

A J Jankel

Annabel Jankel has most recently optioned the book “Tell It To The Bees” by Fiona Shaw. Last year she directed the feature film *Skellig*, a well-received adaptation of David Almond’s enormously popular, award-winning novel. Starring Tim Roth (*Reservoir Dogs*) as Skellig, alongside Bill Milner (*Son Of Rambow*), John Simm (*Life On Mars*) and Kelly MacDonald (*No Country For Old Men*), *Skellig* was the focal point of Sky1’s HD 2009 Easter programming in the UK. The theatrical feature version is due for International distribution and has recently been released on DVD in the UK.

Prior to this, Jankel was the sole director for the first two seasons of *Live From Abbey Road*, a music and documentary show which was commissioned by Channel 4 in the UK and shown internationally, including Sundance Channel in the US. *Live From Abbey Road* took a unique diversion from traditional music programmes, focussing solely on the bands’ performances and behind-the-scenes footage and interviews, avoiding the distraction of a presenter. The show’s intention was to “sound like an album and look like a movie.” Both series were made up of twelve one-hour shows and included over 70 artists as diverse as The Killers, Herbie Hancock, Muse, Paul Simon, Corinne Bailey-Rae, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Wynton Marsalis, The Kills, Massive Attack, MGMT, Ray Lamontagne and Mary J Blige. A third series is currently in production.

Live From Abbey Road harks back to Jankel’s early career, during which she created and co-directed music videos for a range of artists, including Elvis Costello, Miles Davis, Tom Tom Club, Donald Fagen, Talking Heads and her brother Chaz Jankel, most well-known for his work with Ian Dury & The Blockheads. Along with commercials and title sequences for shows such as *The Tube*, and *Friday Night Videos*, these videos showcased the innovative approach to film-making and usually included a mix of animation and live action. These music videos now reside in London’s Victoria & Albert Museum and the Museum Of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City.

Her interest in the synthesis of different art forms and imagery in filmmaking had previously been given an outlet at Cucumber Studios, the animation studio she and partner Rocky Morton had founded, after working at Grand Slamm Animation, during the height of the punk era. This was a studio intended to provide absolute creative freedom, and the work they produced utilised Jankel’s interest and expertise in different filmmaking styles. Cucumber became renowned for its fusion of animation, live action, CGI and visual effects, researching and developing technologies and new visual techniques. Off the back of this, Morton and Jankel co-wrote *Creative Computer Graphics*, a seminal book on CGI published by Cambridge University Press.

It was during their time at Cucumber that Jankel and Morton created the genre-defying Max Headroom, in response to a request from Channel 4 to devise an unusual way of linking music videos. Inspired at the time, by the ubiquity of the “talking head” on TV in the US, the character spawned many theories as to his identity and creation (CGI or live action? Actor or robotics?), this cult classic came to define the 80s and Max became an iconic personality in his own right. The development of what was originally intended to be glue between music videos ended up as a one hour television film which she co-directed with partner Rocky Morton, entitled *Max Headroom: Twenty Minutes Into The Future*. This was a pilot for the subsequent thirteen half-hour shows for Channel 4 in the UK and HBO in the US.

In 1991, having had two children, and along with Rocky Morton and David Zander, Jankel founded Morton Jankel Zander (MJZ), now one of the most prolific commercials production houses in the USA and UK, representing many high-profile directors. Although she has since left the company, it retains her name and has offices in London and New York. Prior to the formation of MJZ, and alongside her former partner Morton, Jankel co-directed the theatrical feature films: *D.O.A.*, starring Meg Ryan and Dennis Quaid, and *Super Mario Bros* with Bob Hoskins and Dennis Hopper.

After graduating from the West Surrey College of Art and Design in 1976, during which time she focussed on animation, Jankel was offered her first job as an assistant animator and inker on *Ubu Roi*. This film, funded by the Arts Council, was directed by Geoff Dunbar at his company Grand Slamm Animation, where she later became an animator and worked on commercials.

Jankel lives between Los Angeles and London.

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