Exceptional Minds Animators with Autism Unlikely Collaborators for Emotional Music Video

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Sherman Oaks, California – February 2, 2016 – A visit to the doctor’s office or hospital is an emotionally charged event for any child, which is why a new music video helping kids cope with such events seems an unlikely project for a group of young artists on the autism spectrum.

Exceptional Minds vocational school of young adults with autism produced the character animation for Perfect Day, a music video of the title track from the children’s album “A Perfect Day” by Dr. Ben & Company. The music album encourages imagination, imagery and self-hypnosis coping skills to calm kids who are faced with medical procedures due to cancer and
other childhood diseases. The project is the brainchild of Dr. Ben Meisel, a children’s music composer and pediatrician in Valencia, Calif., who first learned about Exceptional Minds through his brother, who has a child with autism. “I noticed that people with autism often deal with their strong emotions through music and art, which is at the heart of what we’re trying to accomplish here,” said Dr. Meisel.

The video involved hours of close collaboration between musicians and artists, and the interpretation of complex emotions by third-year and second-year Exceptional Minds artists in order to set animation to music. “One of the surprising things I learned working with Exceptional Minds is how rich the emotional lives of people with autism are, and how easily they can interpret and recreate imagery for highly emotional situations such as a child coping with an illness,” commented Dr. Meisel, who is offering the video for free use on YouTube and through his company Dr. Ben & Company as a tool to help adults who teach children imagination-based coping skills. Funded by the Bialis Family Foundation and intended as a tool for parents, Child Life Specialists and others who teach coping skills to children, the resulting video depicts a little girl in a hospital who uses the power of her own imagination to help her through a challenging medical procedure.

“I remember when I had stitches when I was seven, so I can relate to this character (in the video),” said Jason Klavir, one of the third-year students at Exceptional Minds who provided the animation for the new music video. Exceptional Minds is a vocational school and working studio for young adults with autism who are pursuing careers in animation and the visual effects fields. Its graduates have gone on to work at Marvel Studios and other entertainment companies, and have contributed visual effects work on movies such as “Ant-Man,” “Avengers: Age of Ultron” and “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes.”

Autism affects one in 68 children. More than 500,000 U.S. children impacted by autism will enter adulthood during this decade, with one in 68 children to follow. Exceptional Minds is the only vocational school and working studio to prepare and successfully place young men and women with autism in careers in the fields of animation and visual effects. Perfect Day is the first in a series of music videos by Dr. Ben & Company and Exceptional Minds. The complete “A Perfect Day” album includes 15 songs and liner notes.

About Exceptional Minds (http://www.exceptionalmindsstudio.org): Exceptional Minds is a nonprofit vocational center and working production studio for young adults on the autism spectrum. It was chartered in 2011 to provide the training necessary for creatively gifted individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who may not otherwise be able to make the transition from high school to careers. Exceptional Minds offers technical proficiency and work readiness training that prepares students for careers in graphic arts, animation, web design, visual effects and rotoscoping. Located in Sherman Oaks, California, Exceptional Minds is both an instructional learning facility and a working studio with hands-on student involvement in production projects, many for the film industry.
About “A Perfect Day” and Dr. Ben & Company (www.drbenandco.com): Dr. Ben & Company is a creative media company “building play into health,” founded by pediatrician and musician, Dr. Ben Meisel, in order to improve the lives of children with special health needs. “A Perfect Day” is a children’s music album created to serve the children at actor Paul Newman’s, SeriousFun Children’s Network of camps. The award winning music on “A Perfect Day” inspired a blog (www.aperfectday.rocks) and has been used in hospitals, clinics, and camps throughout the United States. Dr. Ben, Exceptional Minds, and the Bialis Family Foundation (a compassionate family foundation) came together to create the animated title track music video in hopes of improving the world for children facing health challenges. Ultimately, the intent of “A Perfect Day” is to empower the work of Child Life by helping teach skills for coping with challenging situations while improving the well being of the hospitalized child, improving the rate of successfully completed procedures while reducing the need for medicated anesthesia during procedures, improving the family’s perception of hospital care and introducing playful elements that have the welcome side effect of improving hospital work environments for doctors, nurses, and everyone providing care.