



OWLY ANIMATED SHORT TO DEBUT AT COMIC-CON '09

Top Shelf Productions and Sprite Animation Studios team up
to bring beloved graphic novel character to life.

SAN DIEGO, July 9th, 2009 – Owly, the kindhearted star of the award-winning graphic novel series by Andy Runton, will come to life in an animated short at the San Diego Comic-Con on July 23-26.

It was jointly announced today by Chris Staros, Publisher of Top Shelf Productions and Junichi Yanagihara, Executive Producer at Sprite Animation Studios that the loveable Owly and his unlikely best friend Wormy will be animated in a brand-new original segment directed by Moto Sakakibara and storyboarded by creator Andy Runton. Prominently featured will be Runton's innovative "Pictomation," a storytelling device in which the characters' thoughts and feelings are animated with iconic and expressive images rather than dialogue, enabling fans of all ages, languages, and backgrounds to enjoy the show.

"I'm absolutely overjoyed to be working with the entire Sprite team. Over the past months, we've worked very closely to make sure Owly was faithfully translated to 3D. Every little detail was important to them, and the end result blows me away! They've created an animation that captures the pure essence of Owly in ways I never thought possible. It's amazing to see Owly and Wormy come to life like this. The level of artistry at Sprite is incredible," said creator Andy Runton.

"I am very passionate about the world of 'Owly' and its pure, honest, and adorable star. It is such a blessing to be able to bring Owly to new audiences who have not yet been touched by these wonderful stories," said director Moto Sakakibara.

Fans can visit the Top Shelf Productions booth (#1721) during the convention to see the short and to speak with members of the Sprite and Top Shelf teams, as well as meet Andy Runton, who will be there signing graphic novels, doing sketches, and talking to fans from around the world.

Owly's foray into animation comes at a time of big changes for the little "bird of play." Following the re-release of all five *Owly* trade paperbacks with newly painted covers; a new line of T-shirts; a new supply of plushies; a brand new American Library Association poster and bookmark celebrating Owly's support for libraries nationwide; the creation of an extensive collection of lesson plans for the use of *Owly* in classrooms; the release of all five *Owly* trade paperbacks on Amazon's Kindle, and the announcement that Top Shelf and Andy Runton have entered into an agreement with Simon & Schuster to publish two *Owly* picture books, starting with *Owly & Wormy in Friends All Aflutter* in 2011, Owly is on the move.

For more information, please visit www.spriteanimation.com/owly

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Sprite Animation Studios is a Los Angeles-based boutique CGI animation house internationally known for its unique, funky style and creativity. Sprite's high-quality work has been featured in theatrical films, television series, and festival venues such as Annecy, the SIGGRAPH Electronic Theater, Ottawa, and Pictoplasma.

Top Shelf Productions is the graphic novel and comics publisher best known for its ability to discover and showcase the vanguard of the comics scene. Since 1997, Top Shelf has produced over two hundred graphic novels and comics that have helped to revitalize interest in comics as a literary art form.

Andy Runton and his award-winning *Owly* series have been quietly leading the charge in the field of all-ages graphic novels since 2004. Relying on a mixture of symbols, icons, and expressions to tell his silent stories, Runton's work showcases both his gift for characterization and his love of nature. His animated and heartwarming style has made him a favorite of both fans and critics alike and the *Owly* series has earned him multiple awards including the Howard E. Day Memorial Prize, the Harvey Award, two Ignatz Awards, and the 2006 Eisner Award for "Best Publication for a Younger Audience."

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