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Congratulations! You've found the original HiveWire 3D forum!

This forum has been set to Read Only.

There's a LOT of great information here however the images that go with that information have been lost.

Please accept our invitation to join us at our new [HiveWire 3D Community](#) where we look forward to connecting and continuing our many conversations!

Ken Gilliland - The Man Behind the SongBird ReMix Wings



Hivewire3D started a blog post [Ken Gilliland - The Man Behind the SongBird ReMix Wings](#)
01-02-2014, 03:42 PM

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Just recently I had the pleasure of using Ken Gilliland's [SongBird Remix Woodland Jewels](#) in an image I was working on for the HiveWire 3D store and I was immediately impressed with the variety and attention to detail provided in the package. A quick click on the Woodland Jewels User Manual icon brought up a tutorial that not only explained how to quickly load and use the birds, but also provided information about each of the 19 different birds included in the pack. This information combined with the gender and region keys on the library icons for each type of bird made it simple for me to decide which male and female pair to use for my scene. I got to poking around a bit more and was led to [Ken's website](#). After browsing around for a while I found myself both inspired and curious to know more about the man behind the birds.

HWLisaB You obviously have a real passion for birds. What would you say is the driving force behind that passion?

SBRMKenG I've always had a strong love for nature. This probably comes from me being an avid hiker and my father who was a high school biology teacher. While I always enjoyed birds, my obsession really took off when I moved into my house. As most homeowners do, I put up a bird feeder. That, in turn led to me getting a field guide and binoculars, to figure out what was showing up at my feeder.

Of course, that led to more feeders, better books and binoculars, trips specifically to see birds. And that of course, led to me getting on a first name basis with the seed store owner, really expensive binoculars and bird trips out of the country. It was only natural that I started to create bird art.

But why birds? Birds are the most common wildlife interaction we have on a daily basis. Just walk outside, and I'll bet the first wild creature you see is a bird.

HWLisaB What is the bird that you have not yet seen, but would most like to experience in the wild?

SBRMKenG I guess we're talking here about "Grail" birds... The bird I go on trips, questing for... and is at the top of my "grail" list right now is the Black-throated Magpie Jay (found in my [Songbird ReMix Yucatan](#) volume)

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HWLisaB Your web site introduces us to your pet bird, Elsa the Citron Cockatoo. Do you keep other birds as pets?

SBRMKenG No other birds as pets, Elsa is a handful—plus some. Lesser Citron Cockatoos have a lifespan of 50-80 years, and being only 15 years old, we have a lifetime pet. We do have a few "wild" pets. A resident Scrubjay ("Scruffy") in our yard makes an unique whistle sound when he sees us. That's our cue to bring out peanuts, which he takes from our hands.

HWLisaB You include a PDF tutorial in every bird pack

	<p>describing how to use the birds as well as interesting facts about each species. You also maintain a bird Wiki on your website with information about hundreds of birds. Can you share a little about why people should care about birds and their habitats?</p>
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SBRMKenG I guess you want me to talk about my evil plot. When I first started creating 3D birds, I did so primarily because I wanted them for my art. A big revelation came when I created my first “[Threatened](#), [Endangered](#), [Extinct](#)” bird volume. This volume focused on birds on the brink of extinction. I realized I could actually impart some knowledge with my bird sets; not only explaining about the real life counterparts habitat and behavior but also why in the past 50 years we’ve lost upwards of 50% to 90% of our resident bird populations. Birds are considered by most scientists to be bellwether species for the health of the ecosystems that we depend on to survive. So, people should care because the canary in the coal mine is no longer singing.

My hope is that 3D artists armed with my .pdf “Field Guides” and models will create great art that gets noticed, gets people to care and educate.

HWLisaB Your website shows that you are a man of many creative talents. Your background includes music, computer software and programming, building your house, gardening with native plant species and creating art in various mediums including 3D. Are there any artistic mediums on your wish list that you have not yet explored?

SBRMKenG I already do most traditional and digital forms of art so there’s not too much left to explore, although I’m always learning. For those that consider cooking an art, while I’m considered a pretty good cook, I stumble through baking (especially desserts like pies and cakes), so I’d like to improve my skills there.

HWLisaB As both a customer purchasing your birds to use in my own artwork and as a 3D artist creating content for sale, I am inspired by your 3D bird library. What is your best advice to someone who is just discovering their passion for 3D - both from the customer point of view and that of a content creator?

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SBRMKenG I believe it’s of huge importance to be passionate about your art whether you’re a content creator or an end-user. As a content creator, I know it’s hard to balance profitably with passion. Passion doesn’t always translate to dollars and cents. I take the flops with the successes and hope it balances out eventually.

For someone new to 3D art, I think the most important place to start is with basic art fundamentals. I see lots of technically perfect imagery that have forgotten the most important building block, good composition. If you’re confused about composition, I wrote a chapter for the [Poser Handbook](#) way back when, that might be helpful up.

As an artist, I think it’s important to let be in touch with your feelings and not be afraid to spill them on your canvas or screen. The best work I’ve seen are pieces from the heart. Some of my cerebral, minutely planned out pieces do well but nothing matches or flows as well as art from the heart.

<p>HWLisaB What would you say are your biggest challenges when it comes to making various bird species in 3D? How have you overcome them?</p> <p>SBRMKenG There are numerous technical and artistic challenges to overcome with creating a bird species in 3D. I'm currently creating a duck model and am constantly trying to think ahead of all the model features and mesh required for the dozens of waterfowl species I'm going to create. One of the trickier elements is to make the duck neck long and thin when outstretched for flying but short and compact for dabbling or standing, while retaining the neck joint parameters so the bending is smooth. The feather patterning on many of the birds can also be very challenging and requires a lot of texture reworking to finally get things right.</p>	<p>Cli</p>
<p>Cli</p>	<p>HWLisaB What are some of your biggest dreams or aspirations?</p> <p>SBRMKenG I don't know if I really have any big dreams since I'm very content with the life I have. I'm a pretty simple person; I do my art, spend time with my wife and am content with sitting out on the front porch, enjoying nature and, of course, birds.</p> <p>As for aspirations, I did have some of those fulfilled. I've always wanted the scientific community to acknowledge my bird series. Last year, Field Museum of Chicago and the Royal Saudi National Wildlife Research Center expressed interest in using my birds in their exhibits.</p> <p>HWLisaB You've had some pretty special times in your life. You were once "Kenny-K9", lead singer for a Los Angeles Punk Band, and you were recently inducted into the TI-99 computer Hall of Fame. What do you most want to be known/remembered for?</p>
<p>SBRMKenG I'd like to be remembered as a bird artist and an environmental advocate. Hopefully, as someone whose work and products inspired others to help as well.</p>	
<p><i>Ken Gilliland's 3D content library includes hundreds of bird species, fantasy-based winged creatures, various types of historically-themed costumes, props and architecture and is available exclusively at HiveWire 3D. You can learn more about Ken and his many creative outlets at his website.</i></p>	

Tags: None

4 comments

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Ryverthorn commented
01-03-2014, 01:19 AM

#2

Great interview :)



Chris commented
01-07-2014, 05:30 AM

#3

Very nice piece Lisa. And Ken, I'm very impressed that you are content with the life you have. I can learn a lot from that statement. I believe you will have no problem in the footprint that you intend to leave behind with your life's work. Kudos to you Ken!



Songbird ReMix commented

#4

01-07-2014, 04:49 PM

*Originally posted by **Chris;bt223***

Very nice piece Lisa. And Ken, I'm very impressed that you are content with the life you have. I can learn a lot from that statement. I believe you will have no problem in the footprint that you intend to leave behind with your life's work. Kudos to you Ken!

Thanks everyone. Yes, I'm very content... having a perfect companion (my wife), a yard filled with nature and being able to do art on a regular basis... who wouldn't be content? :)

"Keep close to Nature's heart... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean." -John Muir

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