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(C-D) Nary a Keira in the bunch: Mixtape Club's vision of *True Facts From Tudor England*.

## MERRY OL' ENGLAND

MIXTAPE CLUB REVEALS THE CHEEKIER SIDE OF TUDOR LIFE

> If we measured the quality of life in Britain during the Tudor dynasty by the movies that depicted the era, we'd conclude that everyone lived in grandiose castles and looked like Keira Knightley.

But there was another side to life during that period. A brutish side where barbers with no medical qualifications doubled as both dentists and surgeons; corporal punishment included being boiled alive; and wiping the derriere of King Henry VIII was someone's unfortunate profession.

To promote the second season of Showtime's historical drama series *The Tudors*, Hornet Inc.-repped directorial collective Mixtape Club brought some of these little known tidbits to light with *True Facts from Tudor England*, a series of seven webfilms.

"[Showtime] wanted to do something fun," says the Club's Chris Smith. "They kept saying that they wanted this to be something that people will watch, laugh and send to their friends."

While the facts are gruesome, they do lend themselves nicely to comedy. *The Tudors*' historical consultant Justin Pollard researched and wrote 15 initial facts for the team to choose from, but not all made the final cut.

"There was one about chamber pots and hygiene that we really liked," laughs the Club's Michelle Higa, referring to the custom of emptying one's, um, refuse into the street. "[Animator] Danny Oeffinger did this great animation of the contents of a chamber pot splattering onto a woman's umbrella."

Showtime wasn't keen on that idea, but they did encourage Mixtape Club to amp up the wackiness after seeing the first round of treatments.

"We were back-and-forth with [content manager] Trevor Noren at Showtime," says Jesse Casey. "He helped us turn the facts into actual scripts. We took a first pass at it, then him. Once we had the VO recorded, we pared things down even further in the editing phase because we thought that the animation itself needed breathing room."

The editing phase was also crucial in fleshing out the comedy. "We changed the edit in subtle ways quite a bit throughout the process," continues Casey. "It was pretty much locked up front when we did animatics, but then we noticed that changing things a few frames here or there made a huge difference in the timing."

Character animation was the most exciting challenge for the team. Working with After Effects' Puppet Tool feature, the team describes the style of the characters as a "mixed-media puppetry thing."

They also had to ensure that the characters were accurate to the time period. "We screwed up Queen Elizabeth's hair the first time around," says Higa. "They told us that she definitely had red hair, and we were like, 'Whoops, sorry!'"

### WEB FILES

Hornet Inc > [www.hornetinc.com](http://www.hornetinc.com)  
Mixtape Club > [www.mixtapeclub.com](http://www.mixtapeclub.com)

BY CHRISTINE CLARKE