advertised the chance to meet people in the industry and he says his initial scepticism disappeared as executives from Framestore and Sony appeared to meet students and give guest lectures.

He's worked on many other films, but says that as well as *Lord of the Rings*, *Sin City* has also been a big calling card – it may not have been as big a box office success, but special effects buffs love it, and one of his favourite pieces of work is the snowy background behind the actor Michael Madsen and his police car. Believe it or not, only the car and the actor are real – the background is a model made of chicken wire, bicarbonate of soda – and large quantities of imagination!

Paul's now moved on to direct short films of his own – check his website www.paulcampion.com for the scarily hilarious *Night of the Hell Hamsters*, much enjoyed by the Alumni and Development Office (though some of us did watch it through our hands), and for *Eel Girl*, which has already won multiple awards at film festivals here and abroad.

The inspiration for *Night of the Hell Hamsters* came from a discarded idea at a 48 hour film festival Paul took part in. Participants are given a genre, a line of dialogue, a character and a prop – and 48 hours to make a film. Unfortunately the genre was a musical, not something he's interested in, but the hamsters survived and the film contains references to *Psycho*, Freddie Starr and Monty Python, amongst others.

Paul's also been inspired by the work of American author Brian Keene, and his next project is adapting his books *Terminal* and *Dark Hollow* for the big screen. But it's a big step from shorts to a full length film and finance is the greatest problem. Persuading investors that you can direct actors, plan and organise to finish shooting on time and on budget, and tell a good story on film is no easy matter, but Paul's hoping that with work as good as *Eel Girl* and *Night of the Hell Hamsters* behind him it won't be long before he's in the canvas chair with his name on the back.

We wish him luck!