

Music Video

ARTISTS & MUSIC

900 Frames Fills Hip-Hop Niche 'Tell & Sell' Goal Set For Future Clips

BY DEBORAH RUSSELL

LOS ANGELES—Those familiar with production know that in the film-to-tape transfer, it takes 900 frames of film to fill 30 seconds of tape.

Those familiar with the videos of Mary J. Blige, Das EFX, and Pete Rock & C.L. Smooth know that New York-based production house 900 Frames fills a distinct niche in the hip-hop and rap music video realm.

Since its inception in January 1991, 900 Frames can claim credit for more than 43 music videos, with a list of clients that includes EPMD, Gang Starr, Run-DMC, Professor Griff, and Grand Puba, among others.

The list is rather impressive, particularly when one considers founder Chris Halliburton's "past life" as a financial services expert who, for nine years, designed and implemented pension plans for major corporations.

"I guess I had my midlife crisis early," says 33-year-old Halliburton, who decided to shift career gears upon receiving a job offer to represent such directors as Julien Temple, Tim Pope, and Mark Story at a now-defunct commercial production house.

The firm folded about a year after Halliburton came aboard, but by that time, he had accumulated the contacts and expertise necessary to launch his own successful operation.

In fact, one of the first music videos reeled by 900 Frames—El General's "Muevelo," directed by Rolando Hudson—received an MTV award for best international video last year.

Since then, Marcus Raboy, who directed photography on "Muevelo," has become one of the 900 Frame's most prolific directors, shooting Naughty By Nature's "O.P.P.," Blige's "Real Love"

and "You Remind Me," Ice Cube's "Wicked," and the Das EFX clip "Mic Chekka," to name just a few.

Meanwhile, the person who owned the studio where "Muevelo" was shot introduced Halliburton to Chicago-based director Derrick Boatner, who recently reeled Professor Griff's new "Sista Sista." Boatner's credits include videos for Roxanne, Mobb Deep, and A.T.E.E.M. In

February alone, the director was shooting six videos.

Production budgets at 900 Frames range from \$5,000 to \$200,000, says Halliburton. New director Craig Henry shot Chi Ali's "Funky Lemonade," (currently climbing the playlist at the Box), for about \$5,000, but his Christopher Williams clip "Every Little Thing You Do" came in at "significantly more than that," Halliburton says.

"We try to provide the best possible product we can, given the financial limitations that are placed on us," says Halliburton, who notes his crews often shoot at cost-effective and evocative locations in New York, Atlanta, North Carolina, Florida, and Boston.

"The challenge is figuring out a way to create a new twist, especially when people at the label, or the artists themselves, see something someone else has done with some success and they want to replicate it," he says.

One of the key challenges in lensing rap video, he adds, is visualizing lyrics, which often can be graphically violent.

"You try to let people know where

the artist is coming from while demonstrating some social responsibility and being considerate of what the programmers are willing to accept," Halliburton says. "Sometimes you're walking on egg shells."

He describes a situation during director Guy Guillet's recent production of Gang Starr's "Gotta Get Over (Taking Loot)": "There was gun play, but we made sure there was never a scene where you saw who the gun was pointed at. You don't have to slap people over the head with it; we don't want to promote the annihilation of a person."

The challenge in the coming year, says Halliburton, is for directors to come up with different ways to "tell and sell" the urban music experience.

900 Frames will attempt to do just that, tapping the talent of a roster that includes Guillet and P.S. O'Neill, who previously had been an in-house directing team at Rap-A-Lot Records. In addition to Gang Starr, Guillet is the eye behind Ya Kid K's latest clip, "That Man," and Mr. Scarface's "A Minute To Pray, A Second To Die." O'Neill, who is developing projects at 900 Frames, shot Bushwick Bill's Rap-A-Lot clip "Ever So Clear" last year.

Other 900 Frames directors include Eric "Shorty" Meyerson, who is shooting Intro's new clip, "Love Thang," and Pascal Franchot, whose credits include a clip for guitarist Ottmar Liebert.

Marc Smerling is head of production at the firm. Producers include Joe Osborne, Bettina Schneider, and Matt Resnick.

900 Frames is poised for slow, steady growth in 1993, says Halliburton, who notes he is looking to open an L.A.-based operation in the next few months.



HALLIBURTON

Green Jello Vid Sticks; Thrilling MTV Moments

GREEN JELLO, Zoo Records' "video-only" act, has been the hot ticket on the menu at regional outlets since October, and widespread airplay of the group's "Three Little Pigs" clip is finally igniting sales on its longform parent, "Cereal Killer."

The longform title, released Oct. 9, debuted at No. 22 on Billboard's Top Music Video sales chart Feb. 13, and Zoo reports sales on the video have passed the 20,000-unit mark. A big chunk of those numbers was generated in the past few weeks, and Zoo reports sales reached 8,000 units in a recent seven-day cycle.

The Box and MTV finally added Green Jello's "Three Little Pigs" clip, nearly 12 weeks after some 90 regional and local outlets had inspired a significant buzz.

Telemotion's Laurel Sylvanus, who has been promoting "Three Little Pigs" since September, points to such outlets as Austin, Texas-based "Raw Time," Brockton, Mass.-based "Outrageous!," Tampa, Fla.'s "V 32," Romeoville, Ill.'s "The Tube," Dallas' "Dallas Music Videos," and San Diego's "Music Underground" as some key shows that were hip to Green Jello early on.

Dave Prewitt of "Raw Time" is into his third month programming "Three Little Pigs," and he classifies viewer response to the clip as "amazing."

He estimates as many as 15 of the 40 live requests he broadcasts during his four-hour show are for Green Jello. And as many as 15% of the calls that aren't broadcast target Green Jello, too.

"It's pretty weird," he says. "A clip usually dies after [six weeks] or so." Like other regional programmers, Prewitt says he was bombarded with callers seeking local retailers who were selling "Cereal Killer."

The calls turned into sales around the country. In fact, during the last week of January, the home video peaked at No. 2 at Pittsburgh's National Record Mart chain, says purchasing manager John Artale. Other chains reporting significant sales include Philadelphia's Wee Three, Miami's Spec's Music Inc., and West Sacramento, Calif.-based Tower.

And despite the fact that Zoo initially billed Green Jello as a "video-only band," the label released a CD-5 in December, which has generated sales in excess of 45,000 units, says Jayne Neches Simon, Zoo's senior VP of marketing. (A promotional cassette version of the CD-5 is being packaged as a value-added bonus to the video.)

A cassette single of "Three Little Pigs" b/w "Obey The Cow God" hits

the streets March 5. And a full-length audio counterpart to the "Cereal Killer" video is slated for mid-March release. A second single has not yet been chosen, says Simon.

MTV'S THRILLER: Time Warner executive Bob Pittman regaled a crowd of students, academics, and journalists with his recollections of the early years of MTV in a keynote speech at the Feb. 3-6 Rock 'N' Rap, Mass Media & Society conference at the Univ. of Missouri School of Journalism.

Among his more interesting revelations: In 1983, MTV, seeking to boost the profile of Michael Jackson as a video artist, provided significant funds for the John Landis-directed "Thriller" clip. But MTV did not want it known that it would bankroll an individual video. So, to disguise the funding, the network instead "paid Michael to produce the 'Making Michael Jackson's Thriller' video," said Pittman.

In reality, the longform cost "pennies" beyond the cost of the shortform clip, he said. Further, Pittman said the funding was worked out with Jackson's management (then handled by Frank DiLeo) and not with CBS Records.

THE EYE



by Deborah Russell

QUICK CUTS: VH1 has signed on as the media sponsor of Paul McCartney's "New World Tour," which kicks off April 14. Meanwhile, VH1 has "trashed the dash" that used to appear in its VH1 logo... Former N.W.A members Dr. Dre, Eazy-E, and Ice Cube held the top three spots on The Box's weekly "Boxtops" countdown segment in the first week of February... We hear Motown's Boyz II Men are scheduled to shoot an "MTV Unplugged" concert in Philadelphia in April. It's likely Motown will release a CD version of the concert shortly thereafter... Jerry Cantrell Sr., who sired Alice In Chains' Jerry Cantrell Jr., appears in the group's forthcoming "Rooster" video, directed by Mark Pellington for Woo Art. The elder Cantrell, a Vietnam veteran, also was a consultant on the clip, as it explores his son's interpretation of his father's war experience.

REEL NEWS: Eileen Kramer recently joined L.A.'s Squeak Pictures as West Coast sales rep... Dale Dobson is now directors' rep at New York-based Cyclone Pictures. In addition, the production company is now representing director Sam Martin.

Assistance in preparing this column was provided by Ken Schlager in Columbia, Mo.

PRODUCTION NOTES

LOS ANGELES

• The A&R Group's Bronwen Hughes directed Silk's new Keia/Elektra video, "Freak Me." David Ramser produced the shoot.

• Black Ball Films director David Roth shot Soul Asylum's latest Columbia clip, "Black Gold." Bitsy Byron

and Chris Ball produced.

• Director Phillipe Angiers shot Romeo And's new Elektra/Vintertainment video, "For You (I'll Do Anything)," with Propaganda producer Blake Simpson.

• Director Scott Kennedy reeled "Dead End Street," Mad Cobra's latest video from Columbia. Tom Richmond lensed the clip, which features the Geto Boys. Louise Barlow produced and Len Epand executive-produced for Flashframe Films.

NEW YORK

• Black Ball's Bradley Sellers directed Artz & Kraftz's new Columbia clip, "All Of It." Bitsy Byron and David Agosto produced.

• One World director Rich Murray is the eye behind the new Spin Doctors' video, "Two Princes." Anghel Decca shot the video; Joseph Uliano executive-produced. Murray also directed "I Get Wrecked" for Tim Dog and KRS-ONE. David Phillips lensed the shoot; Uliano executive-produced.

• Monie Love's new Warner Bros. video, "Born 2 B.R.E.E.D.," is a colorful dance clip directed by Zak Ove.

Marcus Turner produced.

• Charles Stone III directed Groove Garden's debut Tommy Boy clip, "You're Not Coming Home." Jonna Mattingly produced the shoot; Mike Falasco was cinematographer.

• Brand Nubian's Elektra clip "Love Me Or Leave Me Alone" is an O Pictures production directed by Kim Dempster. George Weiser produced.

OTHER CITIES

• Scene Three director Marc Ball reeled Tracy Lawrence's new Atlantic clip, "Alibis," on location in Cape Coral, Fla. Joe Gutt directed photography. Ball also directed and shot Ricky Lynn Gregg's latest Liberty video, "If I Had A Cheatin' Heart," for Scene Three. The crew shot the performance piece in a Dallas club.

• Midnight Films director Eric Meza shot New Model Army's new Epic video, "Here Comes The War," on location in a former steel works outside London.

• Bill Ward directed and produced the Junk Monkeys' new Metal Blade video, "Bliss," on location in Detroit's St. Andrews Hall.

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