

Jacob Banschick
Prof. Koenig
Digital Media Foundations 1111
April 15 2017

Research Paper #2

In the animation field, it is pretty easy to overlook the animators, artists, storyboard artists, 3d modelers, and riggers who painstakingly work on a project, no matter how much of a success it turns out to be. Undoubtedly, if you were to be asked what were your top 5, top 10, top 20 animated movies or shows, you would probably be able to provide a plethora of answers. But of those choices, how many of those animators could you name? How many animators do you know by name period? One such artist is breaking away from the trend of faceless illustrators and animators, and that man is Paul Robertson.

Australian pixel artist, Paul Laurence Adelbert Garfield Robertson (that's a mouthful) was born in Geelong, Victoria. From a young age, Paul entered the field of digital art as a mere hobby.

"When I was young I always liked drawing and cartoons, and one time my friend gave me a DOS animation program and I just started messing around with it, and making little films, and it grew from there." - *Paul Robertson "Pushing pixels with Paul Robertson"* Webster, Andrew

Growing up on a healthy gaming catalogue of Bubble Bobble, Liquid Kids, King of Fighters, and Metal Slug, Paul became enamored with the simplistic graphic style that somehow, at the same time, seemed to push the limit to what pixel art was capable of representing. Not restricted to videogames however, Paul also finds inspirations in sources like horror movies, 80s action heroes, blues brothers, gainax anime, akira, norse mythology, world leaders, and more (4). such as In an interview with Gamasutra, he goes on to explain his methods. "I just try to make the most awesome and ridiculous thing I can think of," he explains. "I always imagine other people's reaction when they look at something I've done, and if it seems underwhelming I'll push it further or add more to it till I think it's good enough. Actually this works for any art, not just pixels."(2)

It's this code of ethics that makes Paul's style so unique, and yet somehow so iconic. By which, I mean Paul doesn't allow his participation in a certain market dictate what he can and cannot produce online. Just because he works on children's shows, does not mean he cannot produce artwork that depicts violence or anything sexual in nature. Zombies, monsters, blood and gore, anime heroines, Paul does not censor himself for the sake of maintaining a squeaky clean portfolio, he simply makes what he likes. It's a refreshing change of pace to see someone just let loose, and make what they choose. It's this carefree attitude which attracts many to his work (myself included).

In 2006, Paul released his first short film *Pirate Baby's Cabana Battle Street Fight 2006* (most of Paul's work is titled this way, bear with me.), which depicts a fictional side scrolling beat-em-up. While it will unfortunately never be adapted into an actual game, according to Paul himself, it had cemented his name in the industry for his colorful, iconic sprite style, along with its action-packed, sometimes disturbing imagery. His fans would not have to wait long, as in 2008, Paul released his 2nd short film *Kings of Power 4 Billion%*. By now, the industry had begun to gain interest in Paul's unique style. In 2010, Paul was hired on by Ubisoft Montreal to work on *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World: The Game*, based on the movie of a similar name, with its style borrowed from the source material, and beautifully recreated in 16-bit style. Unfortunately according to Paul, working with Ubisoft proved to be almost as disastrous as the box office results for the movie itself, as he reveals in an interview with *The Verge*:

"It was actually a pretty stressful experience. We worked on it for about a year, with the first half at Ubisoft Montreal where we were very poorly managed, with a mostly unqualified team and inappropriate tools for what we were trying to do. The game got postponed for a while and then cancelled and then revived and finished in China at Ubisoft's Chengdu studio. I went back home and did the rest of my work remotely. It's pretty surprising it came out as good as it did."- *Paul Robertson "Pushing pixels with Paul Robertson"* Webster, Andrew

In 2012, Robertson worked with Tribute studios to produce *Mercenary Kings*, which started as a kickstarter project. Much of Tribute's staff was made up of the ex Ubisoft employees that had worked alongside him during the Scott Pilgrim project, and though the Scott Pilgrim project was a nightmare, their natural comradery would draw the two together. When word got

out that legendary pixel artist Paul Robertson was working on the project, their 3,880 backers raised well over the asked \$75,000 amount, closing the fundraiser at \$116,064. Paul went on to help Tribute Studios with two other games within the Mercenary Kings trilogy, as well as working closely with *WayForward* studios as an art director for their Shantae series in *Shantae and the Pirate's Curse*. Paul's work can be seen in more than video games, having worked on famous cartoons like Disney's *Gravity Falls* from 2014-2016. Working alongside Ivan Dixon, Robertson produced an intro for *The Simpsons* in 2015, a more recent tradition given to animators of certain merit. Since then, Robertson has produced many TV bumps for the late night channel *Adult Swim*, interludes that occur when the show cuts to or returns from commercials. Of note, Paul has produced several for the popular animated series *Rick and Morty*, A show that perfectly emphasizes his knack for the absurd and sometimes perverse.

Paul Robertson is an example of an animator breaking from the trend of a nameless animation statistic, and becoming someone known for their particular style. It could be said this is what naturally draws people into Paul's skill as a creator, Paul's lack of any true hidden meaning in his work. Paul simply creates what he likes. In the interview with The Verge, when asked why his style is so saturated with copious amounts of violence, monsters, and sexualization, Paul had this to say:

"Whenever I make a piece I always try to make something that I'd want to look at. I just like ridiculous and extreme things, so that's what I try to create. I always try to push my art as far as it can go. Even if it's a stupid idea, something awesome and ridiculous can still be made out of it."

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