



# Festival du Film Merveilleux

## Interview with director Kirk Hendry



*“Well told fairytales remind older people that what they wanted for themselves when they were younger people can still come to pass.”*

The Festival du Film Merveilleux took place in Paris this July with a selection of the best fantasy short films from around the world. **Marie Barraillier** was seduced by one film in particular - **JUNK** - by London film maker **Kirk Hendry**. It won the **Best Screenplay** and **Best Music** categories. She talked with Kirk about his work and inspirations.

*Can you introduce yourself to Khimaira readers?*

My name is Kirk Hendry. I am a film maker working at London production studio Th1ng.

*Can you summarize your movie?*

Well, it's the story of a boy with an obsession for junk food. But it's about human progress and adaptability. And about the borderline insanity of chasing your dreams. Ha ha.

*How long have you worked on that project?*

The film took two years to produce with a team of around twenty people. It was quite a thing.

*Why this story? What message do you wish to give?*

I wrote a bunch of short stories that all featured a single character pursuing their dream, but their dreams were not ones that were approved of by their society. So they lived on the periphery, were essentially friendless, and all had horrible things happen to them. But in spite of this, they stuck with their dream til the end. They were cautionary tales told with black humour and Junk was one of these stories. I guess much of this was borne out of the frustration of pursuing my own dreams, and watching other people I knew give up theirs as the years went by.





***Can we say Tim Burton is an inspiration? And what are your inspirations in the animation world?***

Tim has done some great work - Edward Scissorhands in particular - although he is not a direct influence on JUNK. Lotte Reiniger, who made what is considered to be the first animated feature film with 'The Adventures of Prince Achmed', was the stylistic starting point. But I think with any project you do, there is never one inspiration. You are always pulling from a lifetime of things that have meant something to you that is forever sloshing around inside you. I love animation, however my inspiration comes from fantastical creations in general, of which animation is one of many. I get inspired by fifties and sixties musicals, matte paintings from old movies, the things Walt Disney did, beyond the wonderful animation he produced, like the theme parks and music projects he oversaw. Karel Zeman. Star Wars. And of course many things outside of the film and illustration world. Music, sport, whatever. Anytime someone executes something with personality and love, I am very admiring of that. And you need a lot of love for what you are doing to enable you to get to the finish line. I think it is an amazing time for animation because what is considered animation is now wide open. With 3-D and photorealism, many live action films have sequences that are essentially animation. So there is a lot of great character work being done. And with motion capture, we are making 'animated' movies that begin with an actor's performance. Though I think audiences are still uncomfortable with

the look of virtual actors. The era of animation being considered 'cartoons' seems to be over. What I also like is people doing 3-D in an illustrative style, and not just using it in a photo real way. Making the aesthetic hand drawn, but having the depth and dynamics of 3-D. And all these tools are available to people at minimal cost. So the most incredible work is being produced in short films now. The ideas being expressed just blows your mind sometimes. It's wonderful.

***I've seen ROUND, your first movie which is also poetic and magical. Why this attraction for enchantment?***

Well, there are many reasons I am drawn to the fantastic. I like to escape. I enjoy experiencing the depths of other people's imaginations and inventiveness. The thing with fantasy, because you are creating a world and everything in it, it is an amazing platform for doing something very personal. It is also great for allegory. You can make a comment on something topical without ramming it down the audience's throat because you can disguise it in a new setting or time.

I also believe that the real power of fairytales is not for children. If someone makes something in the fantasy realm that only appeals to children, it usually means it's not very good. Humans, regardless of their age, look for connection and resonance in creativity. This is why many people are left cold by a lot of conceptual art. They can't see anything they recognise in it and it subsequently fails to speak to them in a meaningful way. I see the real value of fairytales is in their power to inspire older humans. Children don't need inspiration as much because everything is still new to them and they see opportunities in all that is around them. They haven't been ground down by repetition and had their hopes and dreams dashed against the rocks of life and love. Ha ha. They haven't accepted second best for themselves. Well told fairytales remind older people that what they wanted for themselves when they were younger people can still come to pass. And they need reminding often!







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***How do you feel when your movie is nominated at four different festivals?***

Recognition is always nice. And useful. Films, and shorts in particular, are such a huge team effort of people working a long time for little to no money, that it is great when new talents who worked on them can use these accolades to help further their careers. Because that is ultimately the real worth of industry recognition - jobs.

***What are your next projects?***

Aside from keeping busy doing commercial work that I make a living from, I am about to do an animatic for my next film, which is a very exciting stage. I am also collaborating on longer form material with another director.

***And finally, what is your favorite animated movie?***

Are we talking features or shorts? Because I think the

most interesting work is being done in shorts. Animated features are a tricky thing because very few of them engage continuously over the ninety minutes. All my favourites have weak points. The first part of *The Triplets of Belleville* is really wonderful. I like *Monsters Inc* a lot. It achieves so much. There is subtlety to the performances and depths to the characters that really bring you in. *Avatar*. Though many people won't consider it animation, I thought that was the first time a movie laden with synthetic sets and virtual characters actually worked because the characters were strong enough to keep you engaged in their story. The failings of the *Star Wars* prequels were vindicated by *Avatar*. It all comes back to good characters in a well told story. The hardest thing to get right.

**Find out more about JUNK at [kirkhendry.com](http://kirkhendry.com)**

