

Ryan and Stephanie Bellgardt

BOILING POINT

1) For Both:

Collaboration at Boiling Point Media

Ryan, you and Stephanie have built so much together at Boiling Point

Media. How has your creative partnership helped shape the companies vision, and what is it like collaborating as a creative team?

Ryan: Well we just work together so well, she compliments my weaknesses and brings so much skill and artistry to the table. I've called her our "secret weapon" many times.

My job involves looking forward and developing workflows and processes for our current and future clients. Once those are in place, Stephanie and the team do what they do to hopefully bring lots of excitement and value to our clients.

Stephanie: What's been really cool for me is being part of the "grassroots" development of Boiling Point's movies, and becoming known as a creature FX house from our first movie we did together, *Gremlin*. Ryan has been instrumental in helping me grow as an artist. He always pushes me to make something better, to improve on what I know.

2) For Ryan:

Leadership and Direction

As a director and creative leader, what drives your passion for visual effects and storytelling? Are there particular films, artists, or moments that inspired you to pursue this path?

Ryan: I grew up a kid of the 80's so basically all the big blockbusters of the era inspired me. Star Wars, Jurassic Park, Alien, etc. I'm drawn to world building and escapism. I want to make movies that put someone in a world that's not ours for 90 minutes and hopefully, they want to go back! When I first started out, I realized I'd need a lot of VFX work to make these movies happen. I couldn't afford to hire a studio so I started to learn as much as I could. One way to describe it is like learning a musical instrument. It took years of practice, but I was finally able to make something I liked enough to put into a movie. Since then, we've been very fortunate to not only do exciting visual effects for our own projects but for film projects all around the world.

3) For Stephanie:

Animation and Artistic Influence

You bring a unique perspective on animation and character design. What drew you to this field, and which animated works or artists have most influenced your approach?

Stephanie: When I was younger, I watched *How to Train Your Dragon* when it came out in theaters. Something about that

movie, I watched it and went, "that's what I want to do." I knew then I wanted to be an animator. I've always been interested in animals and fantastical creatures, so Boiling Point has been a perfect fit for me.

4) For Both:

Creative Process and Dynamic

When you start a new project together, how do you decide who will take the lead on different aspects? Can you share an example of how your collaborative process sparks creativity or helps you both overcome challenges?

Ryan: We've been doing it long enough that we just sort of slide into our roles. Our workflow is usually the same, I'll need a VFX sequence or animation in a project and it literally starts out with white text on a black background in my edit. For example, it might say, "Two T-Rex's fight to the death". That's when Stephanie comes in and blocks out the action with stand in characters. We'll collaborate on the timing and action and then she will take it to the next level by polishing the animation, then I'll take it back for more lighting and rendering. It's not just the two of us though, we've got a team of talented artists we work with who help out in the pipeline as well. The fun thing is that over time we've come to grow in our skills by challenging each other, it's not competitive in any way, but more like being inspired by the work the other is doing and trying to up our games accordingly.

Stephanie: As Ryan said, we've been doing it a long time so I think we just know what our respective roles will be. Ryan has always taken the leadership position as either director and/or VFX supervisor. He obviously brings a ton of experience to the table after directing 10 movies and countless other commercials and creative projects, so I try to learn from him every time we collaborate. I tend to take the lead on creature/character acting. So we will sit down in front of a slated portion of a movie that just says something like "two T-rexes fight," and then I'll throw out ideas of what they could be doing, how long I think a certain action might take, etc. I got to take on even more of a creative role than usual on our latest *The Jurassic Games: Extinction*, so that was really fun.

5) For Both:

Favorite Projects and Memories

Are there certain projects you've worked on as a team that hold a special place for you?

What made those experiences stand out, and do you have any favorite behind-the-scenes stories?

Ryan: Our movie "Gremlin" was the first time we worked together and one core memory I have is Stephanie standing up and being recognized at our cast and crew screening. I knew it was her goal to animate creatures for a film and to be there and watch everyone validating her work and talent with applause for the first time is something I'll always remember.

Stephanie: *Gremlin* was my first feature film and so that one will always hold a special place. I also quite liked working on *The Adventures of Rufus* because I got to animate to Ryan's voice, haha!

6) For Both:

The Boiling Point Sound Stage

Boiling Point Media sound stage and sets are a unique part of your operation. How has access to these facilities changed what you're able to create, and are there particular set builds or technological innovations you're especially proud of?

Ryan: A few years ago we invested in Virtual Production and installed an LED Volume in our soundstage. It's been game changing as far as allowing us as visual effects artists to have an incredible tool for filming live action sequences and combining them with in camera VFX in real time. It's really the perfect combination of the two sides of filmmaking that I love, on set shooting and directing and visual effects. In the volume, the cast and crew are able to be fully immersed in a 3D world generated by a photorealistic game engine. The result is the ability to be anywhere you dream up. Our latest release, "The Jurassic Games: Extinction" was shot entirely on our volume stage. It allowed our actors and crew to be in all kinds of exoctic locations for the movie while not leaving the comfort and convenience of the studio.

Stephanie: It's really incredible to walk into work in the mornings and there'll be a big forest set in the studio with the LED wall behind it. Like Ryan said, the wall has really expanded

our options of what types of environments we can have in our movies, since there aren't, you know, a lot of volcanoes or frozen tundras in Oklahoma. And I think it benefits the actors more than just a typical green screen, as they don't have to stretch their imagination quite so much to see where they are. Oklahoma also can have quite brutal weather sometimes, so it's nice for cast and crew to be able to shoot within the comfort of an air-conditioned studio.

7) For Ryan:

Sound Stage Innovation

What's been your favorite aspect of developing and working within your own sound stage environment? How do you see the facility supporting Oklahoma's evolving film industry?

Ryan: My favorite part is learning the tools and then experimenting with them. I love when a client presents a difficult challenge or idea and I thrive on being able to tell them, "Look! We figured it out!" I think the facility is very well suited for projects looking for quality/ affordable virtual production and VFX work done by an experienced team of artists. Being indie filmmakers ourselves, we want to be able to make these services accessible and affordable with the idea that we can help elevate film projects looking for this type of work.

8) For Stephanie:

Set Design and Artistry

What do you enjoy most about bringing sets and environments to life at Boiling Point?

Are there particular design challenges or creative triumphs that come to mind?

Stephanie: I don't really do much of the physical set design other than helping move something once in awhile. But it's always fun to see the translation of physical sets and props to the screen, and to see our team integrate the digital environments around them. I think what really helps sell the wall is when you can have as many practical props around the actors as possible. Our biggest challenge with using Unreal Engine for our virtual wall is that it is a game engine, so you can run into that "video game" aesthetic instead of photorealism. So that's always the challenge for us, trying to make the environments as believable as possible.

9) For Both:

Looking Ahead

Are there any new projects on the horizon that you're both excited about and able to discuss? What are your hopes for Boiling Point Media's future growth and creative potential?

Ryan: We've recently finished filming our latest project. It's a feature film called "The Extinction Rule" which I'm very excited to be getting into the editing and VFX phase. It's a dream project of mine and one where we're pushing the limits of what we're able to do visually.

Stephanie: *The Extinction Rule* will be a ton of fun. It's a really well-written, creepy sci-fi project with awesome creatures and characters. It's been on our wishlist to make for a long time. As for Boiling Point itself, I think we're both just always hoping for

bigger and better opportunities, increasing our caliber of work and the types of projects we bring on.

10) For Both:

Inspiration and Motivation

What keeps both of you inspired and motivated, especially during challenging projects?

Ryan: The attitudes of our team members. I've been really fortunate to work with some very talented and creative people and seeing them thrive is very rewarding and inspirational to me.

Stephanie: Even during the "worst" projects, I'm still sitting at my desk every day thinking, "wow, I get to make movies for a living." That's been a huge blessing and while there are of course challenges and tiring days, I really can't think of any job I'd rather be doing.

11) For Both: How do you recharge or find inspiration when the creative process gets tough?

Ryan: As a married couple working together that both love what we do so much, we find that we have to switch to "just being a married couple" every so often. Not talk about work or projects, but just be together. We go on dates to favorite restaurants or watch comfort shows. It helps keep us grounded and focused on what's really important.

Stephanie: I can't really improve on what Ryan said. He's right -- sometimes we have to switch off our work brains and just go walk around the mall or catch a movie. For me personally, I will also get very inspired by big-time shows and movies. I'll always watch the visuals and storytelling of those works and try to push myself to be more like them.

12) For Both:

Advice for Creative Teams

Finally, what advice would you offer to other creative partners or couples hoping to succeed together in the media and film industry?

Ryan: I think it's the same advice I might give anyone: Listen and understand what the other's goals are and be open to collaboration. Two heads are better than one couldn't be more true in our case!

Stephanie: Lean into each other's strengths. Learn from the experience of your partner and don't be afraid to bring your own experience and ideas to the table.

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