

TWC Lands Cannes Gold Lion Winner Alex Ogus

Director secures his first stateside representation after his Cannes win for The Fight Channel campaign generated interest from assorted shops. Ogus will split his time between the U.S. and Canada—where he is repped by Code Film, Toronto, and Cinelande, Montreal—but noted that the American ad market is his priority.

See page 4

Visual Effects/Animation: Trends And Issues

SHOOT seeks out and garners feedback from industry entrepreneurs and artisans as to key developments and concerns in the visual effects and animation sectors of the business. Plus the introduction of our quarterly Top 10 Visual Effects/Animation Chart, this first installment covering the best work of the summer.

See page 13

STORY Time Begins For Director John Komnenich

Helmer signs with production house STORY for national spot representation while continuing to maintain his longstanding Komnenich Films for special projects. This marks STORY's second recent signing of an entrepreneurial Chicago-based director, the first being noted filmmaker Bob Ebel, formerly of mainstay shop Ebel Productions.

See page 4

Cause And Effect In the Midwest Spot Market

A look at the impact of filming incentives on infrastructure.

See page 17



Getting In The Game

Strategies Starting To Catch Up To What Creatives Envisioned

By Robert Goldrich

SAN FRANCISCO—The brave new media world is getting a little braver, though obviously there's ample room for more new ground to be broken and potential to be realized. As SHOOT looked to noted agency creatives this month to reflect on where we are today in terms of interactive and new means of meshing brands into our culture, there was a definite sense that progress has been made.

Consider the creative team of Patrick McKay and Feh Tarty, the lead art director and copywriter at Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, San Francisco (GS&P), for the last three California Milk Processor Board's "got milk?" campaigns. The creative duo first came together at DDB Los Angeles where they scored impressively with the 2005 Super Bowl work for Ameriquest, including "Surprise Dinner" and "Mini Mart," directed by Craig Gillespie of bicoastal/international MJZ.

The premise of that campaign—which advises us not to judge too quickly because things aren't always what they seem—lent itself to McKay and Tarty shooting some test story material that couldn't be shown on TV. The creative team wanted to deploy this content as part of an online interactive campaign.

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O&M Wins Emmy For 'Animals'

By Robert Goldrich

LOS ANGELES—American Express' "Animals"—directed by Bryan Buckley of bicoastal/international Hungry Man for Ogilvy & Mather, New York—has won the 11th annual prime-time Emmy Award for the year's best commercial. The honor was bestowed during the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences' (ATAS) Creative Arts Emmy Awards ceremony, held this past weekend (9/8) at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

"Animals" takes us to a day in the life on the job for Ellen DeGeneres behind the scenes of her TV talk show—except this isn't your typical day at the office in that her co-workers are animals. The storyline is filled with childlike wonder and clever gags such as the turtle being the staffer chosen to make a fast run for coffee, or a giraffe given the task of changing a light bulb.

The commercial was inspired by an American Express print ad in which DeGeneres recalled her childhood ambition as having been to work with animals. According to Chris Mitton, group creative director at Ogilvy & Mather, the goal was to make the TV spot "feel as much like Ellen as possible, and as American Express as possible."

Mitton added, "The animals are a
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Christou Returns To Agency Creative Side Via Saatchi LA

By Robert Goldrich

TORRANCE, Calif.—Andrew Christou, who's been directing commercials the last six years, including the past five at bicoastal/international Moxie Pictures, has returned to his career roots as an agency creative, coming aboard Saatchi & Saatchi LA in Torrance, Calif., as creative director on Toyota motorsports. SHOOT first reported on the move last month

(8/24) but recently got the chance to catch up with Christou to discuss what lured him back to the ad shop side of the biz.

Right out of the gate at Saatchi LA, Christou just wrapped a 10-episode series, which at press time was about to debut on toyotapitpass.com, with broadcast :30s, a trailer and four teasers in place to promote the online show. All the components were

directed by Tim Godsall of Biscuit Filmworks, Los Angeles. The package—which complements Toyota's plunge this season into NASCAR team competition—centers on "Fan Operations," a fictitious new department at Toyota, which is designed to bring fans closer to the racing action. For example, a :30 introduces the "fandangler"—a giant lawn chair with cables placing it in hovering mode

just a few feet over the track, giving the seated fan the best seat in the stadium. The webisodes themselves range from one minute to three minutes long.

For Christou the ambitious project confirms that he indeed made the right decision to join Saatchi LA. "The agency and this client are committed to creating new brand en-

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EDIT FINISH EFFECTS MPTOWN DALLAS



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Legacy



In late July noted cinematographer Laszlo Kovacs, ASC (*Easy Rider*, *Paper Moon*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *Ghost Busters*), passed away at the age of 74. In tribute to the artist, the American Society of Cinematographers last month announced that it is dedicating the 2008 Heritage Award competition for U.S. film school seniors and recent graduates to the memory of Kovacs.

The Laszlo Kovacs Heritage Award will be presented to one or more recipients during the 22nd annual ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards on Jan. 26 in Hollywood. Submissions deadline for the honor—as well as for categories in the overall ASC Awards—is Oct. 31.

“Laszlo Kovacs was both an extraordinary artist and human being,” said ASC president Daryn Okada. “He was chairman of the ASC Education Committee for many years, and

was tireless in his efforts to support students and other young filmmakers. Laszlo envisioned the Heritage Award as a tangible way for us to inspire talented young cinematography students to pursue their dreams. It was his idea to annually re-dedicate the Heritage Award to the memories of different ASC cinematographers.”

“...the best way that I can thank the people who helped me is to reach out to young filmmakers and encourage them to follow their dreams.”

Applicants for the Laszlo Kovacs Heritage Award must be in either their final year of a U.S. film school or a recent graduate. Requirements include a recommendation by a dean, department head or a faculty member and submission of a student film.

Entries will be judged by an ASC jury who will evaluate the artistry and skill with which the candidates tell stories with moving images that augment the visions of the directors

and performances by the actors.

Kovacs rose up through the industry ranks from humble beginnings. He was raised in a small village in Hungary. He studied at the Academy of Drama and Film in Budapest and came to the United States as a political refugee in 1957 following a failed uprising against the communist regime.

But in a sense the most fitting honor—albeit posthumous—is the naming of the ‘08 Heritage Award after him in that my most indelible memory of Kovacs is his explanation for being involved in such mentoring, nurturing pursuits as the ASC Education Committee and the Kodak Filmschool Competition.

Stateside he eventually found a niche shooting low budget films, including *A Man Called Dagger* and *The Savage Seven* during the mid to late 1960s. He broke into the mainstream with *Easy Rider* in ‘69. Kovacs went on to assorted notable films. His career body of work and endeavors earned him Lifetime Achievement Awards from the Camerimage International Festival of the Art of Cinematography in ‘98 and from the ASC in ‘02.

“What chance would you have given me as a young man growing up on a farm in Hungary during the 1940s of having a career like mine in Hollywood?” Kovacs asked rhetorically. “It seemed like an impossible dream at times, but some wonderful people encouraged me along the way. I believe the best way that I can thank the people who helped me is to reach out to young filmmakers and encourage them to follow their dreams.”

POV



Feeling Down? This'll Help.

The pro bono movement in advertising didn't really start in the Mad Men creative '60s. It began in the '80s actually as a first-floor initiative. Executives on the second and third floors went to Addy shows and saw that the efforts of their first floor staff to Help Dogs Find Homes or Save The Battlefield rendered work often more interesting and moving than the work for their roster clients. A nice confluence of agendas followed: edgier creative and helping others.

The second reason is more compelling: 30 million Americans live below the poverty level. One in six Americans has no health insurance. One in four Americans is one medical emergency away from bankruptcy and thanks to Congress even THAT won't help them. Iraq veterans are living in the streets. 300,000 to 400,000 mentally ill people are housed in jails and prisons. 43,000 Americans die on our highways annually. Violent crime is on the rise all over. Three children a day are murdered in America and young people experience the highest rate of violent crime. Thousands of old and infirm and poor die in the heat or the cold. Our children score about 24th in educational testing against peers in the top 30 industrialized nations. The U.S.

infant mortality rates behind Cuba. There are millions of refugees in our own country still waiting for a chance to return to New Orleans. There are young people with no job skills and no jobs. There are geriatric convalescent homes where elders are being abused and neglected. Voter lists are being illegally scrubbed. Unwanted pregnancies proliferate in U.S. high schools. One in ten kids drop out. Once a kid drops out of high school, he or she begins a spiral into chronic joblessness, crime and failure, yet our drop-out rate continues to climb. Malnutrition is one of the biggest problems of poor children in the richest country in the world. Dozens of rare diseases get little attention from pharmaceutical companies because the medicines make no profit. Stigmas char people's souls and crush families because of a flaw in their genetic code that renders them psychotic, prone to alcoholism or burdened by a depression so great that they will tell you that Hell exists and they live in it everyday.

We could go on. But you see it's because someone needs you.

As bad as it gets out there, as cynical as I tend to get, the fact is I see more and more agencies in our much maligned industry are glomming onto a school or a global charity and giving

them something they would otherwise never have: the support of a professional organization—and they are not just bringing creative but integrated ideas replete with planning and smart media and online applications.

So the next time you don't get your upgrade, the next time your salary seems lacking, the next time you have a bad day, walk into a foundation and ask if you can do something to help get their message across. Then watch

their faces light up. Imagine having a client that's actually glad to see you. It'll make you feel better. I swear to God it works every time.

Daniel Clay Russ is the founder of Peacecouncil, a non-profit that does free advertising for causes. He is also the executive creative director of R&R Partners, a Las Vegas-headquartered ad agency that donates millions annually in marketing to charities big and small.

Flash Back

Sept. 13, 2002 Bicoastal/international @radical.media had reached an agreement in principle to acquire Santa Monica-based Stiefel+Company....The California Senate Appropriations Committee has killed Asembly Bill 2747, a measure that would have established a wage-based tax credit in the state, effective July 2004....Joining the advertainment game is clothing retailer Aeropostale, which will run a two-and-a-half minute short film on MTV....Executive producer Steve Schofield, along with creative directors Chris Jones and Loni Peristere—all formerly of Radium, Santa Monica—have formed visual effects company Zoic Studios....

Sept. 12, 1997 HBO's "Chimps," directed by Joe Pytko of PYTKA in Venice for BBDO/New York, has made history, winning the first ever primetime Emmy Award for a television commercial....Editors Roger Harrison and Gayle Grant have teamed to launch Exit in Santa Monica....The Click 3X family of digital visual effects/animation/design shops is scheduled to open in new Santa Monica digs by Oct. 1....

PEOPLE & PROJECTS

Gold Lion-Winning Director Alex Ogus Joins TWC For Spots

By Robert Goldrich

SANTA MONICA—Director Alex Ogus—whose star skyrocketed when The Fight Network campaign he helmed for Cossette Communication-Marketing in Toronto won a Gold Lion this year at the Cannes International Advertising Festival—has secured his first stateside representation, signing with Santa Monica-based TWC.

Ogus plans on dividing his time between the United States and Canada where he continues to be handled by Code Film in Toronto, which produced the lauded Fight Network spots “Park-

than two years of directing commercials. The campaign centers on an average guy’s idiotic quest to pick a fight with anyone in his immediate vicinity. Prior to gaining international recognition at Cannes, the spots scored impressively in Canada’s 2007 Bessie Awards competition, winning Best of Show campaign, Gold campaign, Gold single (for “Parking Lot”) and Kari Award (for best actor performance) honors.

At press time, Ogus was in the process of landing a U.K. affiliation. In the aftermath of Cannes, he gained representation in Germany via Big Fish, in

boutique size and feel, its reputation in comedy, and partner/executive producer Mark Thomas’ track record of helping to develop directorial careers.

After graduating from York Film School in Toronto, Ogus started a salad dressing business to finance his short films and spec reel. The first

commercial he helmed was to promote his salad dressing and it helped him land a slot on the directorial roster of Canadian shop Navigator. Shortly thereafter, Ogus moved over to Code Film where momentum began to build for his spotmaking career, the big break coming with The Fight Net-

work campaign.

Ogus joins a TWC directorial roster that consists of Brian Baderman, Martin Brierley, Sebastien Chantrel, Trevor Cornish, John Doe, Jeff France, Michael Fueter, David Jellison, Justin Klarenbeck, Suthon Petchsuwan, Bo Platt and Hamish Rothwell.



Ogus made his mark internationally with The Fight Network campaign.

ing Lot,” “Construction Site,” “Dog Walker” and “Bus Stop.” He recently finalized separate representation in the Montreal ad market via Cinelande.

The Fight Network package is comedy/dialogue fare, a genre in which Ogus has made his reputation in less

Russia through DTVMA, in Sweden via Esteban and in Malaysia where he’s handled by Planet Films. Yet Ogus affirmed that his primary focus is on the American ad market and that he gravitated towards TWC—after overtures from several U.S. houses—based on its

Director John Komnenich Signs With STORY

CHICAGO—STORY, under the aegis of executive producer Mark Andrew, has signed director John Komnenich for national representation. Best known for people/dialogue fare, Komnenich had been helming spots via his longstanding Komnenich Films, a Chicago shop he will continue to maintain for special projects while STORY now becomes his exclusive commercialmaking roost.

Via STORY, Komnenich gains production footholds on both coasts. The Chicago-headquartered company also has offices in New York and Santa Monica.

Among the director’s recent ad credits are a campaign for Phoenix-

based identity theft firm LifeLock as well as spots for Allstate and Tampax, both via Leo Burnett USA, Chicago, the University of Missouri Tigers (conceived by former Burnett creative Jack Smith) and King Daughters Medical Center out of Chicago area agency Storandt Pann Margolis. Over the years, Komnenich’s work has garnered ADDY, Telly and Mobius competition honors as well as an Emmy Award that was bestowed upon an image campaign for ABC 7 News in Chicago. His commercials have also garnered finalist recognition at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival, the Clios and The One Show. Among Kom-

nenich’s other credits are spots for such clients as Kellogg’s, Chevrolet, Budweiser and McDonald’s.

The director has also begun to diversify beyond traditional TV advertising, recently wrapping a series of 20 short webisodes promoting former ESPN sports news anchor/reporter/talk show host Dan Patrick’s syndicated radio show through Chicago-based Content Factory. Additionally Komnenich plans to direct a documentary via Komnenich Films.

Komnenich began his career as an editor and then successfully transitioned to the director’s chair from which he has taken on such genres

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Death Becomes Director/Writer Carolyn London In Latest Short Film

I’m In The Mood For Death debuts at LA Shorts Fest

By Nicole Rivard

NEW YORK—For Joseph Aboud’s menswear line JOE, Carolyn London, co-owner of London Squared Productions, New York, directed a series of viral videos. The client agreed to two-and-a-half-minute, dark little character studies as a way to launch the brand. The characters, including a hardened criminal and drug-addled rock star, talk longingly about their connection to this mysterious “Joe.”

“I thought that was pretty adventurous for a retail brand,” London said.

Like the viral videos, London’s new short, *I’m In The Mood For Death*, has a dark-comedy vibe. The film, which made its world premiere at the LA Shorts Fest yesterday and has been selected for the 10th annual Mecal, the International Short Film Festival of Barcelona, which starts today, follows Jamie, who has planned her perfect death down to the very last detail. But just as she is ready to die, life decides to get in the way. London teamed with husband



A scene from *I’m In The Mood For Death*.

Andy, who is also co-owner of London Squared Productions, to execute the project, which she admits was inspired by her own life and work. “My husband and I have a production company that specializes in ridiculously obsessive type work such as insane animation projects and music video shoots with 35 locations. This film is about someone who has created a world of her own making—one that makes sense only to her. It’s completely reasonable that she’s trying to perfect the art of death. And she’s going to keep doing it until she gets it right. I

suppose that’s how I feel about being a filmmaker.

“When I’m in the throes of writing and creating, my OCD kicks in big time. I become a lock-checker, almost as if everything would be right in the world if I could tame locks and oven knobs. My husband teases me about it so I wanted to delve in deeper and see what was behind this anxiety and desire to control the tiniest details. I believe that it rises from a fear of death and the unknown, of jumping into the world without a safety net. But that’s the ulti-

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Radium Launches Editorial Division, Signs New Talent

SANTA MONICA—Digital studio Radium—best known for its work in visual effects, motion graphics and design—has diversified, opening a full service editorial division spanning its digitally linked offices in Santa Monica, San Francisco and Dallas.

In San Francisco, senior editor Alan Chimenti leads an ensemble that includes newly hired cutter Inome Callahan and the recently promoted Mahoko Kuramasu. The Santa Monica shop is home to new addition, editor Lee Gardner. And new hire Quan Tran joins resident Dallas-based cutters Brad Wetmore, who’s director of editorial, and Tom Aberg.

Callahan started her postproduction career on the producing side, first at POP Television, Santa Monica, then as an assistant producer at Method Studios, also in Santa Monica. Realizing that editing was her real passion, she moved to Mad River Post, Santa Monica, becoming an assistant editor. Within four years, she was promoted to full-time editor in Mad River’s San Francisco office. Callahan has worked with

noted directors Tony Kaye and Andrew Douglas, among others, and with such agencies as TBWA\Chiat\Day, Goodby Silverstein & Partners and Attik. The socially conscious Callahan also devotes time

to Habit for Humanity, the San Francisco Food Bank and the At The Crossroads homeless organization. Callahan has cut noteworthy spots for adidas, Scion and CareerBuilder.com, and since joining Radium, has edited work for Home Depot out of The Richards Group, Dallas, and a client-direct assignment for Cisco.

Tran joins Radium from Mad River Post, Dallas, where he was honored with a 2007 AICE Award for Bell Helicopter’s “Yellow Ribbons,” out of TM Advertising, Dallas. A 2003 graduate of the University of Texas-Austin, Tran recently wrapped editing the trailer for a new feature documentary *Body of War*, chronicling the story of a young soldier wounded and paralyzed after less than a week in Iraq.

Meanwhile Gardner now reunites with Chimenti; the two worked

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Inome Callahan

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Merger Puts Pirate Booty In New York

By Robert Goldrich

NEW YORK—Toronto-based TV and radio audio production company Pirate has merged with New York creative-audio-for-video shop/studio complex McHale (formerly McHale Barone) to form Pirate New York.

The move gives the 15-year-old Canadian house a major foothold and an expanded talent pool in the stateside market. "Opening a New York City office has been a long-time Pirate goal," noted founding partner Terry O'Reilly, who plans to bring the company's one-stop service—encompassing music, voice direction, sound-scaping and mixing of TV spots—to the Big Apple.

"We're already accruing benefits from cross-nation cohabitation," continued O'Reilly. For example, we've just done some very interesting work for BBDO, the writing created in Toronto and production handled in New York."

Indeed Pirate gains a high-end U.S. studio/creative complex. In '06, Chris McHale restructured his 14-year-old McHale Barone as an audio house with extended creative reach. Maintaining a 12,000 square-foot duplex studio/office in Manhattan, McHale established ties with Ludorum Animation and



Chris McHale

international concert production company Festival Network, both based on the now Pirate New York premises.

"Beyond our core business of advertising, our skills at programming are greatly enhanced by our link to Ludorum Animation," said McHale. "With a worldwide BBC distribution deal, Ludorum is poised to make a major impact on the TV market. Not coincidentally, Pirate Toronto's history of successful long-form animation includes a 2006 Emmy nomination for Disney's *Get Ed*. A half a dozen new animation projects are on the books for this fall.

"Our connection to Festival Network is another cornerstone of Pi-

rate's international expansion," added McHale. "By signing artists like Zap Mama, producing their CDs and booking them on stages like Newport, New Orleans, Paris, North Sea and the Beijing Olympics, we're creating unique collaborations between Festival's blue chip sponsors, artists and record labels. Pirate is cross-pollinating branding elements in a totally new way."

Still commercials will continue to be a mainstay as both the Pirate and McHale shops have a pedigree in the advertising industry. McHale's credits over the years include work for Budweiser, T-Mobile, Siemens, Volkswagen, American Airlines and McDonald's. Pirate in Toronto has turned out spots for the likes of Molson, Hyundai, Ford, The Yellow Pages and Viagra.

Furthermore, Pirate is well positioned in Canada and the United States to diversify into nontraditional advertising forms. "Sonic branding and the emerging digital media is a natural fit," said Pirate founder Tom Eymundson. "Pirate has worked extensively with Toyota and Molson on new media projects. Webisodes, podcast and website enhancements fall right into our creative expertise."

ARTISANS

Charlex Ups Eng To VP/Sr. Creative Director

NEW YORK—3D/animation/effects studio Charlex has promoted creative director Richard Eng to VP/senior creative director. Since coming aboard the New York-based studio 10 months ago, Eng has led such design-driven spot projects as MSNBC.com's "Spectrum" and Maxell's "Red Wave" as well as branding for OnStar. In a recent creative shoot-out, Eng successfully headed the Charlex design team that won the JCPenney back-to-school campaign.

Charlex founder/executive creative director Alex Weil characterized the promotion of Eng as being "a milestone in the continuing evolution of our company. I hope to be able to mentor his development, and at the same time, expect to learn a great deal from him. It's no secret that the design scene is changing at lightning speed. Young designers pick up powerful computer systems with the same nonchalance that my generation would pick up an electric guitar. With Richard's help, I hope to harness some of this youthful energy and talent and together shepherd in the next era of Charlex creative."

Eng reflected on his Charlex tenure. "Coming from the more traditional design side, I've always thought creative first and how to execute it

second, but the scope of the work would often be limited by technical and production considerations," he related. "The dream is really to have the creative vision and be able to express it fully, with the expertise and tools to do so, and that's one of the greatest strengths of Charlex.



Richard Eng

What we've been able to do here is to evolve a workflow and process that integrates the many different aspects of any project, like design and 3D, at an extremely high level. Projects are demanding a higher degree of execution than ever before."

Eng noted that Charlex is evolving to meet those needs and stay ahead of the curve. In that vein, he feels his education is ongoing, adding that he

regards Weil as a valued teacher.

Prior to joining Charlex, Eng was creative director at Fuel, opening its New York studio and supervising creative on both coasts. His experience ranges from broadcast to commercials, from network rebrands to end tags. Previous projects include image spots for Cartoon Network as well as rebrands for OLN, ABC and Nick@Nite, where he also served as an art director. Over the years, Eng's work has garnered recognition from Promax/BDA, The One Show and the Telly Awards, among other competitions.

Charlex president Chris Byrnes credited Eng with being "invaluable in building the Charlex design team of talented artists. As a result we're seeing new looks, techniques and approaches."

Among Charlex's latest fare is AT&T's "Dominoes," which made *SHOOT's* Summer Visual Effects/Animation Top 10 Chart (featured in this issue). The spot shows a seemingly endless chain reaction of dominoes—except each domino is a video screen, which knocks over the next and the next and so on. Each screen offers a different TV show, demonstrating the multitude of HD channels offered by AT&T, dwarfing the number of hi-def options available on cable.

Short Takes

BIG LAWN EXPECTING AIRTIME

Expecting—a short film directed by Chuck Bennett who's best known for his spotmaking endeavors at Big Lawn Films, Santa Monica—is airing this month on the Independent Film Channel, as part of its "Shorts" program. This Short Takes column first reported on *Expecting* in April, at which time Big Lawn harbored the hope that the short would get picked up not only for the festival circuit but also for a broadcast/cable run. *Expecting* was chosen for air by IFC after



being screened for a month on the network's Media Lab website. Additionally the film has been accepted into a number of film festivals and recently debuted at the Santa Monica International Film Fest. Written by Brendan Duffy, *Expecting* isn't at all what you'd expect during an ultrasound session in which a pregnant woman and her spouse are about to get a look-see at their developing bundle of joy. But they can tell from the doctor's demeanor that something isn't quite right. Reluctantly the doctor tells the couple that their baby girl will be "unattractive." The implausible diagnosis is treated as serious by all parties, with the girl's condition later downgraded to "ugly." But a second medical opinion concludes that the baby will grow up to be a gorgeous babe. The two doctors argue about who's right, with both citing the respective disadvantages of being ugly and pretty in today's society. A third doctor then gets into the act, taking the middle ground that the baby will be "plain." Indeed beauty is in the eye of the beholder....

ABSOLUTE PROGRESS

London-based visual effects/post house Absolute opened a New York shop with one Flame in February. Last month, the stateside facility expanded to two Flames with wiring in place for an additional pair of Flame suites, which are expected to be up and running within the next 18 months. Similarly the 3D department is doubling in size with two Maya-based CG workstations now increased to four. A deal has also been finalized to secure new N.Y. premises with enough space to rival the London headquarters. Plans call for the layout and functionality of the Manhattan operation to mirror that of Absolute in the U.K. In terms of work, Absolute NY has just wrapped 2D and 3D postproduction on an effects-heavy, six-part Intel campaign directed by Peter Thwaites of Gorgeous Enterprises, London, and bicoastal Anonymous Content for McCann Erickson, New York....

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Durham, N.C.-based agency McKinney has brought Forrest Maready on board as motion designer. He will design and develop microsites with his 3D and After Effects experience. A



Forrest Maready

veteran of the filmmaking industry, Maready has worked on dozens of features (including several Muppet movies, *Shallow Hal*) and TV shows (*Dawson's Creek*). He comes to McKinney from Guildford, U.K., where he served as lead designer for Imagineer Systems, heading the development of high-end visual

effects applications on Mac, Windows and Linux....Rocky Tortorella has joined PostWorks, New York, as director of sound services at the company's Soho site. He most recently held the position of operations manager at New York-based feature film audio post facility Sound One, his professional home for the past 30 years....

What Goes Around . . . Comes Around

**HSI Productions is proud to
congratulate Samuel Bayer
for his award as Best Director
MTV Video Music Awards 2007**

HD Essentials

HD DVR Unveiled

To the cynic, TiVo's recently introduced HD digital video recorder (DVR) will enable users to now skip past hi-def commercials.

To the optimist, the new DVR will allow people to record and view HD spots.

To the pragmatist, maybe it's a little bit of both.

Whatever your orientation—be it seeing a glass that's half full or half empty—clearly TiVo is looking to make HD more affordable with the debut of a hi-def DVR for \$299.99, part of its initiative to tap into the growing sales of high-definition televisions.

The new DVR lowers the point of entry for a TiVo HD DVR. TiVo started selling an HD DVR last year but at a price of \$800. The new less expensive version is designed to make the technology more accessible to the marketplace at large.

TiVo's \$300 HD DVR can record 20 hours of HD programs or 180 hours of standard programs. The company's more expensive HD DVR records 32 HD hours and offers higher quality audio and video.

The new HD DVR also includes such TiVo flexibility features as movie and TV show downloads from the Internet via Amazon's Unbox, and the ability to record two shows and watch a third simultaneously. (The download of content from the web directly onto a TiVo unit came out of a partnership the company recently entered into with Amazon.)

TiVo began taking orders on its \$300 HD DVR earlier this summer. The DVRs will soon be available in retail stores as well.

Market Penetration

An estimated 4.5 million HD TV sets were sold during the first half of this year, some 50 percent more than the tally for the first six months of 2006. The Consumer Electronics Association estimates that 16 million HD sets will be sold by the end of '07, bringing the U.S. household total to more than 52 million.

This would bring the household penetration rate in America to some 36 percent, with about 20 percent of homes having more than one hi-def set.

Sony/Bexel Deal

Burbank-headquartered Bexel Broadcast Systems has entered into a two-year, multi-million-dollar master purchase agreement with Sony Electronics. Under this arrangement, Bexel will continue providing its customers with the latest Sony professional broadcast and production technologies.

"Bexel has a long and successful track record of providing our customers with the highest quality production systems and support to meet their requirements here in the United States and abroad," said Alec Shapiro, senior VP of sales and marketing for Sony Electronics' broadcast and production systems division. "We're looking forward to expanding our relationship with them, bringing our products to new markets and offering our customers even higher levels of service and responsiveness."

Bexel rents products to its customers either as stand-alones or as part of a package with other proprietary systems, such as The Premier HD Flypack that Bexel is constructing.

Separately, Sony and Bexel will also engage in cooperative marketing and operational initiatives.

"We're excited to be continuing our relationship with Sony," said Bexel's Tom Dickinson. "The combined expertise and strengths of the two companies will result in greater satisfaction and service for our customers."

Bexel is a division of The Vitec Group, a U.K.-based broadcast manufacturer and service provider. Bexel was founded in 1981 and is a leading provider of broadcast rental equipment and system design, operating from a network of offices located in 10 primary production cities throughout the United States.

Contact SHOOT editor Robert Goldrich with HD-related news and developments at rgoldrich@shootonline.com or at (323) 960-8035.

Creatives Reflect On Brand Building

Continued from page 1

"They almost went with it," recalled Tarty. "But the problem at the time was that clients weren't equipped to deal with other mediums...Interactive was an afterthought back then. It hadn't been budgeted for."

"We knew we wanted to do interactive and that it could have great value for clients," noted McKay. "That's long been what Feh and I have pursued. We haven't changed in that regard at all. But thankfully now the times have changed and caught up to nontraditional forms where creative drives the media, where you create content that will find people—and that people will seek out."

Tarty and McKay joined GS&P in '05. "When we came here, Jeff Goodby and Rich Silverstein asked us what we wanted to do," related Tarty. "We told them that we wanted to explore interactive and new forms from the outset, to come up with ideas that can be carried out in different mediums."

That integrated approach has been reflected in the currently running California Milk "Get The Glass" campaign in which commercials tell us of the Adachi family's quest to get milk but to no avail. The spots drive viewers to a website (GetTheGlass.com) where they can play an elaborate, entertaining board game and join the Adachis in their pursuit, all the while showcasing the health benefits of milk.

Web traffic has been heavy, with one million-plus unique visits to the site in the first month alone. Just as, if not more importantly, visitors are spending 15 to 20 minutes on average at the site.

"Get The Glass" came on the heels of California Milk's "Aliens/Cow Abduction" campaign, also based on an engaging, tongue-in-cheek premise in which aliens from outer space covet the milk elixir for its health-enhancing properties. Yet underscoring the educational process that has gone on in recent years to make "Get The Glass" and "Aliens/Cow Abduction" possible is their "predecessor" campaign spoofing the steroids controversy in big league baseball. The five TV commercials told the story of a star player who's "juicing," except that the juice is milk.

The humorous spots sparked some controversy. More significantly, they drove traffic to the California Milk Processor Board's website. For a site accustomed to some 1,100 hits a day, the baseball campaign increased that daily tally to more than 18,000.

"That went a long way to opening the client up to doing more full fledged integrated, interactive work, paving the way for 'Aliens/Cow Ab-

duction' and 'Get The Glass,'" noted Tarty. "It shows we have come a long way in recent years. When you look back, you realize that we've turned a corner in terms of getting the chance to do meaningful integrated work."

Up next for Tarty and McKay is a campaign for a new GS&P client, the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. "We'll be advertising to Australians only so it represents a fun, different opportunity," said McKay. Though they were not yet at liberty to discuss specifics, Tarty and McKay envision an Aussie campaign idea that will be relevant across different media platforms, including interactive.

Happiness

The lauded, animated "Happiness Factory" spot for Coca-Cola—directed by Todd Mueller and Kylie Matulick of Psyop, New York, for Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam—charmed the marketplace upon its debut in '06 as well as its run during this year's Super Bowl telecast. The commercial has since spawned a mini-documentary, *New World of Coke*, in which actual Coca-Cola workers were interviewed and their responses placed in the mouths of the animated characters from the original :90 ad. The six-and-a-half-minute docu piece is a featured attraction at The New World of Coca-Cola venue in Atlanta.

And last month (*SHOOT*, 8/31) marked the debut of *Happiness Factory—The Movie*, an online global premiere event in virtual world Second Life. Again helmed by Mueller and Matulick, the nearly three-and-a-half-minute animation film remains accessible on the Internet. The campaign promoting the movie included 30 and 60-second trailers, cinema-inspired poster ads and promotional packaging.

Al Moseley, executive creative director at W+K, Amsterdam, characterized the "Happiness Factory" commercial as being "the start of a bigger franchise for Coke," reflecting the branding prowess of entertainment. Underscoring that, he noted, is the primetime Emmy nomination that the original "Happiness Factory" earned this summer.

"Entertainment is the way forward for the brand and the [Emmy] nomination is recognition of 'Happiness Factory' as entertainment... The nomination affirms that we are on the right path for the future," related Moseley. "We need to make pieces of valued entertainment, particularly with people choosing not to watch commercials via TiVo and with other choices out there. Maybe in the not-too-distant future, we will be making branded

entertainment that people will actually pay to see."

Voyeurism

As chronicled in *SHOOT*'s iSpot (7/18), the HBOvoyeur campaign from BBDO New York is most ambitious, encompassing a building-sized "peep show" in Manhattan, content online at hbovoyeur.com, mobile fare and a film titled *The Watcher* appearing on HBO On Demand.

The building projection is the image of an apartment building, in which we see Manhattan residents moving about in their dwellings, allowing viewers to be voyeurs into their private lives.

BBDO New York senior creative director/copywriter Mike Smith observed that the campaign brings a new dimension to branding. Rather than an outdoor billboard proclaiming that HBO tells good stories, you can see stories unfold on the projected film along the side of a building on New York's Lower East Side.

Online you can peer further into these people's living spaces and lives, with a video featuring 30 actors in a dozen apartments. Delving deeper you see that some of these lives and goings on in the apartments are connected to one another. You can even select from different pieces of original music tracks to set the tone and discover how sound affects what you're watching.

BBDO executive creative director/art director Greg Hahn said that with all the alternatives, there is more than two hours worth of content on the website, with viewers opting to watch as much or as little as they like. "But the key is that they are interacting with the stories that unfold."

And, noted BBDO senior creative director/art director David Carter, "Every story has a conclusion and they can often be connected to each other."

Putting viewers in the position of accessing and in some respects being able to orchestrate stories that aren't part of HBO network programming is indeed a progressive way to brand HBO as a special place for storytelling.

While viewers are the voyeurs, the HBO On Demand film *The Watcher* introduces us to the master "voyeur" and tells us his story.

The main components of HBOvoyeur were directed by Jake Scott of bicoastal/international RSA, with additional online material helmed by RSA's Chris Nelson. The campaign has generated viewer buzz and blogs and exemplifies what David Lubars, chief creative officer of BBDO North America has long been a proponent of—namely creating compelling content that people will seek out, regardless of form.

Andrew Christou Exits Director's Chair For Saatchi Opportunity

Continued from page 1

ergy through propositions that go beyond the traditional :30," he related. "That's why I came here. I wanted to get closer to the brands themselves and be at an agency that wanted to go into new directions so that I could get deeply involved in innovative, longer form projects. Plus I had the benefit of already knowing how it was to collaborate with the people at Saatchi."

Indeed Christou had more than an inkling that Saatchi LA was a custom fit for him. He had first-hand experience writing and directing via Moxie the 15 episode mini-show *Jon and J.J. at The Line of Scrimmage* for Toyota out of Saatchi. The series—which aired during last season's *NBC Sunday Night Football Halftime Show (SHOOT, 12/15/06)*—starred first-time actors Jon Ray and J.J. Castillo driving around the country in their Toyota truck searching for the best in high school football and conducting tailgate broadcasts. The episodic branded entertainment series promoted the new editions of the Tun-



Andrew Christou

dra and Tacoma trucks.

"That experience introduced me to Harvey [Saatchi LA executive creative director Marco] and a lot of the gang here, and I could see it was a good fit for me," recalled Christou, who noted that *The Line of Scrimmage* series is set for a second season with new hosts. Slated to direct the project this time around is Christou's former Moxie compatriot, Danny Levinson, founding partner in the production company.

Over the past couple of years, separate from his Moxie endeavors, Chris-

tou was involved in original online content development and TV show ideas, looking to cobble together a branded content reel in partnership with a creative colleague. The opportunity then presented itself at Saatchi and Christou deemed it too good to pass up.

Christou whetted his branded entertainment appetite at Moxie some time back in the pre-YouTube days with a campaign for Labatt Blue out of agency Grip Ltd., Toronto. The home video-style spots captured guys—in-

cluding a group from a Southern California rugby team—engaged in goofy antics. The objective was for these spots to act as a catalyst for viewers to come up with their own such exploits and share them via email. "We were successful in that viral goal and it got me much more into thinking about pursuing relevant branded content forms," Christou said.

Christou broke into the agency ranks as an intern at BBDO New York, where he was later offered a junior art director position on the Pepsi

account after studying advertising and graphic design at New York's School of Visual Arts. He went on to Wieden+Kennedy, Portland, Ore., as an art director on Nike and Microsoft. Next Christou was at Berlin Cameron & Partners, New York, where he served as a creative director. There he worked for such clients as Reebok and General Motors. Christou then made the jump to his first production company roost, now defunct Propaganda Films, in 2001 followed by his signing with Moxie in '02.

Radium Diversifies Into Editorial

Continued from page 4

together at the now defunct San Francisco shop Western Images. After that house shuttered, Gardner freelanced, often working with Radium on jobs for such clients as GMC, Coca-Cola, Oracle and Carmen Electra's Strip Tease Workout. Other noteworthy commercial work cut by Gardner includes

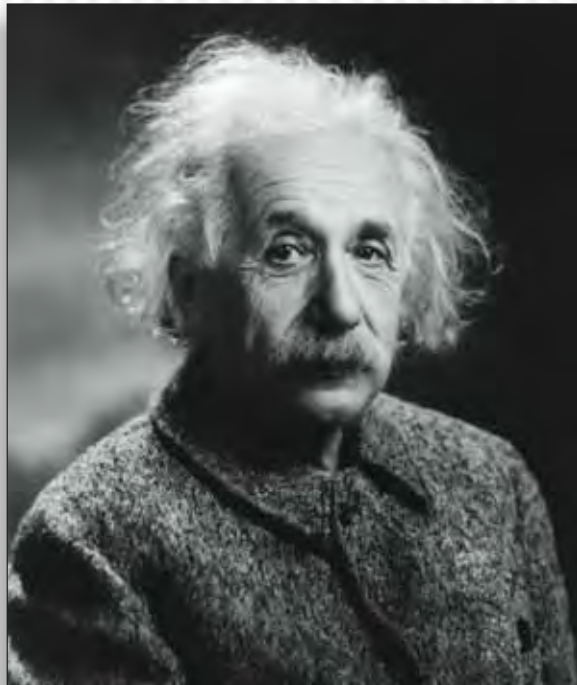
McDonald's AT&T, and HBO-*The Sopranos* as well as non-broadcast projects for clients such as Microsoft, Nike and Apple.

Since joining Radium, Gardner has wrapped jobs for Coke and Energizer. And Kuramasu was recently promoted from assistant editor to a full-fledged editor. Among Kuramasu's credits are multiple

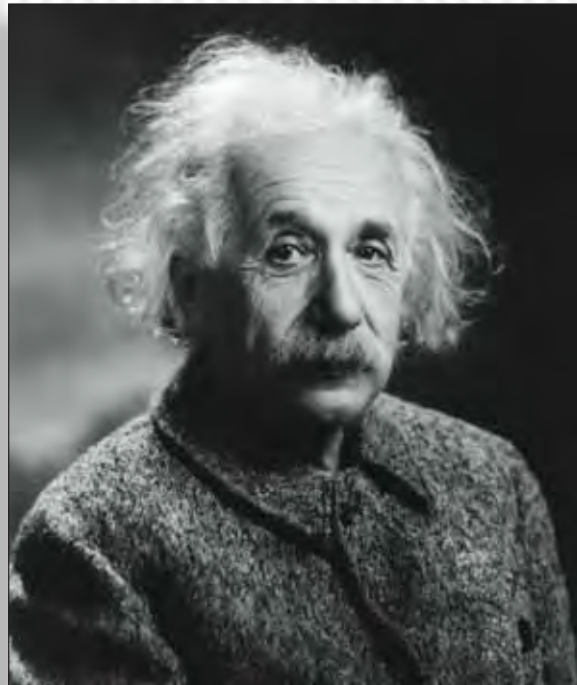
campaigns for Mervyn's.

Radium is no stranger to the editorial arena. Chimenti has cut some of the studio's higher profile projects, including Nike's "Motivation" and Target's "Product People." He has also edited assorted music videos for such acts as Green Day, Dave Matthews Band, No Doubt and Cake.

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Top Spot of the Week

Director Steven Diller Does Battle With Nasty Clog For Liquid Plumr

By Christine Champagne

The women DDB San Francisco is targeting with a series of new commercials for Clorox's Liquid Plumr don't just dislike the clogs that plug up their sinks and tubs—they hate them. The agency found out exactly how much in focus groups during which participants were instructed to write letters to clogs to express their emotions. "These letters were pretty harsh," according to DDB creative director/art director Dustin Smith, who noted that the women lashed out at the clogs for being gross, disgusting and frustrating and lamented the interruptions clogs caused in their daily routines.

The women went as far to say clogs make them feel dirty, which inspired the :30 "Ahem," one of the spots in a campaign of three directed by Steven Diller of bicoastal/international MJZ.

Conceptualized by Smith, DDB art director Natalie Chambers and copywriter Aimee Lehto, "Ahem" finds a woman (played by Jessica Makinson) getting ready for a night out when she hears an "ahem" coming from her bathroom. Upon closer examination, she realizes it is coming from the sink. She peers down

the drain and pulls back in horror after a chunk of the clog that is plugging up the pipes emerges and lands on her white silk blouse.

The rude clog chuckles with glee unaware that our heroine is reaching under the sink for a bottle of Liquid Plumr. She pours it down the drain, and the clog is history. The spot ends with a close up of Liquid Plumr and the tagline, "Destroy annoying clogs." The delightfully dark "Ahem" stands out in a category dominated by neat product demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the clog character really comes to life. Part of the reason DDB hired Diller was that he showed an aptitude for bringing an inanimate object to life—more specifically, a bowling ball—in a series of spots for ESPN out of Los Angeles-based Ground Zero. The spots promote Sundays as bowling day on ESPN and center on a bowling ball that goes out of its way to make sure men aren't embarking on other activities on Sundays. For instance, one of the spots, "Laundry," has a guy opening up his washing machine on a Sunday only to discover it is full of hardened cement. He looks down to spy a bowling ball sitting next to a bag of cement mix.



Steven Diller

"I guess I have a knack for bringing inanimate objects to life," Diller mused with a laugh.

As for why he was interested in tackling "Ahem," "It was one of those boards that was just really strong and very simple and different, especially for the category. And when I got on the phone with Dustin, it seemed like he wasn't afraid to take it to an unexpected and a little darker place," Diller said. "So we kind of clicked on that."

Clog's POV

According to Smith, Diller brought some great ideas to "Ahem," including a key shot in which you see the woman's face from the clog's point of view as she peers down the drain. "We had never thought about doing that. We'd seen this as a more voyeuristic, third-person perspective, and we thought this almost first-person perspective of the clog looking up at her was a cool idea," Smith related. "That's one of the shots in this spot that I like the best. I think it gives the clog a lot of personality."

That said, Diller almost didn't get that shot. He and DP Richard Henkels lensed "Ahem" as well as two other spots on location at a Los Angeles house in just one day, with "Ahem" being shot last. The shoot went right down to the wire. The crew had until 10 p.m. to wrap, and it looked as though they might not be able to shoot the crucial clog looking up at the woman scene.

But Diller kept rolling even as the crew was breaking down because it was a must have in both his and Smith's minds.

Henkels shot "Ahem" on Super 16. "I like the look," Diller said. "One of our references was *Rosemary's Baby*. We had more obscure shots and longer lens shots from the hallway [into the bathroom]. Once we were inside, we kept it on a longer lens. That's one of the reasons why we used a smaller camera and a snorkel lens, so we could get into those smaller, tighter areas and not make everything look wide."

Spoon-fed

It was a decidedly low-tech production. "The clog spitting up was flicked from a spoon onto the woman," Smith shared. "We were nervous about that, but it ended up working well."

Days and days of experimentation went into preparing the clog material that was spewed at the poor lady. "That's where the job becomes a little absurd—you're looking at the ideal texture for a clog," Diller said laughing.

For safety reasons, the clog had to be edible and non-toxic. Ultimately, it was made out of a combination of coconut hair, banana mush, chocolate and ground coffee beans and almonds. "I didn't go for the dare to eat it," Diller said.

You can't help but feel the woman's pain when this nasty stuff winds up on her blouse. Smith credited Chambers and Lehto for upping the ante with their decision to have the woman wearing a silk blouse. "They were like, 'There would be nothing worse than getting this on a silk blouse when you're getting ready for an evening out.' You can just wash it out if it is cotton," Smith said, "but you can't when it's silk."



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW SPOT](#)

What A Drain! A woman is confronted by her nasty nemesis—a clog, which jumps out from the sink to stain her silk blouse. But unbeknownst to the rude clog, whose point of view is depicted in the spot, there's a bottle of Liquid Plumr beneath the sink and within our heroine's reach.

TOP Spot OF THE WEEK

CLIENT
Clorox/Liquid Plumr

AGENCY
DDB San Francisco
Lisa Bennett, chief creative officer; Dustin Smith, creative director/art director; Natalie Chambers, art director; Aimee Lehto, copywriter; Mark Tobin, broadcast producer.

PRODUCTION COMPANY
MJZ, bicoastal/international
Steven Diller, director; Richard Henkels, DP; Lisa Margulis, David Zander, executive producers; Peter Vitale, producer.

EDITORIAL
Filmcore, San Francisco
Brian Lagerhausen, editor; Jon Ettinger, executive producer; Tracy Coleman, producer.

POST/VISUAL EFFECTS
The Syndicate, Santa Monica
Beau Leon, colorist.
RIOT, Los Angeles
Andy MacDonald, visual effects artist; Robert Owens, producer; Wensen Ho and Andy Davis, compositors.

SOUND DESIGN
stimmung, Santa Monica
Gus Koven, sound designer; Kelly Fuller, executive producer.

Audio
Eleven Sound, Santa Monica.
Jeff Fuller, mixer; Luis Rosario, assistant mixer; DJ Fox-Engstrom, executive producer.

Performer
Jessica Makinson.

The Best Work You May Never See

Receptionist Kills Idaho Lottery Spot Concept

By Robert Goldrich

Forget about a viable ad concept dying in committee or in focus groups. In this charming tongue-in-cheek, largely black-and-white animation :30, the commercial assassin is instead a receptionist who answers phones at the Idaho Lottery office.

We open on a ringing phone that is picked up by the female receptionist. On the line is a man who says he saw the new Twister scratcher game cards in the store, which prompted him to come up with an idea for a TV commercial promoting the Idaho Lottery's new game that carries a \$30,000 payoff. The guy's head turns into a light bulb, connoting the proverbial inspired idea. He explains his spot storyline to the receptionist, an ad scenario that is brought to life in animation directed by Christopher Hinton via Hollywood-headquartered Acme Filmworks for agency es/drake in Boise. The man with the plan explains that a dot builder, whom we see with trusty hammer at the ready, is all set to play Twister. Since he makes the colored dots on the Twister board—causing players to contort their bodies in different directions—it figures that he should be masterful at the game and a leading candidate to win the 30 grand.

But these best laid plans are scuttled as our idea man relates that a “ginormous octopus alien” arrives on scene and uses its far reaching tentacles to out-twist the now caped superhero Twister man and win the \$30,000 top prize. The octopus then uses the money to repair his spaceship, deploying a giant drill.

The receptionist, seen mindlessly twirling her hair, says succinctly that this idea “would never make it on television” and proceeds to burst the light bulb that emerges from her ear. (The idea started with the man, apparently made its way through the phone receiver and went in one ear of the receptionist and out the other.) The guy responds, “That wasn't necessary,” referring to the manner in which the receptionist summarily dismissed his concept.

An end tag shows us an animated version of the scratcher game piece along with the Idaho Lottery website address.

Creative freedom

Hinton said he was drawn to the project primarily for the “creative freedom” the agency team afforded him. “They gave me lots of latitude, presenting me with a basic script and then an audio recording of the voices in the phone conversation. I put together a rough animatic based on all of that, and they accepted my interpretation, adding a few suggestions.”

The agency team that entrusted Hinton consisted of creative directors Joe Quatrone and Dennis Budell and producer Lisa Hawkes.

Twice nominated for an Oscar—for the short films *Black Fly* in 1991 and *Nibbles* in '04—Hinton is repped for commercials by Acme. His modus operandi is to hand draw every frame of his work on a tablet. He did just that for this Idaho Lottery commercial, which is aptly titled “Twister.” “It was all drawn on a table using a vector-based software called Toon Boom Studio. It's very easy software to use,” related Hinton. “Because it's vector-based, you can move things around and enlarge them without any degradation to the im-

age. And due to the way I drew it—using line thicknesses to deflect any computer look—the finished commercial looks less mechanical and more human.”

Over the years, Hinton has done a smattering of spots but is looking to pick up the spot pace since he has more free time having recently quit running the animation program at Concordia University in Montreal. After being a member of the fine arts faculty there for 16 years, Hinton decided to devote more time to directing and animating projects, working in concert with Acme Filmworks or Canada's National Film Board. He directed *Black Fly* through the latter, and *Nibbles* via Acme. Ron Diamond and David Schmier of Acme executive produced “Twister.” Hinton and Acme founder Diamond are long-time friends; in fact Diamond was exec producer on the Oscar-nominated *Nibbles*.

Dual existence

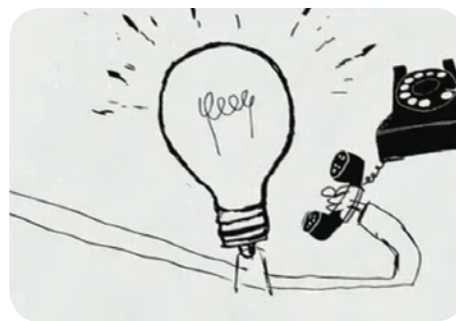
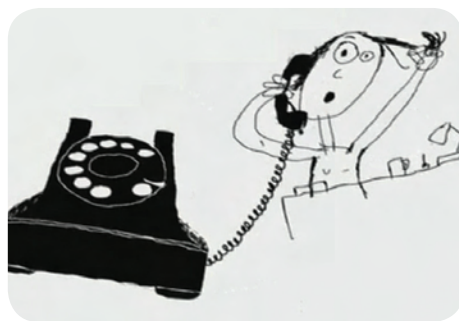
While *Nibbles*, *Black Fly* and now the Idaho Lotto spot reflect Hinton's affinity for comedy, the director noted that he leads “a dual existence...I very much like humor but I also love exploring more abstract, art-related issues by trying to push the animation medium as far as I can.”

On that more serious, abstract score, Hinton is currently working with the National Film Board of Canada on a short that captures the art of dance through stereoscopic imagery. Hinton added that his independent film work consists of shorts. He is not enamored with feature-length fare. “I like to have control. That's the real crux of the matter,” he explained. “I draw, animate and direct all my work. The short is a great medium that allows you to be in the driver's seat.”

credits

Client Idaho Lottery Agency es/drake, Boise Joe Quatrone, Dennis Budell, creative directors; Lisa Hawkes, producer **Production** Acme Filmworks, Hollywood Christopher Hinton, director/ animator; Ron Diamond, executive producer; David Schmier, executive producer/East Coast; Pernille D'Avolio, senior producer; Michael O'Donnell, head of digital operations **Editorial** Acme Filmworks George Khair, offline editor/postproduction supervisor **Audio** North by Northwest Productions, Boise David Earnest, audio mixer/sound designer

The lightbulb goes on—but not for long.



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Primetime Emmy Winner

Continued from page 1

comedic foil for Ellen even though they don't say anything, yet the feeling is created as if they are interacting with her during the course of the working day. The decision to shoot it in black and white brought a nice sophistication to the work, the kind of sophistication that people associate with American Express. Though there are a lot of technical aspects to the commercial, it feels very accessible and we've gotten a lot of positive feedback from viewers. The likability of Ellen and the animals—and the response from audiences—has made the spot part of the culture at large.”

Back in July, when “Animals” received an Emmy nomination, Mitton said he was proud of the accomplishment, describing the nom as “recognition that your work has entered pop culture in some way.” Now the Emmy win solidifies that recognition as the spot has been singled out by the mainstream entertainment community.

The Emmy win reflects what Diego Scotti, VP, global advertising for American Express, described as being “a key cornerstone” of the American Express/Ogilvy strategy, which is simply “to enhance our cultural capital.”

Scotti cited “Animals” as being a prime example of a creative approach that Ogilvy and Mitton have led “in terms of collaborating with talent to come up with great creative and stories that relate to that talent. It’s a non-standard way of operating. We work in a much different way with creative celebrity talent. We don’t write a script and put it in front of them and say, ‘Do this.’

“We build a relationship that tran-



Bryan Buckley

scends a transaction of one commercial or one piece of copy. Chris [Mitton] engages them in a very successful way to partner with and steer them in the right direction to get great creative that truly fits their talent. We put the talent, the agency and American Express together to create alchemy. Chris and his team have basically perfected a model that leads to true creative collaboration.”

“Animals” topped a field of Emmy-nominated commercials consisting of Coca-Cola’s “Happiness Factory” directed by Todd Mueller and Kylie Matulick of Psyop, New York, for Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam; Travelers’ “Snowball” directed by Dante Ariola of bicoastal/international MJZ for Fallon Minneapolis; the American Legacy Foundation’s “Singing Cowboy” helmed by MJZ’s Nicolai Fuglsig for Arnold, Boston, and Crispin Porter+Bogusky, Miami; and three spots from BBDO New York—Pepsi’s “Pinball” directed by Traktor via Partizan, G.E.’s “Jar,” also helmed by Traktor and Cingular’s “Battle” (in conjunction with BBDO Atlanta), directed by Alison Maclean of Park Pictures, New York.

STORY Adds Komnenich

Continued from page 4

as comedy, actor performance-driven storytelling and a substantial amount of kids advertising. He reasoned that STORY will provide greater marketing strength and open up new opportunities for him in the ad marketplace. He cited the production house’s national sales team which consists of Laura Zinn of Zindependent on the East Coast, Doug Stieber and Nichole Tinaglia of Doug Stieber & Co. in the Midwest, Jim Miller of Miller Associates in the Southeast, Alyson Griffith and Jessica Berry of Gossip in the Southwest, and Char Noonan of Char & Associates on the West Coast.

Komnenich launched Komnenich Films in 1993 after departing the now defunct GKO Productions.

The signing of Komnenich is the second recent significant addition of



John Komnenich

a Chicago-based mainstay director to the STORY roster. As earlier reported (*SHOOT*, 8/31), director Bob Ebel has come aboard STORY, closing his long-time Ebel Productions. Relieved of the responsibilities of running a production company, Ebel said he can now focus fully on his filmmaking at STORY.

Trends, Issues, Concerns

A SHOOT Staff Report

Alex Frisch, lead visual effects artist and managing director, Method Studios, Santa Monica, believes the future of visual effects lies in 3D. And he's not alone. Flame artist Jamie Scott of MassMarket, New York, acknowledges that there is an increasing reliance on 3D CGI and design-based elements. In some cases, this has caused a shift away from jobs led by a single person like the Flame artist to a more collaborative way of working. "In some cases jobs are lead by 3D artists or designers rather than Flame artists," Scott says.

He adds that there are several reasons for this. With the advancements in CG, agencies are becoming more ambitious with their ideas. Creative teams are more confident about and can rely much more heavily on 3D. "One reason is the increasing use of pre-visualization. Agencies and directors have come to love the amount of control 3D gives them and this has now extended to pre-production as well as post. It's not uncommon to pre-vis an entire commercial before shooting begins. This gives everyone involved a very clear indication of what the final spot will look like and what needs to be shot and in some cases can even reduce the amount of post work that is actually needed," relates Scott.

"In creative terms the other reason for this shift is that people are constantly finding new and innovative ways of combining live action with 3D and design elements. 3D is no longer just used to fill in the gaps left by the limitations of live action—it is a narrative tool in it's own right."

Mark Glaser, owner and creative director of Sway Studio, agrees that there is a trend towards VFX and animation being considered more as a production model rather than a postproduction service.

"What makes this particularly exciting is that the recently released StopWatch data from TiVo has shown there are two types of commercials that get watched the most: direct-response and high production value movie-like ads. Television still reaches the largest audience and sophisticated, compelling visual effects are definitely being shown to be a highly effective way to capture their attention," says Glaser.

Budget constraints

But while all of this means that creativity is flourishing when it comes to VFX and animation, unfortunately budgets are not. That issue is compounded by compressed schedules.

"With compressed schedules, you now have to take into consideration how much time you will have to work on the scene and devise a methodology accordingly. While it tends to still work and most of the VFX work coming out these days is extremely cutting edge, we now need to think a bit differently with turnaround time always looming overhead. This situation has also been exacerbated by the introduction of HD. Working and rendering in HD can be up to six times slower than with Standard Def," explains Scott.

Frisch points out that 3D software, such as Maya, Boujou, or Massive have become more user friendly and interactive, allowing a heavy use of CG even on a fairly tight schedule.

"Combining live-action and computer-generated images seems to be the most significant trend today. More and more we composite CG elements in a live action shot. We will do this either in a totally seamless photorealistic way or conversely by adding very graphic 3D elements to create a more stylized look. Motion capture has also helped a lot to create convincing animation faster," he says.

Keep pushing the bar

As technology continues to improve, expectations for visual effects and animation will continue to grow. Agencies, clients and even the average audience member are much more aware of the capabilities of 3D animation, for instance, than they were just a few years ago, according to Jacob Slutsky, 3D artist, MassMarket.

"I never thought I'd see the day when my father complains about bad CG," he says. "Amazingly, it has arrived."

So even though challenges such as the changing media landscape, downward pressure on budgets and tight schedules are not going away anytime soon, the biggest concern for most companies is simply putting everything they can into their work and creating the best looking spots possible. "Our focus remains on defining our creative difference and working hard to produce consistently good work," says Bruce Carter, creative director, Animal Logic, Sydney.

A sample of that high-caliber work is showcased in *SHOOT*'s Top 10 Chart of the best visual effects and/or animation work this summer. The Chart appears later in this section.

Meanwhile, continuing the industry's assessment of itself, *SHOOT* surveyed others about their most pressing issues and what they believe are the most significant creative trends in VFX/animation today. Here's what they had to say:

What is the most pressing issue facing the visual effects/animation industry today?



Michael Pardee, EP, ASYLUM, Santa Monica

The most pressing issue is the schedule. Schedule drives everything. It is a continual and ongoing issue for our industry. Agencies feel it from their clients; directors and their production companies feel it. What this means for us is that we have to be smarter about how we operate and how we assess upcoming work. Working with directors that understand the dynamic of what we do and recognize the limitations of the schedule can become our strongest ally. Our goal is to give the director what he/she wants. Ultimately though, time will play into what can and can't be done. If a director understands this and brings us to the table

to help find solutions early on in the pre-pro phase, it will give them credible options prior to the shoot. Rather than thinking of VFX as postproduction, it should be, under the right circumstance, be thought of as preproduction, production and postproduction. From doing previsualization prior to the shoot, to putting together rough comps on set for the director and agency to see; to doing our post-production work once we received all of the shoot elements. It is and can be more useful and at the same time make the production schedule more manageable.

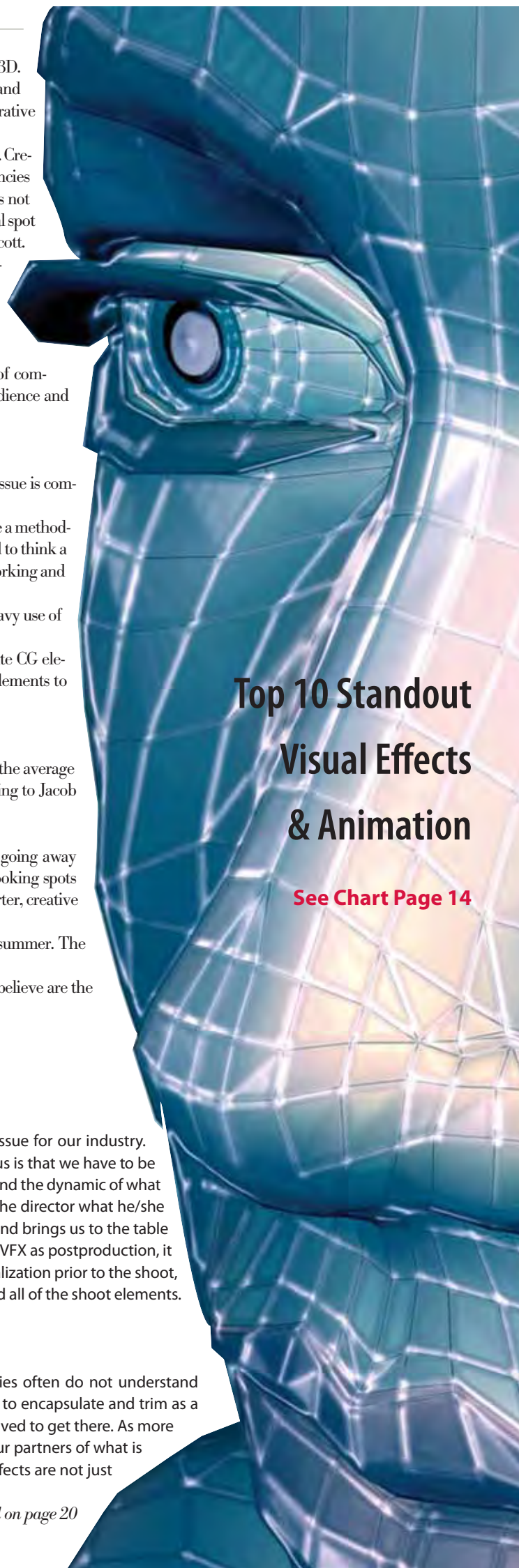


Loni Peristere, Co-founder, Creative Director, Zoic Studios, Los Angeles

Understanding the process of effects production is a major issue. Production companies and agencies often do not understand where a visual effects budget comes from. It appears as a line item number in a budget, which they try to encapsulate and trim as a whole. What is often not understood is the value of the number they are given and the actual labor involved to get there. As more and more work is falling into the hands of VFX professionals, there needs to be a global education for our partners of what is involved in our production, which is very often not dissimilar to a traditional production. Bottom line: Effects are not just

a number, they are an integral part of the creative process and should be approached accordingly.

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Top 10 Standout
Visual Effects
& Animation

See Chart Page 14

VISUAL EFFECTS & ANIMATION

	TITLE	VISUAL EFFECTS/ ANIMATION	AGENCY	PRODUCTION
1	 Coca-Cola's "Happiness Factory—The Movie"	Psyop, New York Todd Mueller, Kylie Matulick, directors; David Chontos, art director/TD; Nicholas Weigel, animation director; Ben Chan, storyboard artist/designer; Jeff Lopez, Pat Porter, Jim Hundertmark, animation sequence leads; Jordan Blit, Aja Bogdanoff, Chris Caufield, Josh Frankel, Jungeun Kim, Henning Kosey, Kitty Lin, Kyle Mohr, Jed Mitchell, Kevin Phelps, Dan Segarra, Miles Southan, Michael Taylor, Goo Shun Ang, animators; Pete Hailton, FX lead; Anthony Patti, environment lead; Jason Conradt, compositing lead; Dylan Cole, matte paintings (Toolbox: Maya, Max, Zbrush, After Effects, Avid, Flame, Mental Ray, RealFlow, Rush)	Weiden+Kennedy, Amsterdam	Seven Senses, Madrid Andreas Hoffman, director
2	 Levi's "Change"	Asylum, Santa Monica Tim Davies, visual effects supervisor; Jason Schugaradt, CG supervisor; Yuichiro Yamashita, CG animator; Matthew Maude, Sean Faden, CG artists; Geg Stuhl, CG modeler; Tim Clark, matte painter; Michael Pardee, executive producer; Mark Allen Kurtz, visual effects producer; Jeff Werner, CG producer (Toolbox: Maya, RenderMan, Houdini, Vmantra, Linux Flame)	BBH, New York	Smuggler, bicoastal Filip Engstrom, director
3	 Miller Lite's "Break From The Crowd"	Method Studios, Santa Monica Alex Frisch, lead 2D VFX artist; James LeBlock, lead 3D VFX artist; Laurent Ledru, CG creative director; Gil Baron, CG technical supervisor; Alex Kolasinski, Cedric Nicolas, Jake Montgomery, Katrina Salicrup, 2D artists; Chi-Wei Hsu, Chris Smallfield, Matt Wheeler, Sean Duman, Seong Joon Lee, 3D artists; Neysa Horsburgh, exec producer; Sue Troyan, head of production; Lisa Houck, VFX producer; Kathy Siegel, VFX shoot supervisor (Toolbox: Maya, Flame, Massive, MayaMan, Sitex Graphics' Air, Apple Shake, After Effects)	Crispin Porter+Bogusky, Miami	Believe Media, bicoastal Zack Snyder, director
4	 Yellow Pages, New Zealand's "Party"	Animal Logic, Sydney Feargal Stewart, CG supervisor; Paul Perrot, animation lead; Simon Le Grand, Andrew Ritchie, Alfie Olivier, Max Liani, Brett Margules, David Hansen, Jonathan Dearing, Nick Lines, Emmanuel Blasset, Tristan North, David Abbott, Pete Colebatch, Dan Marum, Christian So, Paul Braddock, Sotiris Bakosis, Steve Beck, David Hyde, 3D crew; Colin Renshaw, lead compositor; Nick Ponzoni, compositor (Toolbox: Maya 8.5, Zbrush, Maxon Bodypaint, Photoshop, Boujou, MayaMan, RenderMan, Fusion, Flame Nucoda)	Saatchi & Saatchi, Auckland	Exit Films, South Melbourne Mark Molloy, director
5	 Idaho Lottery's "Twister"	Acme Filmworks, Hollywood Christopher Hinton, director/animator; Ron Diamond, executive producer; David Schmier, executive producer/East Coast; Pernille D'Avolio, senior producer; Michael O'Donnell, head of digital operations (Toolbox: Toon Boom Studio)	es/drake, Boise	Acme Filmworks
6	 Guinness' "Music Machine"	The Mill, London Charlotte Loughnane, Lee Pavey, production team; Richard Roberts, lead Flame artist; Darren Christie, lead Shake artist; Grainne Freeman, Becky Porter, Pete Hodsman, Shake artists; John Thornton, Smoke artist; Juan Brockhaus, VFX supervisor/lead 3D artist; Aidan Gibbons, Alex Hammond, Suraj Odedra, Ross Urien, James Rogers, 3D artists; Tom Bussel, lead TD (Toolbox: XSI, Maya, Endorphin, Shake, Flame, Smoke, Final Cut, Spirit)	Irish International BBDO, Dublin	Red Bee Media, London Steve Cope, director
7	 Sprite's "Tonguezilla"	Zoic Studios, Culver City, Calif. Steve Schofield, executive producer; Chris Jones, creative director; John Shirley, VFX supervisor/compositor; Maya Sanchez, Chris Wright, producers (Toolbox: Flame, Combustion, After Effects)	Crispin Porter+Bogusky, Miami	Smuggler, bicoastal Jonathan Watts, director
8	 AT&T's "Dominoes"	Charlex, New York Alex Weil, director/exec creative director; Keith McCabe, CGI director; Anthony Tabtong, animation director; James Fisher, lighting director; Stephen K. Mann, lead character TD; Alex Cheparev, lead modeler; Adam Burke, sr. animator; Sam Crees, John Wilson, animators; Winnie Tom, designer; Marc Goldfine, sr. Flame artist; Adam Isidore, exec producer; Steve Chiarello, sr. producer; Chris Volckmann, Nicole Martin, producers (Toolbox: Maya 8.5, Mental Ray 3.5, After Effects, Linux Renderfarm, Flame, Smoke)	GSD&M, Austin, Texas	Charlex Alex Weil, director
9	 Subaru's "Peel Out"	SWAY studio, Culver City Chris Nichols, VFX supervisor; Erin Hicke, VFX producer; Chris Bankoff, 2D supervisor; Graham Fyffe, TD; Claudia Yi Leon, motion graphics designer; Attila Zalanyi, Michael Walls, animators; Rachel Keyte, Christian Schermerhorn, composers; Mark Glaser, creative director; Leighton Greer, head of production (Toolbox: SWAY Driving Simulator, 3ds Max, Nuke, Flame, V-Ray, Combustion)	DDB New York	Plum Productions, Santa Monica Gavin Bowden, director
10	 Xbox's "Clay"	Moo Studios, Hollywood Shaun Sewter, stop-motion/live-action director; Jared Sandrew, lead compositor; David Lyons, executive producer; Rebecca Donaghe, producer (Toolbox: After Effects)	McCann Erickson, San Francisco	Moo Studios Shaun Sewter, director



Migration To The Midwest

Illinois is back in action. The state's visual media production had dropped dramatically since late 2005 as fierce competition from other states drew projects away. But in May of 2006 the state's general assembly approved a proposed 20 percent credit incentive on total state production spending. Once again the business climate is healthy in the commercial and feature world.

For example this summer the cast and crew of *The Dark Knight*, the follow-up to *Batman Begins*, descended upon Chicago for 12 weeks of filming. Warner Bros. shot a portion of *Batman Begins* in the Windy City three years ago, but Mayor Richard Daley called *The Dark Knight* the biggest film ever shot in Chicago in terms of generating money and jobs. Projected spending was more than \$40 million and it was expected to employ close to 400 workers from the local production community, in addition to hiring 250 day players and 6,000 extras. In addition Angelina Jolie was in town recently shooting the action movie *Wanted*, which is based on a graphic novel.

Mark Androw, president of Chicago-headquartered STORY and immediate past chairman of the Association of Independent Commercial Producers (AICP), believes the tax credit is only part of the reason for Illinois' production success. "An incentive is not by itself going to bring somebody to a state if there weren't other factors that contribute to it. You need good crews and talent. Chicago has all of those things. Some other states are a little weaker in those areas," Androw says.

But Don McNeill, president of Digital Kitchen and AICP/Midwest president, points out that the film incentives can have a positive effect on the overall production infrastructure, including increasing the depth of the crew talent. "My sense is that there has been less defection than increase yet, but I would hope that that is the next phase of it. If the features continue to come back, that will have a big impact. If I were betting, I would bet that it's clearly going to reinvigorate what was a slowing industry," McNeill says.

Tom Fletcher of Fletcher Chicago, a camera rental company serving

the Midwest, adds that lately every DP that comes through has been very impressed with the crew Chicago offers. "I have said it before—the biggest resource we have here in Chicago is we have a good crew base. It's a city with broad shoulders. We have guys here who are willing to work hard and get the job done," Fletcher explains. "Big DPs are coming in and are really excited by the level of the crew guys. And they get that experience from working on the *Wanted*s and the *Batmans*."

Feeling Snowbate's effect

Snowbate, Minnesota's production incentive, has had a positive effect on the production infrastructure in that state. Lucinda Winter, executive director of the Minnesota Film & TV Board, says that she is seeing somewhat of a migration of crew back to the state. "I am getting a lot of calls from people who want to come here, who have done their time in L.A. and want to come back," she says. "They ask me if there is enough work so they can keep their union membership. I think it's exciting."

She adds that an outstanding makeup artist has just moved to town and that L.A. filmmaker Rob Perez, who wrote *40 Days And 40 Nights*, is temporarily relocating to Minnesota in the fall because he will be shooting a feature film there next spring. "He just

really likes the area and really wants to integrate into the community and make this movie here. That's the stuff I am seeing."

Winter also points out she is witnessing the opening of some new post houses. "I'm feeling very positive right now."

Since Snowbate was reinstated in September of 2006, there has been an interesting spread of more than 30 projects—including five features and eight spots. Snowbate was structured to not only encourage people to shoot in Minnesota but also give some incentive to the agencies to say, "I'll bid a Minneapolis production house, a Chicago house and a Phoenix house, for

Continued on page 18

Incentives Help
Bring Production
Back To Illinois,
Minnesota,
Michigan

By Nicole Rivard



Top right: Chicago draws feature films this summer. Bottom row: Downtown Minneapolis. Nighttime in Detroit.

Incentives And The Internet Bolster Business

Continued from page 17

example, and I expect Mr. Minnesota production company, that because you have this incentive here, that the savings might be reflected in your fee,” relates Winter. “We tried to educate the agencies so they, knowing that the rebate existed, could expect to see it impact the budget that they



“The ad agencies haven’t used the incentive yet much to my disappointment. We are doing calls on agencies and clients to encourage them to give it a try.”

—Janet Lockwood

were being handed by the production company. And that actually worked. And then what happened in a number of cases was we would have an L.A. or New York production company come back over and over again whereas before Snowbate, they wouldn’t have shot here,” she says.

One of the production companies benefiting from the incentive package is Twist, which has offices in Minneapolis and NYC. Jim Geib, Twist president/exec producer, explains that Minnesota has always been a cost effective market to shoot in, but remained relatively unknown to the industry at large—unless there were location or client specific needs.

Since one of Twist’s offices is in Minnesota, Geib has often presented it as an option to clients along with requested bids for New York, L.A. and Canada. Now, the value has increased to the point where clients are requesting him to bid Minnesota. “The savings can more than cover any additions to the bid needed to compensate for the size of the market and make our clients feel absolutely comfortable with the choice,” Geib says.

Geib adds that he has seen the effect of the rebate on both a company-wide and Minnesota industry-wide level. “We’ve noticed a surge in non-Minnesota commercial production companies shooting in Minnesota. This is the first Minnesota rebate to include television commercials in the mix of eligible projects. That really helps keep the crews and talent busy and growing in numbers,” he says.

At press time Twist was shooting a job in Minnesota with Grey, New York, for its 3M client. “It’s a perfect example of the rebate in action. The rebate is a draw because it’s very straightforward and is a substantial savings applied to all Minnesota expenditures in A-K, as well as post and talent.”

Michigan’s spot aspirations

Michigan Film Office Director Janet Lockwood was hoping business would have picked up more than it has since the introduction of the film incentive back in January, but she reports that overall the biz has been a

little better. “No question we will double what came in last year insofar as feature films are concerned. We are working with three medium sized features right now, and I’m hoping they do commit to Michigan.”

But she admits the spot business remains flat. “The ad agencies haven’t used the incentive yet, much to my disappointment. We are doing calls on agencies and clients to encourage them to give it a try,” she says.

“A number of states have upped the ante significantly, Connecticut for instance. They are a tax credit and Michigan is a cash refund, but I’m sure the producers see 30 percent versus 20 percent and that’s that. We’re hoping to improve the incentive in 2008.”

While Keith Neff, managing director of hdstudios, a division of Grace & Wild, Farmington Hills, agrees that the spot market is having its ups and downs this year, partially due to the automotive industry’s travails, Internet work has kept them busy.

“We’re doing a lot of work feeding websites with video content and things like that. And what we have been discovering is that because of how compressed those websites have to be to deliver content, we find that the better quality video that you start with, the better quality you end up with; so we are shooting high def for the Internet.”

Neff has also seen a pickup in midlevel feature work in town. Earlier this year, hdstudios provided the Milford, Mich.-based Skeleton Factory with HD cameras, sound stage rental, online postproduction and audio post for the film company’s latest feature *Little Red Devil*. “We have some more feature work coming up this fall. It’s a good sign,” Neff says.

Another good sign is that creativity is alive and well in Michigan. Evidence of that is the newly formed D Show (www.thedshow.org) that will replace the Caddy Awards, which the advertising community decided didn’t

“I am getting a lot of calls from people who want to come here, who have done their time in L.A. and want to come back.”

—Lucinda Winter



do full justice to the creative excellence produced in Detroit. The show will take place at the end of November.

Creative trends

Speaking of ingenuity, there are some creative and technological trends emerging from all the work being done in the Midwest. For example, YouTube continues to influence the spot business.

“With YouTube burgeoning, creative trends and applications continue to be shaped in the direction of accessible, yet unexpected: The comedy work is much wackier, and the execution voyeuristic,” says Amyliz Pera; executive producer of Twist. “Also, stories are told by ‘real people,’ and spots are made to be repurposed. As a result of the creative trends, we’ve

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What is the most pressing issue facing the visual effects/animation industry today?

Continued from page 13



Jason Mayo, Executive Producer, Partner, Click 3X, New York

One of the most pressing issues facing the VFX/animation industry today continues to be the need for shops to deliver high end animation and effects in HD at a severely reduced cost within tighter schedules. As vendors, we're responsible for offering cost effective solutions to our clients. But as any sound business owner could attest to, it's not always as simple as cutting rates and working longer days. Addressing internal issues like technical infrastructure has become more and more essential. Earlier this year, we were awarded a large HD project for Web MD that would be airing throughout the MLB playoffs. The project involved high-end animation and heavy VFX compositing in Flame. We didn't have much time and we weren't afforded a budget with much cushion. We didn't feel that it was prudent to charge more for a technology (HD) that we felt was an important component of our industry's changing landscape. So we upgraded from our Octane 2, Unix based Flame systems that were running on version 8.5 to Linux based Flame 2007. This switch allowed us to render frames in HD up to five times faster than our old systems. With the project deliverables requiring us to finish more than 40 different versions in HD, it turned out to be a switch that essentially made the job not only possible but cost effective and even profitable for our shop. Our industry is changing, so should we.



Aaron King, ECD, Pure, N.Y.

Originality. While desktop platforms have given us a huge flexibility and speed, they have also created an environment where the industry is very self imitative. Schedules have gotten so compressed that there is often little time left for the design phase of a project. Carving out that time for creative exploration is key to finding ideas that are unique while also being brand appropriate. It all comes down to creating a compelling story and finding unique ways to visualize that narrative.

The earlier we start to collaborate with our clients, the more creative thinking we can commit to their project. For instance, in a campaign we did recently for Glade, we spent time up front designing branding elements that could be used in a variety of ways. Then when we shot the whole series of spots, we already had a visual language prepared and could shoot accordingly. The result is a tighter integration of live action and animation that communicates a solid brand while also putting more production dollars on the screen instead of into revisions.



Limore Shur, Chief Creative, Founder, EyeballNYC

Lack of standards and practices have made the industry feel like the wild west. The industry has boomed and it is a bit of a free for all. There is a huge amount of talent out there and the capabilities of both new and old companies are really amazing, but with this boom comes a lack of education on the client side. Until both clients and studios agree in general to the process, we will continue to see unreasonable budgets and timelines being tossed around. Generally these issues work themselves out over time and it is up to the studios to weather the storm.



David Schwarz, Director, co-Founder, HUSH, Brooklyn, N.Y.

One of the most pressing issues is that of nomenclature. In fact, in SHOOT's very own question, the ambiguous little slash "/" between "visual effects" and "animation" sits at the core of the issue. We could even add several more slashes and write: visual effects/animation/design/direction/CG/editing /motion graphics/production. Our company and others like it continue to diversify our work. That's the infinite challenge in a career of image making and storytelling. Sometimes we're hired as directors or graphic designers. Other times, we're effects artists and CG specialists. We have to be in order to challenge ourselves and the industry at large. As a result, one pressing issue seems to be: How do we position our companies and our work in a sea of changing nomenclature, varied aesthetics, converging media and artistic values? What are we called? What are our real capabilities? Is our industry dependent on the Jack of All Trades or being trade specialists? In a business that defines and capitalizes on the newest trends, we have to position ourselves as ever-diversifying specialists – oxymoronic at best.



Lawrence Nimrichter, Director of Animation, Associate Creative Director, Spontaneous, New York

Maintaining high creative standards while managing tightening deadlines is a challenge our entire industry is facing. Compressing the creative process to meet crazy deadlines has led to burnout and an incentive for some artists to go freelance. The result sacrifices the synchronicity that comes with working with an established team and causes an overlooked side effect—the decreased opportunity for agency input into the final product.



Emmett Feldman, Design Director, MEKANISM, San Francisco

In order to keep evolving, the VFX/animation industries need to embrace the thinking and techniques behind real-time interactive technologies. Generating thought provoking and emotionally visceral images that exist solely within a confined rectangle can only go so far. As artists and communicators

we can create a symbiotic relationship between our visual storytelling prowess and the physical/mentally engaging control surfaces of this day in age. People crave the playfulness and immediacy of a usable experience. They want information that is not only useful and interactive, but beautifully represented and conveyed. That's where the designer/ animator/compositor's come in....Our greatest and most exciting challenge in the coming years will be to create visually captivating worlds that house information in ways that bring both cinema and interactive together.



Alex Weil, ECD/Founder, Charlex, New York

I don't think that there really are many seriously "pressing issues" facing us today beyond how to enjoy the phenomenological state of this continually burgeoning industry. We are fortunate to be living in the middle of a Golden Era of effects/animation and graphics. For us these are the days of Camelot—everyday more talent; faster, better software; cooler hardware. And an Internet that's so fast and reliable that anyone can work with anyone else at anytime from anyplace. The democratization of our industry was swift and complete. Individuals at a single work station can sometimes successfully compete with organizations as large, successful and innovative as ILM. A king's ransom is paid to anyone who comes up with a new look or technique. One minute you're on YouTube and the next minute you're broadcast all over the world. So I guess I'm forced to admit that for many of us, young and old, the most pressing issue we face is often "What will I have for lunch today?"



Rick Wagonheim, Partner, Managing Director, Rhinofx, New York

The most recent and salient trends and issues are: 1. Animation and effects studios supplied ballparks when agencies presented multiple concepts. 2. Today, animation and effects studios supply written treatments, visual references, animation tests, design tests and pre-viz's when agencies present multiple concepts. 3. We're losing more jobs to concepts than losing jobs to competitors.

What is the most significant creative trend in the visual effects/animation industry today?



Alistair Thompson, Managing Director, The Mill, New York

The big strides forward recently in VFX have occurred in the area of computer graphics. CGI is often a vital component at the very beginning of any ambitious project and it is the innovation of CG artists and developers that can actually make the impossible become plausible. The computer graphics realm is also a breeding ground for new directing talent. Where directors used to hone their skills behind a camera, many of the today's edgiest young directors are learning their trade by using a virtual set on a 3D workstation. Consequently we have seen the rise of directors like Neil Blomkamp, Pleix, Stylewar and Bif who are entirely at home in this 'generated' world. With the evolution of CG, the postproduction process has also moved away from being centered around a lone, hero operator in a suite. VFX projects now require teams of artists that have their own specialties. At the foundation of our Mill NY and LA offices, we have a core of CG artists that originally emanated from our London office. As a result, our NY and LA offices have exceptional CG talent on the ground but equally, the very close relationship between the operators in all the Mill offices, allows us to effectively utilize global resources in the best interests of an individual project.



David Steel, VP, ArtWorks, a division of NBC Universal

As broadcast designers, animators and storytellers, the use of photo-realistic 3D animation in packaging and illustrative design is one of our top creative priorities. Seamlessly integrating 3D elements into video and film for show opens, for example, or re-creating historic events (Hurricane Katrina devastation, Iraqi tank battles, Olympic games) for our news/sports clients is one area we are very focused on. Thankfully, technology has reduced the turnaround time for these complex scenes. But it has also raised the expectations with shorter deadlines and ubiquitous access to design software and rendering platforms. The real challenge, though, has always been and continues to be a creative one—how you best tell a story or support a brand with strong concepts, smart design and tasteful animation?



Lisa Kwon, Design Director, Creative Bubble, New York

The need to visualize the uber reality. We have progressed in VFX/animation to a place where it is welcome to mix all styles of animation regardless of how disparate they can be. If it's stop frame, claymation, or incredible 3D, by combining these elements, we can create something new and fresh again. By no means am I discounting the seamless integration of effects into a scene, but there is a desire to see bold and beautiful graphic worlds again. In a sense we are moving towards a destandardization of creativity because our individual realities are also becoming more realized (YouTube, digital camera on every phone). Thus as designers we are striving to meet that vision of defining/visualizing one's constantly evolving realities.

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London Brings Sense Of Discovery To Work

Continued from page 4

mate joke—only when you do is when you really start to live.”

Temporary insanity

One of the insane animation projects London mentioned is a film she and Andy are currently working on, which will be released this fall. The film is loosely based on events from Andy's life—being obsessed with a woman in high school and the devastating circumstances of a certain night. To properly do justice to this film, the husband and wife team played around with many techniques for six months: cel drawing, flash, different animation styles.

“Then we hit upon it—rotoscoping actual video footage. So, in essence, Andy and I acted out the events of this high school experience over several weeks with a room full of ex-

tras and then it was rotoscoped and traced scene by scene. So just in case high school wasn't bad enough the first time, now we're revisiting it frame by grueling frame,” said London.

Meanwhile the independently financed *I'm In the Mood For Death* took three months to wrap from start to finish, and required some clever finagling of resources. The 350-square-foot NYC apartment in the film belonged to actress and friend Sonya Rokes, who plays the lead protagonist Jamie. Other key collaborators include editor/line producer/post producer O'Hara Tudor, DP Bill Lucia, art director/production designer Michael Vadino and animator Pascal Campion.

London's background in advertising—she was a copywriter at Saatchi & Saatchi New York and Lowe Worldwide—has informed her directing. She understands the importance

of starting with a really good idea. “And spend a lot of time beta-testing that concept before you invest thousands of dollars to execute it,” London said. “Andy and I collaborate on all of the writing, and we spend a lot of time making sure the idea is ironclad and watertight.

“On set, I've learned that everything comes from the top down. Trust, faith, security, comfort, excitement...whatever. I picked that up early in my career when I was a copywriter going on shoots. I also try to infuse the spirit of my projects with an optimism and sense of daring...I go in with a strong idea, but I'm open to how we come to the end product. I like to have a sense of discovery. I think that's where film and advertising sometimes depart. It's just way too expensive to 'discover' on a commercial shoot. Clients need a sense of security. And who can blame them?”

As far as clients she'd love to direct for, she has a fondness for Target spots and their visual wit as well as how they pull in theatrical bits.

“My recent films are human-scaled, black-comedy-type stories, but in my heart I feel like Vincente Minnelli. I'm a big fan of choreography and precise timing. Many years ago I was studying dance and when I figured out I wasn't a great dancer, I became interested in choreogra-

phy and directing performances, which is partly what got me on the path to directing. So timing and syncopation and musicality still figure largely in my approach to work. I'd love to work on any spot that has a bit of panache, a little wink and nod. Bring on the sunshine and the dancing girls. I'm a shameless sucker for raw entertainment for the masses.”

VISUAL EFFECTS & ANIMATION

What is the most significant creative trend in the visual effects/animation industry today?

Continued from page 20



Bruce Carter, Creative Director, Animal Logic, Sydney

There is so much material being produced all over the world, it is almost impossible to keep track of it all. If I had to pick one trend it would be the cultural homogenization that seems to be occurring. There seems to be a dissipation of unique cultural identities in a lot of work as designers and artists borrow and collect ideas from each other. This may be a consequence of the major socio-political issues of this time in history being defined as 'global' and are thus being addressed as such but I hope that does not lessen the diversity of thought or ideas that comes from unique histories, landscapes and experiences.



Melissa Davies, Sight Effects, Venice, Calif.

The VFX industry boomed in the 90s and technology advanced through experimentation. Technology is driven by creative cycles. The technological advancements are still there but as the industry has matured, those advancements have become more transparent—faster machines, advanced capabilities and off the shelf software. The next creative cycle seems to be a resurgence of big effects, with lower budgets and faster turnaround. The challenge to the industry is to accommodate without compromise to creativity and quality. Outsourcing and networking of freelance labor is allowing boutique companies like ours to stay competitive—companies and individuals connecting under one creative direction to accommodate the technical demands, short schedules and sophisticated creative. We now have the capability to connect to India, China and an array of freelancers around the world to tap into a variety of styles, large render farms and increasing capacity with flexibility to accommodate large projects seamlessly. The only constant in VFX is the creative management and the art of staying ahead of technology and visualizing the creative transparently and cost effectively.



Mark Wilhelm, FX Artist, Guava, NY

The advancements in technology have made this an exciting time to be a VFX artist. When I started out there were only two pieces of equipment, they were quite expensive and access was limited. Nowadays, there is a variety of equipment at my fingertips, therefore enhancing and evolving my skill set as a designer. Being a VFX artist today is like being a kid in a toy store, and I want all the toys.



John Myers, EP/Co-owner, Ring of Fire, Santa Monica

The most significant creative trend (outside of our current favorite—virals) still has to be HD and everything 'creative' that comes with it while we contend with shrinking schedules and budgets. The most significant anticipated trend is RED ONE and everything that will come with that, changing our process in ways that will revolutionize it. (Visit www.shootonline.com for additional responses.)

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Midwest Companies Get More Crafty

Continued from page 18

been extremely busy in new media—embracing the portability of Final Cut Pro and HD 24p and handling projects through finish to help clients with development of their application.”

Andrew too is seeing a resurgence of more real people in commercials or actors that are telling stories like real people. He says spots have a more naturalistic style and a less staged feel. Like Pera, he believes the success of YouTube has spilled over into commercials, so really outrageous ideas or things in YouTube videos that look like they're not staged are going to keep appearing in spots.

On the technical side, Fletcher has noticed that post houses are driving more camera decisions than in the past because they are doing such graphically intensive work. “They are doing a lot of compositing so they are telling the DPs to use a 4:4:4 camera. If you are going to be doing compositing, shooting with a 4:4:4 camera saves you a lot of time in cleanup,” Fletcher explains. “The price of the camera might be double but you are saving more than that in post because it's time and it's money. So 90 percent of our D20 and Viper rentals to this date have been driven by post, not by the DP.”

The other trend he is witnessing is that people are starting to see the benefit of the improved scanners that are out there and they are moving to a digital intermediate workflow.

The Filmworkers Club, Chicago,



Keith Neff

is in the process of developing a digital intermediate pipeline, according to Reid Brody, VP/co-founder. “There are many systems to choose from. Whatever we buy will make a statement. I hope to make a decision by the end of the month,” he says.

Other workflow changes at the company include a new fiber uplink service that facilitates the real-time delivery of HD TV spots and other media to broadcasting destinations across the United States, which was introduced earlier this year. The service is being offered via Vyvx. Brody said the service is “a boon to advertisers facing ever tighter deadlines for the delivery of advertising content. This is a great option for clients who can't wait for overnight delivery. Now they can have a high-quality HD spot sent to New York, Los Angeles or virtually anywhere else in the country in minutes.”

Addressing the issues of speed and tighter deadlines, McNeill says that moving forward, produc-

tion companies have to get more crafty in terms of how they do things. “CMOS have so little time and money to make an impact on their brand, whatever it is. They are asking the agencies to behave so quickly and nimbly, that's why there is a splinter effect on the production companies. The challenge now is not which jobs to do or how to bid the job, it's how to actually produce the job. That's directly related to the tax credit. There's so much opportunity to take the credit and factor that into how you do it because it could be important,” says McNeill.

He believes agencies will continue to ask production companies to behave differently, to be more like creative partners and to be more understanding of their business. “It sort of relates to the tax credit. I think we need to become more educated. Production companies need to adapt and understand our clients needs more and the crew needs,” he says

McNeill adds that Digital Kitchen has gotten much more educated on how to use the tax credit and what it means and has taken a lot more advantage of it over the last 12 months. Recent work shot in Illinois includes a project for bud.tv and spots for Dick's Sporting Goods and Finish Line shoes.

He is a little disappointed in the advertising community in that he doesn't think everyone is really embracing the tax credit yet. “I actually hear some criticisms. From my AICP Midwest perspective, you get exposure to a lot of other states trying to do incentives, and ours is really good. Is it the best? No. But is it the worst, not even close.

“It's sort of misunderstood. I think the danger is if it gets criticized too much or doesn't get wildly embraced, it could go away. And that would be a mistake.”

His advice is to call the AICP or the state film office before you make a judgment. “I think the tax credit is one piece of an ongoing trend in which we are being forced to look a little more deeply and use more outside-the-box solutions to making stuff. To me, it's a great result of that. Four years ago someone said, ‘We have to attract people. We are losing people. How do we do it?’

“It's a great step. I don't think we should stop, though. I think we still need to consider there's so much production going overseas and the labor is a big issue. We have to continue to refine it and look for other big ideas.”



“Game Time” for Dick's Sporting Goods from Digital Kitchen



Director Rich Michell of Twist shoots in Minn. for Clarity Coverdale Fury client Clearway.

Photo by Anne Healy/Location

street talk

Tom Dunlap is joining Deutsch LA as senior VP, director of integrated production. He formerly was director of integrated production at Wieden+Kennedy, Amsterdam, where his credits including serving as exec producer/producer on the lauded “Happiness Factory” spot for Coca-Cola....Director Daniel Benmayor has come aboard bicoastal Anonymous Content....Rockhard Films, West Hollywood, has signed director Rob Pearlstein whose *Our Time Is Up* received an Oscar nomination for best live-action short. Pearlstein first established himself in the industry as an agency creative....Executive producer

Lisa Rich is joining bicoastal Smuggler in the newly formed company role of COO....Sound artist Herwig Maurer, known for his work on the feature *Apocalypto*, has joined the roster of Woodland Hills, Calif.-based Visual Music for spot representation....Editor Carrie Shanahan has come aboard Crash & Sue's, Minneapolis. She earlier freelanced in New York and then was on the roster of Minneapolis-based Uppercut....Atlanta-based Crawford Post Production has hired Basil Iskandrian as creative director/designer. Iskandrian served previously as a senior video designer at Moxie Interactive, Atlanta, and a motion designer/After Effects artist at Spin Productions, Atlanta....

rep report

Rhythm+Hues Commercial Studios, Los Angeles, has signed independent rep Carolyn Hill to handle the East Coast....New York-based editorial and VFX/motion design company Version2 has brought Kathy Misrock on board as head of business development....Finger Music, Venice, Calif., has secured Dave Dakich of indie firm dbi.D representation to handle the Midwest....Sara Kahn, formerly a freelance documentary producer and more recently with the Streetlights program, is now a DP agent at TDN Artists, Encino, Calif. Additionally TDN senior VP/partner Jeff Lewis announced that DP Rob Doumitt has joined the talent agency's roster. Doumitt recently completed shooting the Apple iPhone spots for the directorial team Coppo/Lee of Green Dot Films, Santa Monica....DPs Barry Markowitz, ASC and Eric Larson have joined Paradigm Agency LA for exclusive representation...DP Simon Coull is now repped in the United States by UTA, Beverly Hills, for commercials, music videos and features....DP Barry Ackroyd has wrapped principal photography on *Hurt Locker*, directed by Kathryn Bigelow and starring Guy Pearce, and is now available for commercials and music videos via endeavor, Beverly Hills....

bulletin board

>Oct. 8-11/Albuquerque, NM: Best in the SW:Flash Animation & Motion Graphics conf./Fest. www.bestinthesw.com

>Oct. 23-25/NYC: New York Post|Production Conference. www.NYPostConference.com

>Oct. 24/NYC: Picturehouse NY. www.picturehouse.org

>Oct. 24-27/Brooklyn, NY: SMPTE. www.smpte.org

>Nov. 1/Los Angeles, CA: HPA (Hollywood Post Alliance) Awards. www.hpaawards.com

>Nov.2/Los Angeles, CA: SHOOT Music for Commericals Panel at Hollywood Reporter/Billboard Music Conf. www.billboardevents.com



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