



Will Self's Flytopia: the short film

14 Oct, 2013

Will Self on seeing his short story Flytopia turned into a Film4-backed short by directors Karni and Saul



Will Self by Valerie Bennett

I wrote 'Flytopia' at the end a long hot summer when I was living in a small square cottage in the depths of Suffolk. The cottage was more or less surrounded by wheat fields, and when the harvest began all the anima life living in amongst the crop - field mice and voles, rats and especially insects of all sorts - decided to take up residence in the cottage. I put up insecticide units, I hung coils of flypaper from the ceiling - all to no avail; as I typed away, sweating out the novel that I knew was in me, but which I was having great difficulty excreting, the flies buzzed around my head. When I went to the kitchen to boil the kettle silverfish boiled up from the



by Will Self

Will Self is a British novelist and journalist.

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drain, and when I went to the toilet to make waste of my natural bodily products I found excremental earwigs had made it there before me.

This was, of course, the mise en scene that I placed the narrator of 'Flytopia' in - but the other element that made up the story was a children's book I was reading to my kids in the early 1990s. Called Dinotopia, it was tale of a lost world in which intelligent dinosaurs lived alongside humans. The book was beautifully illustrated, and the ingenuity the authors showed in integrating reptilian and mammalian life forms was something we all found endlessly engaging. (In fact Dinotopia was made into a TV miniseries starring David Thewlis of all people - there's a rueful aside about this in my 2008 novel *Walking to Hollywood* if you want to get anorak-y.) I thought of turning the utopia into a dystopia - being the sort of writer I am - and that's how 'Flytopia' was born.

My initial reaction to Karni and Saul's beautiful film of the story was utter joy: they had perfectly realised the strange mixture of heat, sexuality, and insanity that pervades my text. Writing is a lonely business, and I think the reason so many writers want to get mixed up in the movies is for the company - I often have fantasies about casting sessions, and given the fervid intensity of the performances in Flytopia this is hardly surprising... I love the surface limpidity of the film as well - and of course the flies and other insects. The bedroom scenes are particularly affecting - as I'm sure you'll agree if you have a particle of insectophilia in you. True, on subsequent viewings of the film I did have some qualms: I thought that perhaps the narrative progression of the tale and the particular reveal you get on the printed page hadn't quite been managed - but then I looked at their Flytopia again and realised that these were ridiculous quibbles: a film is a film and a text is a text, and within the terms of a filmic grammar Flytopia works perfectly. Karni, Saul and I are thinking of collaborating together on future films - I think their style of mixed animation and live action is particularly suited to my own hyper-real fictional inscapes. Let's hope it comes off...

You can watch the Flytopia trailer below [or click here to view on a phone or tablet](#). The full short will be available to view from 1pm on Friday 18th October.

Flytopia was produced in partnership with Creative England.



One Response to "Will Self's Flytopia: the short film"

[Flytopia short film](#) - Will Self says:

Guest Contributors

Jeremy Lovering

Writer-director

Carol Morley

Writer-director

Peter Strickland

Writer-director

Alice Lowe

Writer-performer

Steve Oram

Writer-performer

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If you missed our first play of @@MarvelUK's fantasy adventure Thor last week, we're repeating it tonight at 9pm.

<https://t.co/u9T3grlHlt>

Nov 22, 2016

RT @@dickie_kate: so very, very well deserved. congrats to you all! Xx

[@twitter.com/film4insider/s...](https://twitter.com/film4insider/s...)

Nov 22, 2016

Productions

October 14, 2013 at 12:11 pm

[...] Flytopia from his collection Tough, Tough Toys for Tough, Tough Boys today at 1pm on Film4 and read what Will has to say about it too. Flytopia has been filmed by Karni & Saul, and it will be premiering online from [...]

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