

How I became a... Film and TV Director

William Mager

Growing up, I was most interested in comic books, videogames and films.

I discovered films when my stepdad showed me Raiders of the Lost Ark. It had no subtitles, so he explained what the Ark of the Covenant was, then paused the film at certain points to explain what was going on. He also covered my eyes at the melting faces scene!

I went on to record subtitled copies of Singin' in the Rain, Casablanca, The Goonies and watched them all on repeat every day after school.

At university, I studied English Literature which was a natural extension of my childhood, reading books and thinking about them, and putting off thinking about what I wanted to do when I grew up.

I discovered the Deaf world when I bumped into two deaf guys, Andrew and James, at a BBC Christmas party. They took me under their wing and to various Deaf pubs and Deaf gatherings. The friends I made through them are still friends, over ten years later.

My first job in TV was as a researcher on VEE TV, Channel 4's youth programme for Deaf people.

I started as a researcher, by the end of the run I directed a couple of items. I still think about VEE TV and my time there very fondly, it's a shame it's not around any more.

I then went on to work on See Hear as an Associate Producer at the BBC, rising through the ranks to become a producer/director and work on other programmes such as The Culture Show, Watchdog and even Crimewatch.

I made my first funded film in East London through the Hitchcock production fund. The resulting film, Stiletto, was an affectionate homage to the director, made with incredible production values on a tiny budget. It's still being shown around the world.

The actors I've most enjoyed working with are Matthew Gurney and Matt Kirby. Gurney is probably the most charismatic deaf actor working today on screen and on stage. Kirby is the most natural comedian I've ever seen, and I'm proud to call both Matts good friends too.

My favourite filmmaking experience was making Hands Solo. That was a film which felt like everything went right from start to finish. We had a fantastic script, a brilliant producer, an amazing cast, and a really hard working crew who all believed in the project.



I remember watching the premiere of Hands Solo with a rowdy Deaf audience at the opening night of Deaffest! That's what filmmaking is about – making something and sharing it with people, and seeing them enjoy it.

My next project won't be film or TV in the traditional sense. If all goes to plan, it will be a bit different to anything I've done before. Watch this space.

Find out more about William on his website: www.wlmager.com