

Art school education puts 'Wonder Twins' on fast track

The 3D artists at Random Games call their fellow animators Demond and Dion Rogers "The Wonder Twins." It's a reference to the Saturday-morning "Super Friend" cartoon series from the mid-1970s in which alien twins Zan and Jana could activate their super powers only through contact with each other, uttering in unison, "Wonder Twin powers activate!"

The allusion might be lost on the Rogers twins, since the 1999 graduates of Raleigh's School of Communication Arts just turned 20 years old last month. While many of their contemporaries are sophomores in college, both twins have launched promising careers and been promoted two or three levels at Random Games, the Morrisville gaming-software development company.

The Rogers brothers join a growing list of young SCA graduates who are finding hot animation jobs at Triangle gaming companies like Sinister Games, SouthPeak Interactive, TimeLine Studios, RedStorm Entertainment, Perpetual Motion Enterprises and Virtus Corporation.

"I can't believe I just finished school and got to work on something really cool like that," Demond said, speaking about his first project, Parker Brothers Classic Card Games.

Demond and Dion, who grew up in Patterson, New Jersey, and Asheville, dressed alike through grade school, developed a keen interest in drawing and were both outstanding students in SCA's animation and advanced animation classes. Now they not only share an apartment and a red Volkswagon Beetle, they also work across the aisle from each other at Random Games, a company that develops CD-ROM versions of popular board games like Scrabble and Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus.

Demond created some of the animation and opening sequence for the new version of Scrabble, and Dion did the same for Men are from Mars. Both games were released September 28 and are available at most video game stores, electronics boutiques and major retailers.

SCA graduate Judah Graham, assistant director, and Tony Nichols, director of Random Games' art department, discovered the twins when the company was hiring eight to 10 artists to work on Hasbro's Card Game Classics.



School of Communication Arts graduates Demond, seated, and Dion Rogers are fraternal twins who work together as 3D artists at Random Games in Morrisville. The twins sometimes collaborate on the same projects and say they enjoy working together.

Darrell Ludlow, SCA's director of professional services, showcased the twins' work on the school's virtual gallery, sent their demo reels to Nichols and helped them with their résumés and career preparation through the school's Business of Accomplishment instruction.

"We were really impressed with what they could do," Graham said. "They're younger than we typically like to hire but extremely talented, some of our best artists. They've probably helped raise our standards of quality for some of the games we've put out."

The twins hadn't even completed their advanced animation class when Random Games hired them. For seven months they worked full-time and attended evening classes. Even in a culture dominated by youth — most Random Games employees are under 30 — Demond and Dion are young. Nevertheless, Nichols said, "Their demo reels were some of the best we'd ever seen, so we really jumped on them. They seem to work well together. They're competitive but they help each other out a lot. They have amazing talents and are always impressing us."

The twins attribute their rapid success to four factors: drawing practice, parental support, a good education and a positive attitude. The twins drew more than 100 comic books in high school that featured their

friends. "Not a day goes by that we don't draw something," Demond said.

The twins credit their mother, Emma H. Rogers of Asheville, a nurse aide who works with mentally handicapped patients, with encouraging their talent and supporting their education. "My mom told us we didn't have to work the first year at school," Demond said. "We spent most of our free time at the school."

That was above and beyond the 600 clock hours of instruction required to complete Computer Art and Animation and another 600 for SGI (advanced animation) where students gain small-group, hands-on instruction in cutting-edge animation software like 3D Studio MAX, Maya and Softimage.

The twins spoke enthusiastically about their instructors. "Craig (Slagel) was really awesome," Demond said. "He had a great understanding of the software."

Slagel, one of seven animation instructors at the school, holds degrees from universities in the United Kingdom and regularly attends industry conferences and seminars to keep abreast of industry trends and technology. He also makes important contacts with West Coast companies. For instance, Endla Burrows, the training manager from Industrial Light and Magic,

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In addition to its animation programs, the School of Communication Arts offers certificate and diploma programs in computer graphic design, multimedia and information technology. Course length

ranges from six to 18 months.

The school is accredited by the Council on Occupational Education and is licensed by the North Carolina State Board of Community Colleges.

SCA's financial aid office is available to assist students with the financial aid process and can provide counseling on options for tuition assistance and payment.

For admissions information, call (919) 981-0972 or write to School of Communication Arts, 3220 Spring Forest Road, Raleigh, N.C. 27616. Online, visit www.ncsca.com.

Artwork by Demond Rogers is available at <http://members.xoom.com/r2gers> or http://www.ncsca.com/html/gallery_frameset.html. Dion's Internet site is <http://come.to/dioncg>.