

# Henry Cooke

me@prehensile.co.uk // @prehensile

*Creative technologist, team lead, researcher.*

*Tinkerer. Prototyper. Committed generalist. Glue person. Facilitator. Artistic collaborator. Data science lab assistant. Part-time futurist.*

In over 20 years working in creative technology I've made websites, games, 3D environments, toys, mobile and desktop apps, interactive stories, electronics, art installations, many prototypes in and between software and hardware, and in one memorable case building a giant talking throne for a Christmas event in a Royal Palace. I've experimented with digital storytelling (resulting in a BAFTA nomination), language processing, binaural audio, natural language bots, machine learning and edge-cases of speech recognition and computer vision.

I have led successful teams both technical and cross-disciplinary (more fun). I've done a lot of design, concepting and pitching and I am trained in video & audio production. I'm fairly handy with a soldering iron.

Expert in Python and highly skilled in JavaScript, both client and server-side. Experienced with HTML/CSS, with some C++ (mostly openFrameworks), Java, Processing and C#. I can generally pick up whatever stack is most useful for the job at hand. Former iOS and Flash developer. Happy hacking with web-facing APIs and fluent in JSON, XML, OAuth, REST etc. I know my way around a \*nix command line, and frequently tinker with VPSs in various parts of The Cloud. Frequent user of Raspberry Pi, comfortable with Arduino and intermediate electronics.

More information at [prehensile.co.uk](http://prehensile.co.uk) and my LinkedIn profile.

## Skills

Expert in Python, Objective-C/Cocoa Touch for iOS and Actionscript. Skilled in HTML/Javascript/CSS, with some C++ (mostly openFrameworks), Java & Processing. Comfortable hacking with web-facing APIs and fluent in XML, JSON, OAuth, REST etc. I know my way around a \*nix command line, and frequently tinker with VPSs in various parts of The Cloud. Familiar with Arduino and basic electronics; Raspberry Pi, Docker and Kubernetes are my current favourite things.

## Recent Work

### BBC R&D

For the last 18 months or so, I've been working in the Internet Research and Future Services department of BBC R&D. The project itself isn't yet public, but my work on it has ranged across prototyping iOS apps, helping to define a scalable cloud infrastructure for content analysis and experimentation with generation and interrogation of knowledge graphs.

## Pastcards

A recent side-project, Pastcards is an idea that was too good not to implement. Partly a reaction to the ephemeral nature of social photos, partly a way to get nice surprises through the post. I have written in detail about the motivations for the project on Medium.

## **Greatest Hits**

Launchball, a game with over 10 million plays... Malcolm Tucker: The Missing Phone, the first app to be nominated for a TV BAFTA... a contribution to Björk's *Biophilia*, the first app to be inducted into MoMA's permanent collection... a giant talking throne for Kensington Palace... a (very) short story generator in collaboration with Dora García... a pareidolic bot which looks for almost-faces in The Cloud... consulting on creative technology for theatre companies Nigel & Louise and Coney... the Mimeomorphs, a collection of Twitter bots which learn language from a human mentor... conference talks about mysterious radio stations and empathy at scale.

## **Employment History**

### **Freelance, August 2009 - present**

When Flash's wave finally broke and rolled back, I followed my nose to iOS as the next platform where interesting things were happening.

I spent the next few years working as an iOS developer with a heavy involvement in the creative side of my projects. A good deal of this work was for Agant and Faber, but there were also jobs for Touch Press, smaller companies and arts organisations as well as the odd Flash job for advertising and design agencies.

I spent a good chunk of 2012 and 2013 working for W12 Studios on an extensive user experience design project for a major tech company, and towards the end of 2013 I worked on a few prototyping projects and founded East London Kinetics with Tim Burrell-Saward. 2014 saw more prototyping work for REACT and BBC R&D, further development of ELK and public airings at Playful, Bees in a Tin and Hack Circus (as a speaker) and The New Sublime as an exhibiting artist.

### **Preloaded, December 2006 - August 2009**

I moved to Preloaded in 2006 where I spent an enjoyable few years making games and online experiences. My biggest success was Launchball, a physics puzzle game which has been played over 10 million times, installed at the Science Museum, projected 70ft high onto the side of the Shell building and won Best of Show at SXSWi in 2007. I left in 2009 as Technical Lead, having recruited the Flash team which would notch up further successes. During my time at Preloaded I worked on projects for clients like the BBC, Tate Modern, Bacardi, MTV and Cadbury's.

### **Tonic, December 2004 - December 2006**

I cut my agency teeth at Tonic, my first London job. Most of my work was producing Flash microsites, and I quickly progressed through projects of increasing ambitiousness and scope. It was here that I learned to produce high-quality work under agency deadlines and when I really started to learn the craft of creative development.

### **Codemasters, 2001 & 2004**

I worked for Codemasters either side of my degree in their fledgling Online Marketing department, making banner ads, microsites and webgames in Director and Flash. A dream job for a kid straight out of school who liked making things with computers, and a solid base for the next few years of making digital marketing things.

## **Education**

### **BA (Hons) Media Production, University of Lincoln, 2001 - 2004**

When the time came to go to University, I'd already been writing code for a good few years and I wasn't sure how much I got from studying for a Computer Science degree. I'd enjoyed making short films and videos at GCSE & A-Level, and I felt that spending some time studying media theory would be useful in a screen-based culture in a way that English Literature would have been in a print-based culture. Back in the early 2000s 'convergence' had yet to become a buzzword (and even longer until it'd be a footnote), but I had an inkling that understanding how time-based media worked would be a useful skill to go alongside the programming I already knew and was continuing

to teach myself. The critical theory and production skills I learned at Lincoln have been consistently useful and evolving bits of my toolkit ever since.