

Lew Keilar

{PROFILE}

Lew Keilar

With a Certificate IV in Film & Screen and a Certificate IV in VFX, Lew has created award winning animation and stop-motion works, as well as 2D illustrations. Lew kindly shares an insight into his world and his detailed, graphic illustrations.

Outline: Can you tell us about your educational background - and what draws (excuse the term) you to animation?

Lew: During my early thirties I pursued a career as an illustrator by completing a graphic design course in Sydney, majoring in illustration. For over 10 years I practiced as a traditional illustrator and in 2001 made the transition to digital. In 2007 I started making amateur short films and a year later undertook a Certificate IV course in Film and Screen at METROSCREEN in Paddington, NSW. During the course I made a range of short documentaries, interior dramas and exterior dramas and graduated with a basic first hand experience in producing, directing, editing, cinematography, sound recording, writing and pitching.

After working on a series of professional shoots I realised I had a greater interest in animation rather than involvement in live-action film-making.

This coincided with a scholarship to do a follow-up VideoFX course studying 2D animation by my alma mater METROSCREEN. Also during this time I was developing a new illustration style that was amenable to being animated.

The results of this study can be seen in my graduation piece produced from the course:

Δ A New Day In Old Japan

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9d1bRzhchk>

As a filmmaker, what I am principally driven by is the desire to tell a story. I'm drawn to animation because it allows me to be a filmmaker on my own terms and gives me greater creative control. Through illustration I can create my own sets, characters and props. Through the animation and editing process I can create sequences that bring my script to life. Editing on a time-line is one of my favourite creative processes as I get to play with that final element all film-makers relish. Time.



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Simply put, animation allows me to extend my illustrations to tell a story using time-based art.

Outline: What challenges do you find in bringing your illustrations to life through movement?

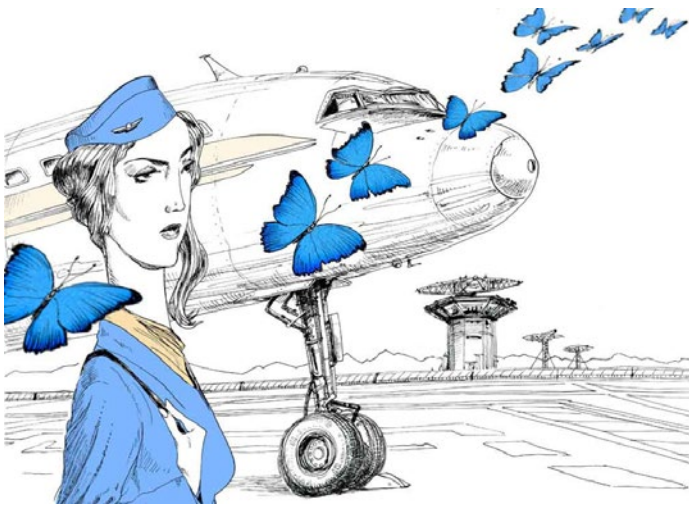
Lew: Bringing illustrations to life through 2D animation can be very challenging and requires a comprehensive understanding of pace, timing and movement. However having extensive experience as a visualiser, comic book and storyboard artist has taught me the principals and techniques of sequencing images to create affective time based art. What I actually find most challenging is the technical aspect of animating and using programs such as Apple Motion and After Effects. Animating on these complex programs and transforming my illustrations into moving sequences is time consuming, finicky work. Good finicky work I hasten to add!

The payoff comes when a sequence is completed and edited into the cut to maximise it's emotional impact in the overall story.

Outline: When you start out an animation project, how do you first conceptualise the work - loose sketches or straight to storyboarding, or something else altogether?

Lew: It depends on the project.

With *Escape Velocity* it began with a pre-existing illustration.



It became this short film.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcQSzP5WCYU>

A New Day In Old Japan began like that too.

A single image has an imbedded narrative and expanding on it can give you a whole story.

Dancing With The Jellyfish, a music video, began with a pre-existing song by singer Jeff Duff. I took the song phrase by phrase and made an image sequence based on what the music suggested. Along with the co-writer I spent a



morning at the Sydney Aquarium filling my head with aquatic imagery then rough storyboarding the song completely in about an hour and a half in a nearby café.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=quIfw_kDCiw

Ray Kurzweil and The Singularity began from a script I co-wrote with artist and musician Steve Smith but it's real genesis came from trying to win a short film contest on innovation! This film's success came from a very tight script that went through multiple rewrites over a period of a week.

Once I had the script I broke it down into images I would be drawing on the day of the shoot. Jeff Duff's music and I did the Voice Over.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8Y1TkaEkHs>

This is a whiteboard animation, a style of animating I've been exploring and building on over the last two years.

Here's a recent variation on whiteboard animation, *Techbar* for clients Charter Hall through my artists' agent The Jacky Winter Group.

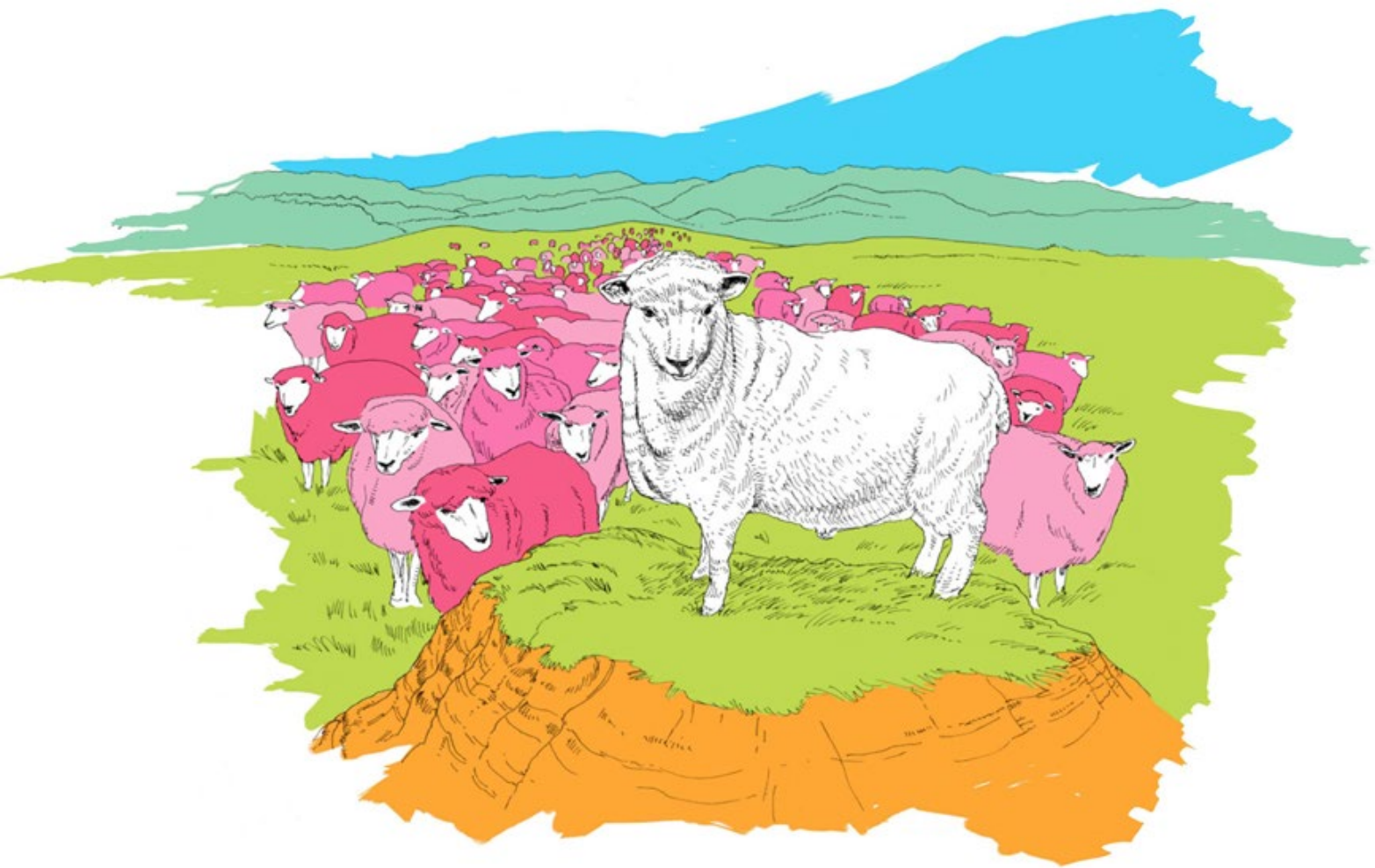
The original commission was just for a whiteboard illustration but expanded to include a process video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQTa8PM1460>

Outline: It was great to see your success in sharing your work through film festivals, such as winning the music video category BEfilm Underground Film Festival, New York. How do you hear about these festivals, and have you found them beneficial in marketing your work?

Lew: The WITHOUTABOX website <https://www.withoutabox.com/> lists all the festivals worth entering and if you join up you can upload your films as on-line screeners for festival selectors to review your work.

Through this process I've had various short films screen at the BEfilm Underground Film Festival, New York; 3 Minute Film Festival, Santa Fe; D.C. Shorts, Washington D.C., Sandfly Film Festival, Sydney and the Byron Bay International Film Festival, Byron Bay.



The highest accolade for my animation so far is Best Music Video at BEfilm for *Jellyfish*.

Another of my short films to get a gong is *Logical Question To God*, once again a music video but live-action rather than animation.

Δ <https://vimeo.com/37232927>

It was selected in the inaugural American Illustration-American Photography (AI-AP) International Motion Arts Award.

Like Dancing With The Jellyfish it is a Jeff Duff song but the visual style is completely different.

Getting these awards has been a great way to draw attention to my projects and expand my network of contacts in the industry and given me credibility when discussing animations with clients.

Outline: In terms of commercial projects, do you find yourself doing more animation work than straight illustration?

Lew: Illustration still outweighs animation but I'm finding clients are responding to the idea that an illustration from me can also have the potential for a short film as well.

I'm now applying the timelapse method of whiteboard animation to my illustrations. My inkline drawings are

usually first pass renderings without prep sketches drawn directly to paper, so when I film that process happening, speed it up in the editing and then segue to the final coloured illustration it has a seamless quality.

This accompanying process video extends the illustrations into a format suited to social media and PR material.

There are three short films done this way,

Finding Our Place

Δ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7MnKa_2a00

The Alarm Bells,

Δ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7E42UCrJKnE>

and Monsterbox.

Δ <https://vimeo.com/89062364>

Outline: Could you tell us about the MONSTERBOX project?

Lew: I'm sure a few IA members would have got the invitation to submit a 'monster' illustration to this selective project or been published in the previous one. I don't usually like to give my work away for free but the theme and final product, which is having your monster printed as part of a collection of 150 monsters on cards in a boxed



set distributed for free to various art-directors around the world was too good to pass up. My illustrative style owes a lot to the look and simplicity of Japanese woodblock art of Hiroshige and Hokusai so I approached my choice of monster by referencing Japanese mythological creatures called Yokai, evil incarnations of the grotesque. Combining something hideously spider-like with an image of elegance like a geisha came to me during research; and the colour scheme, defined for me by the MONSTERBOX submission criteria was the real unexpected gift of the project.

I love this piece. Spider legs, flowing robes and Mount Fuji- what's not to like!

Outline: What plans do you have for your animation and illustration work this year?

Lew: Currently I'm working on a project with Craig Johns of Thursday Design for The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

I'm illustrating men and women who are having their lives interrupted and confronted by this disease and those likenesses are being used on information material by the Foundation.

It's quite a departure for the organisation to use illustrated images rather than photography but drawn images give the faces a more universal appeal rather than the specificity of a photograph.

The video I've made of the drawing process is also going to be used in the new information campaign.

Regardless of the subject matter, it has a life-affirming quality to it inspired by the people I've been drawing.

Like the Benevolent Society project before it, it's work I'm proud to have been commissioned to do.

On the personal front I'm still entertaining a Kickstarter project to fund a short film that amplifies on subject matter in my Ray Kurzweil short but that's probably going to be affected by my existing storyline's similarity to the latest Johnny Depp movie on artificial intelligence.

I guess I'll know soon enough!●

{CLICK!} Lew Keilar

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