



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HouseSpecial releases an animated investigation into the world of armadillo mating

The dangerous and largely misunderstood mating ritual of the nine-banded armadillo takes an unexpected twist on a lonely Texas road.

Still, credits and Director's bio: <http://www.housespecial.com/armor-del-amor>

This short is currently screening at [Portland International Airport](#) through July in The Hollywood Theatre's Micro- Cinema on C Concourse.

JUNE 2018 - From world-renowned animation studio HouseSpecial and Director **Kirk Kelley** comes *Armor del Amor* – a scripted nature 'documentary' that follows the mating rituals of *Dasypus novemcinctus*, to discover the dark underbelly of modern mammalian dating.



The narrative follows a nine-banded female armadillo as she emerges from her burrow and into the lonely Texas landscape. HouseSpecial researchers captured footage of this

modern animal's efforts to find a potential mate until finally, after several ill-fated opportunities, a match is made.

"Our short film is an homage to nature shows like [Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom](#). In reality, we are all just animals looking to find a connection," Kirk said. "I wanted to explore how far removed we've become from unscripted mating rituals in everyday life. Since Match.com launched in 1995, dating has dramatically evolved...or de-evolved, depending on your POV."

The idea to make a short about armadillos ignited as Kirk shared stories of his youth in Texas. He grew up in the farmlands about 50 miles north of Dallas where road kill is a familiar part of the landscape. Adding the social commentary about modern dating highlighted the fact that even though we are humans in a world filled with technology, we are only a few genes away from being wild.

"The biggest challenge was finding a location in Oregon that looked enough like Texas to work for the film," Kirk said. The crew ended up in Dufur, Oregon near the Eastern Columbia River Gorge.

The short was selected to screen in the [Northwest Animation Festival's Animators Showcase](#) program on Sunday, May 28 at The Hollywood Theatre in Portland. Portland International Airport travelers can also catch the piece through July in the [The Hollywood Theatre's Micro-Cinema on C Concourse](#).

CG Insights

Kirk, who is also the Supervising Creative Director behind 20 years of M&M'S content, and HouseSpecial's CG team designed, modeled, animated and composited this photo-real armadillo using Nuke, Flame, PTGui, Maya with Arnold, Houdini, Mari, Substance Painter, ZBrush and Mudbox.

"From brainstorming the best approaches to rig the armadillo, to using layered renders and special techniques for character embedment into the live footage, our CG experts glided through every challenge," Kirk said.

"The armadillo was wonderland for any texture artist who enjoys painting lots of intricate cracks and crevasses," CG Texture Artist **Nikie Monteleone** said. "I ended up using a plethora of textures from turkey and pig skin to tree bark and rugged rocks plus even a few snapping turtle tongues to produce the final textures."

Animating An Armadillo

CG Animator (and fellow Texan) **Beavan Blocker** said the animation was difficult, and required research: "It's important to actually understand the locomotion of a creature before it's rigged, otherwise the rig may not allow the animators to get the naturalistic

motion that you want. Armadillos are very restrained in their body movement. They sort of rotate from their hips without a great deal of body flexibility, which can make it hard to get dynamic movement when you want it."

Post Production

VFX Supervisor **Rex Carter** was thinking about the end of the production process while on the initial live shoot.

"As we captured the live action footage, I knew it would be a challenge to sync and integrate the natural environment, (like grass, scrubs and leaves), with the CG armadillo. We took a blue screen with us to shoot elements individually and I then composited them into the shot with the final animation. We harvested samples of the various grasses and plants and brought them back to the studio to have on-hand for comp reference."

Beyond Animation

HouseSpecial's President and Executive Producer, Lourri Hammack, tapped familiar collaborators to create this film. Cinematographer **Eric Edwards** (*Knocked Up, Cobain: Montage of Heck, Crossroads, My Own Private Idaho*) skillfully captured Oregon's sweeping high-prairie, evoking a sense of the expansive, lonely feeling often associated with online dating.

Death Cab for Cutie's **Dave Depper** composed and performed the original soundtrack, which was a departure from Death Cab's and his solo artist bodies of work. "This was a fun project for me as I rarely have the opportunity to be involved in the creation of primarily acoustic-based music. To prep I listened to a lot of Ry Cooder and Jimmy Page, as I wanted to record the guitar part in a non-traditional DADGAD tuning, which Page was fond of utilizing in his Led Zeppelin days. I also tried to imagine what Morricone would have done," Dave said. "The rhythm guitar part was played on an old Martin D-28 that Ray LaMontagne gave me after our tour was done. It's probably the nicest guitar I own. The slide parts were done on a newer Fender parlor acoustic. There's also a bit of gentle synthesizer droning going on in the background."

Though it was the studio's first collaboration with British-born voice talent **Edmund Stone**, Kelley is a big fan of his weekly radio show and was looking for the right project to work with him. Cast as the narrator, Stone gave the short an authoritative, nature-doc voiceover. He can be heard on more than 1,000 e-books, in various commercial works, in a few movies and on *The Score*, his popular, syndicated radio show all about movie music.

"This was a labor of (twisted) love from our entire crew, who all got a crash course in 'why the armadillo crossed the road!' And while our paramour wasn't fully successful,

our artists created a lovely piece of filmmaking,” said **Lourri Hammack**, President of HouseSpecial.

Armadillo Facts

The only U.S. species is the Nine-banded armadillo (*Dasypus novemcinctus*). All 20 species of armadillos are found in the western hemisphere. Armadillos originated in South America, and a few species have expanded northward due to their rapid breeding cycle, adaptability and a reduction of predators.

The average size: 25-48" long (including the tail); 8-18 lbs.

Their average lifespan: 7-10 years

Diet: Armadillos are mainly insectivores

Mating: The armadillo begins in early summer, and the breeding period lasts about two - three months. It takes up to four months for a fertilized egg to become implanted and another four before young are born. Each time, the fertilized egg breaks into four identical zygotes, yielding quadruplets.

About HouseSpecial

HouseSpecial, formerly LAIKA/house, can make anything move. We are animation experts. Our Portland studio's creative team is well known for our ability to integrate design and develop characters that push brand narratives beyond the expected for clients like M&M'S®, Sony, Jose Cuervo®, Target, Häagen-Dazs®, Planters®, Supercell and Honey Nut Cheerios™. HouseSpecial artists are guided by their infectious passion for storytelling and an obsession to bring wonder to every collaboration.

About Kirk Kelley

Kirk's a big-gun Director, and not just because he's a Texan. A multi-talented designer, storyteller and restaurateur, Kirk has directed and supervised many of our premier ad campaigns since 1995. He is Supervising Creative Director for our fleet of M&M'S and Boom Beach content and brings his visually and technically innovative talent to collaborations with agencies including Barton F. Graf, TBWA\Chiat\Day's Media Arts Lab, Amalgamated and BBDO Worldwide. He has solid mastery over all storytelling mediums plus a wry sense of humor and a strong point of view. His sense of composition is fine-tuned and his timing's right on the money. When he can, after sundown, he likes to sneak out back and work on short films.

Kirk holds advanced degrees in visualization sciences and architectural design and an undergraduate degree in engineering. Early in his career, Kirk taught photography at Texas A&M University. He is the co-owner of Podnah's Pit, a Texas-style barbecue

restaurant in Portland, and La Taq, a Tex Mex bar next to Podnah's. He also is a new dad - probably his greatest accomplishment yet.

About Dave Depper - <http://www.davedepper.com/>

Dave, an Oregon native, plays guitar and keyboards in Death Cab for Cutie. He made his mark playing with Northwest bands and has performed with musicians including Ray LaMontagne, Sharon van Etten, Robyn Hitchcock, Menomena, The Fruit Bats, Mirah, Corin Tucker and Laura Gibson. In 2017, he also released his first solo album, *Emotional Freedom Technique*.

About Edmund Stone - <http://www.thescore.org/>

Edmund Stone grew up on an English farm and listened constantly to BBC Radio, helping him develop an early fascination for entertainment. He became a film correspondent for BBC Radio and Thompson Publications until Hollywood beckoned. His professional highlights included: covering the Academy Awards; interviewing Alfred Hitchcock, Vincent Price and Mel Blanc; narrating more than 1,000 e-books and voicing spots for Disney, TV and radio commercials, and even a few movies. In 2006, he created *The Score*, a popular, syndicated weekly radio show all about movie music.

Dating Advice

From Dave Depper:

"I've tended to prefer the more old-fashioned dating websites, if such things exist. But we can all agree that accidentally matching with a friend is the worst thing ever, right?"

From Karly Richter, Producer:

"Thankfully didn't have to use the online dating to find my husband. I married someone I worked with, which experts often advise against when swimming through the dating pool. My advice? Go with your gut and forget what everyone else says."

From Edmond Stone:

"I have to admit I don't have a good or a bad dating app story as my wife and I married the year before any dating apps came to the forefront. My wife was somewhat 'armadillo like' in how she reacted to me when we first met. You know, armor-plated, spiky and rather solitary. Our courtship took five years and the first four years and eleven months were pretty much repetitive attempts on my part to get her to go out with me and me being rebuffed, or downright avoided... like the time we were both at a formal gala and she literally climbed over a bar, wearing an evening gown and high heels, to avoid me. As it was, it took Oscar Wilde and William Shakespeare to bring us

together, but that's another story. So I do think dating apps might have helped us... swiping is ever so much faster!"

From Beavan Blocker, animator: "Communication is important! Neither of you are psychic (unless you are psychic, then ignore the rest of this.) Don't count on your partner to just 'know' how you're feeling about something. If you want something, or need something, it's up to you to speak up and make sure that they understand how you feel, and what you need. Additionally show them courtesy you would hope to receive, listen to what they say, and don't be afraid to ask questions."

What do you think of armadillos?

From Edmond Stone:

"Now about armadillos... I think they're absolutely misunderstood. Charming creatures, really. However, to be completely truthful, except for my wife, I've never met one close up. But my heart did go out to them in their quest for love. They may be armor-plated but truly, no match for an oncoming car."

From Dave Depper:

"Amazing creatures. I'd have one as a pet if I could."

Watch all the latest releases - <http://www.housespecial.com/>

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