

Proud of Froud How puppets and pressed fairies can lead to fame and fortune. BY VANESSA SALVIA



Conceptual artist Brian Froud and his wife, Wendy, live in England near Dartmoor, a windswept land of granite hilltops abundant in remains from the Bronze Age, tales of ghosts and legends of pixies. It's a fitting home for this artist, who has created the world's most recognizable images of fairies and goblins.

The Frouds met 25 years ago on the set of the movie *The Dark Crystal*. Wendy sculpted Yoda for the *Star Wars* movies and worked on *Labyrinth*, "The Muppet Show" and *The Muppet Movie*. Together they have become the most public representatives of the realm of Faerie, and both will be featured guests at the fifth **Faerieworlds Festival** at Secret House Winery, timed to coincide with the Celtic summer festival of Lughnasa.



The weekend features several well-known artists including children's book illustrator Michael Hague, firedancing by Phoenix Rising, stiltwalking by the Frouds' son Toby (wearing amazing costumes made by his mother), the music of Woodland and the fingerstyle guitar of John Renbourn, founder of the Celtic folk band Pentangle. *EW* interviewed Brian recently.

How did you come to be involved in Faerieworlds Festival?

We noticed that the band Woodland was inspired by my art. We liked what they were doing, so we said, "Well, why don't we help you a bit more." We started to project my art behind the band as they were playing. People started dressing up so we sort of expanded on that and started to do these festivals. We primarily do it in the Northwest, at the moment, but we find that people will come across all of the country to get to it.

Why do you think this faerie culture is such a big draw for people?

One of the things we noticed immediately is that it's a family thing. People always think, "Oh, it's for kids," and yes, it is, but it's for grandmas too. I think people like dressing up, and I think there's something special about wearing wings on the back. I suppose with the pun intended, it's uplifting. In my art it's about connecting to nature and to each other, and I think that's what happens at the festivals.

Tell me about *Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book*.

I was fortunate enough to discover Lady Cottington, who was a Victorian lady who as a young girl discovered that when she was writing her diary the fairies were very inquisitive. She suddenly would shut the book and squash the fairies. This she thought was great sport because as far as she was concerned the fairies were always getting in the way. What she didn't know was that the fairies were playing with her really and vying with each other to be leaping between the pages to be squashed in all sorts of outrageous positions.

You and your wife have had amazing careers. Does one thing stand out?

We were both really delighted and honored to work on *The Dark Crystal* with Jim Henson. It was all puppets, so we were developing the technology. Puppets do very little, and one of the ways I try to design them is so that the little they do suggests they can do everything. In the middle of that, Wendy was mainly working on the Gelflings and she was also loaned out to George Lucas to help make Yoda. We were pleased with the reaction Yoda got, that people were believing in a character that was a puppet, so we became even more confident that people would accept our creatures in *The Dark Crystal*.

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