

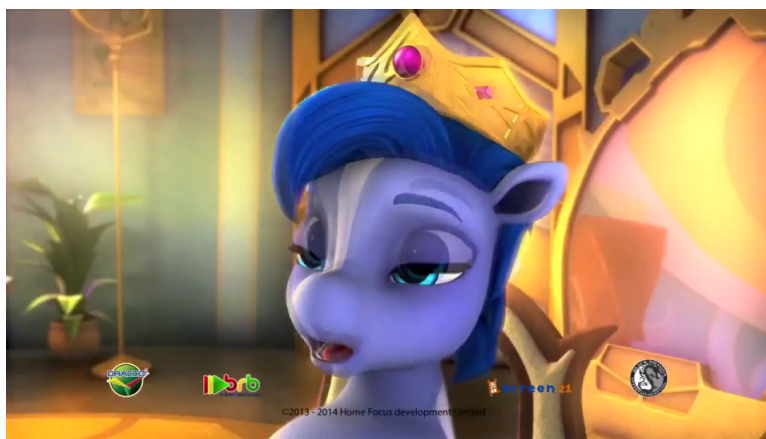
1 Intro: Why another article?

Yes, it's me again, RaichuWizDom aka Wise Cracker, that silly guy who wrote a long explanation regarding the first Filly Funtasia trailer. Well, the truth is right now my thesis has hit a minor snag, a 'bottleneck' if you will¹, and it's been too long since I've managed to write anything in L^AT_EX and besides which, at the time of writing I've just spent several hours fiddling around with a rig for a Filly model (where are the knees on those things?). Pony fiction's kind of a no-no at the moment so, in a desperate attempt to actually start and finish something, here's another short-term work based on stuff I've noticed in the second trailer.

2 How's it looking?

Pretty good, actually.

The new footage is not a standalone trailer, but part of a showreel, but even then it's a vast improvement over the first trailer. We get glimpses of at least three distinct storylines, one of which shows some potential *gasp* character development, and several characters that do not have any toy references to base on. The actions are a lot faster, some of the transitions are fast fade-ins, and as such motion blur is all over the place.



Cedric: The Prince Who Blinks Faster Than His Shadow

It also appears that the lighting has been adjusted, so indoors scenes have brighter fill lights. You can tell by the shade of grey in the shadows.

¹Word of advice to any college students: when conducting experiments in a university lab, bring your own bottles.

As a whole, there's a more defined look and feel being conveyed now, and some of the technical aspects have been tweaked. The first trailer already implied that the series would be using softbody simulations to do the mane movements, but the second one shows very clear fluid simulations. Granted, they don't look very advanced compared to movie productions, but it's still a good move: simulations take up render time, and it would have been easy to skip out on them entirely.



"Step two: poop on people's faces." Sp4zie

The Fillies still lack nostrils, so chances are that's not going to change for the actual release. And honestly, I fail to see why that should be a problem. The main issue is giving the characters proper expressions; without nostrils they're not likely going to be able to snort, and that's it. Watching them sneeze might be interesting, though... Anyway, so Fillies don't have nostrils. Neither did the Freggels, or Gonzo. And neither do the 3D Smurfs, I think. Minions from Despicable Me might have them somewhere. The CGI industry doesn't seem to think nostrils are necessary at the moment. As it stands, the lack of nostrils makes the characters look more like clay toys from afar, while the textures give the illusion of a fur coat in closeups, but only extreme closeups like we saw in the first trailer. They may have removed that detail in the second one, but it's hard to tell at these distances.

3 What kinds of plot are there?

Based on both trailers, at least three different episodes are presented.

3.1 Where are the cupcakes?

This is the plot from the first trailer. Will is walking around with cupcakes, something happens to them and Bella, the Elf Filly, is responsible.



Proud Will, and a random classmate I'm sure won't be important later on.

From there, it all depends on how you look at what we've seen before and what we see now. One option is that Rose, the unicorn and our main character, decides to lie so Bella doesn't get in trouble. Another option is that Bella decides to lie and everyone buys it, except Rose.



"Are you threatening me, Rose?"

Option three is that Lynn reports a burglary in the school that had noth-

ing to do with the cupcakes, but they decide to blame it on that anyways. Combined with the second trailer, though, the story gets a little more complicated.

Cupcakes get stolen. Big fuss, big whoop. At the same time, there's an unrelated break-in by the resident villains, Battiwigs and the Wizard in the Black Mirror. Just one problem: no one really knows what was stolen. Because of the hype surrounding the cupcake theft, the teaching staff is on the lookout for a dangerous monster, when actually they should be looking for an enemy within their ranks. Bella is hyped up to be this big hero who took down a monster, even giving her classmates some kicking instructions.



Slightly crisper lighting on this newer render.

Then somehow, Bella gets roped into finding the 'monster' that stole the cupcakes, possibly after Lynn goads her into it. Or maybe some handsome unicorn boy talks her into it. But that would be silly, right? Why would anyone do that? At any rate, Rose doesn't like it one bit, even discussing telling the truth right in front of Lynn.



You may wish to move this conversation somewhere private, Rose!

But then they go into the dangerous forest and set up booby traps for the monster. Or, alternatively, walk into some booby traps.



Oh, no, indeed. Using both a pit and a cage? Well, some of the Fillies can fly, after all.

Will seems to think he's got the perpetrator, possibly after catching an actual monster, but then, dundunduuuun!

Wait, hang on, I need to put on my pony fanfic writer cap first. Consider how we're in a fantasy setting. What can we expect? We know nothing of the villains, not their powers or their motivations. We do know Battiwigs is the one doing all the heavy lifting. We also know he wears what looks like a medallion or an amulet.

Here's a crazy thought: suppose that medallion lets him change shape?



Does this guy look familiar at all? And/or a little too smug?

So Battiwigs or the unicorn set the heroes up, and everyone is put in peril. Everyone is scattered and/or caught, but it's possible Will does manage to catch either a monster or outwit the (fake?) unicorn somehow. Again possibly, Bella swallows her pride and contacts the Headmistress on her magic mirror to call for help.



It's blurry, but you can tell it's Bella because of the colouring. You can also see one of the wings on her crown. Not sure about the background, though.

Everything turns out okay, they end on laughter. But Battiwigs and the Wizard have at least one MacGuffin in their clutches at this point. Possibly that's what they actually stole.

3.2 Life's a Witch

You know, I've been going through these trailers and checking for tips and tricks I can use in Blender, and after a few runs I started noticing some trends, particularly in how the characters are differentiated.

For example, all Princess Fillies (more on that name later) have circlets for crowns, not diadems. Likewise, all Elf Fillies have winged crowns and pointy ears, but on top of that all male Elf Fillies wear a band around one of their hooves.



Two Elf Fillies, bands on opposite hooves. Right/left-hooved, maybe? Also an Elf gym teacher, going by the whistle. Think we can get Bruce Campbell to voice this guy?

But what's really started sinking in after the second trailer is this: Witchy Fillies (maybe renamed Filly Witches, because... weird adjectives are weird?) stand out by their capes. And there's only one Filly with a cape so far.

Yeah, that's kind of weird, isn't it? A setting with magic, a school for magic, and only one bona fide witch. That's going to get its own episode, for sure.

Lynn is the only Filly whose magic goes through her cape. She might not be accustomed to using a magic mirror². It's hard to keep up in class, because her magic just doesn't work the same way. Something happens to drive her away, but what exactly isn't entirely sure. The clips leave two obvious plotlines open.

Plotline one is that Lynn has to do a show and tell in class, and accidentally causes an indoor twister. Since her toy lists her as a 'Wind Witch' capable of causing storms when she gets upset, that's fairly plausible, and may account for the twister we see in the trailer. There is, however, a problem with that shot, but I'll get to that later.

²By the way, mirrors have been used in occultism as meditation aids for ages, so you're not going to hear me complain about those one bit. Heck, the concept of 'magic mirror' as a substance is close to that of mana. Beats waving wands, I say.

Plotline two is that Lynn is having trouble in class and Rose, being brainy, cheerful, and always ready to help, decides to make the witch her study-buddy.



I'm not sure what's funnier: magic mirror used as a smartphone, or Rose being so addicted to using it her eyes don't change at all. Also note the stack of identical-looking books

Things do not turn out well for Lynn, because... she cannot properly focus, let's say. She gets spooked easily, and her magic starts getting out of control. Worse still, Rose keeps insisting it'll work if Lynn just 'tries harder' or 'tries this next'.



It's all fun and games until someone loses an eyebrow. Right, Will?

Except, what a twist, it actually does work... too well, even. Lynn's powers go out of control, and she starts damaging things, even hurting Fil-

lies. Either that or she snaps at Rose and runs away in horror of what she's done. Lynn flees into the dark. Terrified, she almost rushes off a cliff. Rose is in hot pursuit, rushing off right when she notices Lynn is missing. That's why no one *else* is going after Lynn.



If her powers really can control the weather, her being scared must make for one vicious circle. Note the dark clouds in the background. Did she make those?

But then Rose finds her, apologies are made, there's a genuine moment between the two, maybe even some recognition that, yes, Lynn is the only one of her kind in school. Yes, she is going to get homesick as a result, and no one is really going to be able to relate to her. But they can try, at least, and she doesn't have to feel alone.



A moment between friends. Note the background is still dark.

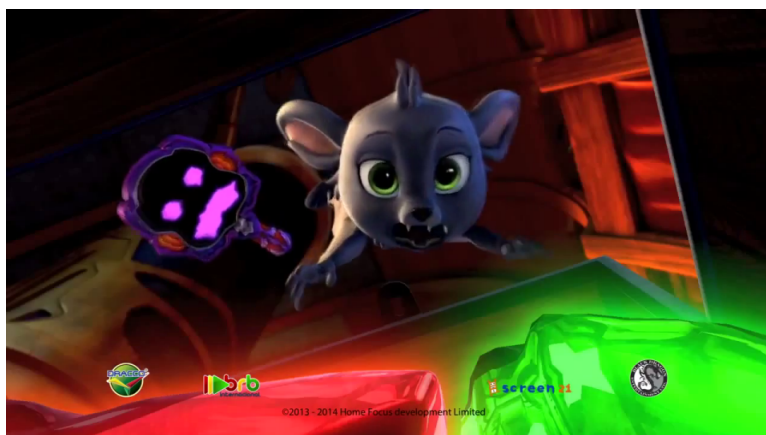
If the show wants to throw in a heavy moment, it's got plenty of room for it. Lots of sitcoms have their moments, no need for this one to stay behind. The setup allows for some genuine personal drama, stuff that's relatable and believable. They don't need to overdo it, obviously, but it's got possibilities.



And end on a laugh track. This is going to be a trend, isn't it?

3.3 Treasure Hunt With AI and Brainy

Now we get to the overarching plot of the season. It seems that there's a chase going on to find a set of gems, possibly related to Crystalia or something similar. The colours match the colours of the rainbow for Filly Unicorns, so far. We can surmise that at some point in the season, the bad guys have two of the gems in their possession.



Oh, great, they've got the green one. How much you wanna bet we'll get a Dragon Dagger in this series?

It's not really clear where they come from, but apparently these MacGuffins can just come falling out of the sky. Maybe they belong to Princess Sparkle, and they all get stolen and scattered by accident in the cupcake debacle.



Presumably this thing punches a hole in the ground?

So we're then introduced to some more of Rose's class, along with a character Fillychan has dubbed 'The Alicornator', or 'Al' for short. Some suggest it's actually Magic, the ruler of the Fairy Fillies, but Magic's toy version has fairy wings, not feathered ones. That doesn't rule out the possibility, though; there's already been several alterations to character designs based on the toys. Will, for example, should be named Willow, and his hair should be long enough to touch the ground.

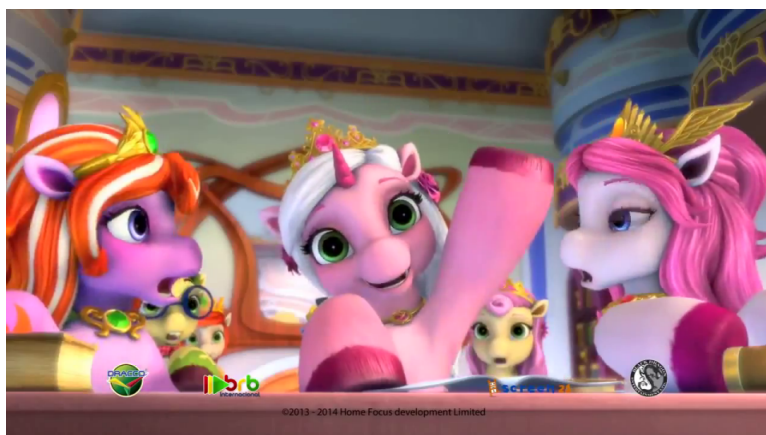
Notable among Rose's classmates is one male Princess Filly with a bow tie, glasses, and buck teeth, sitting next to Will. Most likely he was modelled after Jerry Lewis or Brainy Smurf, but until further notice I'm gonna call him Elio, because of the bow tie. I swear it makes sense if you're Belgian, and make the Filly's hair black.

No? It's really just me? Okay, fine, I'll just call him Brainy.



Brainy's colour map got swapped out for Cedric's in this shot. That's what you get when you move production files around.

Anyway, the Alicornator comes into class and more than likely asks about something no normal, sane Filly should have any business knowing about. So naturally, our hero knows about it.



**"I think it's only fair to warn you: I have no idea what I'm doing."
Mumbo Jumbo, Teen Titans.**

And then we get back to that little headcanon bit from before. Suppose for a second Brainy's being impersonated by Battiwigs? Look at the scene where Rose falls into the water.



One has to wonder what's going through her mind right then and there.

Notice she doesn't get pushed. She's standing there, leaning over, and she falls in headfirst, with her mouth open. What the heck did she see in that water? And if she dropped something, why not just take it out with her magic? If that Brainy is a fake, maybe there's a limitation with reflections. It's already established mirrors are important, after all. Maybe she saw a bat's reflection in the water. It's a big maybe, though. Another possibility

is that Brainy simply *is* Battiwigs. I mean, really think about it: turn the fangs into buck teeth, turn the medallion into a bow tie, make him look as harmless as he possibly can with those big glasses, it's the perfect disguise. No one ever suspects the geeks.



Does that look like the lair of Battiwigs and the Wizard? So far, those two haven't been in any scenic shots, so it's hard to tell. The window looks familiar, at least.

Regardless, Brainy somehow manages to get in on the act, and the troupe is off to recover the blue gem. Things go downhill very quickly, and literally.



Note that it's not a rescue mission episode: Rose falls right along with Al. Brainy may have gone first, or a fake Brainy pushed them.

It looks like Al falls and breaks his left wing, preventing him from flying.

Alternatively, he lands just fine and Rose lands on top of him, breaking his wing. Brainy is still with them, though, which makes me wonder how he got out of that unscathed and undetected.



No bats in the reflection, so presumably no shapeshifters there.

Rose nearly sends Brainy over a cliff after they find the blue gem, and possibly that's the theme of the episode: Rose is anxious to help, but clumsy and distracted. Combined with her being excitable and more sociable than your average teenage protagonist, I can't help but wonder if she's supposed to be more like Starfire from Teen Titans. You know; nice, helpful, wears her emotions on her sleeve, rushes into things, fiercely defensive of her friends, knows a lot about things that others just never look into. Wouldn't be a bad thing to call back to.



This is still after they've fallen; you can see the outlines of the bandages on Al's left wing.

What happens next is confusing. Either Brainy is a good guy and just happens to get separated from Al and Rose, or Brainy really was a traitor after all and he manages to ditch them, leaving them alone in the caves without giving away his disguise, since 'new kid is evil' isn't going to work more than once. Al's magic mirror doesn't work, but Rose somehow manages to get her mirror to activate. This doesn't result in her contacting Sparkle (I think that was the Headmistress's name?) on the big mirror, though, at least not the shot we've seen. What we saw there was a Filly without a horn, and a lighter shade of pink.



No gem, no Brainy. And the dude's got a mirror as well. Personal hygiene is important, after all, even for male alicorns.

But whatever, they get out and end on a laugh track, because laugh tracks. Another possibility is that Brainy's been putting the idea into Rose's head that she's too clumsy to do anything useful, and the scene where she falls into the fountain is actually the ending to the episode. She's looking into her own reflection, pondering, Brainy apologises and assures her he doesn't think she's beneath him. If he turns out to be a good guy, they might even have something in common in both being fairly book smart, in which case we may need a container for all the shipping that's going to happen with these two. And then Rose falls in just after their little moment together. The moral of that episode would be something along the lines of "Don't get dragged down and don't drag down others" or "You're going to screw up, but so does everyone else. Deal with it."

3.4 Show and Tell

This is really the odd one out, mostly based on whatever clips are left that look plot-relevant, but not relevant to any plot covered so far. The two

biggest clues are the indoor twister and the panic in class when Will is in front of the blackboard.



Auntie Em! Auntie Em!

The reason I'm not sure if this belongs in the Lynn episode is because of what's at the centre of the twister. It looks like one of the magic gems. Besides that, if Lynn created the twister, why is it Cedric who's the last to hold on? If it's really out of control, then shouldn't it be moving around uncontrollably instead of keeping its focal point in one place? Or alternatively, shouldn't Lynn be at the centre of the twister, Last Airbender-style? It's more likely this is another gem hunt episode, and this time the good guys find and secure the thing first, but soon learn the gem's powers are unstable.

Then there's this shot of Will standing flabbergasted in front of class while everyone else panics, even the frog. Most likely this is from yet another episode altogether, but it could also be that the purple gem has a bodyswap effect, and this is the aftermath. The pupils are rushing off to find a fullsize mirror, Will is actually one of the teachers, and the frog is a classmate. Either that, or Will really messed up his presentation and is about to get chewed out for it. More likely the latter, since the scenery doesn't quite match at first glance.



What the heck is that frog doing there? It can't be Lynn's pet; she'd be heading towards it, or standing still to track and catch it.

4 So is there anything to worry about?

A couple of remarks come to mind, both from the first and second trailer.

4.1 What about the unicorns?

One of the ways Filly differentiates itself from MLP is by having its toys come in clearly themed sets with very defined limits and settings. For example, you're not going to see any Elf Fillies mixing with the Princess ones, except in the Wedding set, but that's a different story altogether. One such set is the Unicorn Fillies. The idea behind the Unicorns is that they all live on a separate island responsible for a different kind of magic. Now, in and of itself that shouldn't pose any problems.

Until you realise that there's five different islands, and every island has its own colour. Why is that a problem? Well, it means that going by toys alone, there's only ever going to be four unicorns per island. It means that within the Unicorns, you have five different kinds, and only one of those is likely to show up on screen. That makes their individual worlds seem pretty damn small, doesn't it? Besides that, you can tell which island a Unicorn is from by their colour of horn, and at the same time that can tell you which family they're from. Rose, supposedly, has a brother with a pink horn. Everyone in her family has a pink horn. You can get blue, green, yellow, purple, pink.

My point is this: if all of the Filly world is to be made to look big, the Unicorns are going to break that illusion. Unless Unicorns have some rule or there's a sense of isolation (like there is with the Witchy Fillies, from the looks of it), they need to have an even distribution for all five islands, and right now the roster doesn't allow for that. Besides which, for some reason girl's shows involving magical creatures seem to shy away from male unicorns, especially young males. I'm not sure if that's because of marketing or if there's some Freudian excuse for it.³ Right now the cast looks like a fairly even distribution in gender, at least. Point is, unicorns themselves are split up into families by horn colour, which further adds to making their world look smaller. Basically, the ratios in Unicorns are either going to end up skewed, with some lacking representation at all, or they need to get a lot more Unicorns in, which can upset the balance with the other four races.

Can the creators fix that kind of issue? Sure, and they already are, in a way. All they need to do is just add more characters to the list that don't have toy versions yet. Keep in mind the toys are a mix of children and adults, and the series itself focuses on teens in school. You just can't use all the toys, it's simple as that. As for guy unicorns, I'd be happy if Rose's brother showed up. Seriously, just get some memorable male unicorns on screen, enough to balance out what the other races get, and ensure a mix of Unicorn horn colours, if only in the background. The Witchy Fillies kind of get a free pass because there's only one of them right now, but otherwise the same principle applies.

4.2 Where's the food?

This one's not so much a remark on the trailers as it is a concern for fantasy series in general. Basically, whenever you're trying to make a fantasy world, or a fictional civilisation, it always starts with food. As Guns, Germs, and Steel taught us: civilisation starts with food production. From there on, you get specialised professions, politics to manage distribution, yadda yadda yadda. The same logic applies to fantasy settings as much as it applies to history, and keeping that in mind can help make a fictional world believable. There's a reason MLP has shown four main characters capable of cooking⁴, and two of them do it professionally⁵. There's also a good reason you sometimes see ponies just eating; that's what living creatures need to do from time to time. Having food and proper meals around makes it look more consistent and real, it helps with the immersion.

³Because a girl having bodyparts capable of poking your eye out doesn't have anywhere near the same implications as a boy, right?

⁴Pinkie Pie, Applejack, Rarity, and Spike, and that's just the ones that come to mind first.

⁵AJ and Pinkie.

That said, this is a magical academy setting, and with the focus on royals or nobles, chances are we're not going to see any farmer Fillies. The toys also lack farmers, which strikes me as a major oversight, but that's marketing for ya. So far all the food we've seen in the trailers is pastry and sweets of some description. At the very least, there should be some cafeteria scenes and we need to see what these things eat in terms of normal food. There's no way this setting is going to work if there isn't some form of actual meals being served. A lunch lady (or lunch lord?) Filly is the bare minimum. Besides, a lunch hall is a great place for characters to talk and scheme, as well as to show off a wealth of background characters. Makes the setting look bigger. On the flip side, from what I hear it is a real chore to make food in 3D look appetising. There's a problem with how foodstuffs reflect light, and sugary materials are just easier to set up shaders for. But that's just what I heard, don't quote me on that.

4.3 Unfortunate naming conventions

I sort of covered this in my earlier analysis, but it bears repeating: the names are going to cause trouble.

It's a sad state of affairs, but there is an overly politically correct crowd of moral guardians who will pounce on any perceived prejudice, stereotyping, or insults, regardless of whether or not it's justified. Filly Funtasia has the added pressure of upsetting pony geeks.⁶ There's a couple of things that may need some attention, unless the show intends to play these things for comedy. To wit:

- Both 'Fairy' and 'Princess' are derogatory terms for effeminate or perceived-to-be-gay men. The show's two male protagonists are a Fairy Filly and a Princess Filly. You can get away with calling them Fillies, barely, but the category names are going to ring some alarm bells.
- The name 'Willow' is shared by the character played by Warwick Davis in the movie of the same name. It's a pretty good fantasy film, and the "Power to control the world" scene is one of my personal favorites. Unfortunately, 'Willow' also happens to be the name of a lesbian witch in *Buffy: the Vampire Slayer*. This resemblance may account for why the Fairy (again, a term used to refer to effeminate men) is called 'Will'.

⁶I refuse to use the term 'bronies' nowadays, since it fosters an unhealthy and self-delusional 'Us vs Them' mentality.

- It's not entirely clear if Unicorns just like to 'party', as the toy site describes them, or if that's just an unfortunate translation and the word 'party' should be replaced by 'celebration', which is a decidedly more dignified term for it.
- If we're going to see Filly Butterflies, for the love of all things sacred, keep those insect designs off screen. The gangly limbs do not match the heads at all. It'd be better if the arms and legs were thicker, and the overall design was more humanoid in nature. I hesitate to encourage plagiarism, but have a look at the Maya the Bee reboot for designs, those actually work.

Anyway, given how Willow's name was changed right from the first trailer, there's a good chance the other remarks will be addressed as well. After all, the writing staff is American, and native speakers would catch that sort of nonsense before it starts.

But if they don't, here's hoping the creators are ready to face any backlash that may be heading their way, from pony geeks or moral guardians or whatever. And let's hope they play it for laughs.

5 Closing thoughts

The Filly Funtasia show looks set to premiere in 2015, as it stands right now. Possibly that's because some backtracking had to be done regarding scripts, or naming conventions, or compositing. Not all of the animation looks perfect, either, but it only slips in a few places, so that won't take too much tweaking. Then there's the Equestria Girls thing coming up. There's no telling why Filly Funtasia's delayed, but that's just how it is. Probably a combination of things.

There's also the potential hiccup with texture maps ending up on the wrong character, that's the sort of thing people will notice. But all in all, it looks like the creators have a definite vision of what they want to make, and how they're going to make it.

Is it going to be good? Let's hope so. It sure looks like it.

But hey, that's just, like, my opinion, man.



Cedric, are you off your meds again?