

CINEFANTASTIQUE

SCREENING THE IMAGINATION

Week 9: *Brian and Charles* (2022), *Asteroid City* (2023) and *Wonka* (2023)

Brian and Charles (2022)

- David Earl began experimenting with the idea in 2006
- He developed the idea of a man and his robot into a radio show in 2013
- Rupert Majendie did the voice of Charles
- Chris Heywood heard the radio and built a crude version of Charles for the stage
- In 2016 Earl, Heywood and Majendie approached director Jim Archer with the idea for a self-funded short film called *Brian and Charles*
- The short caught the eye of Film4 and it became one of Ollie Madden's first feature commissions as head of creative.
- BFI funding followed at the end of 2019.
- Bankside boarded as the sales agent, with Focus Features distributing in the US, and Universal Pictures internationally.
- Shot in just four weeks, owing to the expense of filming in such a remote location.

"We did the short as a documentary, then when we started the feature, I thought we should go back to making narrative comedy... But when we started writing it, we felt we were missing something. The way Brian talks to camera and is essentially lying to us in those first 10 minutes – he's telling us one thing but we know he's saying something else – we can only get that in the documentary format...I thought there was something to be done in mockumentary, to make mockumentaries similar to modern docs, making them arty, ambient and atmospheric – not Spinal Tap, not The Office, but the new version of that."

Jim Archer

"The towering, ungainly Charles could easily be creepy and uncanny, but he's nothing but loveable – with a childlike streak that gives way to teenage petulance and bedroom sulks sound tracked by death metal. 'You are a very, very cheeky robot!' scolds Brian as his new pal begins defying him in all sorts of ways that will be instantly recognizable to any parent watching."

Time Out

"Made with genuine affection and innately British whimsy, this is really just an odd-couple comedy about two lonely blokes — one of whom has a "washing machine for a tummy"

Empire

Wonka (2023)

- Warner Bros. Pictures purchased the rights for the Willy Wonka, from the Roald Dahl estate
- Initially, the idea was met with negativity – there has already been two filmed versions of the story, plus Gene Wilder had recently passed
- Producer David Heyman announced It would be a 'prequel' of sorts to the 1971 film
- The director's job was offered to Paul King who had written and directed the first to Paddington film but decided to pass on the third instalment

"I was a bit nervous because origin stories don't always feel essential, and I was aware this is such a beloved property,"

Paul King

- After taking on the job, King first revisited the book

"I realised that it's also an amazing emotional masterpiece. I really wasn't expecting that. Or maybe I had forgotten how incredibly touching it is. Poor little Charlie suffers so much. And you're so rooting for him. I found myself in tears at the end of it."

- A companion piece to the 1971 film and the original book
- Set in the 1940s and inspired by European stories
- Though King described it as a film with songs rather than a straight up musical – the film was inspired by *Oliver!* (1968), as King also thought that *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* had been heavily influenced by Dickens

Wes Anderson

- Hailing from Huston, Texas, Wes Anderson was born in 1969
- In 1991, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with a major in philosophy. He describes being intrigued by *The Meaning of Meaning* by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards.

Influences

- Pedro Almodóvar
- Woody Allen
- Satyajit Ray
- Hal Ashby
- Roman Polanski

Methods of Working

"But it's also what surrounds it, where all the actors stay in the same hotel. We have dinner at one table every single night with Wes and all guests; it's like actor camp... On a Wes Anderson film there are no trailers, no dressing rooms... there's no hierarchy, no call sheet—you are just ready to go at about 9:30, 10:00 in the morning in your wardrobe. You hop in his golf cart with him or a van and you go to the set... you hang out with everyone so you never know if you are going to be called into a scene. He's such a kind and generous spirit... also in his personal life. Everyone makes the same amount of money. You just show up and off you go. Sometimes you might [be] just a small supporting role in a scene and then [in] others you'll be the lead in a movie."

Bryan Cranston

Noted for

- Postmodern
- Nostalgic attention to detail
- Subversion of mainstream conventions of narrative
- References to different genres in the same film
- Eccentric characters with complex sexual identities

Visual Style

- Extensive use of flat space camera moves (pans, tilts, and zooms within scenes that look two-dimensional)
- Symmetrical compositions
- Snap-zooms
- Limited color palette, and handmade art direction often using miniatures.

Asteroid City (2022)

- Inspired by the pandemic.
- The fact that the group in the film are quarantined, was not in the original script but added later
- Initially announced as a romance, it was later revised to be a movie about 'brainy teens'
- In a retro-futuristic version of the 1950s, a television host introduces a documentary about the creation and production of Asteroid City, a play by the famed playwright Conrad Earp.
- The play's events are depicted in widescreen and stylized color, while the television special is seen in black-and-white Academy ratio.