



TOM LAWTON AND SON SET FOR TV DEBUT IN 'TOM'S FANTASTIC FLOATING HOME'

How does the mind of an inventor work? To find out tune in to watch this four-part series on Channel 4 starting on 27 July 2014. Here **Tanya Weaver** catches up with Tom Lawton about how he went about transforming a derelict, old boat

Inventor Tom Lawton has been featured a few times in **DEVELOP3D** over the years; his **Bubblescope** invention graced the front cover in November 2012. Also, those who attended **DEVELOP3D Live 2013** will remember his entertaining talk about the trials and tribulations of being an inventor and designer (the video is available on develop3d.live.com).

Lawton will now grace our television screens in the Channel 4 programme 'Tom's Fantastic Floating Home'. The premise is that over the course of one summer Lawton will transform a derelict boat into a fantastic and magical floating home filled with practical inventions. In fact, there were over two dozen original ideas that he had to conceive, conceptualise and develop into a first stage prototype in a period of less than four months.

"There was no master plan," says Lawton. "The budgets weren't big either which meant we had to be pretty resourceful. I looked for inspiration in a design movement in India called Jugaad where people adapt and hack things that already exist. I barely referred to the internet

because I found it too distracting."

Interestingly, in the development of his ideas Lawton chose to ditch the use of CAD and other modern design tools such as 3D printing. Although proficient in these tools, he stuck to pen and paper in a bid to show that design and innovation can be accessible and there aren't barriers if you have a truly good idea.

"I know CAD is commonplace and there are free tools available but not everyone has access and the inclination to use them.

"I wanted to pull in an audience that wouldn't normally watch this type of show. I also deliberately didn't 3D print anything. It was such a media buzzword last year when we were filming that I got bored of every conversation about it. At one point the producers wanted me to 3D print something, anything, as if that was inventive in its own right – I didn't support that so we didn't."

However, Lawton wasn't alone on his boat. He had support from Hadrain Spooner, his on screen engineer, as well as key individuals in the production team. They also pulled in fabricators when needed. Of course, Lawton also

had his six-year-old son Barney, whose imagination and creativity fed into some of the inventions. "Barney quite liked to see himself as the client, I was happy to oblige," laughs Lawton.

Although Lawton can't give too much away, some of the challenges he had to try solve included: how to collect and pipe light from the sun into the dark corners of the boat; how to build an amphibious bike to get to the shore; how to create a bed that puts you to sleep; and how to create a flexible indoor/outdoor living space.

But ultimately, what does Lawton hope viewers will take away from watching the series? "I hope, more than anything, this show gives other designers, engineers, makers and inventive souls – young or old – the Dutch courage to be more visible with their work and process.

"Not to try and make stars of themselves but because designing and making stuff is how we change the world around us and there's quite a lot that needs improving!"

about.me/tomlawton

For the full interview with Tom Lawton, visit our blog on develop3d.com

On his journey, Tom Lawton will take inspiration from his six-year-old son, Barney