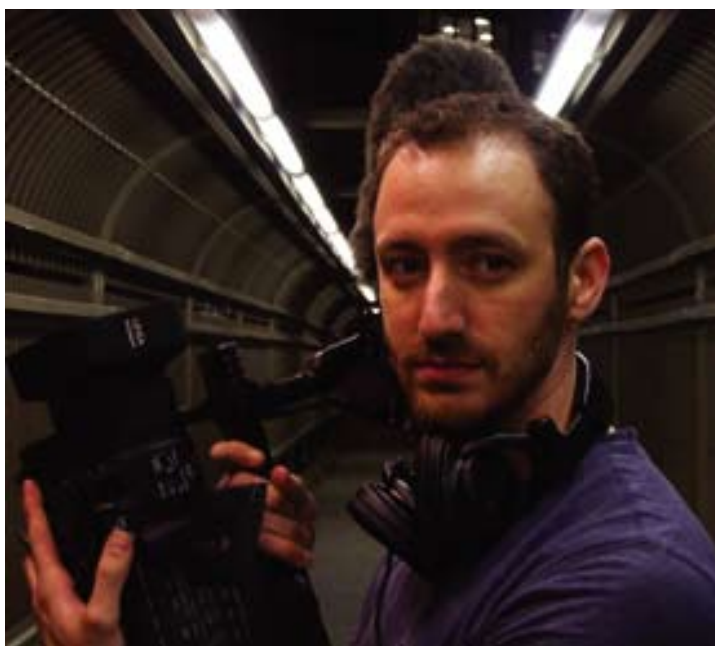


Drawn by pain, Driven by passion

A Toon Boom Studio Case Study with Jeskid Productions



Originally from Manhattan, Jesse Cowell came to Los Angeles where he enrolled in the University of Southern California's revered Cinema School. After earning his Master of Fine Arts degree in Cinema/Television Production, winning several cine Eagle awards as well as a student Emmy, Jesse then formed Jeskid Productions.

His first production was the highly irreverent comedy *Shades of Gray*, which he launched completely online in 2005. By releasing his feature to the web, Jesse not only began to build a significant fan base, but was also awarded the audience choice for Best Director's site on the web by Movies.com! Shortly thereafter *Shades of Gray* jumped onto the big screen as it was awarded Best Comedy Feature Film at the Microcinema Fest in Chicago.

Around this time, Erica Langworthy, an online fan of Jesse's work and graduate from the Columbus College of Art and Design in Ohio (with a BFA in Time Based Media), sent her portfolio to Jesse who really loved her anime style of drawing. The encounter of these two great creative minds could not have happened at a better time, as Jesse was immediately convinced she would be involved in his next project, *Drawn by Pain*.

Drawn by Pain tells the story of Emily Waters, an eight-year old girl who witnessed her father's brutality of her mother and as a result, an ever-growing rage within her manifested into the real world with vengeful anime characters. Fusing animation with live action, Emily (now a grown woman) slices an animated sword through all that stands before her as she struggles to deal with her real life, inner (and outer) demons and the person she fears the most: herself!

Drawn by Pain is a 12-part series shot on the streets of New York using a state of the art High Definition camera. Teaming up with cutting edge animator Erica Langworthy and blossoming actress Marissa Parness, Jesse has made a film of psychological intensity and action that unfolds one layer at a time for the short-form hungry web audience. With each episode averaging just ten minutes, "I think people will be pleased with where the story takes them and I really believe they are ready for something new and different" says Jesse.

In what would be massive undertakings for even a large full-time team, both Jesse and Erica have day jobs, which forces them to spend every waking moment of their free time to bring each new episode of *Drawn by Pain* to life.



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"It isn't work if you enjoy it" laughs Jesse who controls the casting, scripting, shooting, directing and editing aspects of the project while Erica uses Toon Boom Studio to create about two intense minutes of animation in each episode.

Erica explains, "I am a huge Anime and video game fan, which inspires me greatly in the creation of my characters. Being trained as a traditional animator, it was great to go from pencil and paper to a completely paperless workflow. Jesse shoots digitally, edits the film, then exports the shots as numbered sequences in JPEG format. I then draw directly into the frames using the Wacom Cintiq pressure sensitive tablet screen and Toon Boom Studio's intuitive interface. When a shot is done, the way Studio exports alpha channels in full resolution, but small file sizes, makes it easy for Jesse to receive the files electronically for comments and implementation. With limited time and tight deadlines, we can honestly say that combining Studio with the Cintiq saved the project. It works so quickly and efficiently,"

Jesse continues: "The hardest thing was figuring out if this could work at all on a tiny budget, but thanks to affordable tools like Toon Boom, new workflows, and an open form of distribution, a whole new world of professional filmmaking has opened to people with the dedication to try and make it happen. But



nowadays, you can't just make the film and wait for people to come to you. At least 40 percent of my time goes into spreading the word and increasing viewership through various channels on the web, including our site, which has near high definition streaming quality. We currently are featured in the ITUNES store as "What's Hot", reviewed very favorable by BRIGHTCOVE, spotlighted on VEOH, and have between 10,000 to 20,000 people coming to watch each episode on YouTube, many of which go beyond the typical idea of fan. They help promote the film in chat rooms, comic conventions by handing out business cards, and even by donating to help buy the High Definition camera itself! I myself walk around with my ipod trying to get people excited about working on and sharing the project. Nothing says you believe in what you are doing more than having it ready to show at all times!

The plan is simple. We want to work our hardest to make something people enjoy and hopefully reach millions instead of thousands. With that

kind of exposure and advertising dollar, the goal isn't to get rich, just have more resources to make more films. Erica and I are investing so much personally to make this project happen, we have to have faith that only positive things will come out of giving everything we have to Drawn by Pain".

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Erica is definitely on the same wavelength. Her utter commitment from day one has translated into innovative design and greater intensity.

"I remember Professor Ron Saks at C.C.A.D. explaining the importance of the ability to draw, and the understanding of motion and timing relying on 2D techniques. I certainly put his advice into practice in every episode that I work on. Toon Boom Studio offers great tools that support these principles: the multiple onion-skinning levels make the drawing so much easier, the short cut interface speed up the creation process, the paint tools make the total experience so efficient. I also find the ease with which you can program macros into the program to be wonderful. Speed is very important as I draw each and every frame differently to give that particular character the living sketch look that ties them directly into the idea of jumping straight off the little girl's drawings. It's a lot of work, but worth every frame if it helps the film."



Jesse adds: "Erica is getting faster at execution. She can design her own characters and animate them in less time by maximizing and learning new Toon Boom Studio tools as we go. Nothing replaces good habits though. When faced with a new challenge like the wolf we have in Episode 5, she went and researched the anatomy and body structure of the animal for hours on end to make sure she could create a realistic animal. The end result must be believable; this is where the true art of animation comes into play".

With all twelve episodes already shot, Jesse premiered his first episode in February 2007 and has released a new episode every three weeks (just enough time for Erica to create the animation component) since. With a bit more blood, sweat and tears, they race towards an exciting conclusion in episode 12 and whatever other projects they can sink their teeth into next.

"I just hope we can give people the gift of movies I got as a child and hopefully bring them back to where I feel they should be: full of heart, risk and creativity." says Jesse as he shuffles back to work on episode 6.

<http://www.drawnbypain.com>