

Transitioning from Scripted to Non-Scripted programming

Jeremy Presner

While working in Vancouver on indie features such as *Jiminy Glick*, *The Burial Society*, *Spooky House*; narrative TV series like *Stargate Atlantis*, *Hollywood Off-Ramp*; and MOWs including *Carrie*, *Class Warfare*, *Best Actress*; I had the opportunity to work with some of Hollywood's notable directors and producers (Richard Shepard, Brad Turner, and The Hughes Bros).

Upon moving to New York to work with the post production agency Vidiots (Anthony and Michael Amoia, www.vidiots.tv), I made the transition from fiction to non-fiction programming which was appealing in that generally the same set of tools would be used (Avid Media Composer/Adrenalin & Unity) to create entirely different genres of programming. Cutting this style would be highly dependent on FX - Sapphire, Boris - and music such as Extreme, Pump, and MML (licensed tracks from known artists). Although I do try to use MML tracks whenever possible and appropriate.



Instead of cranking out dramatically crafted science fiction every day on *Stargate Atlantis*, I am now working on intricate packages for MTV News and VH1 networks. *Cribs* invited me to join their team on the one-hour 50 Cent special. My segment featured Fiddy pulling up in a golf cart, reviewing the niceties of his Crib, and leaving his 20 million-dollar palazzo in Long Island in true swagga style: in a chopper.

Speed Ramps and Motion FX such as 'fit-to-fill' are used much more judiciously than in the narrative programs mentioned earlier. One Avid tip learned on the job for *Yo! MTV Raps's 20th Anniversary* was to organize footage in the timeline based on color, "Blue" for standups (interviewees), and "Red" for music videos, "Green" for VO. Each element would have a different color assigned and when changing the timeline view to "Source" you can see "what's what" clearly and effectively at a glance. Much-needed manipulation of graphics imported as tiffs, jpgs or targa sequences were required to get the look the producers wanted. With 3D Warp, by far the most versatile tool in the Avid effects palate, we were able to create picture in picture FX, with a graphic border delivered by the graphic department, moving about the screen via keyframes accompanied with one of several hundred little swoosh FX from the Sound Ideas library.



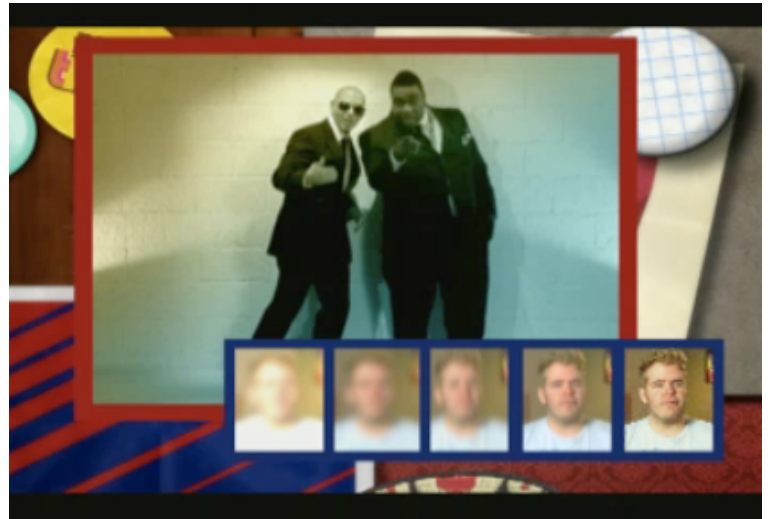
Politics

On the Norman Lear *Remix America* project I got to mash-up speeches from all the various candidates to create a voting campaign for the '08 election as well as prep footage for home-surfers to create their own mashups. Prior to Obama's inauguration I cut several 'Choose or Lose' packages promoting MLK's Day of Service with Tobey Maguire and Brendan Routh helping to build schools, and Jay Z's benefit concerts. This culminated in capturing a live feed of his inauguration coming straight into MTV Newsroom offices and hunting for good segments for news briefs through the day. At the newsroom we used Avid's Newscutter systems which are good, but I find them a little less responsive than the Adrenalin systems.



Fashion

On a *Top 13 Fashionista Stunnas* project with limited footage, I utilized Photoshop & Stage Tools "Moving Picture" to animate stills and shrink host Perez Hilton down to tiny boxes with varying color tints to create a Pop Art effect that would match and supplement the effect house's supplied bgs and open/closes. Another section involved creating a film-strip type effect for the hosts' commentary with varying shades of blur culminating with a crystal-clear one on the right of a Don Omar music video running below (see vimeo.com/3299971).



Another had the host split with a mirror image. The right side would slide away revealing the clip Perez was commenting on. None of these elements was scripted but came through my experimentation with the footage and tools at hand.



In addition I got to put together a fun package of excitement for New York's Fashion Week and profile some of Bravo's *Project Runway's* contestants. It included a fast-paced walk-through intercut with some of the finalists' designs along with upbeat music and fun backstage interviews.

Timing

With extraordinarily tight deadlines, sometimes 17-hour-days are required as in the recent Chris Brown-and-Rihanna incident; we had to create a timeline that focused on how they met, and the events leading up to the incident, only days after the story broke. And, similar to the live feed of Obama's inauguration, we had to capture live footage from Michael Jackson's memorial service for a VH1 rebroadcast later that day and split it up, create bumpers and breaks for commercials.

Conclusion

To effectively manage the transition from scripted to non-fiction, it helps to focus on finding out what story the producer wants to deliver and find those moments in the footage that will best work to accomplish this. Also, find the best music and FX to enhance your finished visuals.

To check out various other clips check out by Jeremy Presner www.presner.com or www.innuendoinc.com



