

Roaring Girl Productions

Who we are and what we do

Roaring Girl Productions is a creative media projects company based in Bristol and founded by writer-director and activist Liz Crow. We undertake media productions, training and associated projects. With awards for our work on audience access to film and with the release of our new DVD, our work is defined by imagination and humanity and combines high quality creativity with practical activism.

We do this by:

Bringing to the screen fresh representations of deaf and disabled people

Past work has screened to audiences internationally and won various awards. It includes *Frida Kahlo's Corset* (screened at Tate Modern last year alongside the retrospective of Kahlo's paintings), *21 Things to Remember* (commissioned for an electronic advent calendar) and *The Real Helen Keller* (made for Channel 4, with Ann Pugh and Redweather Productions).

Our most recent production, *Nectar* is a 16-minute drama set in 1931, telling the story of a young deaf champion swimmer who suddenly realises the dream he is following is not his own. As he journeys back to swimming for the love of it, he also journeys forwards to a language of his own.

"The jewel of the festival... an exceptional achievement." **Disability Now**

"A beautifully directed, evocative, well-crafted period set piece." **Paul Trijbits, UK Film Council New Cinema Fund**

"A wonderful story that draws you in and takes you away. I couldn't bear to blink. The film is shot with the detailed attention of a word perfect poet." **Benjamin Zephaniah, poet**

"A gorgeous film... a simple story, yet very moving, showing different kinds of courage and consequential emotions... I can predict a deaf audience cheering when they see what Walter does with his hearing aid. A sweet uplifting film about making your own choice." **Caroline Parker, Deaf Performer**

Our next production, due to shoot in 2007, is *Egg Wars*, a tale of political awakening. When the local authority bans eggs from the menu of Surehaven Lodge, the residents' protest is taken up by a nation – but is the battle *really* about eggs?

Demonstrating inclusion in our production processes

In a sector where disabled people make up only 2% of workers, 25% of the *Nectar* production team was made up of Deaf and disabled people, showing just how possible it is to work inclusively in film. We involved a Deaf consultant throughout the production to advise on all elements, from story authenticity, production team inclusion, actors' delivery of period sign language.

There were distinct creative advantages to the way we worked. Working across two languages (BSL and English) and with various access requirements, it wasn't possible always to rush headlong into the next shot. As people paused to consider how they were working, they also gained extra moments to consider creative decisions.

Also, because a wide range of access needs were incorporated (not just disabled members of the team) and people *felt* included, they were much better *able* to contribute. There was huge goodwill and support throughout the shoot, much of which stemmed from working inclusively.

Making films that pioneer new approaches to audience access

Roaring Girl Productions is pioneering new approaches to film accessibility for audiences with a sensory impairment, making audio description, captioning and sign language interpretation (ACS) an integral part of the creative and production process. We do this by experimenting through our own productions, testing out innovative approaches and trialing them with audiences and filmmakers.

Typically, ACS is not even considered until the distribution stage, when all the creative decisions have already been made. The film is squashed into the a one-size-fits-all template that does no favours to either audience or filmmaker. The job of any access measures is to convey the story and the emotional content of the film, so they need to be capable of adapting to and representing it. On *Nectar*, ACS is built into the creative planning right from the start of development and pre-production and through to distribution.

So far, our approach is promising a high quality, adaptable, reliable and cost-effective tool for access. We have produced a paper about the design and technology of ACS, so other filmmakers can replicate or adapt what we have learned. We are also building our website as a practical resource for working with ACS, with trailers and clips demonstrating our approach. We welcome comments which we feed back into ongoing research.

Applying the ideas and practices from our productions

Our goal is to take audiences beyond the simple telling of a story, to look at how they can be informed and inspired to take action by applying the ideas and practices from our films.

We have released *Nectar* on DVD, along with three-part documentary *Making Nectar*. The documentary includes behind the scenes footage, storyboards, archive material and audition tape. Entertaining and informative, it shows how *Nectar* brings to the screen a fresh representation of disabled people, raises the curtain on the rollercoaster of the shoot, and demonstrates how innovative approaches make the film accessible to audiences with a sensory impairment. The DVD has audio description, captioning and BSL interpretation.

Relevant to production companies, community film organisations, industry bodies, higher education and schools media courses, production facilities houses, independent filmmakers, disabled people's organisations and equalities trainers, the DVD can be bought from our website.

Links

Check out Roaring Girl Productions' website on www.roaring-girl.com for details of other productions and projects.

Production information on *Nectar* is at www.roaring-girl.com/prod07_a.shtml and on *Making Nectar* at www.roaring-girl.com/prod14_a.shtml.

More information on our approach to audio description, captioning and sign language interpretation (ACS) is at www.roaring-girl.com/proj02_a.shtml.

Thanks

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Contact us at info@roaring-girl.com.